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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT

Solution to Economic Collapse?

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A R T I C L E S

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**The Treaty of Lisbon
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Most expect Europe to take another step toward political unity this year. What is the Treaty of Lisbon, and what does it mean for the EU and the world?

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■ **FRONT COVER:** Former European Parliament presidents attend at a plenary session of the European Parliament in the northeastern French city of Strasbourg (Feb. 13, 2007).

PHOTO: FREDERICK FLORIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAVID C. PACK

SENIOR EDITORS
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
JAMES F. TURCK

PUBLISHING
KEVIN D. DENEEN

MANAGING EDITOR
BRUCE A. RITTER

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
SAMUEL C. BAXTER
ABDON V. BUENA
RYAN L. CASWELL
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
KEVIN D. DENEEN
MARK P. DENEEN
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JONATHAN A. DICEN
ROBERT R. FARRELL
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GEORGE C. ROGERS
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
JAMES F. TURCK

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STACEY L. PALM

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ROSLYN D. MCFARLAND

ART/GRAPHICS
DARNITRA D. MAIDEN
PAULA C. RONDEAU

INFORMATION SERVICES
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
ANGELA K. ECHELBERGER

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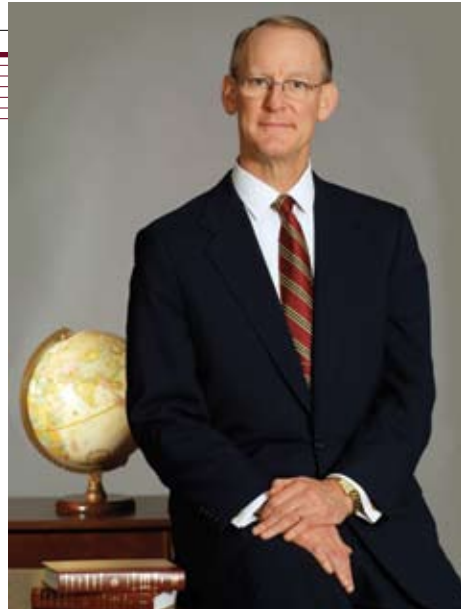
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Contact The Real Truth:
P.O. Box 23295
Wadsworth, OH 44282
www.realtruth.org
info@realtruth.org

PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



God's Tithing Law

NO ONE THINKS they have enough money. Millions are concerned—many even obsessed—by the need for more. Despite most households having more than one income, this is often still not enough to pay the bills. And just budgeting does not always help.

Everyone wants to end their money worries. The Bible holds the key! Here comes fascinating knowledge.

Despite unparalleled affluence in the Western World, personal bankruptcies are soaring. *Why?* Consumer credit has never been higher. *Why?* Millions of people in America are literally just “one paycheck from the street.” *Why?* The U.S. national debt is measured in trillions of dollars, requiring hundreds of billions in annual interest payments! None of this need be.

Much of the news is devoted to the “leading economic indicators”—unemployment, inflation, recession, interest rates, declining markets, home values and auto sales, and rising layoffs, energy and fuel prices. All are household words.

What about you? If you are honest, you will admit to spending a lot of time thinking and talking about MONEY. You probably wrestle with financial difficulties daily. Sometimes you feel that you are winning the battle, only to learn you are either treading water or falling behind. For most, the “money struggle” is constant, and the pressure can seem unbearable. Just the stress can drive away the happiness and peace that everyone seeks.

All of this is unnecessary—IF you have God's *key* to financial prosperity.

What You Earn Is Not Your Own

Some questions: Your house belongs to *you*, right? So does *your car*, doesn't it? You bought the clothes you wear with *your money*, didn't you? Haven't you heard yourself say, “I earned my money, it's *mine*”? Isn't it true that “what's yours is yours and what's mine is mine”?

Not so fast!

Let's reason. Certainly we all agree that before we have fully paid off the things we have purchased, they are not truly ours. Banks and other lenders hold liens against houses, cars, boats and other expensive things people buy on credit. Everyone understands this. But have you considered whether you really own everything you *think* you do? Do you really have title to the things you own “free and clear”?

We must consider whether others could lay claim to what is “ours.”

“Death and Taxes”

Most know the phrase, “Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes.” Indeed, death is certain. Of course, everyone also recognizes the government is entitled to a certain percentage of one's income. Few dispute this, though most seek to get around taxes as much as possible. No one wants to give the government a penny more than its fair share. Most feel *less* than its share is better.

Have you considered whether *God* instructs us to pay taxes? *He does!* These scriptures prove it: “Let *every soul* be subject unto the higher powers...Wherefore you *must* needs be subject...For this cause pay you *tribute* [Greek:

taxes or assessment] also...render therefore to all their dues: *tribute* to whom tribute *is due*" (Rom. 13:1, 5-7).

Christ was asked if taxes should be paid. Notice: "Is it lawful to give *tribute* to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?" (Mark 12:14-15). Holding a penny to illustrate, He answered, "Render to Caesar *the things that are Caesar's*, and to God *the things that are God's*" (vs. 17). Christ taught there are things that *belong to man's government* and things that BELONG TO GOD.

What belongs to the government are *taxes*! Woe to those caught not paying them! Interest, penalties and even prison can result for tax evasion. The guilty have disobeyed not only the laws of the land but also God's plain instruction.

Taxes *are* an undisputed fact of life for most people on earth. That you *earned* the money you have does not negate the fact that human governments have a prior right to a certain legal portion of it to ensure their own operation. No government can function without tax revenue.

This is one way that what is yours is *not* always entirely yours.

Who Really Owns Everything?

However, no one would suggest governments own everything *else* that a taxpayer has. This belongs to the taxpayer—or does it?

Notice. God says, "For all the earth is *Mine*" (Ex. 19:5) and "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is the LORD's* your God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deut. 10:14) and also "whatsoever is under the whole heaven is *Mine*" (Job 41:11). King David wrote, "The earth *is the LORD's*, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1). I Corinthians 10:26 repeats his words.

God also says, "For every beast of the forest is *Mine*, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for *the world is Mine*, and the fullness thereof" (Psa. 50:10, 12). Finally, the prophet Haggai wrote, "The silver is *Mine*, and the gold is *Mine*, says the LORD" (Hag. 2:8).

All money is God's (remember, the value of money is generally attached

in some way to gold and silver). He owns absolutely EVERYTHING there is to own. Human beings are "squatters" on His land and "renters" in His homes. Everything you *think* you own is actually owned by God. You are merely its temporary custodian.

Look around and ask yourself: Where do we get the things that we have? Where did they actually come from?

People manufacture products from natural resources, which come from the earth, but it is God who makes both the natural resources and the earth in which they are found. Men may own mining or timber rights, but it is ultimately God who owns the mine and created the timber, which grew because of elements in the soil—which He created and owns!

Any time He wishes, God could take back all that is His. After all, it is His! This includes your income. While you may have "earned it," God OWNS it.

"The Things That Are God's"

What things belong to God? Remember, we are to "*Render...to God the things that are God's.*" Render means *give*. Since the heavens and the earth (or the land on which we live) cannot be "rendered" back to God by human beings, what does this mean?

We saw our entire income (salary, wages, interest earned, investments, bonuses, commissions and any other financial increase) actually belongs to God.

What of a farmer and the produce from his field? What is the process whereby things grow? The farmer does his part—tilling, planting, fertilizing, watering, etc.—but so does God, in that He sends rain and sunshine and provides the very soil in which the fruit, vegetables or grains grow. Who did most of the work? In truth, the farmer did little more than a fraction of it, while God did perhaps 90 percent. And the farmer is far more dependent on God's effort than God is on the farmer's. Without God's contributions, the farmer would produce nothing—and *would not even be alive* because NO ONE would be able to produce the food necessary for all human beings to survive.

The day you chose a profession, job

or vocation, you formed a partnership with God—whether you knew it or not. You use materials that belong to God. To invest, sell, distribute or produce goods or services, whereby you can earn a living, *you have become a partner with God!* Admit that without God's role and help in earning a living, it would be impossible to produce ANYTHING! God knows this and has chosen to make a special arrangement with you.

His Word describes it.

God lays prior claim to the first 10 percent of everything people earn as income. This is called the *tithe*, meaning "the *tenth*." To be a tithepayer means the same as being a "tenthpayer." *Tithe* is an old English word commonly used to mean *tenth*. People have long understood that to tithe is to pay a tenth of one's income.

There are small and large points within God's Law. Some commands carry more "weight" than others. When speaking of some lesser points within God's Law, Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of *these least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19).

Regarding tithing, He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For *you pay tithe* of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the *weightier* matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: *these* [the weightier matters] *ought you to have done*, and *not to leave the other* [careful tithing] *undone*" (Matt. 23:23). Love, mercy and faith are, indeed, weighty matters within the overall Law of God. Christ acknowledges this. However, He also explains that tithing should not be something people "leave undone." The argument is often raised that tithing is not important—that it is *least* among God's laws. This verse does not actually say it is "least." Matthew 5:19 merely says that, if it were, it is still required by all who value the commands of God!

Any learning the truth of God's tithing laws must pay His tithe—once it is clear where His chosen representatives are working! We will learn later that tithing is the manner in which He finances the Work His true servants per-

form. Only after His tithe has been paid does God give the rest of one's income back to the tithepayer. God's generosity and love for His children is why He gives nine-tenths of what He owns to the one faithful in tithe-paying.

In other words, we are not giving God *one-tenth* of what is *ours*. God is giving us *nine-tenths* of what is *His*!

Let's examine scriptures about tithing. People who dismiss this command often attempt to make the truth of tithing into a highly technical subject. But it is not difficult to understand. It does require careful examination of a relatively *few* scriptures. Tithing has always been, is now and always will be the means whereby God finances His Work and His Church.

The Tithe Is God's

Some theologians and Bible critics create confusion by saying tithes in the Old Testament belonged only to the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel. Is this true? Does the Bible say this? Is there a scripture where God plainly says that *tithes belong to Him*?

There is! God declares, "*All the tithe of the land...is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD...And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD*" (Lev. 27:30, 32). This is plain. Tithes belong to God alone. *He* may choose to give them to His servants, but it is completely within *His* discretion what *He* does with them.

These same "higher critics" use Numbers 18:21 and 24 to prove the tithe belonged to the *Levites*. Careless reading causes misunderstanding. "And, behold, *I have given* the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve...But the tithes of the children of Israel...*I have given* to the Levites to inherit."

Did *Israel* give their tithes to the Levites? No! *God* gave His tithe, which was merely supplied by the Israelites, to the Levites, twice saying, "*I have given.*"

The tithes were God's, not Israel's, to give to whom *He* chose. Verse 20

makes this more plain. God says that *He* will provide for the Levites, since they had no physical land inheritance in the nation.

Abraham and Jacob Paid Tithes

Those teaching that only ancient Israel was required to pay tithes, and this was always to the Levites, have another serious problem in their thinking.

The patriarch Abraham, often called the father of the faithful, paid tithes! The following account occurred when Abraham was still known as Abram. Notice: "And He [God in the Person of Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham], and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the Most High God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. *And [Abram] gave [Melchizedek] tithes of all*" (Gen. 14:19-20). Abraham tithed on *everything* he received.

This account took place over 100 years before the birth of Levi—Abraham's great-grandson. (The tribe of *Levites* came from *Levi*!) However, God did not establish the Levitical priesthood until after Israel left Egypt, over *400 years* after Abraham paid tithes! The 12 tribes of Israel, with *Levi one* of them, were not recognized as a nation until that time. Abraham was paying God's tithes long before Moses recorded Leviticus 27 and Numbers 18.

Hebrews 7:1-6 proves Melchizedek (also rendered as "Melchisedec") was the person who became Jesus Christ. (This will be shown later.)

But understand—Melchizedek was God because Christ is God. Abraham paid tithes directly to God, 400 years before the Levitical priesthood was formed. Hebrews 7:6 explains that Melchizedek (Christ) did *not* descend from Levi, and yet Abraham paid Him tithes.

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, later named Israel, also paid tithes to God. He fathered 12 sons (Levi was one). Notice: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, *If God will be with me*, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put

on...then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that you shall give me *I will surely give the tenth unto you*" (Gen. 28:20-22).

Many are familiar with the story of "Jacob's Pillar Stone"—or "pillow stone." However, most people do not recognize its connection to Jacob's vow to pay God His tithes! This scripture introduces a vital principle. Notice the phrase "*IF* God will be with me." Jacob wanted to know that paying God's tithes meant blessings, guidance and protection from God would always be ensured. God inspired this crucial connection be recorded for all time.

God Says People Can Rob Him

A remarkable prophecy about tithing is found at the end of the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi asks, "Will a man rob God?" (Mal. 3:8).

Now be careful you do not say this is an *Old Testament* verse with no effect today. Did you realize the *New Testament* Church is built directly on the prophets? Notice: "Fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the *household of God* [the Church]; and are *built upon* the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20). There it is—the Church stands directly on a foundation that includes the prophets! Therefore, what is written in the prophets is instruction to God's New Testament Church!

Now for a powerful series of verses. The first two set the stage for a verbal exchange between God and His people: "For I am the LORD, *I change not*... Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from *My ordinances*, and *have not kept them*. Return unto Me and I will return unto you, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:6-7). The exchange shifts to a rhetorical question from the people to God: "Wherein shall we return?" Then God answers with His own question: "Will a man rob God? *Yet you have robbed Me*." Next comes another rhetorical question from the people: "Wherein have we robbed You?" God answers, "*in tithes and offerings*" (vs. 7-8).

When people do not *pay* God His tithes—nor *give* Him His *offerings*—He considers them to be robbing Him. Robbing is thievery—stealing! Not only is it stealing, but it is STEALING FROM GOD! All sin is against God, but few things could be more serious than this!

Stealing from God brings consequences. God continues: “You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this *whole nation*” (vs. 9). This statement is directed to all modern-day nations that descended from ancient Israel. Generally, these are the democratic nations of Western Europe, and the primarily English-speaking nations of the world—United States, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

These nations are under a growing curse—more evident every day—for their sin of stealing God’s tithes. Remember that Abraham and Isaac were *not* Israelites, yet were required to tithe. Therefore, all nations suffer—and will continue to—from the curse of not obeying God’s financial laws.

This world is based on the “get” way rather than the “give” way, which is God’s Way! People constantly strive to “get” more for themselves. This violates the Tenth Commandment, forbidding coveting. Notice what God says of His people, and of all nations, in a prophecy directed to those living at the end of the age: “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them *EVERY ONE is given to covetousness*; and from the prophet even unto the priest *EVERY ONE deals falsely*” (Jer. 6:13).

Just one look around will end any doubts you have about both these national sins.

Two chapters later is an almost identical statement, except God also warns of the horrific punishment He will bring because of this worldwide attitude.

The subject of Malachi is God’s coming punishment on the entire world during the Day of the Lord—called the Day of God’s Wrath. This theme is found in nearly all the last 12 short books of the Old Testament. See these verses. Malachi continues the theme of the Day of the Lord and actually

pictures tithing as the key to a repentant attitude.

Consider! How could God punish the nations of Israel—and the world—for robbery *if the tithing law is not in effect today*?

The context of Malachi continues with an offer from God directed both to the modern peoples of Israel and to any *individual* who chooses to take Him at His word: “*Bring you all the tithes* into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and *prove Me now herewith*, says the LORD of hosts, *if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*” (Mal. 3:10).

This is plain! Pay God His tithes, and He will bless you beyond what you have room to receive! Will you believe this?

Jacob believed God and this is what he expected—once he began paying His tithes.

Becoming God’s Partner

Faithful tithing activates a *promise* to which God has bound Himself, and it is “impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). He is bound by His promises. When God makes a promise, He keeps it—and we have read that He tells Christians to “prove Me” through tithing. We also read that Jacob took God up on this promise.

What about you?

I have known men who sought to make God their partner. In my hometown of Lima, Ohio, a well-known, successful businessman put a sign on his factory saying, “God is my Partner.” He certainly did prosper.

John D. Rockefeller, the famous patriarch of the Rockefeller family, tithed. Other well-known tithepayers have prospered because they followed this principle.

No one can make God his partner. We cannot “let God in” on a “business deal” with us. But *God* can choose to make individual tithepayers *His* partners!

To not pay our bill to God is theft, pure and simple. Stealing is dishonesty. No businessman could remain in busi-

ness if he stole from his partner. Getting caught stealing is enough to put people in prison. This fear keeps most from attempting it.

But men do not fear a God who does not immediately punish them. To most, God seems far off, unreal—and people think they can get away with disobeying God’s tithing law. The consequences are financial curses.

Some believe they should pay off existing debts before paying God’s tithe. Is this correct? Realize that tithing is actually a debt that all of us have to God. It is no less so than any *other* debt, and it is no less an obligation than any *other* obligation we have!

Since God promises to bless the tithepayer, there will actually be more left to pay the other debts, because the *most important* one was *not* left unpaid. God is a faithful partner who keeps His word. He *will* pour out blessings to make up for the financial problems a person may have gotten himself into prior to tithing. In God’s form of “higher math,” \$10 minus \$1 is *more* than \$10, not less.

I have seen God’s math at work hundreds of times in people’s lives and experienced it many times myself. I have seen many who were blessed in ways they could never have anticipated, simply because they put God first and faithfully paid His tithes. Little by little, their debts melted. Extra, unexpected income always seemed to arrive and cover additional bills and emergencies that all people encounter. You can have faith that God will always keep His promise—ALWAYS!

The Bible is filled with places where God says that He wants to bless His people—if they will faithfully obey Him.

Solomon wrote, “*Honor the LORD* with your substance, and with the first fruits of all your increase: *so shall your barns be filled* with plenty, and your presses shall burst out with new wine” (Prov. 3:9-10). The apostle John recorded, “I wish above all things that you may *prosper* and be in health” (III John 2). Moses said, “Observe and hear

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STDs

Immorality's Plague

REPORTED CASES of sexually transmitted diseases in America are at an all-time high. Preventive measures are not working. Can anything be done to curb the problem?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

WHEN THE UNITED STATES government published its statistics for sexually transmitted diseases in 2006, the numbers were shocking. Chlamydia had topped one million newly reported cases for the first time. Syphilis cases jumped 14 percent over the previous year. And a new drug-resistant strain of gonorrhea plagued the nation.

The record was topped again for 2007. Nearly 1.5 million Americans reported new cases of chlamydia and syphilis.

However, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), most cases go undiagnosed, with the actual number of chlamydia cases likely near 3 million a year. Syphilis cases went up 15 percent from 2006 to 2007.

Officials at the CDC said the increase was partly due to better testing methods. Still, the new stats reveal a growing and pervasive health trend.

“‘The bad news from last year has continued,’ said Dr. John M. Douglas Jr., director of the CDC’s Division of STD Prevention. ‘These infections remain at very high levels, and frankly, unacceptably high’” (*Washington Post*).

The CDC describes one way to dramatically reduce the spread of STDs: “The most reliable ways to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), are to abstain from sexual activity or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an unaffected partner.”

But this solution does not mesh with modern society. Labeled a holdover from archaic religious notions, the solution is often discarded.

Instead, to keep up with today’s relative sexual norm, governments, health

■ **TESTING FOR STDs:** A medical technologist conducts HIV screening test on blood serum samples.

PHOTO: ROMEO GACAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

COMMON STDs

Studies suggest that having chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis increases the risk of HIV transmission.



■ **Chlamydia:** The most commonly reported infectious disease in the United States; a bacterial infection easily cured with antibiotics; it often does not have visible symptoms. For young men, untreated chlamydia generally does not present complications, but 40 percent of women who do not treat the disease will develop pelvic inflammatory disease—a condition that causes 50,000 U.S. women to become infertile each year.

■ **Gonorrhea:** Also easily cured, but if left untreated, can lead to infertility in women. In men, gonorrhea can cause epididymitis, a painful infection in the tissue around the testicles that can cause sterility.



■ **Syphilis:** Causes sores on the infected area, usually genitalia; highly infectious and easily treated in its early stages. If untreated, it can lead to brain, cardiovascular and organ damage, and even death. In pregnant women, if untreated, syphilis can be spread to the infant—causing stillbirth, death shortly after birth, physical deformity and neurological complications.

■ **Herpes:** Causes a reoccurring viral outbreak of blisters, generally occurring on the genitals or rectum. The blisters will usually turn into sores that may take two to four weeks to heal. The viral infection can remain in the body indefinitely, but outbreaks are usually less frequent with subsequent years. □

specialists, individuals, and America as a whole, seek other ways to combat the STD scourge.

A Spreading Affliction

For years, education has been seen as one way to curb the growing problem of STDs. A major forum for this is high school health classes. Sexual education teachers arm students with information regarding the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. Some school systems teach abstinence, while others advocate “safe sex” and condom use.

However, whatever the curriculum, it appears classes do little to prevent the spread of STDs; nearly half of the 19 million newly reported infections each year are among 15–20-year-olds.

According to a CDC study of over 3 million teenage girls, one in four has a sexually transmitted infection. Among the girls in the study who admitted to having sex, the rate was 40 percent.

And the problem continues with adults, who constitute the rest of the 19

million new infections per year.

Women are particularly affected. The CDC reported that female chlamydia rates are almost three times higher than males.

Syphilis cases are up over 80 percent since 2000. A person with syphilis has about a 40 percent chance of having HIV or AIDS. In 2007, 65 percent of reported syphilis cases were among homosexual and bisexual men.

Drug-resistant gonorrhea is another growing threat. Among heterosexual men, cases of the drug-resistant strain increased 6.7 percent in 2006, compared to 0.6 percent in 2001. Doctors have only one class of antibiotics that can fight the strain.

Most sexually transmitted diseases are asymptomatic—meaning that unless a person is tested, he does not know he is infected. It is possible for one to unknowingly spread STDs, not realizing he is infected.

The CDC recommends one STD screening per year for those who are sexually active.

Society's Response

The solutions put forward are often as telling as the statistics of STD prevalence. The response to the epidemic reveals much about societal attitudes toward the problem.

One website allows users who have tested positive for an STD to send email alerts to sexual partners. The messages are sent in glibly worded “e-cards.” One says, “Who? What? Where? When? How? Doesn’t matter I’ve got an STD; you might have one too.”

Another reads, “It’s not what you brought to the party, it’s what you left with. I left with an STD. You might have too.”

The cards then provide information for a nearby STD clinic.

Once a sexually transmitted disease is diagnosed, it usually can be treated or the symptoms suppressed. However, many do not want to be tested or treated because of the stigma attached to STDs.

Prescription drug manufacturers have responded by launching advertising campaigns aimed at broaching the taboo subject.

In a genital herpes television commercial, numerous characters representing all walks of life proclaim, “I have genital herpes,” while upbeat music plays in the background. A voiceover reads the description of the drug and its treatment, while people are doing yoga, sitting with their loved ones—leading visibly healthy lives.

However, the advertised medication can only *reduce* the symptoms of genital herpes. The best it can do is decrease symptoms and outbreaks—not remove the STD itself.

There has also been a recent push to vaccinate young girls to help prevent the development of cervical cancer.

One television commercial, aired in Britain, shows a girl in her early teens getting out of bed and going through the routine of her day: eating toast for breakfast, riding the bus, raising her hand in class, getting her vaccine against human papillomavirus (HPV), texting her friends. The com-

mercial states that HPV can develop into cervical cancer.

An American ad for a similar vaccine has young females saying they will not be victims of cervical cancer. The fine print tells viewers that the vaccine can be administered to 9- to 26-year-old women and may prevent up to four types of HPV, the cause of 70 percent of cervical cancer.

What the commercials do not say is that HPV is a sexually transmitted disease.

Girls as young as nine can be administered this vaccine, which is seen as a preemptive approach to both a common STD and cancer risk. But the medication only fights cervical cancer caused by HPV.

The U.S. government also is working to reverse the growing STD trend. On Jan. 28, 2009, Congress passed a near-trillion dollar economic stimulus package. Page 147 of the bill dictates “not less than \$335,000,000 shall be used as an additional amount to carry out domestic HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, sexually-transmitted diseases, and tuberculosis prevention programs as jointly determined by the Secretary and the Director.”

God and Science

For many, the “most reliable” solution proposed by the CDC—a monogamous relationship—appears to have overtly religious tones: that sex should only be within marriage between a man and woman.

This seems incompatible with the permissiveness of modern society. For some, the notion may even bring to mind childhood Sunday school memory verses such as “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14).

Millions see God as Someone who constantly thunders, “Thou shall not!” They see a fiery Old Testament God who, after delivering His Law to Israel, warned that if they did not obey, disease would result.

“If you are not careful to do all the words of this law which are written in this book, that you may fear this glori-

ous and awful name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring *extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting*. Every *sickness* also, and every *affliction* which is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed” (Deut. 28:58-59, 61 – Revised Standard Version).

However, when God says that disobeying His Law will bring “severe” and “grievous” afflictions, He is acting

But why does America refuse to listen to the solution that most readily addresses the cause of sexually transmitted diseases?

Worsening Conditions

For thousands of years, human beings have decided for themselves right from wrong. Each scientific advancement and philosophical development has been seen as “good” and “right”—but many brought negative side effects.

This has been the way of humanity throughout the centuries. “There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

Since World War II—since the discovery of antibiotics—since the controversial Kinsey Reports, and the sexual revolution of the 1960s, and onward—man has repeatedly redefined sexual morality.

Each step of the way, man has felt he was progressing toward a better society. Few feel that each decision rendered by human reasoning leads to unhappiness, disease, misery and—ultimately—death. Each successive generation worsens, not realizing the effects of its decisions and “progressive” ideas. Each generation accepts a new “normal” and cannot see its own dire conditions.

But rather than seeking to address the causes of problems, man focuses on finding ways to address the symptoms alone—the effects. Humanity uses science to support the sex-driven society to which it has become accustomed.

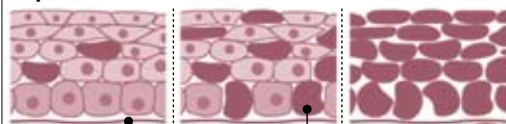
Realize that the breaking of God’s laws is **BREAKING** mankind! Disobedience—following what *feels* good or “*seems* right unto a man”—brings these plights on society.

Conversely, obedience to God’s physical health laws, which dovetail with scientific fact, will “keep” you. These laws are not designed to burden human beings with a life of “thou shall not’s”—but rather, God’s Law brings joy (Psa. 1:1-2), success, and an abundant, healthy life. □

HPV From Infection to Cancer

“High-risk” human papillomavirus (HPV) types have the potential to lead to cancer over a decade or longer. When the virus infects cells, it gradually causes increasingly severe damage.

Squamous cells



Basement membrane

In mild abnormality, only a few cells are changed; this sometimes goes away on its own

Abnormal cells

In moderate abnormality, affected cells are found throughout the surface lining of the cervix

Cancerous cell

Abnormal cells progress to malignancy after the virus slips two key cancer-causing genes into the DNA of the host

MCT Source: Dr. Richard M. Haupt, Merck & Co.

as a loving Parent, much like telling a child not to touch a hot stove.

Often, the laws in the Bible involve physical side effects. If God’s laws are kept, the side effects are good; if broken, they are bad. If you remain within God’s Law—which includes to “flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18) and to “not commit adultery”—you will not be as susceptible to the spreading STD scourge.

The CDC says something somewhat similar by stating that the best option to avoid sexually transmitted infections is to abstain from sex or only practice it within a “long-term monogamous relationship.” This is the only way to get to the *cause* of rampant spreading STDs—stop being promiscuous.

READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

All recommended books and booklets can be read and downloaded—free of charge—from our website, www.thercg.org, while our magazine articles are archived and freely accessible at www.realtruth.org.

■ “I am looking forward to reading your magazine! I am searching for many answers to many questions at this point in my life. I am in need of a new direction, in almost all areas of my life. I’m hopeful that your magazine will lead me on a different path. Are we truly in ‘the end-times’? The world is a mess.”
Nevada, U.S.

Recommended booklet: *Are These the Last Days?*

■ “Being a born again Christian, this knowledge is very useful.”
Tennessee, U.S.

■ “I am a saved born again believer...I can’t go on what man says; I need scripture and I am searching.”
Maryland, U.S.

■ “I am a born again Christian and would appreciate receiving this magazine *The Real Truth* with thanks and may God bless you all very, very much.”
Iceland

Recommended booklet: *What Does “Born Again” Mean?*

■ “I was interested in learning more about Lent, and I found one of your articles. It was very helpful and informative. Thank you. I really like the manner in which you present the material: everything you mention is straight forward, logical. It does not seem to include any denominational bias. It is simply backed by the scripture, just as it should be. Thank you again!”
Connecticut, U.S.

■ “I was searching about lent and its history and accidentally I got your contact. I hope your publication will improve my knowledge to have deeper understanding of my Christian Faith.”
Pakistan

Recommended article: “The True Meaning of Lent”

■ “I wish to know the truth about

important issues in the contemporary world.”
Netherlands

■ “I’m glad I ran across your site because it has valuable information about biblical truth, and that’s what I believe in.”
Florida, U.S.

■ “I am open to see what your magazine has to say.”
Oregon, U.S.

Recommended articles: “Why This Magazine!” and “Why We Analyze News, Trends, Problems and Conditions From a Biblical Perspective.”

■ “I subscribed to the original *Plain Truth* magazine until about 1998.”
California, U.S.

■ “My sister and my mother-in-law were *Plain Truth*

subscribers when I was just a little boy and I used to read it...I got the feeling that if I can subscribe to the magazine, it’s better than the rubbish publications that you have to pay [for] circulating around.”
Philippines

■ “I was a subscriber of *The Plain Truth* magazine way back in the 60s and 70s. I loved reading the magazine...it change my outlook in life.”
Philippines

■ “Thank you for publishing again such an important magazine.”
Japan

Editor’s note: *The Real Truth* magazine continues the insightful analysis of the former *Plain Truth* magazine produced under the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

■ “It is helping to understand more about falsehood being preached in the

world today about Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day, etc.”
New York, U.S.

■ “I need to know what you celebrate, Passover or Easter (the pagan holiday) I have been doing research, and the word ‘Easter’ appears only once in the Bible, and is NOT in the original manuscripts...I am trying (in vain) to find a church that teaches the truth.”
Florida, U.S.

Recommended booklet: *The True Origin of Easter*

■ “I think it is a good thing to provide free offers online because there is always people out there like me who need help in having a better understanding on facts, but there are not much resources.”
Vanuatu

■ “I’ve really enjoy reading your books and magazines.”
Virginia, U.S.

■ “Highly insightful and a revealing exposition of the mystery of life. My eyes are opening!”
Lagos, Nigeria

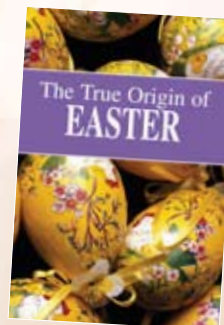
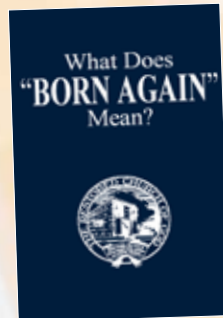
■ “This site is amazing.”
Western Cape, South Africa

■ “Fantastic magazine.”
Ontario, Canada

■ “I am looking forward to reading your magazine...I have been searching for answers to everyday questions and not been satisfied. I think I have finally found what I have been looking for. Thanks!”
British Columbia, Canada

■ “Just want to learn more of what life is all about.”
Papua New Guinea

Recommended book: *The Awesome Potential of Man*



THE TREATY OF LISBON

Europe's Next Step?



Most expect Europe to take another step toward political unity this year. What is the Treaty of Lisbon, and what does it mean for the EU and the world?

BY MARK P. DENECE

THE DREAM OF a united Europe, which empires there have previously attained through history, is alive and well.

With the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1950s, most of Europe has slowly progressed toward fulfilling this dream.

The European Union (EU) currently consists of 27 member states and nearly 500 million citizens, and produces the world's greatest gross domestic product, at \$14.96 trillion.

Yet the EU is not a single legal entity, but remains a fragile union of independent states, unable to sign international treaties, for instance. Therefore, its involvement in geopolitical rela-

tions and processes is bureaucratic and inefficient.

For example, the EU attempted to pass into law a European Constitution in 2004, which most considered a natural "next step" in becoming a unified legal entity. However, the majority of France and the Netherlands voted against it in 2005.

Three years later, the European Union signed the Treaty of Lisbon, intending that all member states ratify the new laws by the end of 2008, and

■ **A UNIFIED BODY:** A photo taken on June 21, 2008, shows the second day of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments at Sao Bento Palace in Lisbon.

PHOTO: FRANCISCO LEONG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

it be in force for the 2009 European elections. Yet a June 2008 referendum in Ireland resulted in “no,” putting the treaty’s implementation on hold. The Irish government will seek to ratify it, via a second referendum, by October 2009.

However, what is the Treaty of Lisbon? Does it differ from the formerly proposed European Constitution, and if so, how?

Recent History

Several treaties currently govern the European Union. For example, the 1957 Treaty of Rome formed the EEC, which the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht amended to form the EU and prepare for the Euro. Both the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam and the 2001 Treaty of Nice consisted of amendments to the Rome and Maastricht treaties. All of these treaties and many others remain in force this day.

In addition, the member states require unanimity to amend any of the EU treaties, which partly explains the difficulty and inefficiency that the European Union faces.

In 2001, the European Council—the highest political body of the EU, consisting of the heads of state of all members—established the European Convention, chaired by former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. Its purpose was to produce a draft constitution. After much debate, the Convention presented the final text in June 2004.

A major goal of the constitution was to replace all overlapping treaties with one set of fundamental laws for Europe: 18 member states ratified the constitutional text; seven postponed their process following the Netherlands’ and France’s rejection.

When it was Germany’s turn to take over the six-month rotating EU presidency in 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared the “period of reflection” that followed the failed

ratification of the constitution to be over. During the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, in March of that year, Germany led all member states to adopt the Berlin Declaration, consisting of a timeline for a new treaty to replace the failed constitution.

That June, the European Council met in Brussels and negotiated a new treaty, addressing key issues. The Polish government was concerned about European Council voting; the

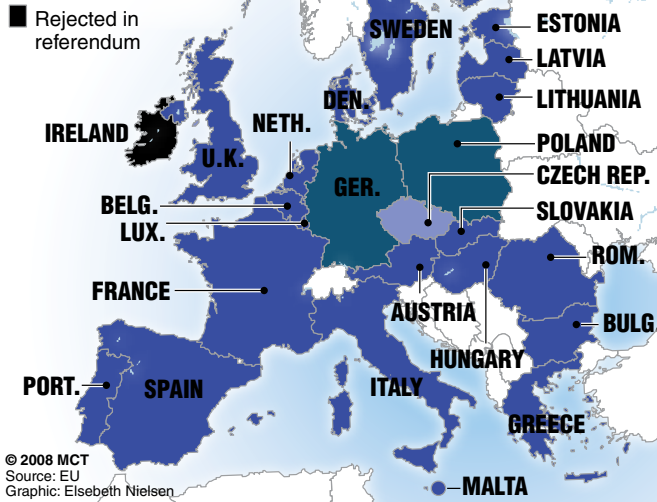
immigration and civil judicial oversight, protection and enforcement of human rights, and an increase in the power of the European Parliament) and by the Treaty of Nice (largely preparation for the admission of new members from eastern Europe, adjustments to the power of the Commission, and adjustments to voting rules to allow easier passage of laws), with a view to enhancing the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the Union and to improving the coherence of its action.”

Significant changes introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon include more qualified majority voting in the EU Council. Therefore, “a majority vote in the Council of Ministers (which represents national governments) will be carried if 55% of nations representing 65% of the overall EU population say yes” (*The Economist*).

More importantly, “majority voting will become the rule in some 50 policy areas currently decided by unanimity: most dramatically migration, criminal justice and judicial and police co-operation, where the European Court of Justice (ECJ) will also gain broad oversight for the first

EU Lisbon Treaty Progress

- Ratified as of Feb. 27, 2009
- Ratification in progress
- Ratified but not deposited with Italy
- Rejected in referendum



© 2008 MCT
Source: EU
Graphic: Elsebeth Nielsen

United Kingdom and Poland were concerned with the EU Charter of Fundamental Human Rights being able to overturn domestic law; and Dutch citizens desired a greater role for national parliaments in the EU decision-making process.

Completed by October, the member states signed the treaty into law two months later in Lisbon.

Ratification was to take place during 2008, with the expectation that the new treaty would enter into force by Jan. 1, 2009.

The Treaty of Lisbon

As the preamble states, the purpose of the treaty is “to complete the process started by the Treaty of Amsterdam (socioeconomic standards, broader

time” (*ibid.*).

This will significantly increase the ability to change and/or introduce law, as well as its enforcement.

The Treaty of Lisbon will also eliminate the pillar system—the co-existence of three separate and equal bodies that make up the EU: the European Community, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters. All functions will merge into the European Union as a single entity, thus enabling it to have a “legal personality”—including the ability to sign international treaties.

The treaty will create two significant offices—President of the European Union and High Representative for Foreign Affairs—presenting a united

position on EU policies. The treaty also allows member states to push ahead with military co-operation.

Commenting on the current six-month rotation of the EU presidency, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once asked, “If I want to call Europe, who do I call?”

The new President will be voted into office by the members of the European Council, and will sit for a renewable, two-and-a-half-year term.

The new High Representative for Foreign Affairs will have political power, a substantial budget and a diplomatic corps. In effect, he or she will serve as the continent’s Foreign Minister, speaking on behalf of the European Union, such as before the United Nations.

Finally, if ratified, the Treaty of Lisbon will make the Union’s human rights charter—the Charter of Fundamental Rights—legally binding. The *BBC* reported that the UK secured a written guarantee that the charter could not be used to alter British law.

Nonetheless, experts are divided on how effective this will be. The bottom line: Most of the above was part of the original constitution treaty, and that “most European leaders acknowledge that the main substance of the constitution would be preserved” (*ibid.*).

The Implications

Because it is a reform treaty (in fact, it is also known as the Reform Treaty), it is amending previous treaties rather than replacing them, as the constitution would have. Consequently, almost all member states have been able to ratify the Lisbon Treaty without holding national referendums.

The constitution contained articles regarding the symbols of the European flag, an anthem, and a motto. While these will continue to exist, they are not part of the Lisbon treaty.

Several countries will continue to hold “opt-out” clauses on various policies, namely Ireland and the UK regarding asylum, visas and immigration; Poland possibly in regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights; and Denmark regarding justice and home

affairs. While these members have garnered political points at their respective homes, they also provide for the possibility that certain countries may find themselves someday on the outside, looking in. This could take form via the “two-speed” Europe, or even possibly with some current members completely outside any formal union.

Some politicians, however, hold a skeptical view, accusing their nations’ governments of propaganda. For example, UK Labour MP Gisela Stuart, who was a member of the European Convention that wrote the original constitution, maintains that 96 percent of the Treaty of Lisbon is a “word-for-word carbon copy”—significant enough that the British people should be first asked, via a referendum. She calls it a “deeply dishonest process” (*BBC*).

Harry van Bommel, spokesman for the Dutch Socialist Party, insists the creation of the new president and the foreign minister imply a significant transfer of sovereignty to the European level, “without any satisfactory democratic control being exercised over this.” He continued, “In our view, it’s up to the people to decide whether to transfer sovereignty to the EU” (*BBC*).

A December 2008 *Economist* article stated the EU, under French President Nicolas Sarkozy, was a glimpse of what the world might be like should the Reform Treaty be successful. Mr. Sarkozy’s leadership was described as a “thundering pace and reckless disregard for the rules”—something Europe is not used to, yet (at least in part) desires.

Due to circumstances (the Irish “no” vote, the 2008 Russian-Georgian War, the current world economic crisis), Mr. Sarkozy did not have time to consult and identify the consensus view. Consequently, his bold leadership startled some and angered others, bypassing the EU foreign policy chief in proposing a peace deal in Georgia. In addition, at an EU-Russia summit, his statements regarding American missile-defense in Poland and the Czech Republic were beyond the normal for safe, middle-of-the-road Europe. He, in a sense, “acted as if the Lisbon treaty were already in force” (*The Economist*).

In summing up his stint as EU president, Mr. Sarkozy maintained that a strong Europe depends on its

Please see LISBON, page 18



■ **A CRY FOR HELP:** Protestors take part in a demonstration calling for a referendum on the European Union (EU) Lisbon Treaty, outside the Houses of Parliament in central London, England (Feb. 27, 2008).

PHOTO: BEN STANSALL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



SWEDEN



Grappling with Economic Upheaval

BY ABDON V. BUENA

IN THE 1990s, the people of Sweden were admired for winning the battle against global financial downturn. Today they are again confronting a wave of recessions—this time greater in scope and magnitude.

Recent financial data shows that Sweden's gross domestic product contracted by 0.1 percent in both the second and third quarters of 2008, placing the country in a state of recession.

"What we're seeing now is a strong negative trend in the Swedish economy which will have major consequences for the labour market," Swedbank economist Cecilia Hermansson told the *Tidningarnas Telegrambyra* news agency.

Bankruptcies in Sweden grew by 12 percent in 2008 to a total of 5,500. The country's credit check company, UC, fears the worst is to come. It estimates that 9,000 companies are in dire financial straits.

"In total, UC predicts that company bankruptcies will increase by a full 25 percent in 2009, which would take us above the 2004 level of 6,900 bankruptcies," said UC's marketing manager Roland Sigbladh.

"There will be a large scale shake-out as well as probable domino effect when sub-contractors in the manufacturing industry are hit by major problems" (*The Local*).

Even Sweden's billionaires have not been spared by the present global financial crisis and stock market crash. A business magazine showed that the number of Swedish billionaires was reduced by close to 30 percent in the

past year. Their losses have reached as much as 200 billion kronor (\$24.7 billion USD)—about 20 percent of their combined wealth.

The economic slump resulted in hundreds of companies having to lay off a large number of workers. By the end of 2008, a total of 199,359 lost their jobs, an increase of 25,338 compared to the previous year. Alfa Laval, a Swedish engineering firm, has said it will cut 1,000 jobs worldwide due to dwindling demand for its services (*BBC*).

People

Sweden has one of the world's longest life expectancies (80.74 years) and lowest birth rates (10.15 births per 1,000 people). The nation's extensive childcare system guarantees a place for all children ages two through six in a public daycare facility. From ages 7 to 16, children participate in compulsory education. After completing ninth grade, 90 percent attend upper secondary school for either academic or technical education.

Free sex education in all four levels, from grade school to college, is part of the school curriculum.

Sweden is one of the richest countries in the world. Both the nation and Stockholm, its capital, are considered the greenest and most livable places on Earth (*The Telegraph*).

The Swedes live in an egalitarian society, which emphasizes the need to provide for its citizens. Its income and wealth are more equally distributed than other nations, primarily because of a large public sector allotment and a high tax burden.

In 2005, Swedish tax-financed consumption, or government subsi-

dies for services such as education and childcare, was about \$100.46 billion USD. This figure constituted 28 percent of Sweden's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the total value of all goods and services produced by the nation that year. Capital spending in Sweden was \$10.72 billion USD, three percent of the nation's GDP. Another \$78.94 billion of Sweden's GDP was redistributed to the public sector through transfer payments, such as unemployment benefits, sick pay and pensions.

To finance its social welfare programs, Swedes pay a tax burden equal to 51 percent of their GDP—the highest in the world.

A Permissive Society

In a 1992 article, *The New York Times* published the following: "From the 1950's through the early 1970's, Sweden was synonymous with the idea of an unfettered and open sexuality, a permissive, even promiscuous society at the cutting edge of the sexual revolution."

"In part, the image of Sweden as a bastion of free love and sexual abandon endures as a memory of the 1960's, a period of open sexual experimentation that was a precursor to the sexual revolution in the United States in the late 60's and early 70's. 'It was a time of radical politics, a time when people believed quite wholly in the idea of personal freedom,'" said Katarina Lindahl, executive director of the Swedish Association for Sex Education.

According to the National Marriage Project of Rutgers, more than 90 percent of Swedish couples live together

before marriage, and 55 percent of all babies are born out of wedlock.

Travel blog writer Terri Mapes (*Scandinavian Travel*) wrote that many Swedes like to swim or sunbathe in the nude. Nudism is prevalent.

History

The Swedish people descend from ancient Middle Eastern tribes that were captured by the Assyrians in 721-718 B.C. Their captors carried them to the Caucasus region (now modern Iran). Ultimately, the Assyrians migrated to northwestern Europe, along with their captives, who settled in northern Europe.

During the Viking Age, the Swedes were feared even by their former masters, known today as the Germanic peoples. The Vikings subdued nations across the European continent and pillaged villages as far as the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian seas.

In 1397, Queen Margaret of Denmark united all the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway) under one ruler. Named the Kalmar Union, it lasted up to the 16th century. King Gustav Vasa fought for an independent Sweden, and succeeded in driving the Danes from their stronghold in Stockholm. He then founded the Swedish state, joining the Protestant Reformation and making Lutheranism the state religion.

In the 17th century, Sweden, with just over one million people, was catapulted to great power by the leadership of the fearless, master military tactician Gustavus Adolphus. He made Sweden the dominant power for the next 100 years. The warrior king was credited as the founder of the Swedish Empire, in addition to breaking the religious dominance of the Catholic Church in Europe.

The 17-year-old king, in 1611, led his armies to a series of impressive victories. Then he joined in the Thirty Years' War (1618-48)—one of the most destructive wars in Europe, which started between the Protestants

and the Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire. His reign became widely known when he penetrated Germany in his war campaign in June of 1630, and began turning the tide against imperial Rome.

However, he died in the battle of Lutzen in 1632, which prolonged the war for many years.



Full name: Kingdom of Sweden

Ceremonial King: Karl XVI

Population: 9.2 million (UN, 2008); 10 percent immigrants

Capital: Stockholm

Area: 449,964 sq. km (173,732 sq. mi.)

Major language: Swedish; English (second language)

Major religion: Christianity; Lutheran 87 percent, other (includes Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist) 13 percent

GNI per capita: \$46,000 USD (World Bank, 2007)

Sources: BBC News, CIA World Factbook

By 1658, Sweden ruled several Danish provinces, as well as what is now Finland, Ingermanland (in which St. Petersburg is located), Estonia, Latvia, important coastal towns, and other areas of northern Germany.

The Dominions of Sweden extended as far as North America, including part of the present-day state of Delaware, which was ruled by a governor general who was appointed as permanent representative by the Swedish monarch.

But the territory was lost to Dutch Governor General Peter Stuyvesant.

During the Great Northern War, which started in 1700, Russia, Saxony-Poland-Lithuania, Denmark and Norway joined forces and attacked

the Swedish Empire for supremacy of the Baltic Sea. Although the young Swedish King Karl XII (also known as Charles XII) won stunning victories in the early years of the war, he failed to achieve total victory and was killed in battle in 1718.

The war ended in 1721, with Sweden defeated. In 1809, Sweden was forced to cede Finland to Russia for losing during the Napoleonic Wars. The following year, the Riksdag (Parliament) elected Karl Johan, French Marshall Bernadotte and the Swedish king's adopted heir, as crown prince. The present Crown King Carl XVI Gustaf is his descendant.

The Swedes ended their last war in 1814.

At the time of the Industrial Revolution, Sweden's agriculturally based society failed to provide economic well-being to its growing population. As a result, about a million Swedes immigrated to the United States between 1850 and 1890. There was a common saying in Sweden around 1930: "Every Swede has a cousin in America" (*The Local*).

At one time or another, the Swedish realm once ruled Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, German, Polish, Prussian, Russian and other Baltic nationalities from the 12th to the 20th century.

Since Sweden remained neutral during World War I and II, the country was able to operate its vital industries. The economic success derived from the worldwide demand for Swedish products laid the groundwork for modern Sweden's social welfare system.

EU Involvement

Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU) in 1995. In September 2003, the nation held a referendum on entering the European Monetary Union; 56 percent voted against it. All parliamentary parties pledged to respect the outcome of the referendum. No new referendum is planned.

In the last half of 2009, Sweden will take her role as rotating president of the EU. □

A New World Order

Solution to the Economic Collapse?

As the world teeters on the brink of financial disaster, leaders are calling for a new world order. Why?

BY KEVIN D. DENEE



THE CURRENT financial collapse has the West hearing phrases not heard before: “exploding deficits” and “devastating inflation,” with the situation possibly getting “worse than the Great Depression.” In the end, the “magnitude of the debacle” may cause the situation to “fragment disastrously” on a global level.

Perhaps the most profound statement heard is that “nations will be redefined and their futures fundamentally altered,” uttered by Rupert Murdoch.

As one commentator put it, “We are all in trouble.”

These *are* sobering times. Uncertainty grips every level of Western civilization.

FAMILIES are uncertain whether they will keep their homes. Housing values have plummeted. Headlines of lost jobs are almost daily. Sudden unemployment is knocking on the doors of fathers and mothers with young mouths to feed.

COMPANIES are scrambling to keep solvent, as stocks tumble and opportunities dry up. Many reported near-

■ **A WORLD OUT OF CONTROL:** Left, Destroyed buildings hit by Israeli air strikes in Beirut, Lebanon. Top right, Unemployed construction workers demonstrate outside the district office of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, D-Los Angeles California. Bottom right, The Pending Home Sales Index, based on contracts signed in Feb., slipped 1.9 to 84.6 percent, according to the National Association of Realtors.

PHOTOS: MAJID (L)/DAVID MCNEW (TOP R)/JOE RAEDLE (BOTTOM R)
/GETTY IMAGES



devastating losses from 2008. Well-known businesses that have thrived for decades are suddenly laying off employees, reporting losses and, in some cases, staring down the barrel of fatal bankruptcy. Icons of Western culture, thought to always exist, may soon be reduced to relics of history.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS are caving in. Having already sought funds from their governments, many are in need of more assistance to survive. Some banks are being nationalized to protect the world economy from collapsing.

GOVERNMENTS are racing to assess the economic situation within their countries. Every option is on the table, with many nations passing bills of unprecedented proportion. Unrest is growing, with some expecting protests and riots to break out.

In January 2009, a columnist for the *Financial Times* painted a bleak future for the West: “This vast reordering of our economic system has only just begun. We shall have to cancel all the self-indulgence of endless welfare spending and cultivate rather more of a work ethic and a sense of self-sufficiency. Expectations must be modified and attitudes altered profoundly. Expect years of negligible growth, permanent high unemployment, declining property prices, higher taxes, crumbling currencies and falling living standards.”

Families, companies, institutions and national governments face tough times. In this interconnected world, as some of the wealthiest nations begin to collapse, others will fall with them.

Many think, *A solution that rises above any one nation must be found.*

A Call for Action

Presidents and prime ministers race to make sense of this ever-worsening situation, convening summits to resolve the problem. Many conclude it cannot be solved on a family, company or country level. New governmental institutions and procedures that stand above any national government must be put in place to protect the global economy. International leaders call on nations to pull together under intergovernmental institutions, in what is commonly called “a new world order.”

Gordon Brown, prime minister of the United Kingdom and a fiscally minded leader, stated, “As some want, we could close our markets—for capital, financial services, trade and for labour—and therefore reduce

the risks of globalization...But that would reduce global growth, deny us the benefits of global trade and confine millions to global poverty.”

“Or we could view the threats and challenges we face today as the difficult birth-pangs of a *new global order*—and our task now as nothing less than making the transition through a new internationalism to the benefits of an expanding global society—not muddling through as pessimists but making the necessary adjustment to a better future and setting the new rules for this new global order” (BBC).

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, in its article “Time for a new world order: PM,” reported that Australia’s Prime Minister “Kevin Rudd has denounced the unfettered capitalism of the past three decades and called for a new era of ‘social capitalism’ in which government intervention and regulation feature heavily.”

The *EUobserver* reported on comments made by German Chancellor Angela Merkel: “Earlier, during a gathering of the world’s business and political leaders at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos...she called for the setting up of an international economic body with powers that would allow it to prevent rather than react to crises.

“New economic principles should be enshrined in ‘a new charter for a global economic order,’ the German chancellor said.

“This may even lead to a UN Economic Council, just as the Security Council was created after the Second World War,” she added.”

Former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote, “While American political judgments have often proved controversial, the American prescription for a world financial order has generally been unchallenged. Now disillusionment with the United States’ management of it is widespread.”

“The nadir of the existing international financial system coincides with simultaneous political crises around the globe. Never have so many trans-

formations occurred at the same time in so many different parts of the world and been made globally accessible via instantaneous communication. The alternative to a new international order is chaos.”

“Every major country has attempted to solve its immediate problems essentially on its own and to defer common action to a later, less crisis-driven point. So-called rescue packages have emerged on a piecemeal national basis, generally by substituting seemingly unlimited governmental credit for the domestic credit that produced the debacle in the first place—so far without more than stemming incipient panic.”

“The role of China in a new world order is equally crucial. A relationship that started on both sides as essentially a strategic design to constrain a common adversary has evolved over the decades into a pillar of the international system.”

“An international order can be permanent only if its participants have a share not only in building but also in securing it. In this manner, America and its potential partners have a unique opportunity to transform a moment of crisis into a vision of hope” (*International Herald Tribune*).

Clearly, such a proposed world order would be economic in nature.

Decades of Calls for a New World Order

Since the early 20th century, mankind has pursued the dream of one world government to solve its problems. Most “solutions” were presented in the context of producing peace and freedom, while eradicating poverty and disease. With injustice and mass suffering evident, thinkers, planners and leaders have, understandably, sought solutions to these horrific, widespread concerns.

With the end of the Cold War, and problems escalating in the Mideast, U.S. President George H.W. Bush discussed a new era in his September 1990 speech to Congress: “A new partnership of nations has begun,

and we stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective—a *new world order*—can emerge: A new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony.

“A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavor.

“Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we’ve known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak.

“This is the vision that I shared with President Gorbachev in Helsinki. He and other leaders from Europe, the Gulf, and around the world understand that how we manage this crisis today could shape the future for generations to come.”

“Once again, Americans have stepped forward to share a tearful goodbye with their families before leaving for a strange and distant shore. At this very moment, they serve together with Arabs, Europeans, Asians and Africans in defense of principle and the dream of a new world order. That is why they sweat and toil in the sand and the heat and the sun.”

Truly, as President Bush stated, “A hundred generations have searched for the elusive path to peace.”

Nearly 20 years have passed since these statements were made—yet ills and troubles continue to plague mankind.

As early as 1917, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson tried to rally the world in pursuit of peace and toward removing the cause of war. He called

for a league of nations to institute “peace without victory.”

On the other hand, the motives for a new world order have not always been noble. *The New York Times* reported on Jan. 21, 1941, “Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka told the Japanese Diet today that Japan, Germany and Italy certainly would accomplish their goal of a new world order ‘if only given time’...”

In 1999, South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki stated, “We cannot accept that war, violent conflict and rapine are a permanent condition of existence for us as Africans... We will make our due contribution to the construction of a new world order that will be responsive to the needs of especially the poor of the world.”

Almost a decade later, considering the depth of troubles in South Africa, has any real progress or contribution to a new world order occurred?

Depending on the leader and the context, the motivation for a multinational order differs. Today’s catalyst for new world order is the economic collapse.

Some nations are reassessing the relations between countries. Many accuse America’s capitalism for the cause of the most recent problems.

In 2005, Russia and China “issued a joint statement on a new world order in the 21st century, setting forth their common stand on major international issues, such as UN reforms, globalization, North-South cooperation, and world economy and trade.

“The statement was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao after their talks.

“During their talks, the two leaders discussed ways to further enhance the strategic and cooperative partnership between China and Russia, and exchanged views on major regional and international issues.

“The joint statement said the two countries are determined to strengthen their strategic coordination in international affairs and promote peace, stability and prosperity of the world” (*Xinhua* news agency).

One cannot deny that powers are shifting.

Insurmountable Difficulties

Why have there been calls down through history for international institutions? The answer is simple. Mankind continues to produce problems and evils, and leaders sincerely look for solutions!

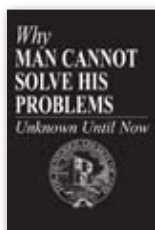
The world is awash in pain and suffering, injustice and corruption, war and conflict. The introduction of the booklet *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems – Unknown Until Now* by David C. Pack perhaps sums it up best:

“The world is filled with problems—disease, pollution, poverty, ignorance, religious confusion, war, terrorism, crime, violence, hunger, immorality, slavery, oppression, political upheaval and much more. Why? With the passing of time come more problems, not less. Why? Also, existing problems grow collectively worse instead of better. Why? Why, at every turn, has man bungled and botched all efforts to solve his truly great problems?”

“Individually, people have never seemed more incapable of addressing and overcoming their personal problems. As with the world in general, the passing of time finds individuals and families drowning under an ever-worsening sea of decadence and seemingly insurmountable difficulties. More and more seem completely incapable of managing their lives.

“Yes, why?”

“Men have created many amazing technological inventions, but they cannot create solutions to their problems. Mankind has harnessed the power of computers to help process vast amounts of information, but human beings cannot correctly process their personal problems. Scientists have discovered much about the size, magnificence and precision of the universe, but they cannot discover the way to peace. Astronomers can find majestic, beautiful new galaxies throughout the universe, but they can-



not find a way to preserve the beauty and majesty of earth. Scientists have also unleashed the power of the atom, but they are powerless to unleash answers to life’s greatest questions. Educators have taught millions how to earn a living, but not how to live.

“The well-known presidential historian and columnist Peggy Noonan summarized the complex, jumbled course that has been mankind’s history: ‘In the long ribbon of history, life has been one long stained and tangled mess, full of famine, horror, war and disease. We must have thought we had it better because man had improved. But man doesn’t really “improve,” does he? Man is man. Human nature is human nature; the impulse to destroy coexists with the desire to build and create and make better’ (‘America’s Age of Uncertainty,’ Knight-Ridder, Nov. 9, 2001).”

In search for solutions to man’s great problems, leaders turn to the possibility of a global government.

Conspiracies Abound

The concept of a new world order has also been the subject of much conspiracy over the last few decades. Many believe that there are unseen, unknown groups of power brokers behind the scenes steering the world to a place where these same individuals can lead a new world order. People go to great lengths to supposedly “connect the dots” regarding elements of society, feeling that their evidence points toward a plot by an unknown group to control all nations.

Some feel that this “new world order” will be brought about gradually by various agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, etc. Others feel that a military power will force it. Others believe that this will begin through a surveillance program that will slowly take control of the global populace.

What Next?

The fundamental question is: What is next for America, the West and the world?

First, as leaders scramble to solve this financial crisis, institutions may likely be put into place to deal with the world’s economy. While America will continue to be a global player, her power and influence will decrease. Mr. Kissinger stated that this financial collapse was “a major blow to the standing of the United States” (*International Herald Tribune*).

Decades ago, the United States was the lone superpower, militarily and financially. This meant that the world’s mightiest country had the most say in making fiscal policies. However, times have changed. All experts agree that power and influence is shifting to other nations.

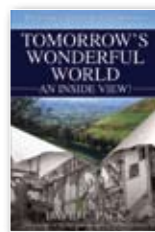
The Bible explains that the United States of America, along with the other primarily English-speaking nations of the West will have the “pride of their power broken” (Lev. 26:19). This financial collapse has, and will continue, to contribute to the decrease of power held by the West.

What about a new world order? The power in the world *is* shifting and will continue to shift. But the “new world order” that conspiracy theorists are convinced of will not occur.

In the coming few years, the Bible foretells that Europe will increase in power, as will nations in the East. But in the end, after even worse troubles, now on the horizon, a stable, peaceful world will be realized, but not through the efforts of man. (To learn more read, *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!*)

Could a new world order just a handful of years from now produce peace and prosperity for all? Will the ultimate goal verbalized by many world leaders finally occur?

Read the referenced book and prove—for your sake and your children’s—whether a new world order *is* on the horizon... □



LISBON

Continued from page 11

“strong nations.” Although the larger European countries do not have more legal rights than the smaller nations, he added they do have more “responsibilities.”

The Delay

Several issues have delayed implementing the treaty. As already mentioned, Ireland voted against it in a national referendum. Under EU rules, a treaty cannot come into force if any of the 27 member states fail to ratify it.

Having obtained pledges from the EU addressing various concerns voiced by Irish voters, the Irish government has agreed to hold a second referendum by October of this year. It is unclear as to what will happen if the treaty fails a second time.

Currently, according to a January 2009 Angus-Reid poll, 55 percent of respondents said they would vote in favor of the treaty; 37 percent said they would oppose it.

Elsewhere, both the Czech Republic and Poland have yet to ratify it. Czech President Vaclav Klaus is a Euro-skeptic, and does not like the Treaty of Lisbon. Even the Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek has tied his country's willingness to ratify the treaty to the proposed installment of a U.S. radar base. As for Poland, President Lech Kaczyński insists on waiting until the Irish question is resolved.

A significant concern regarding the elections for the European Parliament, to occur June 4-7, 2009, among the EU member nations, is that the Irish delay may offer the opportunity for more debate across Europe on the treaty.

It is likely the global economic crisis could bear political consequences, and may have an effect on either the Irish, or the European Parliament vote. The *International Herald Tribune* indicated that “the leader of the Irish

‘no’ campaign, Declan Ganley, said he wanted to field candidates opposed to the Lisbon Treaty in all 27 countries, giving them the ‘referendum they didn’t have.’”

Nick Clegg, leader of Britain's Liberal Democrat Party, said that mainstream pro-Europeans would need to respond with “ever more clarity and the need to be more engaged” (ibid.).

“There is no doubt,” Mr. Clegg added, “that in the teeth of recession with people losing their jobs and worrying about putting food on the table, an angry message of rejection of the status quo could go down well. It is a



■ **EVERY VOTE COUNTS:** Irish President Mary McAleese and her husband Martin McAleese cast their votes for the Lisbon Treaty at St. Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park in Dublin, Ireland (June 12, 2008). Ireland voted in a knife-edge referendum on the European Union's new reform treaty, threatening to plunge the 27-nation bloc into new crisis if it is rejected.

PHOTO: STRINGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

fertile time for populism and simplicity.”

Also potentially complicating the issue is the British Conservative Party's position that if elected, it would scrap the Lisbon Treaty alto-

gether. According to the *Irish Times*, Conservative leader David Cameron has put his party on election alert amid speculation that UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown might call a snap election to take advantage of his rising popularity due to his handling of the recession.

The British Conservatives maintain the treaty dilutes national sovereignty by transferring too much power to Brussels, the EU capital.

In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Mr. Cameron said there was a 50/50 chance for an election as early as April. If the Conservatives won, he stated, they would hold a national referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon by October, and lead a “no” campaign against it. This would wreak havoc on the Irish vote and potentially doom the treaty, throwing the EU into a major crisis.

The Future

The treaty's immediate future remains unclear. Other factors, such as the economic crisis, an election in the UK, or some other major geopolitical event (such as the outcome of the Israeli election, and possible action against Iran) could have a significant role.

Nevertheless, here is what we do know. First, the EU is becoming desperate for changes allowing a stronger, more unified leadership and control of its resources. Second, the Treaty of Lisbon is essentially the same as the European Constitution, and provides for these needs. Third, Bible prophecy indicates we are near the time of the seventh and final restoration of the Holy Roman Empire. (For more information, read our literature *Out of the Ashes – The Rise of Europe*, and *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?*)

Mr. Sarkozy said, “It is ‘untrue’ that institutions stop Europe from taking decisions” (*The Economist*).

Europe's problem is a lack of political will—but that will is on the verge of becoming strong and obvious. □



The Hidden Law of Sleep

Why Is It Vital to Your Existence?

Everyone needs sleep—but why? How much does getting a good night’s rest affect your day? And what happens if your body goes without it?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER AND RYAN L. CASWELL

ABLARING ALARM is the first sound you hear in the morning. Grogginess brings back memories of the restless night before. You bat at the alarm clock, hoping to hit the snooze button and snatch a few more minutes of sleep.

The alarm sounds again. “I have to wake up,” you tell yourself.

With only five hours of sleep, you face a packed day and busy schedule.

Most in the West, especially Americans, wake up exhausted, with the day seeming to begin far too early. The daily pressures of home, family, work and finance weigh on all. A never ending list of tasks vies for our attention, tempting many people to stay up a little later at night.

However, these lost hours of rest are more vital than most realize.

Sleep experts once thought that five to six hours of slumber each night was enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, based on new scientific measurements of the human body, they have adjusted these figures to seven to eight hours. Statistics show that one third of a person’s life is spent sleeping, yet an estimated 40 percent of America’s population averages less than seven hours per night, which experts classify as “mildly sleep deprived.”

William Dement, a pioneer of sleep research, found that there is a correlation between sleep and health. “In maintaining good health, sleep may be more critical than diet, exercise, even heredity,” he said.

Most do not realize that laws and principles govern our health, including the principle of getting sufficient sleep each day. Practicing the rules governing sleep will yield tremendous benefits, such as better job performance, mental clarity and a greater capacity to manage stress.

But disobeying them brings harmful consequences.

Startling Impacts

The most famous manmade catastrophes of the last few decades evidence the serious consequences that can result from sleep deprivation.

Consider the tragedy of the Challenger spacecraft in 1986. One of the primary causes of this explosion was a technical detail overlooked by NASA managers. The engineers, who worked tirelessly on the project, slept for two hours the night before the launch. Experts attribute their impaired judgment to a critical loss of sleep, which doomed the mission to disaster.

Another example is the crash of the Exxon Valdez oil tanker in Alaska in 1989. While many connect the cause of the crash to alcohol, those manning the ship were also severely sleep-deprived. The steering shipmate had only slept six hours in two days! His severely impaired judgment caused him to err, resulting in one of the largest environmental disasters of all time. Thousands of animals died and over 11 square miles of ocean were contaminated with crude oil.

While missing a few hours of sleep here and there seems to have the side effect of making one a little drowsy, a study by David Dinges at the University of Pennsylvania proved otherwise. He found that people are notoriously bad judges of their own mental abilities. Subjects he tested who slept six hours per night over two weeks claimed to be only slightly sleepy.

Yet after impartial testing, he found that the cognitive alertness and attention spans of most subjects was equal to missing two full nights of sleep.

Although this may not seem significant, researchers compare sleep loss to the cumulative effects of alcoholic drinks! A study by the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales measured a subject's cognitive abilities, memory and motor skills after sleep deprivation. Researchers found that those who regularly missed sleep became comparatively "intoxicated!" Given this, author

Jennifer Ackerman concluded that the day after someone sleeps only six hours, he or she will operate with the mental and physical effects of drinking two or three bottles of beer.

Further, Ms. Ackerman considers four hours equivalent to five bottles and an entire night of missed sleep equal to drinking 10 bottles of beer. Imagine the effects of trying to spend an entire day at work intoxicated!

Since the woozy, often disconnected feeling that occurs when one is inebriated does not always accompany sleep loss, most people assume that they can deal with a little tiredness. But the cumulative effects of mild sleep deprivation also cause what are known as "microsleeps." This is a span of three to 10 seconds where sleep pushes through consciousness, causing an immediate distraction or lapse in consciousness. Those who seem to "fade out" for several moments sometimes mistake this as a common, natural occurrence.

However, inadequate rest can have much more dire consequences. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration concluded that this timeframe is just enough to veer hundreds of feet off an interstate—causing one of 100,000 car crashes in the United States annually. This equates to 1,500 fatalities as a result of sleep deprivation.

In addition, in 2005, Eve Van Cauter discovered that sleep loss in contemporary culture is directly tied to obesity. With only four hours of sleep, the body has difficulty regulating blood sugar. To compensate for the energy loss, the body releases hormones telling it to eat to make up for the lack of energy. This is done by reducing leptin in the blood (the hormone triggering satisfaction after a meal) and increasing the amount of ghrelin (the hormone triggering hunger).

The end-result is a strong craving for heavier carbohydrates, even though the body does not need the calories. At its peak, this hunger resembles a 1,000 calorie deficit in a person's diet. Most of these unnecessary calories are then stored directly

as body fat—resulting in significant weight gain over time.

Evening Distractions

Picture a typical day. Between working late at the office and the long commute home, you arrive at home well after 9 p.m. But walking through the front door does not mean your day is over: There is cooking, cleaning and paying bills. By the time your head hits the pillow, it is well after midnight; morning is only a few hours away. The minutes tick off the clock as you gradually drift to sleep.

In the scientific world, it was once assumed that the shift from being awake to falling asleep was gradual, leading to suspended brain activity. But new research reveals that the sharp transition from alertness to sensory blindness is far more important than most realize.

A scientist at the University of California in Los Angeles found that once the brain puts itself to sleep, it immediately self-activates, with quieter portions becoming more active at night.

Another researcher, J. Allan Hobson, a Harvard Medical School professor, stated, "The brain is still roughly 80 percent activated and thus capable of robust and elaborate information processing." This nocturnal process accounts for the varied shifts in brain activity throughout the night, resulting in changes in body temperature, chemistry and sensory activities.

Constant Stimulation

Have you ever woken up and had a "eureka" moment? Perhaps, thunderstruck, you realize after regaining consciousness that there is a much simpler way to perform a physical task, which makes you wonder why you never saw it that way before.

According to researchers, it may be true that you never viewed a certain task that way before, since the previous night your brain reinterpreted the information, stored it, and is waiting for you to make sense of it in the morning.

Ulrich Wagner, a researcher at the University of Lubeck in Germany found that there is evidence that during sleep, the brain interprets, reorganizes and restructures information received during the day. He presented experimental evidence that suggests our brains determine solutions to complex problems during sleep, which we realize only after we awake.

In Mr. Wagner's experiment, sleep was crucial to problem solving. He showed patients a complex series of numbers that they needed to use to solve several numerical problems. However, in this experiment there was a hidden solution only found by combining these numbers in specific sequence. Mr. Wagner found that 60 percent of patients who slept before attempting to solve the problem used the secret answer, over twice the number of those who did not sleep before answering.

According to the study, the brain rearranged the numerical information, allowing patients to perceive the information in a completely different light. They could then see the information the brain rearranged for them and were able to find the obvious solution. This faculty of the brain gave these patients an advantage over their peers.

Several other studies have found that there are 20 percent increases in visual and motor speeds after sleep. The hippocampus, which is a part of the brain responsible for learning motor skills, is also active during the REM phase of sleep. Scientists attribute this activity to the brain performing a type of "instant replay," in which it internalizes the learned skill then determines the most efficient way for your body to perform the action.

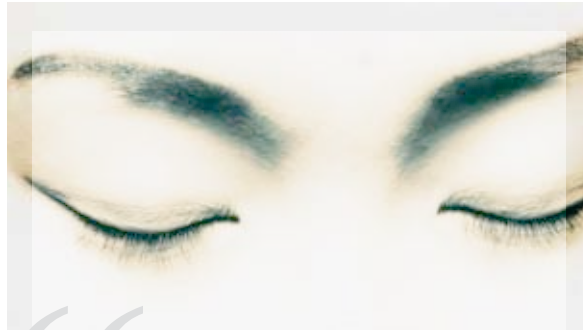
Thus, the common phrase "Let me sleep on it" is more rooted in science than most people believe. When you rise, you truly see the skill in a "new light"—with completely different neuron connections! Your brain effectively hardwires the action into your consciousness, which results in

the ability to perform the task much more efficiently the next morning.

Laws and Principles of Health and Wellness

All people desire to live an abundant, peaceful and productive life. God desires this for His creation. He inspired the apostle John to write, "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers" (III John 2).

As the Creator and Lawgiver, God



“Sleep is just one of the many laws and principles governing your body.”

put in place physical laws—gravity, velocity, inertia and others—to govern and sustain the universe. Yet few recognize that the Holy Bible has much to say about the laws and principles God has set in place to benefit man, whom He made “in His image” and “likeness” (Gen. 1:26-27).

God created the essential nutrients in the earth for humanity's wellbeing. He determined which meats human beings should consume, and which kinds they should avoid.

Through the apostle Paul, God instructed the principle of eating, drinking and living life in general in moderation, instead of excess, and confirmed that “bodily exercise profits [for a] little [season]” (I Tim. 4:8).

The Supreme Lawgiver also established statutes regarding sanitation (human waste, contagious diseases, etc.) During the Black Plague, it was these laws that kept the pandemic

from decimating Jewish populations in Europe.

There is also a commandment that, if obeyed, is designed to rejuvenate us each week. God commands us, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work” (Deut. 5:13-14).

Jesus Christ said the “Sabbath was made *for* man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). God commands us to “sanctify it” (Deut. 5:12)—“keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8)—that is, set apart the seventh day of the week by resting on that day, and refraining from work and the normal pursuits reserved for Sunday through Friday.

Even farmland is to receive a “Sabbath” every seventh year, ensuring the soil would retain vital nutrients so necessary to grow healthy crops and to stave off potential droughts.

Likewise, to “prosper...and be in health” as God intended, we must be willing to recognize the laws and principles that govern our lives.

In regard to daily sleep, recent scientific studies have identified the negative effects of sleep deprivation on one's body and mind. Yet man has a stressful and sleepless track record, proving he is incapable of following laws over his body, even when they are for his own good.

Sleep is just one of the many laws and principles governing your body. If practiced, it will keep you refreshed, rebuild your body and mind, and help you prepare for anything you encounter during waking hours. It affects your cognitive responses and the ability to carry out normal biological processes. To disregard this law brings consequences.

Our Maker did not intend His creation to suffer in an ongoing cycle of sleeplessness and exhaustion. He designed us to enjoy each day living a truly peaceful, rested and thrilling life! □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 4

all these words which I command you, *that it may go well with you*, and with your children after you forever, when you do that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deut. 12:28).

Tithing is for our own good—as are *all* God’s commands. He wants to bless people, but requires their obedience beforehand.

The Christian is told, “Seek you *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; *and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matt. 6:33). Being part of the soon-coming kingdom of God must always be the **FIRST** goal of a Christian. Everything else (including all debts and financial concerns) is less important than this greatest goal. You are promised that when you remember this priority, all other necessary things will be “added unto you.”

First pay your tithes. Do not delay. They belong to God. Even temporary withholding is stealing. Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is *least* is faithful also *in much*: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also *in much*” (Luke 16:10). Tithing is far from the “least” of things that matter to God. Those who are faithful in all matters will be given **GREAT RULERSHIP** (which would certainly qualify as “much”). And be sure to give *offerings* willingly, not grudgingly or sparingly, because God says He especially loves “cheerful givers” and promises they will reap “bountifully.” Read II Corinthians 9:6-7.

Was Tithing Ever Done Away?

Because few groups practice tithing, the average person understands little of its history or practice. Some might ask, “Wasn’t tithing abolished?” Or, “Wasn’t it just for the Jews or the Old Testament Israelites?” Others feel tithing was little more than a ceremonial ordinance introduced by Moses, while still others have heard it was only a form of national, civil taxation. Other religionists claim tithing was merely a

way of caring for the Old Testament poor. Almost no one believes tithes are to be paid to a faithful New Testament ministry. All these ideas, except for the last, are wrong. They do, however, demonstrate the confusion that reigns over the subject of tithing.

The modern nations of Israel are paying—and will pay—a terrible price because of this confusion. Catastrophic punishment is coming on the world because a rebellious mankind has ignored this law! It wants the blessings of obeying God without having to actually obey Him. Most are deceived into believing they can live any way they choose and then blame God when the blessings of peace, happiness and prosperity are missing.

Know this! Any person who steps out in faith to obey God’s tithing laws will be blessed and protected from *horrific prophecies* soon to strike this world. Through God’s promise, he will *escape* the punishment to befall all nations!

Some understand that tithing was practiced in Israel, where people were required to tithe on money, livestock or grain products. What is less clear is what the *New Testament* says about tithing.

First, we must explore the book that discusses the priesthood of ancient Israel. Hebrews has been called the “book about the priesthood.”

Where Is Christ’s Office Today?

I grew up hearing much about a *dead* Jesus, with many depictions of Him hanging crucified! I almost never heard how He was *alive* and sitting at the right hand of God. A few vaguely understood that He would return to Earth as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” But I certainly never heard anyone describe Christ as God’s High Priest. Yet, this is the office that Christ works through today—and Hebrews 7 contains instruction for financing His ministry. **CHRIST’S** Priesthood has always superseded—and long *preceded*—the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel.

True Christians have hope of eternal life because Jesus Christ has given them *access* to the Father. He has

taken them inside the very throne room of God in heaven, “within the veil,” to where human beings have never been allowed before. Christ’s role as High Priest makes this possible. Notice Hebrews 6:20: “Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an *High Priest forever* after the order of Melchisedec.”

Jesus Christ is still the active High Priest of His New Testament Church and ministry. At His first coming, He taught about the kingdom of God. The world focuses on His *Person*, instead of His *Message*. The true gospel is about the coming kingdom of God. After His ministry ended, Christ was crucified and became the Savior of mankind. Afterwards, He was resurrected to sit at God’s right hand in heaven.

Notice this: “Seeing...we have a great *High Priest*, that is *passed into the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an *High Priest* which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:14-15).

These are encouraging words. They show Christ as both High Priest and the *living Head* of the *true Church*.

Many wonder who was Melchizedek. This question has long puzzled Bible students. The beginning of Hebrews 7 makes absolutely plain that Melchizedek could be none other than Christ Himself.

The Moffatt translation best renders “after the order of Melchisedec” as “*with the rank* of Melchisedec.” Christ held the *rank* of Melchizedek when He received tithes from Abraham during the times of the patriarchs.

How and *where* does Christ work today? Ancient Israel did not preach the gospel to the world and it did not have a ministry teaching God’s truths to *all nations*. Israel was one physical nation and did not have the Spirit of God. The Levitical priesthood carried out burnt offerings, animal sacrifices and other physical rituals. The arduous labor of the Old Testament priesthood was very different from the work required of the New Testament ministry. In short,

the Levitical priesthood held a lower, human rank far below the spiritual, divine rank of Christ as Melchizedek.

We discussed how God financed the Levitical priesthood. It should now also be clear that Jesus Christ, as Melchizedek, received tithes many centuries before the Levites appeared. An already-existing tithing system simply *continued* through this priesthood and passed to the New Testament ministry.

Hebrews 7

Hebrews 7:1-5 begins comparing the Levitical and Melchizedek priesthoods. Remember, tithing did not start with Moses and the Levites. “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, *priest of the Most High God*, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a *tenth* part of all...Now consider how great this man was [correctly translated: “this *one* was”], unto whom *even* the patriarch Abraham gave the *tenth* of the spoils. And verily they that are the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people *according to the law*.”

Abraham was no different than either a New Testament Christian or any citizen of Israel. He paid tithes to a High Priest—Christ. The Levitical system always had a high priest. Moses’ older brother Aaron was the first human to hold this office. All Levitical priests served under whoever was the high priest at the time.

Tithing is not merely something practiced during the period of the Levitical priesthood. This practice has existed as long as there has been a high priest—Christ or Levitical—to receive tithes.

Tithing then is God’s system for financing His Work—no matter the age in which His servants live. Notice that Melchizedek, “having neither beginning of days, nor end of life... *abides a priest continually*” (Heb. 7:3). Because Christ, as Melchizedek, had no “beginning,” He existed as a Priest from the time of *Adam*. Notice He “abides...continually.” Christ is still

High Priest of His people. Hebrews 7 goes on to address which priesthood supersedes the other *today*.

While first century Christians needed little instruction about tithing as a mandatory, permanent law, they did need to be carefully taught that the Melchizedek Priesthood of Jesus Christ had been restored and had, therefore, replaced the Levitical priesthood.

Which priesthood—Levitical or Melchizedek—does the Bible consider superior?

Carefully notice: “But He [Melchizedek or Christ] whose descent is not counted from them [the Levites] received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him. And without all contradiction the less [Abraham] is blessed of the better [Melchizedek]...And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he [Levi] was yet in the loins of his father [great-grandfather Abraham], when Melchisedec met him” (Heb. 7:6-10). Christ—Melchizedek—was not “descended” from the Levites. As God, Christ (a *non-* and *pre-*Levite) supersedes the authority of the Levitical priesthood.

The Melchizedek Priesthood has precedence as the greater, superior Priesthood. Now again in force as God’s continuing Priesthood under Christ—it requires financing! We can now read the all-important concluding verse 12: “For the *PRIESTHOOD being changed*, there is made of necessity a *change also of the LAW*.” This should be clear. The law requiring people to tithe to the Levitical system was “changed” in the *New Testament!* There are no assigned Levites today, yet tithes still belong to God. So, He had to *re-designate* to whom they must be paid! Technically, it is correct to say that the law, as it was prior to the Levitical priesthood, has been *restored*—changed back to the way it was from the beginning.

It is helpful to understand the overall reasons for the book of Hebrews. *First*, it was written to prepare the New Testament Church for the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 69-70. The Levitical priesthood would

soon pass from existence—creating a dilemma for those who knew tithes belonged to God and must somehow be paid. *Second*, to teach the nature and function of the priesthood. *Third*, to explain that Christ’s office was *above* the office of Aaron and predated it to the Melchizedek Priesthood, which had no beginning.

Consider what David wrote: “The LORD has sworn, and will not repent, You [David] are a *priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*” (Psa. 110:4). This is actually a prophecy that David, at the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns, will also be considered a priest “after the order of Melchizedek.” This is fascinating! David was a *Jew*, not a Levite, and yet he will one day be a priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood. No wonder Revelation 5:10 says, “And has made *us* unto our God *kings and priests*: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Faithful Christians, with Christ and David, will reign on Earth as *kings and priests!* This is because Christ is King of *kings* and High Priest of *priests* (sadly, few hear of this part of the Christian’s reward). While Christ is the greatest King and the greatest Priest, it is all true Christians who will be the *other* kings and the *other* priests ruling with Him.

What a staggering promise. Christians faithful to this understanding are kings and priests *in training*.

Describing the Church, the apostle Peter wrote, “But *you* are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a peculiar people” (I Pet. 2:9).

After Christ returns, tithes will be paid to all the *other* priests who qualify to comprise this Priesthood. None who are unwilling to pay tithes to Christ today, as their High Priest *now*, could ever be used later, in God’s coming Priesthood. They will have disqualified themselves to *receive* tithes because they were unwilling to *pay* them.

Tithing has always been God’s Law.

Paying God’s Tithes

We discussed how governments collect taxes. In most countries, people do not physically hand their taxes to the coun-

try's leader in its capital city. It goes to regional offices that collect revenue on behalf of the government.

Companies are the same. They have collectors who act as their *representatives*. These function by the authority of, or in the name of, the company. If a customer pays a collector, he considers himself to have paid the *company*—not merely its representative. And no customer considers himself to have paid the salary of the collector, but rather a bill or invoice owed to the company. The company pays the collector's salary.

In a sense, God owns the greatest company in the universe. He employs representatives, or collectors, who receive the payment for bills or invoices *the company has sent the customer!* In essence, God has sent a bill to every human being on earth. As with customers of a company that sends invoices of differing amounts, depending upon the size of the purchase, God "invoices" people differing amounts—whatever is exactly 10 percent of their gross income. When a person pays this to God, the bill is satisfied—until the next invoice is received.

Tithing works in this way. Each time you tithe, you have paid the latest in a long string of ongoing regular "bills" sent to you from God. Actually, His bill is always to be the *first* one paid! God is not willing to stand in line behind other creditors who represent mere human organizations to whom the tithepayer may also have existing or on-going obligations. Remember, God gives 90 percent of your income. *What other organization would do this?*

Another important principle to note: Tithes paid to God work differently from money put in a bank. If you place your money in a bank, you expect that bank to keep careful track of the funds you have deposited and to give you a periodic accounting. The bank remains responsible to you for keeping proper track of your funds. The reason is simple. Though the bank may be holding your money, it is still your money! The same with stocks or other investments. Brokers account to the investor.

Tithing is different! Since tithes belong to God, once they are paid, God (or His representative) is not obligated to explain exactly how, or in what fashion, they were spent. One should never pay tithes to God's representatives and then try to supervise or otherwise watch over the way the ministry or Church headquarters spends them. The ministry answers to God because it is *God* who employs them, not the people who paid the tithes. God owns His "company," and He has the authority to hire (or fire) His employees—His ministers. Tithepayers have no voice in how they are spent.

Proving Who Are God's Representatives

But who are God's representatives? How does one find them? How are they identified? A tithepayer must be absolutely sure he is paying tithes to where God is working. This requires careful thought and research. It is not a decision to be made lightly.

God's tithes belong to Him—and giving them to those who are *not* His representatives is the same as *not paying them*.

If someone owes you \$200 and, in ignorance or through misunderstanding, gives that \$200 to someone else, *you* did not receive your \$200! Upon reminding the person of this, would you be satisfied if he said, "I'm sorry, I paid your \$200 to *someone else!* He said he represented you."

Would you not say, "That's regrettable! But you still owe *me* the \$200 because he did not represent me!"

Of course you would. And so would God. We—*you*—cannot give God's tithes to those who do not represent Him.

There are many ministers in the churches of this world. They all profess to be Christian—to *represent* Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 11:13-15 says that Satan has his ministers. These ministers do not *appear* as Satan's. None say, "I am the devil's minister, you should follow me." For the most part they are just as deceived as those who follow them. Yet, they are counterfeits! They speak and preach in syrupy, sanctimonious and pious-

sounding language that they suppose is "spiritual." Because Revelation 12:9 says that Satan "deceives the whole world," his ministers greatly outnumber the true ministers of God. These men come in "sheep's clothing," pretending to serve God!

Paul recorded, "*Prove* all things" and "*hold fast* that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). Christ said the only way to prove ministers is by their *fruits*. Notice: "Beware of *false prophets*, which come to you *in sheep's clothing*, but inwardly they are *ravening wolves*. You shall know them by their *fruits*" (Matt. 7:15-16). This is a plain warning to all. Do not be deceived. "All that glitters is not gold," and all who come in the name of Christ are *not* His ministers!

God has His ministers and He uses them to lead (under Christ's guidance) His Church.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church." This Church is a spiritual body of specially called out believers. He also said, "the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it." There is only one true Church and our literature explains how to recognize—how to identify—that Church from the nearly 2,000 different professing Christian organizations built by *men*. It is only in this Church that Christ works. No one need be confused!

Christ's Church is described as a persecuted little flock, hated by this world for teaching the truth. However, since Christ promised His Church could not die, it must exist somewhere on Earth today. It is your responsibility to prove where it is, so you do not give God's tithes to a thieving impostor!

It is *only* to the faithful ministry of the true Church—the *only* Church Christ built—that tithes should be paid. Those laboring full-time in the Work of God are hired and paid directly by God! Since tithes cannot be sent to heaven, He designates they go to His earthly representatives.

You must prove who is teaching the full truth of all God's doctrines. *You* must prove who faithfully proclaims the gospel of the soon-coming kingdom of God to the world.

How God Spends His Tithe

We might ask further: How does God *spend* tithes—what does He *do* with them?

Christ gave His Church work to do. “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them...Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have COMMANDED you: and I am with you alway[s], even unto the end of the [age]” (Matt. 28:19-20). This responsibility has never changed in the nearly 2,000 years since Christ explained it. He taught His disciples many truths (“all things”) that His Church has preserved and continues to teach *all over the world*. This is not a duty His ministry can shirk. Nor can it go to the world with humanly devised doctrines, ignoring *God’s doctrines*, commanded to them by Christ!

Though ancient Israel was called the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), it was still a fleshly, civil nation, having no need for a *spiritual* ministry. God selected the Levites to work for Him and take care of the *physical* duties—rituals, sacrifices, ceremonies and ordinances—nationally and locally, of all 12 tribes. The New Testament ministry no longer does these things. Ancient Israel did not have the Spirit of God. The priesthood simply ministered to the *physical* needs of that *single nation*. Their responsibility did not reach outside Israel to “*all nations*.” God was not yet working with people from all regions of the world. Today He is.

True ministers have been called and trained by God. Led by His Spirit, their ministry is of a spiritual nature.

The Church’s Work

Christ gave an extraordinary commission to His Church at the end of the age. Notice: “This *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in *all the world* for a witness unto *all nations*; and then shall the *end* come” (Matt. 24:14). We saw that this included the other knowledge of “all things” He had commanded them. But it is God’s world-ruling kingdom, under Christ

and the saints, that receives special emphasis “before the end come.”

The world lies in chaos. It is confused about who and what man is, and the purpose God is working out on earth. War, famine, disease, poverty and other problems grip the planet. This world is held captive by an unseen being who holds sway over its values, customs, beliefs, governments and religions. The world is blinded to the purpose God is working out.

God’s Work costs money. His Church must continually hire more staff and ministers to perform the many functions of a growing worldwide organization. We publish a vast number of books, booklets, magazines and other literature teaching God’s truth. The Church of God has members around the world who must be fed God’s truth by faithful ministers and elders. The number God is calling is expanding and will continue to as the age draws to a close.

Jesus said, “The night comes, when no man can *work*” (John 9:4). This is true of His final Work. Soon this age will be over and the glorious Return of Jesus Christ will have occurred. We have little time left to finish God’s Work!

Through the biblical law of tithing, God finances it. Doing His Work is the way He chooses to spend His tithe. God calls people into His Church so they can help in preaching and publishing the true gospel to the world.

You may say, “I never knew about tithing.” That may be true, but ignorance of the Law has never been an excuse for disobedience. The true God is very merciful. He freely forgives those who wish to change and seek Him.

I have now done my part. I have taught you the truth about tithing. You have been given *essential knowledge* that you must act on, in order to be given more. Christ said, “*Walk while you have the light*, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the *children of light*” (John 12:35-36). Further, notice this warning to all: “Behold therefore the goodness

and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, *IF you continue in His goodness*: otherwise you also shall be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

We will all be held accountable for what we do with what we know: “To him that *knows* to do good, and does it not, *to him it is sin*” (Jms. 4:17), and “If we sin willfully *after that we have received the knowledge of the truth*, there remains no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26).

These are sobering statements straight from God. A calling (read John 6:44) is occurring when one *understands* the truth upon reading or hearing it. *You* must decide if God is calling you to take part in this great worldwide effort. *You* must decide if you are willing to allow God to train you to become a *king* and a *priest*!

Do not worry over the *size* of your tithes and offerings. The story of the “widow’s mites” has an important lesson for all. Even small amounts, when paid faithfully, carry much weight with God. I have seen many inspiring examples of people who had little but gave much. God always blessed them with more in the end!

Tithing is a law. Like any *other* law, there is an automatic cause and effect relationship. Why do you keep the law of gravity? Because if you break it, you know there will be an immediate, visible and sometimes painful effect. Jumping from a 10-story building brings real consequences.

The tithing law is no different. If we break it, it breaks us. But if we keep it, it keeps us. But there is one fundamental difference between tithing, which is a spiritual law, and physical laws. Breaking spiritual laws rarely brings *immediate* effects on the offender. There is a *delayed penalty*—but a penalty, nonetheless.

Please read the following three books: *The History of the True Church – Where Is It Today?*, and *Which Is the True Gospel?*, as well as *End All Your Financial Worries*. You will be glad you read them.

I urge you to obey God’s tithing command—and reap the benefits. □

Why *The World to Come* Program!



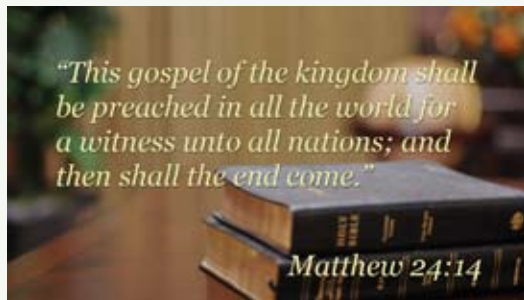
WHY ARE SOME trapped in abject poverty generation after generation? Why do crime, violence, war, rampant immorality and corruption exist? Why are cities, nations, governments, businesses and households facing economic instability?

As the world boils in a cauldron of troubles, people from all walks of life seek answers to life's greatest questions.

"Experts" boldly promote their views—how they think humanity's ills should be solved. They bring extensive experience and knowledge, with multiple degrees from prominent universities. Yet other "experts"—who carry similar backgrounds, speak and write with similar conviction and eloquence—advocate entirely different solutions.

Who is right? Why cannot the world's "best and brightest" minds agree?

People turn to religion and ask, "Where is God?" Instead of finding clear answers—explaining the



causes—to society's ever-worsening problems, they are given only "feel good" phrases, words that sound profound and full of hope, yet lack substance and true meaning.

The World to Come program is different. Presented by David C. Pack, publisher/editor-in-chief of *The Real Truth* magazine, each broadcast explains what the Bible reveals about life's greatest questions, with plain, easy-to-understand answers.

Through daily emails and letters, viewers express their appreciation of the program. Here are samples:

■ "It's an amazing and truthful teaching; that is why I like Mr. Pack's teaching. I would like to learn more and more. I am very glad that I found this website."

■ "I found your video compelling."

■ "Thank you for the message about the true Church. This is the first time I have heard someone I can understand. It is nice to hear a message about God and His Son Jesus from someone that uses the Bible to teach, not just their thinking of what is right and wrong; not their own word, but the Word of God, the Bible."

Through *The World to Come*, Mr. Pack explains the Bible's teachings about true conversion—the American and British peoples in prophecy—the importance of the family unit, and related issues (dating and courtship, how to have a happy marriage, childrearing God's way)—spiritual application of the Ten Commandments—God's Holy Days and pagan holidays—the Church Jesus built, its history and how to identify it today—God's financial system—the true Jesus Christ—and so much more.

The World to Come preaches the gospel of the kingdom of God to "all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14), and follows Christ's command to "teach all nations...to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). □

Watch **THE WORLD TO COME** at www.realtruth.org/wtc.html

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

Does Technology Stunt Children's Social Development?

An increasing number of top scientists and researchers are questioning the effects on children of spending excessive amounts of time using modern technology, particularly social networking websites and cellphone text messaging and their influence on the formation of basic skills of human interaction.

Neuroscientist Susan Greenfield of Oxford University detailed her concerns regarding social networking sites such as *MySpace*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* to the United Kingdom Parliament.

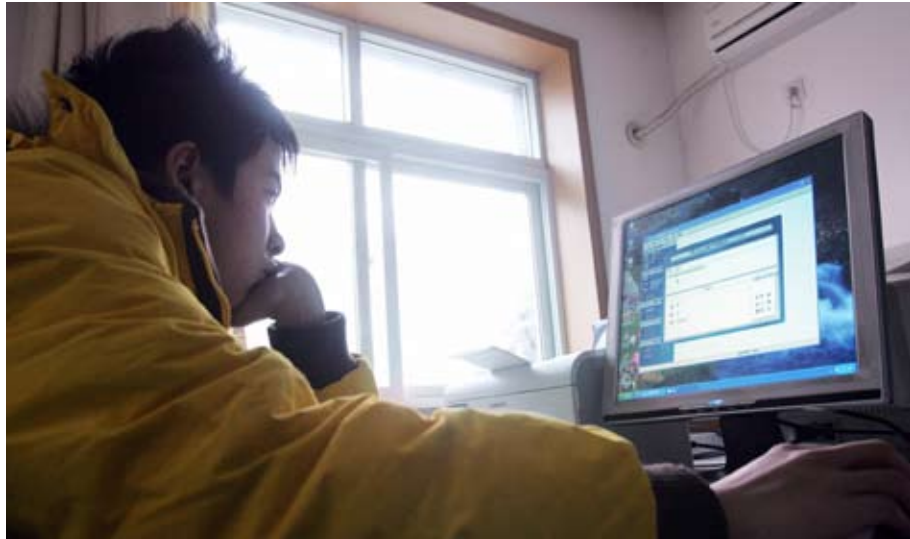
Baroness Greenfield said that while social networking websites give the user a feeling of acceptance, she worried that the activity distanced children “from the stress of face-to-face, real-life conversation.”

Online, children and teenagers can have hundreds of “friends” without having to leave their home or open their mouths.

“Real-life conversations,” Baroness Greenfield continued, “are, after all, far more perilous than those in the cyber world. They occur in real time, with no opportunity to think up clever or witty responses, and they require a sensitivity to voice tone, [and] body language...”

The worries do not stop with social networking sites. A recent study found that heavy Internet use may increase violent and aggressive behavior. The study, published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, documented the Internet use patterns of 9,405 Taiwanese teenagers. Researchers labeled 25 percent of males and 13 percent of females as Internet addicts. Among these, 37 percent reported aggressive behavior within the last year, compared to less than 23 percent for all teens.

The researchers' criteria for Internet addiction included “withdrawal” symptoms—irritability and moodiness when not online, being preoccupied with Internet activities



■ **INTERNET ADDICTION:** A Chinese teenager uses a computer without online games at the Internet Addiction Treatment Centre in the southeastern suburb of Daxing in Beijing, China. The nation had an estimated 2.5 million Internet addicts in 2007.

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

and foregoing physical activities for more time online.

Some experts argue the study does not prove that Internet addiction causes aggression, but the findings do fit with previous research showing technology can negatively influence children's behavior.

A *Washington Post* article questioned the effects of cellphone text messaging on children's social development. The article documented the “text life” of a 15-year-old American girl who “texts at home, at school, in the car, while her mother is driving...during homework, after pom-pom practice and as she walks the family dog.” The teen takes her cellphone to bed.

During one month she sent and received 6,473 messages.

“I would die without it,” the teen told the *Washington Post*.

Of the over 75 billion text messages sent monthly in the U.S., teens ages 12–17 send the most, with an average of 2,272 texts each month per teen, according to Nielsen Co.

While the ability to text does aid in the planning of picking up kids from school or letting a parent know a child

arrived home safely, many researchers say the phenomenon of a “text life” does impact children's social interactions.

“Addicted or not, hard-core texters find it difficult to be ‘in the moment’ with other people because they are constantly being summoned by someone else in another place, said Naomi Baron, professor of linguistics at American University” (*Washington Post*).

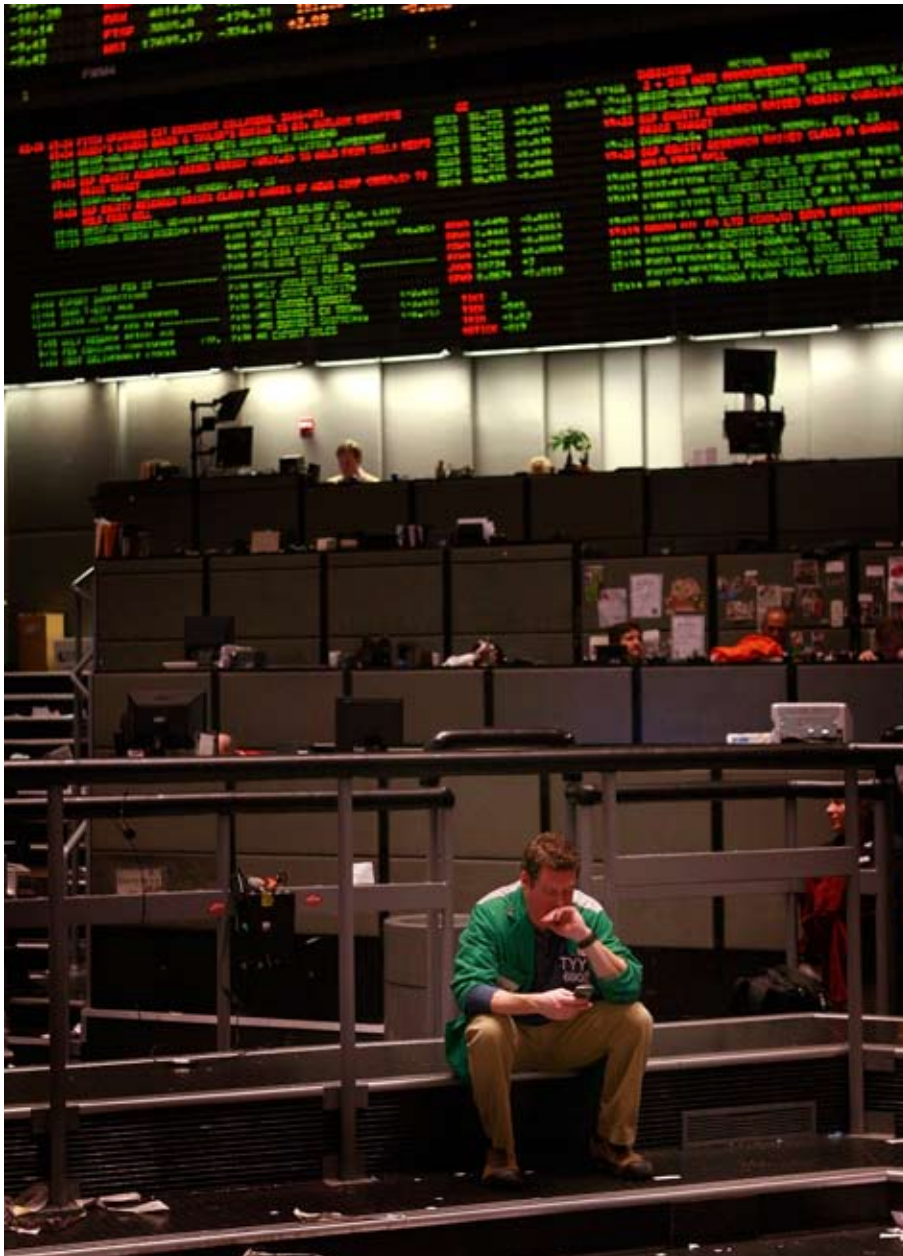
The teen mentioned above also admitted her 200-plus-message-per-day habit does impact her family life. “If I really look into it, I think it is affecting my focus and my closeness with my family,” she said (*ibid.*).

Despite being too early in the digital age to understand the definitive effects from growing up interacting with cellphone keypads and computer screens, the exchanges lack the depth and complexities of face to face conversations.

In her concluding statement to the UK Parliament, Baroness Greenfield said that while digital interactions are enjoyable, the “experiences are devoid of cohesive narrative and long-term significance.” □

ECONOMY & PERSONAL FINANCES

Global Financial Crisis: An International Snapshot



■ **DOW REACHES SIX-YEAR LOW:** A trader takes a break following the close of trading in the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index futures pit at the CME Group in Chicago, Illinois (Feb. 20, 2009). The major indexes closed down but well off their lows after the White House tried to calm worries that the government would nationalize crippled banks.

PHOTOS: SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

As the global economic crisis continues, nations, businesses and private citizens struggle to stay afloat financially.

The U.S. Congress passed the White House-backed \$787 billion stimulus package, whose bailout programs could cost \$9.7 trillion tax-

payer dollars over the next ten years—an amount just \$1 trillion short of the total amount of national debt. The estimated budget plan by President Barack Obama would boost the deficit more than \$1.75 trillion, the highest it has been since World War II. The Dow fell to its lowest level since 1997.

In February, *Bloomberg* reported, “U.S. consumer confidence collapsed this month and home values plunged in December, the latest evidence of a deepening economic slump that Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke today warned may last into 2010. The Conference Board’s confidence index dropped more than anticipated to 25, the lowest level since data began in 1967, the New York-based research group said today. Another report showed home prices dropped a record 18.5 percent from December 2007.”

Automakers, media outlets and other businesses face bankruptcy, job losses, closings and restructuring. The following is an international snapshot of the world-at-large:

Automakers: Germany announced it will lend funds to Opel, due to financial troubles at parent company General Motors (GM). According to German news media, the carmaker, which employs some 25,000 people, will face bankruptcy “as soon as May or June if it does not receive a credit boost from the state” (*AFP*). For Opel to survive, it reportedly needs at least 3.3 billion euros (\$4.2 billion).

Swedish automaker Saab, also owned by GM, filed for bankruptcy protection so it can either restructure as a separate company or be sold off.

The British government turned down van maker LDV’s request for a \$43.6 million bridge loan. The decision threatens to close the Birmingham manufacturing plant and eliminate 850 staff, including thousands of linked jobs.

Bankruptcy: With a dwindling readership, fewer advertisers and more people relying on the Internet for information, newspapers are shrinking their number of pages, downsizing staff, seeking bankruptcy protection and even going out of business.

In an attempt to restructure its debt, estimated at \$390 million, the parent company of two major U.S. newspa-



■ **JOBLESSNESS IN CHINA:** Left, migrant workers, with their skills written on pieces of paper, try to find work at a labor market in Chengdu, the capital of China's southwest Sichuan province (Feb. 5, 2009). As millions of the migrant workers across the nation returned to cities and manufacturing areas from Lunar New Year holidays this week, the government warned at least 20 million others were jobless due to the crisis.

PHOTO: PETER PARKS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



■ **HOME PRICES AND FORECLOSURES:** Top right, Toll Brothers slashed prices on condos by as much as 37 percent following a housing downturn in the New York metropolitan area. Bottom, evicted from their foreclosed home, a family of four live in their van.

PHOTO: MARIO TAMA (TOP)/JOE RAEDLE (BOTTOM)/GETTY IMAGES

pers, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Daily News*, filed for bankruptcy protection. The E.W. Scripps Co., citing multi-million dollar losses, announced the closure of its Denver daily, *Rocky Mountain News* one day before the almost 150-year-old newspaper produced its last issue. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, owned by the Hearst Corp. is also debating a possible shutdown, which could result in a loss of more than 200 jobs.

The Ritz Camera chain was another casualty of the changing times of instant technology, with film sales plummeting while digital cameras and related equipment rose. Ritz Camera filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

Even the world of glamour was not immune to the current economic downturn. Modeling agency Irene Marie Models, famous for launching the careers of several supermodels, closed its doors and is seeking bankruptcy protection.

Economic meetings: Prior to the G20 meeting in London on April

2, European leaders met at Berlin, Germany, and agreed that "all financial markets, products and participants must be subject to appropriate oversight or regulation" (*Reuters*).

National, state and local government and private sector leaders worldwide continue to hold town hall meetings across the U.S. to discuss job opportunities and ways to avoid business and home foreclosures.

Joblessness: China saw its highest urban unemployment rate in five years, while the number of jobless claims in the U.S. reached an all-time high.

America's largest tire maker, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., plans to cut nearly 5,000 jobs in 2009, while Germany is expected to lose 5,000 jobs and the European Union is projected to lose 3.5 million.

Property: The New York metropolitan area is seeing slashed prices on luxury condos. On the other hand, with fewer customers and less sales, more small businesses are receiving eviction notices due to failure to pay rent.

Upswing businesses and projects:

Movie box office grosses were up 20 percent, theater attendance was up 16 percent over last year and secondhand stores increased their revenue. Gold prices hit \$1,000 an ounce, as stock prices and real estate values continued to fall. UK pawnbrokers are seeing higher profits.

States are beginning to plan how to use their share of the stimulus package. Florida is developing a road-widening project, and part of New York's money will be used to support public housing projects, and social welfare programs like Medicaid.

Economic outlook: Global analysts agree that infusing large monetary quantities into the world economy will help it to recover, but worry that the global community will not be able to repair itself quickly enough.

In response to the changing times, Media baron Rupert Murdoch warned his staff, "We are in the midst of a phase of history in which nations will be redefined and their futures fundamentally altered." □

