

MARCH-APRIL 2006

THE

www.RealTruth.org

REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



**CANADA'S
GREAT SHIFT**
WILL U.S.-CANADIAN
RELATIONS IMPROVE?

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. IV | NO. 2 | MARCH-APRIL 2006

A R T I C L E S

www.RealTruth.org



**Tipping the Scales –
The Changing U.S. Supreme Court**
With two new justices within four months,
could changes be ahead for America?
Page 15

Victory for Hamas – What's Next for the Mid-East?

In January 2006, the terrorist group Hamas surprised the world by winning a majority in the Palestinian election. What does this mean for the United States, Europe, Israel and the greater Mid-East region? Will it lead to peace and stability—or result in more of the same rhetoric, desperation and violence?

Page 3

“The Da Vinci Code” – Captivating the Masses

The topic of numerous articles and television specials, and selling more than 30 million copies in less than three years, *The Da Vinci Code* has become an international success. But is there any truth behind this work of fiction?

Page 5

Three Messiahs?—or One?

Three religions—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—look for a coming Messiah. Yet they differ in their view of *who* this will be and *what* he will do upon his return.

Page 8

Minute-to-Minute Living

Many feel trapped in the stress-filled, nonstop rat race called the modern world. Is there more to life than just living in the “here and now”?

Page 10

The Great Canadian Shift

America’s neighbor to the north had a political reversal in its latest federal election. Will a conservative minority change the fabric of Canadian society?

Page 12

The European Counterweight – Part Two: Will a Strongman Fill the Void?

Before it can assume the mantle of global preeminence, the European Union must face several daunting obstacles and challenges—including a drastic and startling change in government.

Page 19

ABOUT OUR COVER:

Canadian politics weigh heavily on the health of relations with the United States. Will the results of recent Canadian elections unify or divide these two great trading partners?

PHOTO CREDITS: All photographs courtesy of ArtToday, Inc., unless noted otherwise.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAVID C. PACK

SENIOR EDITOR
GEORGE C. ROGERS

EDITORIAL MANAGER
BRUCE A. RITTER

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
JEFFREY D. DAVIS

WORLD NEWS DESK
MARK P. DENEEN

ART/GRAPHICS
BRUCE A. RITTER
JAMES T. BOYLE
PAULA C. RONDEAU

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
KEVIN D. DENEEN
MARK P. DENEEN
RYAN P. DENEEN
CHESTER R. ECHELBERGER
ROBERT R. FARRELL
CHARLES E. HERZOG
GABRIEL N. LISCHAK
BRUCE A. RITTER
GEORGE C. ROGERS
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
JAMES F. TURCK

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

JENNIFER L. DENEEN
SHARON A. ECHELBERGER
VERNIA I. ANSTEY
DAVINA L. LISCHAK
DEBORAH A. TUCKER

The REAL TRUTH magazine is provided free of charge. This is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of The Restored Church of God, and by the offerings and donations of co-workers and donors. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support the Work of God in preaching and publishing the Gospel to all nations are gladly welcomed as co-workers. Contributions should be sent to the address below.

The preparation and production of this magazine involved the work of editors, proofreaders, graphic artists, illustrators, writers, researchers and those who support the Work of God.

Copyright © 2006, The Restored Church of God. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved.

The Restored Church of God is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photos.

Scriptures are quoted from the King James (or Authorized) Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

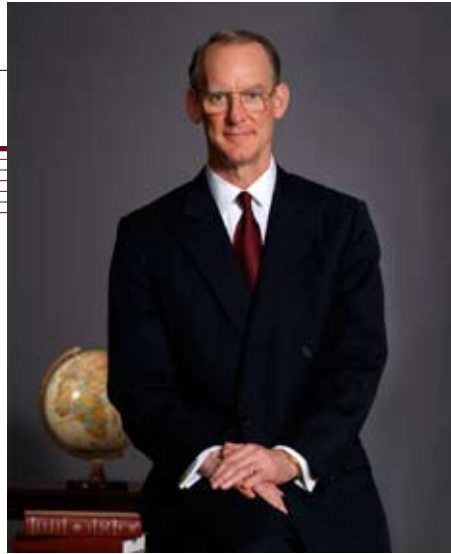
Contact The REAL TRUTH:

P.O. Box 23295
Wadsworth, OH 44282

www.RealTruth.org
info@RealTruth.org

PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



HOW RELIGION HELD BACK CHRIST'S MESSAGE FOR 2,000 YEARS!

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL—God's astonishing *purpose* for man—has been withheld from the world. It explains *why* you were born. It is incredible knowledge that will leave you dumbfounded! This amazing understanding is now revealed—along with the cover-up to suppress it!

Billions are now deceived. Previous billions have been. Even you have been lied to. A complete seduction has taken place, and all the world's religions have played a part in it. Knowledge of your *incredible future*—your AWESOME POTENTIAL—has been kept from you!

Many wonder and worry about the unknown—and what their future holds. Others fear they do not even *have* a future. Still others fear that *civilization* has no future. You need never be in doubt about *your* future again—or of mankind's.

If only humanity knew what God has in store for it! Yet a deliberate suppression of the truth has withheld this knowledge from all but a few. You can be an exception—one of the few who is *not* deceived!

The world has believed a false gospel for 2,000 years. It has generally supposed that Jesus Christ *is* the gospel rather than the Messenger *of* it. The Message—the centerpiece—of the gospel is *not* Christ. By focusing on Him—the Messenger—religious deceivers have

been able to successfully suppress and cover up the Message that He brought!

The vital knowledge of how man could have solved his problems and understood God's Supreme Purpose has been withheld from the world, keeping it in darkness. Man does not know what he *is* or his *reason* for being. He does not know the way to abundance, peace and all the good things of life. The gospel would have shown mankind the solution to its most insoluble problems.

And yet, except for the apostle John, all the original apostles were *martyred* for teaching the truth of God's incredible purpose. Jesus was crucified because people did not want to hear His Message!

A correct understanding of the true gospel reveals crucial knowledge. It contains a dimension of understanding that cannot be discovered by scientific inquiry. Every supposed "great religion" of the world has helped suppress it. Their theologians neither comprehend nor are willing to teach it. We will see that they have held back the great *key* that unlocks your purpose for being—YOUR AWESOME POTENTIAL!

How did this happen? And who is behind this suppression of knowledge?

The Super Deceiver

To the unlearned, the Bible is a book of shocking statements. It reveals startling truths, completely unknown even to those who profess to understand it. But there

are few statements more astonishing than that found in Revelation 12:9. This verse directly states that Satan the devil—who does exist!—“*deceives* the WHOLE world.”

As “prince of the POWER of the air” (Eph. 2:2), Satan has influenced, guided, controlled and completely deceived the unsuspecting masses.

This is an absolutely staggering revelation—so much so that most simply ignore or reject it, believing that it cannot possibly be true. But it is in your Bible. And the entire world remains deceived about the fact that it *is* deceived!

The Bible states that, since his rebellion prior to the creation of man, Satan has “weakened the nations” (Isa. 14:12) and “deceived the nations” (Rev. 20:3) in both understanding and critical knowledge explaining God’s purpose. His deception has been complete. We will explore how he does this in greater detail later.

This World’s “God”

The Bible also calls the devil the “god of this world”—another shocking revelation! This is what II Corinthians 4:4 states: “In whom the *god of this world* has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the *light* of the glorious *gospel*...should shine unto them.”

Satan blinds the world to the true gospel for a personal reason. It describes the soon-coming kingdom of God—God’s world-ruling government. Of course, Satan seeks to block people from understanding this marvelous truth, not wanting “light” to shine on God’s incredible purpose for mankind. He wants humanity, collectively and individually, to think it *has no future!* Actually, the devil recognizes that the arrival of God’s kingdom means *he* will be banished from his current position (Rev. 20:2-3) of global influence as the god humanity unwittingly worships. He will no longer be permitted to deceive or weaken the nations. He also realizes

he can never have what God has offered to men.

In John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11, Christ refers to Satan as “the prince of this world.” These verses state that the devil will one day be judged. Take a moment to read them! John 12:31 parallels the judgment of this world with Satan’s judgment. Why? Because this world *is his!* Paul’s inspired statement reveals that he is literally its “god.”

This is the plain truth from your Bible! Man’s civilization, with its cultures, ways and systems, is under the control of the devil!

Consider. If Satan has deceived the *entire* world, then this cannot be God’s world. And since the *whole* world is deceived, it is cut off from God. Deceived people do not know their purpose for being, and practice lives that reflect this ignorance (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25).

We could ask: How can a single being deceive *six and one-half billion people?* There are two primary ways.

First, Revelation 12:9 concludes with, “he was cast out into the earth, and *his angels* were cast out with him.” Notice that it says, “*his angels*.” These beings, which he leads, are referred to as demons (or fallen angels), and they assist Satan in his role of superdeceiver. Therefore, Satan does not work alone—he has millions of deceived spirit beings who help him.

But there is much more to understand. There is a second, equally important way through which Satan has so successfully deceived such vast numbers of people—and hidden their enormous potential from them.

Satan Has Ministers

Christendom is represented by hundreds of competing, fighting and differing denominations and sects. Supposed Christianity appears in every conceivable “shape, flavor, color and texture” of belief and custom. Most have assumed that this is the natural state of affairs in the

“Christian” world—that this is the way God must want it.

How wrong they are!

Put another way, this means that there are hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of *clergy* who represent and teach the beliefs of this kaleidoscope of differing and disagreeing brands of Christianity. Most who attend these various churches have also assumed, therefore, that all *these* must generally be *God’s* ministers—that they represent and teach what *God* wants taught. There could be no more dangerous—or plain WRONG—assumption!

Now here is yet one more shocking statement!

As the god of a completely deceived world, which must, therefore, include all the differing forms of Christianity *and* other religions, Satan has his own *agents*. He uses these agents to unwittingly spread his false doctrines. Yes, he has been able to achieve this almost universal success because he HAS HIS OWN MINISTERS! Of course, his agents—his ministers—are themselves deceived into believing they are God’s ministers. Some teach a few aspects of God’s truth, but virtually *none* of His most important truths!

Now notice II Corinthians 11:13-15. The apostle Paul warned of the cunning with which Satan’s ministers successfully deceive: “For such are *false* apostles, *deceitful* workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the *ministers* of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

This is a blunt, stunning scripture. Yet, it is true that Satan’s ministers *appear* to be the ministers of God. Grasp this! Satan does not talk directly to human beings. He works through his servants—his ministers!

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 22

VICTORY FOR HAMAS



What's Next for the Mid-East?

IN JANUARY 2006, the terrorist group Hamas surprised the world by winning a majority in the Palestinian election. What does this mean for the United States, Europe, Israel and the greater Mid-East region? Will it lead to peace and stability—or result in more of the same rhetoric, desperation and violence?

BY MARK P. DENEÉ

IN THIS AGE of immediate information, polling, and computerized models and statistics, it is not often that the outcome of a democratic election comes as any great surprise. This, however, is often dependent upon the freedom and wealth of the society—neither of which are prominent in the Palestinian territories.

And so, on Wednesday, January 25, the Palestinian people shocked the world by giving the majority of their parliament's seats to the terrorist group Hamas.

Many wonder why. Others expected it. But all should be concerned.

Leading Up To the Election

Based on the accord known as the "Declaration of Principles," which was signed by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in Washington, D.C., Palestinian self-government began in 1993, administered by the then

new Palestinian National Authority or Palestinian Authority (PA), headed by Arafat and staffed with many Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) members.

A second agreement between the PLO and Israel, signed in 1995, extended Palestinian self-rule, and opened the way for PA's first elections, which Hamas and other fundamentalist groups boycotted. This resulted in Arafat being elected president by a wide margin.

The progression continued in April 1996 with the PLO voting to remove the sections from its charter that called for the destruction of Israel. This, however, was followed by a drastic slowdown in negotiations during Benjamin Netanyahu's years as Israel's prime minister.

In 1999, Ehud Barak became the next prime minister. There were some signs of progress in the negotiations, but then difficulties arose, which ultimately led to the "second intifada," or uprising, in September 2000 (the first being from 1987 to the early 1990s).

The violence continued, escalating to the point that both Israel and the United States declared Yasser Arafat *persona non grata* in terms of further peace talks. The Palestinian leader eventually found himself and his government confined to their compound, essentially unable to oversee the territories.

With Arafat's death in 2004, a political vacuum was created within the Palestinian government and society, as well as within Fatah, his own political party, which had ruled the PLO for several decades. Such were the circumstances that brought about the socio-political environment ripe for a change in government.

In the campaign leading up to the January 2006 election, Hamas made considerable political gains. Opinion polls early that month revealed that the gap between the ruling Fatah party and Hamas had shrunk to 6-8%. It was therefore expected that Hamas, which had stated it existed for the sole purpose of destroying Israel, would likely become a considerable political and somewhat "legitimate" force within Palestine. The international community expected that Hamas would do reasonably well, but viewed its involvement in the political process as a good thing, likely forcing the terrorist group to renounce violence. During the campaign, however, the leading candidate, Ismail Haniyeh, stated that his party would cease all negotiations with Israel, and that any communication would take place only through the barrel of a gun.

In the hours following the election, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and the rest of the Middle East were thrown into turmoil by a stunning Hamas victory: a clear majority, 74 of 132 seats. The resounding win in the Palestinian parliamentary vote immediately raised concerns about the Middle East peace process, and was quickly followed by statements from governments, such as Israel and the U.S., declaring that they could not—and would not—deal with a government led by a political party that advocated the destruction of another country. Much, if not most, of the Western world also threatened to eliminate financial assistance to the Palestinians.

Considerable unrest erupted within the territories, as supporters of the long-ruling Fatah party clashed with Hamas gunmen. Most of the 58,000 Palestinian security forces are allied with Fatah (which won only 45 seats, the voters' reply to years of inept rule).

Foreign influence in the election was suspected, as has been the case in Palestine for decades; both Syria and Iran have long supported Hamas and other anti-Israeli terrorist groups in the region.

The geopolitical landscape in the Middle East essentially changed overnight. Some hope it will be for the better. Others expect the worst. In any case, with a new political party calling the shots, the world is suddenly interested in learning more about Hamas.

What is Hamas?

Hamas (Arabic for “zeal”; also an Arabic acronym for the *Islamic Resistance Movement*) is considered a radical political group with para-military activities, and is classed as a terrorist group by the European Union, the U.S., Israel and Canada. The group was created in 1987 as an offshoot of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood movement, and stands for complete Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian territories.

Following the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the

Hamas leader in Lebanon declared, at a rally attended by local members of parliament, that the resistance would continue until all of Palestine—including Jerusalem—is “liberated.” With representatives of Hizbullah (another terrorist group) and various other Palestinian factions also in attendance, he said that this, not negotiations, was the only way to succeed.

It is suspected that Hamas primarily seeks to establish an Islamic theocracy in all of the area that is currently Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A Hamas co-founder reportedly stated that the movement's goal is to “remove Israel from the map.”

In addition to its military wing, which carries out all the attacks and suicide bombings on Israel, Hamas also has a social wing, which operates mosques, schools, health clinics and social programs within the Palestinian territories. While Arafat and his Fatah party largely failed to deliver such services to the Palestinian people, Hamas succeeded, or at least appeared to in part. It therefore gained much of the grassroots sympathy that eventually brought it to power.

It also increased its support through its leaders notoriety for politically challenging the old PA leaders. This led to periodic mass arrests of Hamas officials.

According to the U.S. Department of State Terrorist Group Profiles, Hamas receives some funding directly from the Iranian government. But most donations are from Palestinian expatriates from around the world, as well as from benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. In addition, there is evidence that some Hamas fundraising and propaganda activities take place in Europe and North America.

The Upcoming Israeli Election

The uncertainty and unrest has come at a particularly troublesome time for Israel, as it awaits the results of an election of its own, scheduled for March 28. With the sudden near-

death of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, one might wonder if anyone is willing to attack Israel in the meantime. On the other hand, one must consider whether Israel will react to the Hamas victory by turning its votes to a hard-liner, such as Benjamin Netanyahu. Such an outcome will certainly ratchet up the tension in the region, especially in light of the Iranian nuclear threat.

The election is generally viewed as a three-way race for the seat of prime minister: Ehud Olmert, of the new Kadima Party (centrist); Amir Peretz, of the Labour Party (liberal); and Benjamin Netanyahu, of the Likud Party (conservative).

In a recent interview with Israel Radio, Mr. Netanyahu said, “We are in a struggle against Hamastan. Facing an organization of this sort, we need to switch diskettes. The concept of folding in the face of terror is what lifted Hamas.” He added, “The last thing that we should be doing is to [give] them more withdrawals for free.”

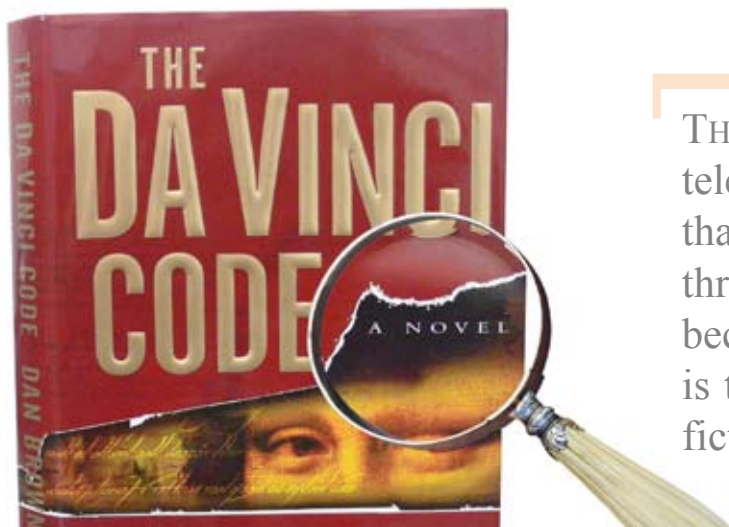
However, according to polls in January and early February, Kadima continues to hold a commanding lead over both Labour and Likud, indicating broad approval of recent history, such as the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Nonetheless, with Hamas in power, the game has certainly changed. “The main question now is whether unilateral withdrawal, which was the presumed favorite option of Kadima, is still viable,” said Yossi Klein Halevi, a fellow at the Shalem Center, a Jerusalem-based research institute. “That’s because we’re not talking about handing over territory to a corrupt, anarchic, terror-supporting Fatah, but to an Iranian proxy that’s far more dangerous” (ibid.).

The Result

In the days and weeks following the election, the usual rhetoric continued. Just as this article was being written, Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

*Please see **HAMAS**, page 18*



THE TOPIC OF NUMEROUS articles and television specials, and selling more than 30 million copies in less than three years, *The Da Vinci Code* has become an international success. But is there any truth behind this work of fiction?

Captivating the Masses

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

MARY MAGDALENE: Speculation and debate as to her true identity have followed her name throughout the last 2,000 years. Some say she was a prostitute. Others claim she was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus gave her the authority to start His Church. Still others proclaim that she and Jesus were married, and that they had children together.

In the fictional novel *The Da Vinci Code*, this controversial subject is fused together with the legend of the Holy Grail.

The result? The ultimate conspiracy theory, and an instant global phenomenon.

Glowing reviews abound. *The Da Vinci Code* is “one of the best books I have ever read—makes you see the world a little differently after reading it!” one reader stated.

Another raved, “You will be amazed at the revelations that come forth in this book.”

Yet another reader elaborated, “*The Da Vinci Code* has to be one of the most remarkable books I’ve read. It is a wonderful—and very effective—mix of history, mystery, action, puzzles and suspense. The pace is so powerful, the book just wouldn’t let go! The story line is almost to [sic] brilliant to

conceive, the sheer genius and fascinating craftsmanship that Dan Brown uses in his book are breath-taking. The idea behind the story may seem controversial, but once you think about it, it really does become quite real and even natural” (*Envoy* magazine).

The novel’s storyline is full of mystery, conspiracy and “revelation.” A mystery/thriller, the book hooks the reader through suspenseful plot twists and turns—full of lies, deceit, conspiracy and murder—combined with an overall treasure hunt-like journey for the legendary “Holy Grail,” which is the central focus of the story.

During their quest for the Grail, the main characters engage in multiple discourses that present highly speculative ideas and interpretations. For instance, the Holy Grail is revealed to be Mary Magdalene, whose true identity was suppressed by Christianity; she is also said to represent the lost “sacred feminine,” which, if rediscovered, would supposedly bring balance to the world once again; the Bible is reported to be nothing more than a corrupt collection of allegorical stories; and—the most bold of assertions—Jesus Christ is alleged to have been married to Mary Magdalene, and to have been nothing more than a human prophet.

It is these contentious discussions—and the wild ideas present-

ed—that have enraptured millions of readers.

But is there any truth to the ideas put forward in this novel?

Mary Magdalene and the “Sacred Feminine”

The “sacred feminine” is a metaphysical concept that has been around for millennia, and is interpreted in a wide variety of ways. As one might assume, it generally appeals to women.

In a sense, the sacred feminine is said to “bring balance and wholeness to our vision of the Creator” and to “bring feminine wisdom back into the equation” of the “divine.” The various goddesses of times past are thought to be symbolic of various *archetypes*, or “universal patterns of behavior,” of the sacred feminine. Generally speaking, it is said that working with the sacred feminine allows a woman to realize that all of her behaviors are different parts of the “divine,” thus freeing her from feeling bad when she exhibits behaviors she does not like. After all, in some mystical sort of way, the sacred feminine exhibits such behaviors as well.

The following is one person’s interpretation of the concept, a bit more metaphysical and esoteric than others: “Throughout humanity’s societies, the Sacred Feminine has been identified with the qualities of wisdom, justice, beauty, and compassion. She is also the irresistible power that destroys old

forms and brings new ones into being. The Divine Feminine is this unseen dimension of soul to which we are connected through our instincts, our feelings, and the longing imagination of the heart. She is an invisible flow of energy that brings life into being, sustains and transforms it, and withdraws it into a hidden dimension for rebirth or regeneration. This process is rhythmic, and rhythm is a primary characteristic of the Feminine. In a very Masonic definition of Being, She has been described as being the principle of justice that inspires all human laws, She is the invisible spirit guiding human consciousness” (*The Lysistrata Project*).

The need to rediscover this sacred feminine is the underlying theme in *The Da Vinci Code*. During an interview with *CNN*, the author hinted at this agenda: “In the early days...we lived in a world of gods and goddesses...Every Mars had an Athena. The god of war had the goddess of beauty; in the Egyptian tradition, Osiris and Isis...And now we live in a world solely of gods. The female counterpart has been erased.”

Further, in an interview posted on his website, the author emphasized, “Two thousand years ago, we lived in a world of Gods and Goddesses. Today, we live in a world solely of Gods. Women in most cultures have been stripped of their spiritual power. The novel touches on questions of how and why this shift occurred...and on what lessons we might learn from it regarding our future.”

The conclusion is then drawn that the search for the Holy Grail is really the search for Mary Magdalene—who, in turn, is symbolic of the sacred feminine. The Grail is interpreted to mean or symbolize many different things, from the cup or dish that Jesus used at His last supper, to a certain item considered so special that a person must be proved worthy to be in its presence.

Now notice the link that two of the book’s characters make concerning Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail and the sacred feminine: “The Grail is literally the ancient symbol for woman-

hood, and the Holy Grail represents the sacred feminine and the goddess, which of course has now been lost, virtually eliminated by the Church. The power of the female and her ability to produce life was once very sacred, but it posed a threat to the rise of the predominantly male Church, and so the sacred feminine was demonized and called unclean... Woman, once the sacred giver of life, was now the enemy...The quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one [Mary Magdalene], the lost sacred feminine” (*The Da Vinci Code*, pp. 238, 257).

Gnostic Thought

Depicting Mary Magdalene as the embodiment of the sacred feminine is nothing new. The idea is usually based upon the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Mary*, among many other such “gospels.” These works were actually the result of a movement known as *Gnosticism* (which derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”).

Though it exhibited great influence and posed a serious threat to the early Church, Gnosticism is a difficult movement to define due to its esoteric and decentralized identity. Generally speaking, it views the physical realm and the human body as evil, and believes that some form of salvation can only be achieved through secretive, individualistic means.

Adherents of Gnosticism believe that the true God had nothing to do with the creation of the physical realm. The world is supposedly the result of “lowly powers.” And although these powers descended from the true God, they do not know Him, and their teachings prevent the knowledge of Him from being disseminated. Supposedly, humanity’s goal is to escape the evil material realm, which can only be accomplished through “secret knowledge” of the true God.

A key concept embraced by many Gnostic followers is that the true God is androgynous (the perfect balance of feminine and masculine), the “great male-female power.” Others stressed

that He can be described in either masculine or feminine terms. In *The Gnostic Gospels*, the author writes, “Proponents of these diverse views agreed that the divine is to be understood in terms of a harmonious, dynamic relationship of opposites—a concept that may be akin to the Eastern view of *yin* and *yang*, but remains alien to orthodox Judaism and Christianity.”

Since their deity is both god and goddess, the Gnostics came to despise Christianity for suppressing the “true” nature of the Godhead. In *The Da Vinci Code*, one of the characters states, “...Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever” (p. 124). (In actuality, Emperor Constantine merged paganism with professing Christianity, thus creating a false, hybrid religion. Our book *The TRINITY – Is God three-in-one?* explains this in detail.)

According to the author of *The Da Vinci Code*, Constantine’s actions led to a warped, overly-masculine society: “The days of the goddess were over. The pendulum had swung. Mother Earth had become a man’s world, and the gods of destruction and war were taking their toll. The male ego had spent two millennia running unchecked by its female counterpart. The Priory of Sion believed that it was this obliteration of the sacred feminine in modern life that had caused what the Hopi Native Americans called *koyanisquatsi*—‘life out of balance’—an unstable situation marked by testosterone-fueled wars, a plethora of misogynistic societies, and a growing disrespect for Mother Earth” (pp. 125-126).

Was Jesus Christ Married?

Based upon what we have learned so far, it should then come as no surprise to learn that some would claim the outrageous—that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. With its worldwide success, *The Da Vinci Code* has given this age-old supposition, along with many others, new life.

A passage from the *Gospel of Philip* is often cited as proof of their union: “And the companion of the [Savior] is Mary Magdalene. [But Christ] loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples [were offended by it and expressed disapproval]. They said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’”

How does one refute the above passage? It does seem to indicate that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married.

However, the *Gospel of Philip* was written nearly three centuries *after* the time of Christ, and it has been labeled by most experts as an unreliable document.

Yet, to refute this outlandish idea beyond a shadow of a doubt, only one item is necessary. Though it has been rejected by some to be nothing more than a nice collection of Greek and Hebrew literature, or a corrupt “work of men,” the Bible is nonetheless the Word of God. It is *the* foundation—SOURCE—of truth and knowledge. Within its pages are found the answers to life’s greatest questions, answers that human beings dismiss as false. Even most who profess to believe the Bible twist, distort and butcher its words. (You may wish to read our booklet *BIBLE AUTHORITY... can it be proven?*)

Recognize that there is no verse stating, “Jesus was not married” or “Mary Magdalene was the wife of the Lord.” Even so, there is *absolute proof* that Jesus Christ could not have married while He was human, and it lies within Christ’s own teaching of the marriage covenant, found in Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:2-12.

In these parallel accounts, Jesus taught that once a person is married, and that marriage is *bound by God*, remarriage after divorce is forbidden. In Romans 7:1-3, the apostle Paul explains that the death of a spouse ends the marriage covenant. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, this would be the only way a remarriage could occur.

Most have no idea that this understanding can be used to prove that Jesus could not have been married. Here’s why. In the Book of Jeremiah is the

passage: “Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am *married* unto you” (3:14).

Who is the Being saying this? None other than Jesus Christ! He was the “Rock” of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:1-4)—He was the Being (known as the Word – John 1:1) who gave the people of ancient Israel the Ten Commandments, thus entering into a marriage covenant with them. He, as their Husband, agreed to lead, protect and bless Israel (His bride), *as long as* the nation obeyed Him. If Israel disobeyed—breached the contract—He would divorce them.

Eventually, Israel proved that she no longer wanted to be a part of the marriage. Notice: “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the holiness of the LORD which He loved, and has *married* the daughter of a strange god” (Mal. 2:11).

“But as a wife betrays her husband for her lover, so you have betrayed Me, O house of Israel—says the Eternal” (Jer. 3:20 – *Moffatt*).

This disobedience—spiritual adultery—resulted in Christ having to divorce Israel: “And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her *a bill of divorce*” (Jer. 3:8).

However, under the terms of the Old Covenant, Jesus was not able to remarry. Remember, only death could break this marriage covenant. The only way that Christ would be free to marry again would be for *Him* to die, as the people of Israel as a whole were not going to be obliterated from the face of the earth.

Of course, Jesus eventually came to earth as a physical human being to die for the sins of mankind. But until His death, He was unable to remarry, even as a human being. Why? Because doing so would have caused Him to commit adultery, thus breaking His own law. If He had married before dying, He would have sinned (I John 3:4), and could not have become our Savior. Death was the only way to officially free Him from His marriage to ancient Israel.

This means that it is **UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE** for Jesus to have been married to Mary Magdalene!

Much more could be said about this parallel, including Christ’s future marriage to the nation of spiritual Israel, the true Church of God. (To see the full picture, read our booklet *The Purpose of MARRIAGE—Ever Obsolete?*)

“Philosophy and Vain Deceit”

Despite that none of the book’s radical claims are found within the pages of the Bible, *The Da Vinci Code* will undoubtedly continue to achieve great success due to its radical claims. Human nature is naturally attracted to conspiracy theories and vain babblings. Consider Paul’s warning in Colossians 2:8 against such outlandish ideas: “Beware lest any man spoil [plunder] you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

The following is an example of how the “philosophy and vain deceit” found within the storyline of *The Da Vinci Code* can “spoil” a person’s mind: “The historical events and people explored in the book are real. But no one knows the Truth...nor will we ever, probably. I think that some things are meant to be a mystery. With all the world’s diverse religions and each individual’s belief in what is Divine—the Truth would have to destroy the beliefs, hopes and lives of many of the world’s population. So, perhaps, in the divine scheme of things, there are many more Truths than one” (reader comment from *Envoy* magazine).

Such unnecessary confusion!

With a movie due to be released sometime this year—having a promo that states, “The greatest conspiracy of the past 2,000 years is about to unravel”—this confusion will surely increase.

But with the insight you have just gained, you need not be one of the many to be duped by the phenomenon known as *The Da Vinci Code*!

(If you have doubts as to whether the Bible in its present form is really God’s complete, accurate Word, read our in-depth article “*Where and How Did We Get the Bible?*”) □

Three Messiahs? —or One?

THREE RELIGIONS—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—look for a coming Messiah. Yet they differ in their view of *who* this will be and *what* he will do upon his return.

BY JAMES F. TURCK

THE CLOSING WORDS of a recent speech by Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad left various impressions on those who heard it.

Many simply had no understanding of what was said or its implications. Some who heard and understood his words felt a growing uneasiness, mixed with trepidation and fear. But others welcomed them with eagerness and excitement, looking forward to the fulfillment of centuries-old prophecies.

What was said that could incite such a range of conflicting emotions?

It was an appeal to Allah to hasten the appearance of the *Hidden Imam* or *Imam Mahdi*, a prophesied leader who will help usher in the rule of Islam over the world.

It may come as a surprise to many that Christianity and Judaism are not alone in the belief of a soon-coming Messiah who will intervene in world affairs and establish a true religion. Though they may share this belief, there are vast differences concerning who this is, and what he will do upon returning.

Are there three separate Messiahs, or is there only one? And, if only one—then *which*?

Prophesied Imam Mahdi and a Promised Messiah

Islam—with more than one billion adherents to its various forms—has become increasingly visible in recent years. Practitioners of this belief system, which is based on the Qu'ran, can be found in most nations of the world. The prophet Muhammad is a familiar personage to most outside of Islam and commands deep respect from those in it. He is said to have ascended into heaven from a rock on top of what Jews and Christians believe is Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, to receive special instructions from God.

The world is now becoming aware of the Islamic belief in a coming Messiah coupled with an apocalyptic aspect. The Iranian president's petition to Allah offered a glimpse into one version of this belief, shared by millions within the Muslim religion.

The majority of Muslims are of the Sunni branch of Islam, while Shia makes up much of the minority belief. It must first be acknowledged that many in the Sunni majority do not subscribe to the belief in a Mahdi as viewed by the Iranian president and the Shiites. Many Sunnis view the Messiah as exclusively "Jesus the son of Mary." It should be pointed out that some noted Sunni authorities have

rejected belief in the Mahdi altogether. Of the portion of Sunni Muslims who do believe in this figure, they do not necessarily accept that he is the Twelfth Imam, as do the Shiites.

Yet it is beneficial to understand what the Iranian president, the minority Shiites and some Sunnis in particular countries believe in regard to the Imam Mahdi. Who is this Imam Mahdi and what is his significance? Is he regarded as the same as the promised Messiah? Or are they considered two different figures?

The term *Mahdi* is interpreted to mean "the Guided One." Though (according to some Muslims) not specifically mentioned in the Qu'ran, the belief of a coming Mahdi is rooted in Islamic *hadiths*, or traditions, based on its teachings. According to these hadiths, the Mahdi is to be descended from the prophet Muhammad's family (from Ishmael, of the Old Testament). At age 40, he is expected to appear on the scene suddenly at the time of the end, a period when the world will be filled with injustice and tyranny, and believers (of Islam) will be under oppression. Preceding his appearance will be various signs such as a great earthquake and green grass growing in desert lands. Receiving knowledge directly from Allah, the Mahdi will rule over the Muslim community for seven (some say nine) years, spreading brotherhood, equity and devotion among Muslims. It is also believed he will bring justice to the Earth, uniting Arabs and other peoples under Islam.

These events occur prior to a second *physical* coming of *Hadhrat Isa bin Maryam* (Jesus, son of Mary), who Islam believes was a prophet of

God from the lineage of Abraham, and the prophesied Messiah. According to some hadiths, Jesus and the Mahdi will co-rule for a short time. At Jesus' return, he will fight and overcome the Dijjal (the "antichrist"), will rule according to the laws of Islam, and cause the peoples of the world (Jews and Christians) to embrace Islam, heralding in a time of justice, peace and prosperity. During his 40 years on Earth, he will be married for 19 years, have children, and then die and be buried in a grave next to the holy prophet. He will also be victorious in a battle against Gog and Magog (nations also mentioned in the Old Testament).

These events are said to happen before all believers die prior to the Day of Judgment, during which a resurrection of the dead, involving judgment and punishment, occurs. It is after this that Allah establishes his kingdom on Earth, with Islam as the worldwide religion.

Judaism's Elijah and Messiah

The Jewish belief in a Messiah (Hebrew: *Mashiach*—"the anointed") predates Islam and traditional Christianity. This Messiah is not the Jesus known to professing Christians, who (according to the Jews) failed to fulfill primary Messianic prophecies, such as ushering in world peace. The Jewish Messiah is, however, to be a descendant of King David—under whose leadership the nation of Israel began to flourish, ultimately reaching its power and prestige during the reign of his son, Solomon. The Jewish people look forward to national greatness being restored with the first coming of the Messiah, a conquering king.

Born of ordinary physical parents, the Jewish Messiah is to come as a mortal human being. In time, he will rise in stature and prominence among the Jewish and gentile peoples through his charisma, wisdom and political prowess. This will establish his recognition as the "redeemer of Israel."

His coming is expected to be preceded by the prophet Elijah, as referenced in the book of Malachi (4:5-6). He is expected to announce the

Messiah's coming by blowing a *shofar* (ram's horn) from Mount Carmel. Preparing the way, tradition says Elijah will end mankind's disputes and cause existing religious doubts and questions to cease. It is also believed that he will restore to Israel a flask of manna, which will provide the nation's food; a flask of purifying water; and a flask of olive oil, from which he will anoint the Messiah at his appearance.

It is Jewish tradition to set an extra place at the Passover supper for Elijah in anticipation of his return.

Though the Messiah is born of ordinary parents, he must be a Jew—from the tribe of Judah—and a direct male descendant of King David and King Solomon. Coming in a time when the Jews are suffering oppression, he is to be a political/spiritual leader of his people, uniting them under Judaism and redeeming them to their God. The laws and rituals contained in the Torah will once again be in force. The Messiah will gather the exiled Jewish people from around the world, returning them to their homeland—Israel. The temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and Israel will return to national prominence among nations—becoming an example to the world.

The Jewish Messiah's earthly reign will be one of unparalleled peace and prosperity; war and injustice will disappear. He will rule in the kingdom of the Almighty with justice and equity, and through this rule will bring all of the Earth's inhabitants back to their Creator—with Judaism as the world's religion—filling it with the knowledge of God.

The saying among Jews "next year in Jerusalem" points to this time.

The Christian Messiah

To believers of traditional Christianity, Jesus Christ (Greek: *Christos*—"anointed") is the Messiah, the One who is coming again. Though there are differences within Christianity's view regarding Christ's Second Coming, the following overall framework is generally agreed upon.

His First Coming was that of a baby born in a manger. Coming as

a flesh-and-blood human being, yet still divine, Jesus had to die on the cross, taking on the role of a suffering servant and making mankind's salvation possible. Having then risen and ascended into heaven, He, with the help of His earthly servants, is trying to save as many people as possible during the only "Day of Salvation"—the present age. Christmas and Easter are highly venerated among the world's Christians since it is believed these two holidays picture Jesus' birth and resurrection.

This "Day of Salvation" continues until just before the prophesied Great Tribulation, which is coming to punish an evil world.

It is believed that just prior to this event, Jesus' Second Coming is eminent, and occurs in two stages. At His *initial* return, Jesus comes to "rapture away" the church (composed of all believers in Christ). He does not return completely, but only partially—to the clouds—to remove Christians from the Earth, protecting them from the Tribulation, which is believed to last seven years. Believers who are alive at that time (and those who are resurrected from the dead) are given glorified bodies and meet Jesus in the air, remaining with Him until this terrible Tribulation is over. This impending rapturing away of believers will happen secretly, and in an instant. Unbelievers will be caught unaware, left to suffer through this dreadful time of God's wrath, which will result in worldwide devastation and millions dead. This is when the antichrist ("the beast") will come to power, ruling the entire world.

In certain circles of Christian thought, there is also the expectation of "two witnesses" (Rev. 11:3-12) coming on the scene. These could be Elijah and Moses (or other Old Testament figures), and will be precursors to Jesus Christ's return.

At the Tribulation's end, Christ will now *fully* come as King (called the Second Coming), returning with those who had been raptured, to make war

Please see MESSIAHS, page 18

MINUTE -TO- MINUTE *Living*



MANY FEEL TRAPPED in the stress-filled, nonstop rat race called the modern world. Is there more to life than just living in the “here and now”?

BY RYAN P. DENEE

STOP! Before reading any further, unplug your phone. Turn off your cell phone, pager, television, radio and MP3 player. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by phone calls, TV shows or music. Do not let instant messages or emails interrupt you or break your train of thought.

At this point, you are probably thinking, “You have got to be kidding!”

But consider. You possess a precious, highly valuable—yet often mismanaged—resource: time. And your time is important. Once it is gone, it is gone forever—you cannot afford to let it go to waste!

With all the above-mentioned modern communication devices turned off, you might feel as though you are disconnected from the outside world.

Relax. The average person reads 250 words a minute; it should take you only about ten minutes to read this article. Afterward, you can turn everything on and return to this adrenaline-driven civilization.

In the meantime, take advantage of this momentary break from society, and consider what you are really “missing.”

Welcome to the Rat Race

In the Western world, a typical day begins with a mad rush to get the family ready for the day. Breakfast time is far from a “family meal.” Often, each member of the family is on his or her own, getting his cereal, toast or just a quick snack—or even skipping breakfast altogether because he does not have time. This meal is often referred to as the most important meal

of the day. Yet, ironically, recent surveys reveal that 37% of those between the ages of 19 and 29 skip breakfast. Without this essential meal, productivity is severely limited.

Many parents now take the time to drive their children to school, when in times past they would have walked or taken the bus.

Next is the challenge of commuting to work, which averages 24 minutes per day in the United States—over 100 hours each year! This is longer than the 80 hours of vacation time for which we spend the entire year working. With many drivers running behind, everyone is in a hurry to get to work on time. Tempers often get short, and “road rage” ensues.

Then there are the many hours spent at work meeting deadlines, writing emails and memos, making phone calls, etc.—though the pace seems to quicken, less seems to be accom-

plished. A research paper published by the Families and Work Institute titled "Overwork in America: When the Way We Work Becomes Too Much" concluded that one in three American employees are chronically overworked; 54% of American employees have felt overwhelmed at some time in the past month by how much work they had to complete; and 29% of employees spend a lot of time doing work that they consider a waste of time (and these employees are more likely to be overworked).

The fast pace continues after the family returns home from school and work. This is no longer a definite time of the day, as mom or dad might be working overtime or a second job to make ends meet—leaving their children unsupervised. There are extracurricular activities that the children will need to be driven to: football, baseball, soccer, ballet, gymnastics, etc. Then there are television shows that "must" be watched and video games that "must" be played. Groceries need to be bought, and laundry needs to be done. Few families will be able to sit together uninterrupted during dinner, discussing the day's issues and building family relations.

Eventually, the day comes to an end, leaving many exhausted, stressed and worn out, wondering, "Where did the day go?" Sadly, it will only begin again as soon as the alarm clock sounds. This minute-to-minute lifestyle has many effects—consequences to consider.

Effects of the Race

The modern world lives life at a pace that leaves no room for second thoughts, and no room to think about the many adverse effects on society—and our headlines show these on a daily basis.

A topic that is constantly in the news is abortion, and the most recent debate is over emergency contraceptives commonly referred to as "Plan-B" or the "Morning after Pill." If people would stop and consider the consequences of their actions, millions of babies would not be killed. But it is much easier to enjoy the moments of

fleeting pleasure now, and deal with the outcome later!

Another needless headline is "Shaken Baby Syndrome" (SBS). Some chilling statistics from a recent Canadian study, conducted over a 10-year period, reported that 364 of that nation's children were hospitalized for SBS. Of those, 19% died, and 59% had neurological or visual impairment, or other health effects; 19% of 364 is equivalent to 70 babies—7 babies *per year* needlessly killed. Though this is a relatively small number of deaths, consider that the cause is 100% preventable! This abuse often occurs due to frustration, combined with loss of control by the parent or caregiver.

Impatient parents have raised impatient children, who themselves ultimately become impatient parents. They lack basic self-control and the knowledge that it takes time—lots of time—to care for a newborn baby.

Impulsiveness can be demonstrated in other ways. During "February sweeps," on the most popular afternoon television talk show, a conversation occurred that could have been mistaken for an excerpt from a morning shock radio show. This program featured two women guests talking openly and explicitly about their sexual escapades. One of them compared sexual desire for a stranger to wanting an éclair in a bakery. The other had four or five sexual "friends" she could "call anytime." This was on a program that is squarely in the mainstream!

Search statistics for cell phones with web capabilities boggle the mind. Typically, 8.5% of searches on the Internet are for pornography. Compare this to one in five—20%!—of all searches on *cell phones* being for pornography (*New Scientist*). Sex has become a commodity, available anywhere—everywhere—at any time!

Our society has drastically changed in other ways. Computers, the Internet and cell phones help us to communicate quickly and more efficiently. But email is destroying what was once common etiquette in business communications.

Instant messaging and texting have taken this further, actually changing the

language. Try to decipher this sample of texting: "hi m8 u k?-sry i 4gt 2 call u lst nyt-y dnt we go c film 2moz." At a quick glance, it looks like a foreign language. Here is the translation: "Hi mate. Are you okay? I am sorry that I forgot to call you last night. Why don't we go and see a film tomorrow?" Even the translation has lost the formality and precision that was once used in communication. Gone are the times when writers carefully considered each word, because every word had meaning.

The phenomenal growth in gambling is one more example of society forgetting the old adage, "Good things come to those who wait." Gaming seems to be everywhere, with many cities and states vying to get in on the action with their own casinos.

As well, the popularity of online gambling is exploding, with television ads commonplace. The statistics are stunning! Worldwide, online gambling revenue rose from \$8.5 billion in 2004 to \$10.9 billion in 2005—a 28-plus percent increase! In America, the 30 million who participated in online gaming in 2005 were more than double the 13.6 million players in 2001. Gambling from the comfort of one's own living room, and the chance to "win big" without hard work, is just too tempting for many. Few take time to consider that, ultimately, the casinos and state-run lotteries win every time!

Family life is under constant pressure. On average, a father spends only 5 minutes with a child each day, and a mother just 20 minutes. Much more time is required to properly train children in how to live and how to make right decisions. No wonder many parents lose touch with their children, and many families fall apart.

The overuse of television also hurts the family. Consider these hard statistics: The time per day that the television is on in an average U.S. home is 7 hours, 40 minutes; the amount of television that the average American watches per day is over 4 hours; for U.S. children age 6 and under, time

Please see *MINUTE*, page 17



THE GREAT CANADIAN SHIFT

AMERICA'S NEIGHBOR to the north had a political reversal in its latest federal election. Will a conservative minority change the fabric of Canadian society?

AFTER FOUR national elections in eight years, Canadians have voted for change. In a country that has been ruled by the Liberal party for the last 13 years, such a political shift has been a long time in coming. And if you believe some prominent American voices, the new government is unlike anything Canada has ever seen!

On January 23, 2006, Stephen Harper's Conservative party (often called the Tories) won a minority government (in which a party wins the most seats in an election, but does not hold at least 50% of the House of Commons).

A brief examination of his ideology demonstrates great differences from former Prime Minister Paul Martin—so much so that former U.S. Vice

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

President Al Gore called Mr. Harper an “ultra-conservative leader.”

Considering that Canada is one of the first Western nations to allow homosexual marriage and to introducing marijuana decriminalization legislation, among endorsing many other liberal philosophies, it is a striking shift to bring an “ultra-conservative leader” to national leadership.

Former daytime talk show host Rosie O'Donnell stated, “It's a very sad day for Canada when the Liberal government has been ousted by the Republican Right” (*FrontPage Magazine*).

But is Canada leaning toward conservative thinking? If so, what will this mean for the Bush White House—and for U.S.-Canadian relations?

Editor's note: The author of this news analysis is a Canadian citizen.

The timing of this election is also significant because, like the United States, a seat on Canada's Supreme Court (see the article “Tipping the Scales – The Changing U.S. Supreme Court” on page 15) has been vacated by a retiring judge, which means that the new government will be able to select the replacement.

While there has been much talk regarding possible changes, minority governments tend to be unstable, and can quickly be ousted in another election.

A Coming Change

In an effort to improve popular opinion for the new government, the new prime minister's first order of business is a 1% reduction of the federal sales tax (GST) to 6%. (In Canada, nearly all goods and services are taxed at the federal level. This is in addition to any

provincial sales taxes, often meaning a total of 15% tax on all purchases.) Due to these extremely high taxes, any reduction is welcomed with open arms.

Mr. Harper also wants to reform the justice system and toughen sentencing for violent criminals. Recent shootings in large cities such as Toronto have given Canadians pause regarding sentencing guidelines.

Some of Mr. Harper's other popular agendas include reducing bureaucracy in the welfare system, and granting more autonomy to provinces and territories (similar to the often-touted "States Rights" issues in the U.S.).

These programs will allow him to usher in some of his more controversial legislation. While most Canadians generally do not support sending troops for active combat, such as in Iraq, 685 Canadian troops have been deployed to Afghanistan, with another 2,200 deployed in February 2006. Some of

these troops are scheduled to be used in combat.

Polls show that Canadians are in favor of closer ties with America—a viewpoint that Prime Minister Harper strongly supports. Much of his social policy is in line with President George W. Bush, which could prove to warm relations between the two nations. When Mr. Harper's original political party (Canada Alliance) joined with the Progressive Conservatives (PC) in December 2003, it was a combination of a much more conservative party with the slightly right-of-center PC. Many voices in the Harper camp will want to see action taken to reverse a particularly controversial ruling—the legalization of same-sex marriage—in 2006 or early 2007. With polls showing that the public is nearly split on the issue—with approximately 52% against it—it is as much a hot button issue in Canada as it has become in the U.S.

Another contentious issue appearing on the horizon is the appointment of a Canadian Supreme Court justice. Like America, the Supreme Court of Canada can, at times, change the direction of the country. With a seat recently vacated, Mr. Harper, who has already announced his cabinet, will be able to help shape the direction of the most powerful court in the country. It is well understood that the newly-appointed minister of justice, Vic Toews—who is in charge of all the courts—is a strong social conservative who will play an extensive role in the final appointment of the Supreme Court justice.

In any case, the new government, with its minority standing, could have a difficult time pushing anything but the most popular legislation. However, if popular opinion grows toward such legislation, a new election may be called in hopes that the Tories could shore up a majority, allowing much more of their agenda to be advanced.

UNDERSTANDING CANADIAN ELECTIONS

For those familiar with only the United States' electoral system, the Canadian system will in certain ways seem dramatically different. However, readers from many of the British Commonwealth nations will notice similarities to their governments. Still, there are aspects that are uniquely Canadian—many of which have solidified over its 150-year history.

The legislative branch consists of a Senate and House of Commons. The Senate is normally made up of 105 senators who are appointed by the governor general through recommendation of the sitting prime minister. Once approved, a senator holds office until age 75. While the Senate does wield *some* power in the legislative process, it seldom blocks any legislation passed by the House. Mr. Harper's promise of moving to an elected Senate could change this power balance.

The House of Commons consists of 308 seats. Members are elected by popular vote, and represent their local constituents.

While a House and Senate sound similar to the U.S. system, how the

leader of the government is chosen differs greatly. In Canada, the head of the party with the most MPs (Members of Parliament in the House of Commons) is assigned the role of prime minister. He has the prerogative to appoint his cabinet and is much more directly involved in the legislative process than his American counterpart.

By tradition, the time between general elections is approximately four years. However, like most parliamentary systems, elections can be called at nearly any time; therefore, up to five years can pass before one is called. The government in power may call for an election, or, in a minority government, the opposition party may call a no-confidence vote. This is what spurred the most recent election. A no-confidence vote, or motion of non-confidence, can be called against most pieces of standard legislation. If the governing party receives less than 50% of the vote, dissolution of the government follows, with a general election shortly thereafter.

While it may seem that such a system is counterproductive, it means

that an issue does not come to a halt because of partisan fighting. For instance, in the United States, the president could push forward an agenda, but not have enough supporting votes in either the Senate or House of Representatives. In such circumstances, matters often come to a gridlock, with Congress blocking what the president wants and the president vetoing what Congress puts forward.

This does not happen in a parliamentary system. However, in a minority government, pushing legislation through can be a matter of debate and compromise.

As it currently stands, the Conservative party has a minority government, with 124 seats in the Commons. This will make furthering the Conservative agenda difficult for Prime Minister Harper.

But the Canadian people elected for change, and the Liberal opposition (with 103 seats) may find it difficult to stop the Conservatives. Some of the items promised during the election will actually see the light of day before the next election. □

The Real Story

The recent election revealed that a noticeable chasm has formed among Canadians. While holding fewer seats than the Liberals in Ontario and Quebec, the Conservatives basically swept the Western and Prairie provinces.

The same comparison can be made between the rural and metropolitan areas of the country. The Conservatives had a strong showing in rural areas, but failed to win any seats in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal.

American elections typically follow similar lines. The rural parts of the U.S. (the “red” states or regions) typically vote Republican, with the metro “blue” regions voting Democrat. American media has likened this to a cultural war being waged in the United States.

Is this what is happening in Canada? Is there an undercurrent of a cultural war forming in America’s greatest trading partner? Would this explain the apparent conservative shift?

Brothers Standing Together

The United States, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand have much closer ties than one might first imagine. The Bible and history record that these Western peoples share a common ancestor.

Many thousands of years ago, a series of promises were made to the biblical patriarch Abraham. Those same promises were passed through his son, and on to his great-grandson Joseph. Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are the fathers of these modern Western

nations. (To learn much more, including a fascinating historic record proving this, read our book *AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN BIBLE PROPHECY*.)

Those promises can be witnessed through the amazing blessings experienced by these same countries. However, these nations have rejected their God—the SOURCE of blessings and prosperity.

With the introduction of a conservative prime minister, Canada is now more closely aligning itself with its American brother. This has not gone unnoticed by certain policy makers. “I see them moving a lot closer to the Bush government,” a senior policy adviser for the Sierra Club of Canada said (*The Calgary Herald*). He and many others can readily see that Mr. Harper is much closer ideologically to President Bush than was the former prime minister.

The reason for this tightening of relations may be explained through a proverb: “A friend loves at all times, and a *brother* is born FOR ADVERSITY” (Prov. 17:17).

God is beginning to align these brothers for a coming “adversity” upon both of their nations—and upon all the nations that have forsaken God and have not shown gratitude for the great blessings He has given them.

Their decline has already become evident in both economic and social circles. Canada has become a nation *full* of sin—spiritual lawbreaking (I John 3:4). Whether it is the breaking of God’s laws or the support of things completely contrary to those laws, this nation has moved farther and farther away from its Creator.

A “great shift” is not coming to Canada—it has *already* taken place. Canada and all the

Western nations have shifted away from the God of the Bible. They are not swinging right in some kind of way that will bring back morality and the “good old days,” as some claim. The new government will bring the country more in line with its British and American brothers—and, in turn, the rest of the world will see it as part of the problem. (Much as America is viewed today.)

As such, this new government will not, in the long-term, change Canada in any exceptional way. It will be business as usual—and that means corruption and mismanagement of the country’s problems.

But why?

A New Government Needed

Only God’s government—the kingdom of God—can solve all the ills and troubles that the nations of the world face. Since man’s problems are ultimately *spiritual* in nature, no great policymaker, educator or leader can solve these with human effort alone.

There is a solution to the problems facing liberals and conservatives in Canada: the development and implementation of a *new* government—one not only ruling over individual nations, but *all* nations. A global government!

But such a government will never work under men; human beings cannot be trusted with such power. This coming system will not be ruled by men, but by Jesus Christ. At His Return, He will establish a world-ruling government that will take a completely different approach than governments led by men!

In the meantime, Canada will experience certain small changes under the leadership of Prime Minister Harper. However, these changes will be nothing more than a “holding pattern” before the arrival of a final government—God’s soon-coming kingdom! This Christ-led system will stop all bickering, debating, fighting, corruption and greed. Peace and calm will literally “break out” all around the world, and mankind will truly experience the most positive “great shift” imaginable! □



■ CANADA’S NEW LEADER:

Prime Minister Stephen Harper (at right), with Marshall Rothstein, Minister of Justice.

PHOTO: Office of the Prime Minister



TIPPING THE SCALES

The Changing U.S. Supreme Court

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT nominations of Judge John G. Roberts in September 2005 and Judge Samuel A. Alito, Jr. in January 2006 were both expected to ignite a clash in Congress and among special interest groups and political action committees—and they did.

Occupying different ends of the court hierarchy—Mr. Alito as the junior associate justice, Mr. Roberts as chief justice—their appointments were celebrated as conservative victories.

WITH TWO NEW JUSTICES within four months, could changes be ahead for America?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

There was considerable liberal opposition to Judge Roberts. But since he is a conservative who replaced another conservative (the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist), his confirmation would not drastically affect the balance of the court.

However, Judge Alito replaced a swing vote in Sandra Day O'Connor. She was a moderate, whose opinions could line up with either side of the nine-member Court, making hers the

pivotal vote in a number of five-to-four decisions. Those on the political left believed that President George W. Bush was obligated to appoint a replacement with a similar approach. Therefore, the prospect of Mr. Alito on the bench caused greater concern, as evidenced by the more sharply divided confirmation vote (58 for and 42 against, compared to 78-22 for Mr. Roberts; contrast these with the unanimous 99-0 confirmation of Mrs. O'Connor in 1981).

“ **If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, this could lead to votes in each state on whether to permit abortion...No longer would the taking of more than one million lives per year be blurred behind ‘the right to privacy.’** ”

Massachusetts senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry attempted to rally support for a filibuster to block a confirmation vote on Mr. Alito, calling it “the vote of a generation and a test of conscience” and referring to the nominee as a “far-right ideologue” (CNN). However, there was not sufficient backing in the Senate to move forward with the filibuster.

With the Democrats still stinging from their presidential election disappointments of 2000 and 2004, the appointments of judges Alito and Roberts are salt in the wound. These men appear to represent a long-term continuation of the legacy of President Bush, and the opposition is fighting to limit his ability to make fundamental changes to American law and policy. The Democrats are counting on regaining a majority of Congress in November, which would greatly increase the chances of a “lame-duck” presidency for the last two years of Mr. Bush’s tenure.

In the meantime, their strategy is to promote discontent with the Republican Party as a whole. This is often accomplished by portraying the mistakes or hardships of one individual—for example, the circumstances surrounding Vice President Dick Cheney’s hunting accident in February—as symptoms of deep flaws in the party.

So why does the Roberts Court, with Judge Alito now aboard, have liberals nervous?

The Most Pressing Issue

There is a matter that will be addressed by this court that carries huge implications for the American people: Abortion. The legal right to end the life of an unborn child is probably the most fervently protected interest of Western liberalism. To its defenders,

this brutal practice represents the values of sexual freedom (in other words, license to avoid the consequences of irresponsible sexual behavior), gender equality and feminism.

During his confirmation hearings, Judge Alito referred to *Roe v. Wade* (the 1973 court decision that led to legalized abortion nationwide) as an “important precedent” and repeatedly stated that he would approach each court case with “an open mind.” This language unsettled those who opposed him. They viewed his remarks as broad and evasive, designed to avoid a firm position. During these hearings, Mr. Alito was also repeatedly questioned on his approach to *stare decisis*—the principle that previous legal precedents and rulings should be upheld. The main concern was obviously the *Roe v. Wade* precedent.

A push to outlaw abortion would be the flashpoint of an all-out war between conservatives and liberals—the straw that breaks the back of an already severely strained left-right dialogue.

In a 1985 memo, Judge Alito wrote that he preferred a more subtle approach to a “frontal assault” on *Roe v. Wade*. However, a frontal assault looks to be on its way in 2006. On February 22, South Dakota’s state senate voted for a ban on abortion in nearly all cases—even those of incest or rape. Under this proposed law, an abortion would be permissible only when a mother’s life is considered in danger. Ironically, the bill is mainly sponsored by a Democrat, State Senator Julie Bartling. Justice Alito is assigned to hear emergency petitions from the Eighth Circuit Court—the jurisdiction that includes South Dakota.

Some have expressed concern that with the additions of judges Roberts

and Alito, for the first time in American history, the count of Roman Catholics on the court increases to five. They point out that Catholic justices have been quite consistent in their dissent from pro-abortion opinions.

If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, this could lead to votes in each state on whether to permit abortion. This would lay the issue squarely on the table for voters across America. No longer would the taking of more than one million lives per year be blurred behind “the right to privacy.” (Take time to read our extensive report *ABORTION – Woman’s Choice or Modern Holocaust?* to learn more.)

Another Nomination for President Bush?

A number of moderate and liberal Supreme Court justices are nearing retirement age, and some are battling health problems. With Stephen Breyer at age 67, Anthony Kennedy at 69, Ruth Bader Ginsburg nearing 73 and John Paul Stevens nearing 86, those who dread a further conservative tilt in the court are hoping that these justices will be able to continue through the end of President Bush’s second term.

Since, as mentioned, appointments to the Supreme Court are for life, the prospect of installing a third Bush-appointed conservative justice would be a nightmare for the opposition.

Will the Nominees Come as Advertised?

Twenty-four days after her nomination, Harriet Miers, the Supreme Court candidate who preceded Mr. Alito, withdrew from the process. Though she was opposed by liberals, it appears the pressure that ultimately led to her withdrawal came mainly from conservatives—some of whom feared she would not bring a strong enough presence to shift the court to the right, and that her stance on abortion was too soft.

Whenever a new justice takes the bench, he is followed by questions: Will he maintain a consistent approach? Or will his views change

over time, as has been the case with some others—nearly always drifting to a liberal direction? Regarding court nominees, a slogan has developed among Republicans: “No more Souters.” This refers to Justice David Souter, who—appointed in 1990 by President George H. W. Bush—turned out to be much less conservative than his supporters had believed.

Some in the right wing felt that even Chief Justice Roberts’ conservative credentials were lacking. But many of these believe that his views are balanced by those of Judge Alito. Some commentators assert that Mr. Alito’s judicial approach lies to the right of Judge Antonin Scalia, long considered the most conservative justice.

The Ultimate Judge

When will the liberal-conservative struggle in the United States end? How long will the nation be divided into red and blue? Is either side’s viewpoint correct?

The Bible reveals that we are living in the last days. Time is running out for the “Great Experiment” of democracy, along with all other man-made governments across the globe. Even the most capable judges in all the world’s courts will not be able to keep the current world order limping along for much longer.

Speaking of the conditions in the modern nations of the West, Scripture records, “None calls for justice, nor any pleads for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither does justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us” (Isa. 59:4, 9-11).

But soon, *all* nations will be ruled by the ultimate Judge—the returning Jesus Christ: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does JUDGE...” (Rev. 19:11).

Christ’s judgment will not be based on a flawed charter or constitution—or on human opinions and interpretation. It will be according to *righteousness*—the keeping of God’s commandments (Psa. 119:172), also called the law of liberty (Jms. 2:12).

The book of Jeremiah describes the glorious future under Christ’s rule, “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that...a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute JUDGMENT and JUSTICE in the earth” (Jer. 23:5).

At that time, America—and all other nations—will *truly* enjoy “liberty and justice for all”!

(For more information, read our book *TOMORROW’S WONDERFUL WORLD – An Inside View!*) □

MINUTE

Continued from page 11

spent daily with screen media is about 2 hours; 45% of parents say that if they have something important to do, it is likely that they will use the TV to occupy their child; 40% of Americans often or always watch television while eating dinner; the time *per week* that parents spend in meaningful conversation with their children is 38.5 minutes; 54% of 4- to 6-year-olds state that they would rather watch TV than spend time with their fathers.

Ponder the last point. Over half of 4- to 6-year-olds chose TV over the most important man in their lives!

A Choice to Make

There is evidence suggesting that early exposure to television can “rewire” a child’s developing brain patterns. An article in *The Wall Street Journal* related the experience of professional storyteller Odds Bodkin. In his experience performing for children, he observed that restlessness sets in after about

seven minutes, as their inner clocks anticipate a “commercial break.” They appear to be conditioned by television to expect a commercial interruption every seven minutes.

In reading this article, you may have now reached that seven-minute mark when the attention span wanes and the mind craves a change. Perhaps you are beginning to feel that restlessness.

Here you can make a choice: If you love minute-to-minute living—living on the edge—stop reading, turn everything back on and rejoin the rat race. The modern world will support your choice.

On the other hand, if you choose to continue reading, you will *begin* to learn the CAUSE of the rat race in which we live.

Root Cause

We have seen the results of minute-to-minute living in headlines and statistics. These consequences may not have been foreseen by society, but they were prophesied thousands of years ago by the prophet Daniel: “The time of the

end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (12:4).

The effects of this modern age are related to a choice between two basic ways of life: one is the way of GIVE—caring, outgoing love and concern for your fellow man; the other is the way of GET—acquiring everything possible for the satisfaction of self. Our entire society is built on catering to our human nature—the way of GET.

In our fast-paced world, many no longer take the time to ask the big questions of life: “Who am I?” “What am I?” “Why do I exist?” These are questions that we need to ask—and answer. The answers *are* available, if we look in the right place—the Word of God. The Scriptures reveal God’s Plan for mankind!

As you endure the adrenaline-driven rat race we call civilization, realize that there is a purpose for your life—and it is worth spending that precious resource called *time* to discover it!

To learn more about God’s purpose for your life, read our booklet *Why Do You Exist?* □

MESSIAHS

Continued from page 9

with the antichrist and the false prophet. He will defeat them, bind Satan, destroy all evil, and establish the millennial (1,000-year) rule of the kingdom of God on Earth. Inhabiting the kingdom will be two kinds of saints: (1) those with earthly bodies (Jew and gentile) who lived through the Tribulation and accepted Christ at His return (they apparently live and die, producing children to repopulate Earth); and (2) those who were raptured, and are the only ones given glorified bodies.

This is to be a time of peace and prosperity, and Jerusalem will be the center of rule—with traditional Christianity as the world's religion. After the 1,000 years will come the judgment of all unsaved mankind.

Which One?

Though these three messianic beliefs share some similarities, they are ultimately very different and conflict with one another. Can all of these views be right? Are *any* of them correct? Are

there three Messiahs—or only one? And, if only one, *which* one? How can you know?

Will a coming Messiah usher in the kingdom of God on Earth? Will He put an end to war and all the other problems that plague humanity? Will He bring peace, happiness, prosperity, brotherhood and unity among nations, teaching mankind about the true God, under one true religion?

The Bible—both Old and New Testament—claims to be the inspired Word of God. It declares there *is* a coming Messiah, who will establish God's kingdom—His government—on Earth: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6-7).

“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:2).

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (vs. 6-9)

The Messiah's return and the establishment of God's kingdom *will* happen—but at a time and in a way that will take the vast majority of humanity completely by surprise! To learn more, read our book *TOMORROW'S WONDERFUL WORLD – An Inside View!* □

HAMAS

Continued from page 4

imposed certain economic sanctions and other restrictions against the PA. According to a *BBC* article, these included withholding monthly tax payments to the PA; increased security checks at all crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip; banning the transfer of equipment to PA security forces; tightened restrictions on the movement of Hamas officials; and finally—and possibly most importantly—asking foreign donors to stop all payments to the PA.

While the White House has maintained a similar hard line, the Europeans have softened somewhat, though they still hold to a threat to stop funding unless Hamas recognizes Israel and renounces violence. Palestinian Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniya stated that “the West is always using its donations to apply pressure on the Palestinian people,”

and that the Palestinians had “lots of alternatives.”

“We have other Arab and Islamic countries and members of the international community who are ready to stand next to the Palestinian people.”

Consider the larger picture: Iran, a significant supporter of Hamas and a fellow proponent of the destruction of Israel, continues to fight the West over its nuclear program; the Islamic world has been rioting over the European press publishing derogatory political cartoons of Islam's prophet Muhammad; Russia is taking an increasingly uncooperative stance toward the U.S., and immediately invited the new Palestinian leadership to visit Moscow for consultation; and Iraq and Afghanistan continue to fester, with serious and ongoing implications for the U.S., Israel's primary (and perhaps only) ally. All this as Israel loses a strong leader, Ariel Sharon.

For the Middle East, the ultimate result of a Hamas-led PA will essen-

tially be more of the same rhetoric, desperation and violence—at least for the immediate future, with only slight nuances in tactics and personalities.

As the end of this age quickly nears, a major increase in conflict in the region is certain. The Jews, descended from the Patriarch Jacob, and the Islamic Arabs, descended from Ishmael, have competed against each other in hatred, jealousy and strife for centuries. Instigated by the great arch-deceiver (Rev. 12:9)—the true source of human nature, evils, confusion and all wars (Eph. 2:2; Jms. 4:1-3)—the hatred between these two peoples will come to a boil in the not-too-distant future.

For more details, read our booklet *The MID-EAST in Bible Prophecy*. Following the end of this age, with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as King and the establishment of the kingdom of God, genuine, lasting peace *will* exist in Israel, Palestine, the Middle East—and the entire world! □



THE EUROPEAN COUNTERWEIGHT

PART TWO WILL A STRONGMAN FILL THE VOID?

BEFORE IT CAN assume the mantle of global preeminence, the European Union must face several daunting obstacles and challenges—including a drastic and startling change in government.

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

EUROPE FINDS ITSELF at a major crossroads: continue on its present course and remain in America's shadow, while flexing its diplomatic and economic muscles like a passive-aggressive giant—or take the lead role on the world stage and become a dominant superpower.

Many believe that, because it is mired in bureaucracy and is severely limited by its system of governance by committee, Europe is *incapable* of choosing the latter path.

■ **SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL TREATY** (shown above): On Oct. 29, 2004, representatives of the EU member states signed the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

Consider the numerous obstacles and challenges that the EU must face: dealing with Russia and its competing interests; the growing economic threat of a China-India trade alliance; the continual Europe-wide need for oil; the rising tide of secularism, as the Vatican repeatedly calls for Europe to return to its spiritual roots; a growing and restless European Muslim population that could one day become the majority; terrorism from Islamic extremists; deciding whether to grant Turkey, an Islamic country, EU membership—the list goes on.

Europe's future will be determined by how it deals with these and other issues.

An Example of EU Bureaucracy

The European Union “excels” at establishing endless government regulations,

in effect, micromanaging its sovereign member-states.

Consider the following example. Åland, an island of 26,000 people in the Baltic Sea, is an autonomous region of Finland. For centuries, the people of Åland have hunted migrating fowl, such as wild duck. When Finland joined the EU in 1995, about 70% of Åland voters voted “yes” in their own referendum, after being assured that their hunting rights would be preserved. Yet the European Court of Justice later declared most spring hunting as illegal.

Because their island is autonomous, but considered a part of Finland, the citizens of Åland are essentially sovereign co-rulers of Finland. Therefore, they have veto-power of any international treaty that the Finnish government wants to enter—including treaties of the European Union.

Tired of being outvoted and overruled by the EU time and again—losing the right to fish at sea with traditional nets, having their spring duck hunting virtually abolished, and the European Court of Justice’s attempt to abolish the local laws on consuming “snus” (a form of chewing tobacco that has been outlawed by the EU in every nation except Sweden)—the islanders are threatening to veto the European Commission’s attempts to revive the Constitution.

Despite taking Finland to court to quash Åland’s snus law, the Commission ruled that Finland has no power to change that law; only Åland has the power to control its internal laws covering health.

Think of it! Just a single European nation (or, in this case, an autonomous region within a nation) can bring EU initiatives to a screeching halt. With all members having a say in internal affairs, how can Europe hope to become a federal superstate?

Dealing With Iran

The government of Iran claims that advancing its nuclear research program is vital to the needs of the nation’s booming population, which has more than doubled in 20 years. But Europe, along with the U.S., Israel and other nations,

remains skeptical, believing that the Islamic republic is bent on becoming a nuclear power. Even Russia, China and India—Iran’s allies and trading partners—are wary of Tehran’s insistence on uranium fuel enrichment.

At first, Russia’s offer to use its own nuclear reactors to enrich Iran’s uranium was rejected, with Tehran postponing further negotiations; eventually, they reached an agreement. However, fearing possible economic or political sanctions, Iran’s deputy nuclear chief warned that the deal would be off if the International Atomic Energy Agency referred the nation to the UN. Despite these on-again-off-again negotiations, Moscow, like Beijing, prefers diplomacy rather than military options in dealing with Iran.

Acting on behalf of the EU, Britain, France and Germany (also called the EU3) negotiated with Iran to cease fuel enrichment. However, these efforts failed when talks were suspended.

In keeping pressure on Tehran, German Chancellor Angela Merkel still views diplomacy as a viable solution, but she refuses to rule out other options—thus keeping the threat of military action on the table. According to *Der Spiegel*, this position is threatening to fracture the chancellor’s coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, Germany’s two largest political parties. German conservatives generally believe that without the looming threat of military confrontation, Iran will never give up its nuclear ambitions. However, many members of the center-left Social Democratic Party do not support the use of force.

For now, both parties are nervously awaiting how this international situation will unfold. If the unresolved tensions between Iran and the Western nations come to a boil, Ms. Merkel could face a major internal political crisis.

Meanwhile, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has hinted that his nation may be considering a withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Contributing to rising tensions and the West’s growing concern of future

Iranian aggression, Mr. Ahmadinejad stated that Europeans are being “held hostage” by “Zionists,” and demanded an independent investigation to look into the “truth about the fairy tale of the Holocaust” (ibid.). Further, he asked that the West “remove what they created 60 years ago and if they do not listen to our recommendations, then the Palestinian nation and other nations will eventually do this for them.” Then he added, “Remove Israel before it is too late and save yourself from the fury of regional nations.”

The Iranian leader also said that it was time for the West to bow to Allah.

What will Europe do? What kind of decisions can a committee of European leaders—all harboring national and personal self-interests—unanimously agree to? As stated in Part One of this two-part series, no corporation, school system or church can successfully govern by committee. Someone must take the lead—someone must take full responsibility when things go wrong

A Future EU Foreign Minister?

To do away with bureaucratic confusion and institutional frictions, and to establish a stronger foreign policy presence, the EU Constitution introduced the creation of a future office: EU Minister for Foreign Affairs. This individual’s role would be to represent the EU’s foreign interests and positions—to allow the 25 member-states of Europe to speak with one voice and act jointly in international affairs.

The future EU foreign minister would also be vice-president of the European Commission, responsible for external relations—development issues, human rights, foreign and security policies, etc.—and chair the Foreign Affairs Council.

To assist in carrying out the functions of this office, the EU Constitutional Treaty calls for the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which would be an administrative body the foreign minister would preside over, and from which he would appoint EU ambassadors.

Issues have already arisen, such as working out and agreeing to the foreign minister's powers and duties; deciding if he will have his own independent secretariat, or be part of the Council or the Commission; and determining whether he should be authorized to represent the EU in trade and development policy.

Suppose that this new office successfully allows Europe to carry out its foreign policy and interests speedily and effectively. Would EU leaders conclude that a similar office needs to be created—one that would handle Europe's *internal* affairs?

A "Club Within a Club"

The EU requires unanimity in deciding key issues. Yet, ever since expanding to its present size—25 nations, all desiring a say in how the government should operate—administration has become unwieldy.

For instance, EU members cannot agree as to how Europe should address the economy and high unemployment within member nations. Such division keeps the EU from effectively challenging America's financial clout, or China's increasing economic presence.

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt has offered a bold solution: *the creation of an EU core*. This "United States of Europe," a name Mr. Verhofstadt has proposed, would function as a "club within a club" of the EU political machine. Only a small group of member-states bound closely together, he argues, would solve the current administrative logjam.

The model for Mr. Verhofstadt's proposal already exists: The 12-nation single currency euro zone—Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain.

"Twelve countries within the European Union have already handed control over their monetary policy to the European Central Bank. When EU finance ministers meet, the 12 ministers from the euro zone hold talks among themselves before they meet the 13 colleagues whose countries haven't adopted the euro.

"In that pre-meeting, the most important decisions for the euro zone are made—in the club of the avant-garde. And it's a model that could conceivably be transferred from finance policy to other areas—with the euro zone core leading the way" ("European Union's Future: A Club Within a Club," *Der Spiegel*).

Both Paris and Berlin have shown interest in this proposal.

How Will It All Come Together?

With Europe weighed down by bureaucracy and regulations, and inefficiently governed by committee, dramatic changes in government must take place before the EU can surpass America's global leadership.

Imagine this future scenario: The materialistic morals and values of secular Europe have left a spiritual hunger in the lives of millions, waiting to be satisfied. Conditions are ripe for a charismatic religious leader to fill this spiritual void. Through awesome miraculous powers—bleeding statues, signs in the sky?—this leader sparks a religious revival throughout the continent; Europe's spiritual roots are re-awakened.

As was done for centuries in European history, this religious leader, backed by throngs of fervent believers, will use his new-found standing to influence government policy and civil laws. Through him, religion gains a voice in state affairs.

He then uses his clout to endorse a popular European statesman who shares his values and vision for Europe—perhaps a "rising star" whom many see as destined for a bright political future. (Could this man's shrewdness, charm and deft diplomacy become evident with his successful tenure as the EU's foreign minister?)

The religious leader uses his increasing authority to influence—even pressure—the heads of the "club within a club" to hand over governing powers and authority to his political counterpart. Europe is no longer ruled by committee, but by one man—one voice—one will and purpose.

Does this sound far-fetched? Is it even *conceivable* that secular Europe would zealously embrace religion and transform itself from democracy to one-man rule?

Before you answer, remember the world before 9/11: Who would have dreamed that a group of terrorists could hijack four U.S. planes, demolish the twin towers of the World Trade Center and destroy a portion of the Pentagon? Who would have imagined that the U.S. and its allies would wage a worldwide war on terrorism, invading Afghanistan and Iraq, and toppling the government of Saddam Hussein?

This may come as a surprise, but this hard-to-believe scenario was foretold long ago in an ancient book of historic records, poetic writings and religious text. It's called the Bible. While it continues to be the world's leading bestseller, the Bible is greatly misunderstood and sorely misinterpreted by hundreds of millions of readers. Even the overwhelming majority of Christians and their most highly educated religious leaders cannot comprehend its teachings.

For instance, very few know or understand that an estimated one-third of the Bible is prophecy, 90% of which pertains to *our time*—NOW—and to "the world to come" (Heb. 2:5; 6:5). It speaks of a future leader who, endorsed by a powerful religious leader, will receive government authority from ten heads of European nations (or groups of nations)—possibly a "club within the club"? (See Revelation 17:12-13.)

Europe's rise to global preeminence will become a reality—and, to worldwide astonishment, the United Kingdom will *not* be a part of this!

As the European counterweight assumes its place as the world's leading superpower, what will become of the United States and her staunch allies—Britain, Canada, Australia and other Western nations? The answer, thoroughly explained in our book *AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN BIBLE PROPHECY*, will surprise you! So will information in our booklet *How WORLD PEACE Will Come*. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

And here is the greatest deception of these false ministers: The devil uses them as instruments for spreading a false gospel about the *Person* of Jesus Christ—instead of His *Message* of the kingdom of God, the one that Christ brought. The greatest truth that the ministers, theologians and religionists of this world deny is the incredible potential that each human being carries.

The following verses continue Paul's description of the work of false ministers. They demonstrate the ongoing danger of Satan's agents seeking to penetrate the *true* Church to blind God's *true* servants a second time to the wonderful truth of the gospel and return them to darkness. Notice: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so *your* [the Corinthian brethren] minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [speaking of false preachers] preaches *another Jesus*...or if you receive *another spirit*...or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted..." (II Cor. 11:3-4).

Paul warned of "another" spirit entering the true Church. This very *different* spirit perverted both the truth about the gospel and the *real* Christ of the Bible. Historically, the counterfeit Christianity of today first appeared almost immediately after Christ's death and resurrection.

Also, ask yourself: If Christ *is* the gospel, then why cite "another *Jesus*" and "another *gospel*" as *two* separate wrong teachings?

New Testament Warnings

The New Testament contains numerous warnings of seducers, deceivers and charlatans who would try to enter the true Church and lead away followers into false doctrines. Most of the apostles, in one way or another, warned virtually every congregation of this danger. It is this same system of false Christianity into which most

people have been born and spent their lives.

The apostle Peter warned of false teachers "among you (the Church)." Notice: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *MANY shall follow their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*. And through *covetousness* shall they with *feigned words* make merchandise of you" (II Pet. 2:1-3).

These are strong words. Just as false prophets continually plagued ancient Israel, the Church has been assaulted through the centuries by "false teachers" who, through "feigned words," seduced "many" into following them. The goal was to pull people from "the way of TRUTH."

The apostle Jude, Christ's younger brother, was equally direct in his warning: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation...and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for *the faith which was once delivered* unto the saints. For there are *certain men CREPT IN unawares*, who were *before of old ordained* to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into *lasciviousness* [license to break God's Law]..." (vs. 3-4).

This powerful indictment describes those who "crept in" and caused some to no longer fight for "the faith which was once delivered." Notice it says that some of these imposters had been "before of old ordained." Because *they* were ungodly, they taught others to break God's Law as well. We will examine Acts 8 momentarily to better understand *where* these men came from. Their system and doctrines are far from new.

John recorded nearly an entire chapter of Christ's own words of warning to all His future sheep. Jesus pulls no punches when describing the true nature of false leaders and

teachers. Here are excerpts from that chapter:

"He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold [the Church]...the same is a THIEF and a ROBBER...the shepherd [Christ and His faithful ministry] of the sheep...the sheep follow him: for they know his *voice*. And a STRANGER will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of STRANGERS...Then said Jesus...I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are THIEVES and ROBBERS: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The THIEF comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an HIRELING...sees the WOLF coming...and flees: and the WOLF catches them, and scatters the sheep. The HIRELING flees, because he is an HIRELING, and cares not for the sheep" (John 10:2-13).

Take time to read this entire chapter. Notice the repeated use of the terms "wolf," "stranger," "thief," "robber" and "hireling"—these latter are those who abandon the flock, pursuing self-interest. Throughout Church history, when enemies threatened God's people, most ministers *did* abandon the flock, and many sheep *were* deceived and swept away from God's Church and truth.

In addition to the Corinthians, Paul warned several other congregations. Here is what he told the Galatians after they had slipped into false doctrines: "You *did* run well; who did *hinder you* that you should not *obey the TRUTH*? This persuasion comes not of Him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the *whole* lump" (5:7-9).

The Galatians had gotten off track. They did not understand that a little false doctrine ("leaven") eventually spreads (like leaven in dough) through the "whole lump" of God's many truths. We will see that these

Galatians were losing their understanding of the gospel.

The Mystery of Iniquity

Now turn to a warning Paul gave to the Thessalonians, in which he spoke of a “mystery of iniquity” that was already at work in the first century Church. The context there (II Thes. 2:3) also contains a description of events that would immediately precede Christ’s Return. A “falling away” and a revealing of the “man of sin...the son of perdition” would first have to take place before Christ’s Second Coming. He wrote, “For the *mystery of iniquity* does already work” (vs. 7). Paul understood that certain events were “already” in play in the Church then, just as they would come to be, once again, at the end of the age.

The book of Acts describes events in Samaria and sets up more facts to consider: “And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria... and there was *great joy* in that city” (8:1, 4-5, 8).

When the plain truth of God’s Word is preached to those whose minds have been opened, it does bring “great joy.”

Later, several verses reference one Simon the Sorcerer—often called Simon Magus by various church historians. This man had tremendous influence in the predominantly Gentile area of Samaria. He was a part of the *mystery system* of which Paul warned the Thessalonians (also see Rev. 17:5, and later in this book). This same powerful system, originally led by Simon, has continually sought to enter the true Church.

Now notice: “But there was a certain man, called SIMON, which before-time in the same city used *sorcery*, and *bewitched* the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from

the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (vs. 9-11).

The Bible explains what “word” Philip was preaching: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the KINGDOM OF GOD, and the name of *Jesus Christ*, they were baptized, both men and women” (vs. 12). Notice that these in Samaria were baptized only after “they believed” *this message*—the kingdom of God—not some other idea.

Here is what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. This passage describes various offices Christ established within His New Testament ministry. It explains the purposes of those offices in edifying, unifying and perfecting the brethren of God’s Church. Notice: “And He gave some, APOSTLES; and some, PROPHETS; and some, EVANGELISTS; and some, PASTORS and TEACHERS; for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the *work* of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ: till we all come in the *unity* of the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, *tossed to and fro*, and carried about with *every wind of doctrine*, by the *sleight of men*, and *cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*; but speaking the TRUTH in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (4:11-15).

This is another very strong and instructive series of warnings to God’s people. Christ intended that His sheep listen to true ministers and recognize false “winds of doctrine” that may be packaged in “cunning” and “crafty” ways.

Near the end of Paul’s ministry, just before going on trial for his life, he met with all the assembled elders in Ephesus. This was an emotional meeting, because he knew that he would not see them again. He took time to remind them of their responsibility and of what he had repeatedly instructed

them over a period of *three years*! The responsibility Paul described remains for God’s true ministry today.

Carefully note how Paul stressed the importance of his having preached the kingdom of God: “I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD, shall see my face no more...Take heed... to all the flock...to feed the church of God...For I know this, that after my departing shall *GRIEVOUS WOLVES* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, *speaking perverse things*, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore *WATCH*, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:25, 28-31).

What Paul had warned of did happen. Heretics entered not only the Ephesian congregation but most of the rest of God’s Church and subverted it into false understanding and practices. Church historians commonly refer to the period from the mid-first century A.D. to the middle of the second century A.D. as the “lost century.”

During this period, the *visible* Church radically changed in appearance, becoming almost unrecognizable. True believers, who were in the small minority, were forced to flee the visible majority, which had departed into error. The knowledge of God’s awesome purpose for human existence became lost to the overwhelming majority of those who were swept away into a false salvation.

Ever since the first century, when Christ established His Church, it has had to fight for the truth. God’s people have always had to be careful—extremely vigilant—about the dangers of false ministers coming among them and perverting some or all of the doctrines of God. And these imposters always teach a false gospel. Remember, Paul warned the Corinthians that they had been “beguiled” into accepting “another gospel” (II Cor. 11:4).

And yet, the TRUE gospel—and the coming of the KINGDOM OF GOD—holds the answers to mankind’s greatest problems. □

WORLD NEWS DESK

AN EDITORIAL ANALYSIS OF WORLD NEWS, TRENDS AND CONDITIONS



GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGIES & ECONOMIES **PALESTINIANS FACE FINANCIAL CRISIS**

James Wolfensohn, the special envoy for the “quartet” (Russia, the U.S., EU and UN) that is attempting to mediate the Middle East “Peace Process,” has warned that the Palestinian Authority (PA) could quickly face financial collapse.

The situation has come after Israel decided to cut off all tax transfers (which account for \$50 to \$55 million in monthly revenue for the PA) to the PA in response to the Hamas election victory in January.

Mr. Wolfensohn, a former World Bank president, projected that the PA will be short \$100 million for February, and up to \$70 million in March, largely due to the Israeli decision.

He went on to say that the PA would need \$60 to \$80 million immediately just to begin to pay wages for February.

“I know I do not need to tell each of you that the failure to pay salaries may have wide-ranging consequences—not only for the Palestinian economy but also for security and stability for both the Palestinians and the Israelis,” Mr. Wolfensohn said.

The EU has since stepped forward

and said it would release an emergency aid package worth €120 million (\$142 million).

All of this comes at a time when the PA government is in transition. It is expected that Hamas will not form a cabinet for another month or so.

In the meantime, at issue is the question of whether aid should continue for the time being, and more importantly, what will happen when Hamas actually takes the reins of government?

Source: *The International Herald Tribune*; *Financial Times*

IRAN: “NO REASON” TO BACK DOWN

Amid contradicting reports that an Iranian-Russian “solution” to the nuclear issue had been reached, Iran said that there was “no reason” to back down from its dispute, largely with the U.S. and her few allies, over its nuclear (weapons) program.

Ali Hosseini-Tash, one of Iran’s nuclear negotiators, was quoted by state television as saying, “Iran has predicted and studied the consequences of any possible Security Council decision. There is no reason for Iran to retreat. Any possible Security Council resolution against Iran’s peaceful nuclear activities will not have any legal or rational foundations. It is not the last loop in the chain of decisions, especially when

the U.S. and the West are not sure of an agreement among Security Council members.”

Source: *Middle East Online*

IRAN-CHINA ENERGY DEAL

Western diplomatic sources have indicated that Iran and China are in deep negotiations regarding a major energy deal involving the swap of energy for technology. This would ultimately make Iran China’s leading supplier of oil.

China’s economy (and military) desperately needs oil, natural gas and petrochemicals from Iran. In exchange, Iran is desperate for modern technology. Gholam-Reza Manouchehri, managing director of Iran’s Petropars, said, “We intend to create new opportunities by making optimum use of the facilities of both countries in the mentioned fields.”

In another report, commercially available satellite images, of the quality (objects three feet in size can be identified) once only seen by classified and advanced military organizations, are forcing the U.S. military to acknowledge various elements of China’s secret military buildup. For example, these photos make visible for the first time a secret underwater submarine tunnel.

A Pentagon official said in response,

on condition of anonymity, "The Chinese have a whole network of secret facilities that the U.S. government understands but cannot make public. This is the first public revelation of China's secret buildup."

Washington Times journalist Bill Gertz, in describing the photos, stated that they were taken from 2000 to 2004, and show China's Xia-class ballistic missile submarine docked at the Jianggezhuang base, located on the Yellow Sea in Shandong province. Nuclear warheads for the submarine's 12 JL-1 missiles are thought to be stored inside an underwater tunnel that was photographed about 450 meters to the northwest of the submarine. The high-resolution satellite photo shows a waterway leading to a ground-covered facility.

Recently, U.S. intelligence agencies produced a National Intelligence Estimate (major analysis) that concluded China is using strategic deception to fool the United States and other nations about its goals and programs, including its military buildup.

Source: *The World Tribune*; *Washington Times*

RELIGION

EUROPE AND ISLAM

The *EU Observer* published an interesting look at the European response to the violent cartoon protests. The Members of European Parliament (MEPs)—Europe's lawmakers—are expected to issue a resolution condemning the violence, supporting Denmark and reiterating their stance on freedom of expression.

Some MEPs believed that the protests were not spontaneous: "They were organized by repressive regimes months after the publication of the cartoons," center-right German MEP Hans-Gert Poettering said.

During the debate, Mr. Poettering brandished a stack of clippings from Muslim newspapers around the world, and said that he had found "hundreds of cartoons making a mockery of our world," and underlined that "tolerance is no one-way-street, but has to go in both directions."

The MEPs were also generally critical of a proposal for them to draw up a media code of conduct: "The press has to draw its own code of conduct, we cannot do it for them," said German Green MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

On the other side, officials at the Cairo University Al Azhar, with support from the 57-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference, submitted a proposal to the UN calling for the UN Security Council to "oblige countries not to insult prophets and that legal action be taken against offenders."

Source: *The EU Observer*

HEALTH, SCIENCE & SOCIETY

H5N1 CONTINUES TO SPREADS WESTWARD

The deadly H5N1 avian influenza virus continues to spread westward.

Germany is the latest country to report that dead birds with the virus have been found.

Austria made similar confirmations, causing Sweden and Denmark to order all their poultry producers to keep their birds indoors as a precaution.

H5N1 has also recently been found in Italy, Greece and Bulgaria. The UN food agency urged governments in Western Europe not to panic, but to expect spread as bird flocks migrate.

A spokeswoman for the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds indicated that the flocks may have migrated West quicker and farther than normal due to the extreme cold temperatures that Eastern Europe had experienced earlier this winter.

Source: *BBC*

MANDATORY ABORTION IN HOLLAND?

In the Netherlands, a government health official has called for a controversial debate on whether to force abortions and mandatory contraception in order to, in her view, solve a "crisis of unwanted children."

The official recommends targeting Antillean teen mothers, drug addicts

and people with mental disabilities.

Source: *WorldNetDaily*

SOCIETY AND LIFESTYLES

BRITAIN: ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS ON THE RISE

According to an Australian newspaper, new research reveals that, if trends continue, 50% of all babies in Britain will be born out of wedlock by the year 2012. More than half of all families will consist of unmarried couples, and up to one-third could become single-parent families.

The report also states that, of European nations, Britain has the fourth highest level of out-of-wedlock births, after Sweden, Denmark and France.

The percentage of unmarried cohabiting British couples is expected to rise to about 18%, up from 13% in 2001.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*

OSCAR UPSET

Having won the Golden Globe and numerous critics' prizes, *Brokeback Mountain*—a highly controversial movie about a homosexual affair between two American cowboys—was touted as being a sure thing for winning best picture at the 78th Academy Awards ceremony.

Yet, in one of the most stunning upsets in Hollywood history, the film *Crash* won the best picture prize.

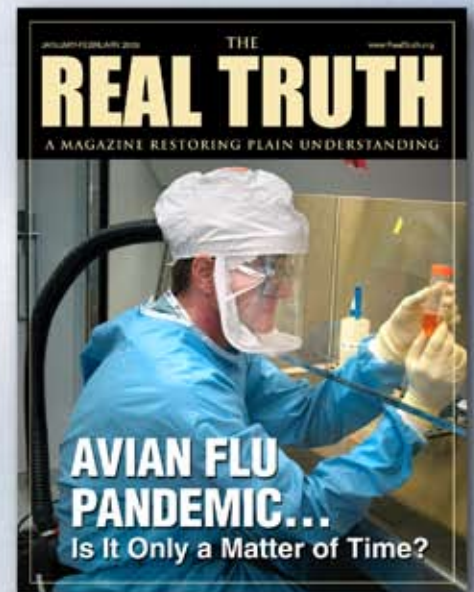
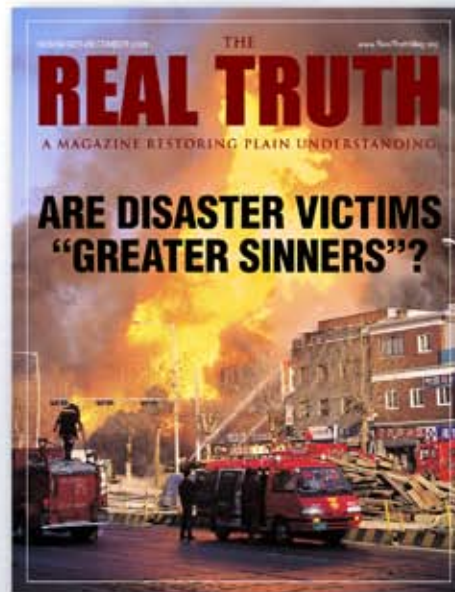
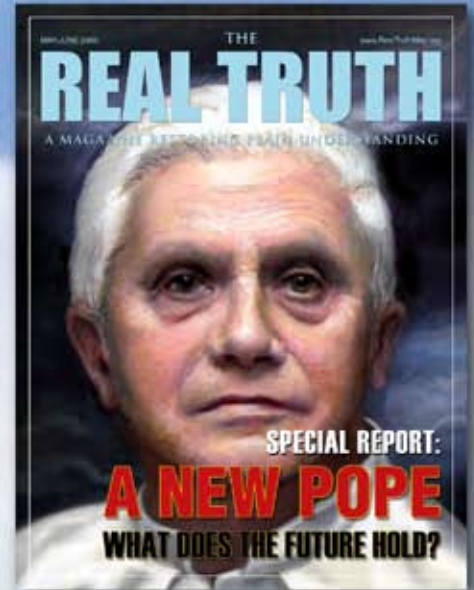
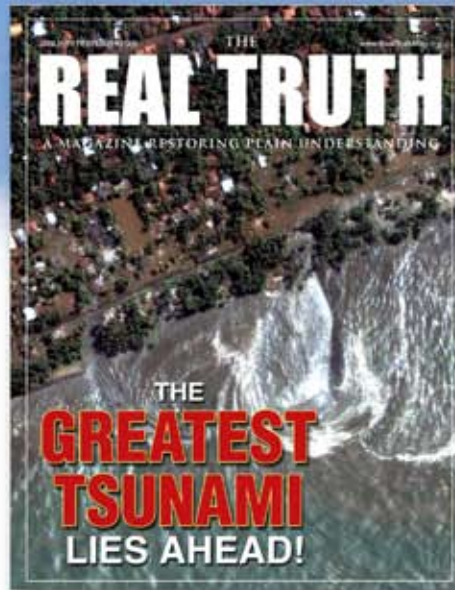
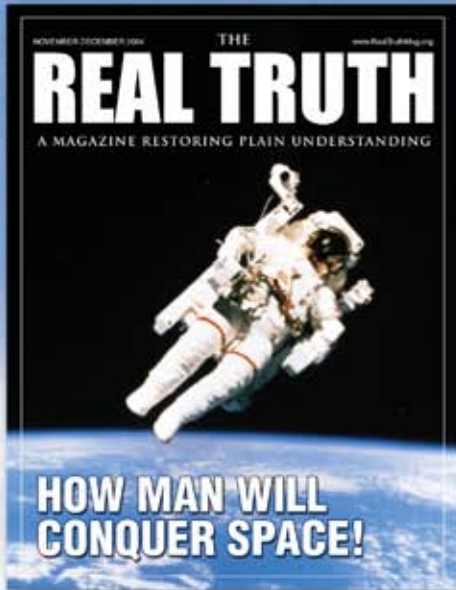
Brokeback Mountain did, however, win best director and best adapted screenplay. In addition, Philip Seymour Hoffman received the best actor award for playing the title role of a flamboyant homosexual author in the biopic *Capote*.

The selection of liberal political satirist Jon Stewart to host the awards ceremony was considered in harmony with the nominees selections for best picture, which tended to deal with social or political issues. For example, at least three of the movies nominated for awards popularized homosexual/transgender lifestyles.

On a side note, the film *Hustle & Flow* won for best song: "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp."

Source: *San Francisco Chronicle*

Have you missed out on previous issues?



You can read them online at your convenience!