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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



A Bloody Day,
A Bloody Nation

THE REAL TRUTH

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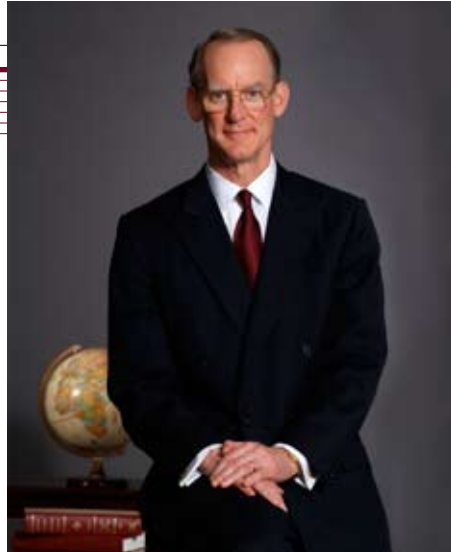
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Does Hell Exist?

IN 1999, POPE JOHN PAUL II said this about the nature of hell: “*Rather than a physical place, hell is the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy.*”

A few years earlier, popular televangelist Billy Graham told *Time* magazine, “The only thing I could say for sure is that *hell means separation from God...When it comes to a literal fire, I don’t preach it because I’m not sure about it.*”

And at a recent community gathering outside Rome, Pope Benedict XVI stated that hell “really exists and is eternal, even if nobody talks about it much anymore.” Benedict, formerly the enforcer of Catholic doctrine, also told gatherers that if sinners fail to “admit blame” they risk “eternal damnation.”

The Question

The idea of an ever-burning hell has frightened countless millions!

What *really* happens to the wicked after death? Are they “doomed to hell,” where their “souls” roast in “torment” forever? If hell exists, and the wicked go there, *where* is it and *what* is it? And *when* do they go? What about the resurrection of the dead? And the parable of Lazarus and the rich man?

There are many popular beliefs about the fate of unrepentant sinners. Why such confusion? What are the Bible answers? Here is the *truth* about hell!

Several years ago, a well-known unrepentant mass murderer was executed. A grim-faced relative of one of his victims appeared at a press conference shortly afterwards and pronounced that the killer was now “burning

in hell.” It was obvious that the relative also *wanted* this to be true just as sincerely as he *believed* his own statement. What *was* this killer’s fate? *Did* his crimes doom him to roast in hell forever? Most professing Christians would answer “yes.” But is this what the Bible teaches?

Popular Belief

The most common image of people “roasting in hell” pictures a God willing to burn people for all eternity without ever totally burning them up. Apart from what the scriptures teach, ask yourself, what kind of God is capable of this? Modern “human rights activists” recognize the terrible evil of torture—even in its *temporary* forms. Would the loving God of the Bible design an *everlasting* torture chamber? If so, He would have to witness—for the rest of eternity—the suffering of those that He had condemned to such a “hell.”

We might also ask: How enjoyable could salvation be for the saved, if they were forced to watch their children or parents—and other loved ones—screaming in pain and agony for the rest of time? Do you see the absurdity of this idea? Yet millions upon millions come to this conclusion when they accept the beliefs surrounding the popular concept of hell.

Consider what the *Encyclopedia Americana* says about hell: “...As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions...whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment...Some have thought of it as the place created by the Deity, where He punishes with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through the worship of false gods have angered Him. It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, never ending.” An additional

quote, also from the *Encyclopedia Americana*, makes this stunning admission about the almost universal acceptance of the popular belief about hell: “The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian and Christian theologians are essentially the same.”

Dante's Inferno

Almost no one understands that it was primarily pagan poets who authored today's widely believed concept about an underground, ever-burning hell.

Much of the tradition surrounding this subject came from Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) famous work *Divine Comedy*. In it, he described his view of paradise, purgatory and hell. Notice this quote from a book about his life, *Dante and His Inferno*: “Of all poets of modern times, Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization than any other man since his day... He wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell—a long poem containing certain phrases which have caught the attention of the world, such as, ‘*all hope abandon...ye, who enter here!*’ This had a tremendous impression and influence on the popular Christian thought and teaching. His *Inferno* was based on Virgil and Plato.”

This makes obvious where Dante got his ideas. He believed that the pagan philosophers Plato and Virgil were divinely inspired. His fascination with the Greek philosopher Plato caused him to accept Plato's ideas about the immortality of the soul as described in his famous work, *Phaedo*. Here is what the *Encyclopedia Americana* says about Virgil: “Virgil, pagan Roman poet, 70-12 B.C. Belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages, including Dante, believed he

had received some measure of divine inspiration.”

Few know the true origin of the beliefs that they hold. Fewer still even wish to know! We have just laid bare, in the quotes above, the real origin of this belief. Did *you* realize the source of these ideas? The concept of an ever-burning hell comes from *outright paganism!* We will see that the popular version of hell has never had anything to do with the true teaching of the Bible.

A Popular Scripture

Perhaps the most familiar and often-quoted verse in the Bible is understood by almost no one. John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Millions routinely quote this verse, while ignoring an essential phrase within it.

Reread it! Those who receive salvation are promised that they “should not *perish*” but “have *eternal life!*” If hell is a place of eternal torture, then the people suffering this torment must *also* have eternal life. But the verse says, “should not *perish.*” It does not say, “Should not suffer eternal life in torment.” How does the word *perish* relate to the popular teaching about hell and hell fire? Why did God inspire John to use the word *perish* if this is not what He meant?

The Wages of Sin

If you are employed, you receive regular paychecks. They represent wages paid to you for work done. What about God? Does *He* ever pay wages for work? Notice Romans 6:23: “For the *wages* of sin is *death*; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This verse exactly mirrors John 3:16! Eternal life is contrasted to DEATH—to PERISHING! The wages of sin is *death*, not eternal torture in hell.

There is no mystery regarding the meaning of wages that an *employer* pays an employee for his work. Why should there be confusion over the meaning of wages that *God* pays a sinner for his works? God says He pays the wicked a paycheck of *death*—not life in a place of torment. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. It states that “scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35) and “Your [God's] word is truth” (17:17). If we are to believe that the Bible is unbreakable truth, then we must believe that *death means death* and *life means life!* How sad that most do not understand these straightforward verses.

Before examining a number of additional verses about the subject of hell, important groundwork must be laid. The idea of an ever-burning hell is inseparable from the popular belief that all human beings have *immortal souls*. We must examine what God says about souls. It is not what you may think!

Do People Have Immortal Souls?

Most people do not understand the relationship between physical men and souls. In Sunday school, I was taught that human beings are born with immortal souls. The common belief is that, upon death, the souls of sinners go to hell forever, since they are immortal. Is this what the Bible says? If the wages of sin is *death*, could the Bible also teach that people have immortal souls?

Genesis 2:7 says, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul.” This verse does not say that men *have* souls, but that they *are* souls. Adam became a soul—he was not given a soul. Then, almost immediately, God warned him, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the

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Easy to Get, Easy to Abuse

Generation Rx and the Spiritual Void

Prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse
is on the rise—why?

BY RYAN P. DENEÉ

PICTURE AN IDYLIC suburb in Anytown, America, where homes are well-kept, lawns are mowed, trees trimmed, houses painted, paved driveways occupied by SUVs and sedans, and homes filled with families—your typical “all-American” family living the American dream.

Now add to this image: A teenager gets into one of the vehicles and goes on what has become a regular trip to a local store. The trip seems innocent enough, just picking up some cough or pain medicine, something done thousands of times a day for proper reasons.

But this young person has a *different* purpose in mind. Due to the regu-

larity of such purchases, his ultimate purpose will go unnoticed.

Upon returning home—back to a house and neighborhood in which most of the world would never get a chance to live—the over-the-counter cough medicine will be refined to extract the active ingredient, increasing the intensity of the “high” the drug will produce. The refining process is easily obtained from the Internet after a few effortless searches, providing detailed instructions with pictures to make every step clear and understandable.

The active ingredient of the cough medicine will produce extreme euphoria and, if taken in large enough doses, feelings of invincibility or “out of body” experiences and other hallucinations—what some have called mind-expanding, seemingly “spiritual,” experiences.

Sadly, this type of drug abuse can all too often go unnoticed and bring the most unfortunate side effect—death!—needlessly shattering the lives of many youths and their families.

The Big Picture

In a time when so many in the Western world are blessed with a high standard of living as never before, it may seem difficult to understand why many turn to substance abuse.

Recent statistics, reports and analyses show there is some good news on the war against the use of illicit drugs. Teen use of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, LSD and other drugs has been reduced by up to 23% over the last five years.

This is great news by any standard, but it does not give the complete picture: At the same time this decrease occurred, a disturbing trend in over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription drug abuse dramatically increased.

The abuse of licit drugs is prevalent. Several celebrities have recently made news headlines due to their alleged abuse of pain relievers. But their examples are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to licit drug abuse, a problem that exists “under the radar” at every level of society.

COMMONLY ABUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Abuse of prescription drugs has become increasingly widespread among teens and young adults, now ranking second—only behind marijuana—as America’s most prevalent drug problem.

(Below are examples of the types of licit drugs being abused, and some of their symptoms.)

OPIOIDS

Name: Codeine, cough syrups, etc.

Signs, symptoms: Respiratory depression, decreased mental status, hypotension, cardiac dysrhythmia, bronchoconstriction, constipation, decreased intestinal motility, lethargy, coma

Name: Oxycodone, Oxycontin

Signs, symptoms: Respiratory depression, decreased mental status, hypotension, cardiac dysrhythmia, hypoxia, bronchoconstriction, constipation, decreased intestinal motility, lethargy, coma

DEPRESSANTS

Name: Propoxyphene, Darvon, etc.

Signs, symptoms: Respiratory depression, seizures, cardiac toxicity, nausea, vomiting, anorexia, constipation, abdominal pain, drowsiness, coma, confusion, hallucinations

Name: Benzodiazepines, Xanax, Valium, etc.

Signs, symptoms: Respiratory depression, hypothermia, hypotension, nausea, vomiting, impaired speech and coordination, amnesia

STIMULANTS

Name: Amphetamine, Adderall, Dexedrine, etc.

Signs, symptoms: Hypertension, agitation, headache, seizures, dehydration, hyperthermia, shock

Name: Methamphetamine, Sudafed, Desoxyn, etc.

Signs, symptoms: Hypertension, agitation, headache, seizures, dehydration, hyperactivity, coma, pale skin, restlessness, overly talkative, insomnia, paranoia, aggressive behavior, hallucinations

Source: *Saunders Nursing Drug Handbook 2003*

The journal *Pain Physician* published a comprehensive review on this topic entitled, “Prescription Drug Abuse: What is being done to address this New Drug Epidemic?” The report shows a shocking 556% increase in sales of oxycodone/Oxycontin, a 500% increase in therapeutic grams used, a 568% increase in non-medical use, and a 129% increase in opioid-related deaths (excluding heroin)!

Data from a report by the California Poison Control shows that since 1999 teen abuse of Coricidin pills, Robitussin cough syrup and other common medications had risen ten- to fifteen-fold for children ages 9 to 17.

A 2005 study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America places teen abuse of cold medications on par or higher than the abuse of illegal drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine, methamphetamine (meth) and heroin.

Prescription and OTC drug abuse is not limited to America. A United Nations group recently reported this problem is quickly passing the abuse of all illegal drugs worldwide.

The main reason licit drugs are gaining popularity among the youth is the ease of access, as these are widely available in drug stores, grocery stores and home medicine cabinets. Abuse takes many forms, such as ingesting cough syrup or pills at three to ten times the recommended dosage, or even going to great lengths to extract the active ingredients; once isolated, the users can smoke, snort or ingest them.

The most commonly abused pills are the painkillers Oxycontin, Vicodin and Percocet. Even medications for ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)—drugs such as Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta and Strattera, along with the common cold medicines such as Coricidin and Robitussin—are used to get high. Coricidin and Robitussin are sought for the active ingredient dextromethorphan hydrobromide (DXM), which abusers claim gives a high similar to taking ecstasy—“trip-like” effects such as mild distortions of color and sound, strong visual hallucinations, out-of-body sensations,

confusion, slurred speech and the loss of motor control.

Among teens, abuse takes many different turns. There are reports of an increase in the number of parties or gatherings for the purpose of sharing and abusing drugs that were collected, bought or stolen. The pills are thrown into a bowl and kids take a handful, hoping to get high.

The gravest concern is that partygoers do not know exactly what they are taking or the effects of mixing the different medicines together. This can have fatal consequences.

Prevention

Before addressing the underlying cause of this problem, we must first examine some of the methods used to counter this trend.

The first line of defense generally used to prevent or reduce drug abuse is education—teaching the side effects of using certain substances. Sadly, when it comes to the abuse of licit drugs, especially OTC cough medicines, there is much work to be done.

Those who should be most effective in educating the youth are parents; however, most are utterly failing in this matter. While nine out of ten parents have discussed the dangers of drugs with their teenagers, less than a third of teens say they learned significant information.

According to an annual study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, three of five parents discuss drugs such as marijuana “a lot” with their children, but only a third of parents discuss the risks of abusing prescription or OTC cold/cough medicines.

Because parents have been taught to look for all the classic signs of illegal drug abuse, they are missing this new trend.

Some of the signs to watch for are: items disappearing from the medicine cabinet; empty pill bottles or pill packages in and around the home; packages arriving unexpectedly; changes in sleep and eating patterns; declining grades; loss of interest in friends; changes in behavior; and the presence of unusual chemicals in or around the home.

There are specific things parents and guardians can do, such as taking inventory of all medicines, and tracking what is used and when; instead of stockpiling pills, only buying what is needed; throwing out leftover pills when done and locking the medicine cabinet.

As awareness of licit drug abuse increases, preventative steps are also being taken outside the home. Some of the top pharmacies in the country now require customers to be 18 years of age to purchase anything with DXM, and have limited the number of boxes of Coricidin (two per purchase) regardless of the customer's age.

U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Michigan) has introduced legislation making it illegal to sell DXM products to any person or company not affiliated with the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration).

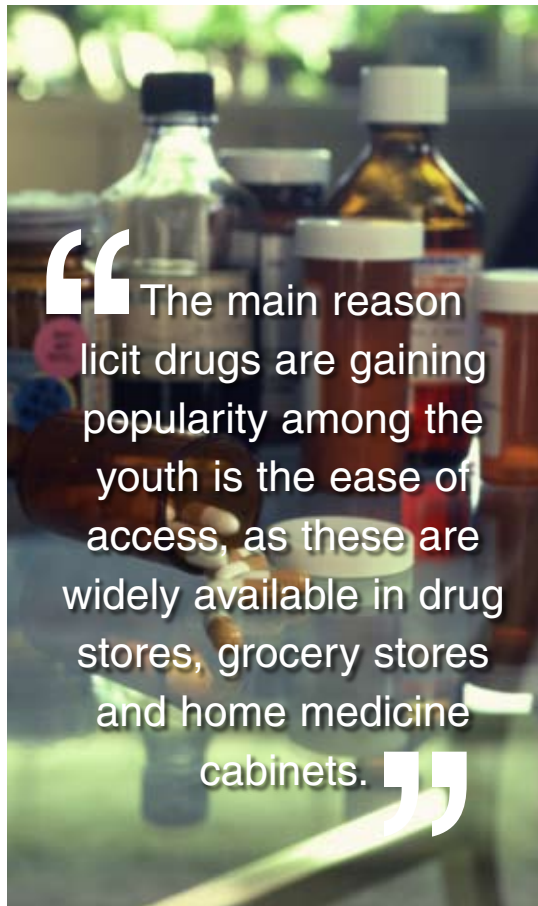
The Consumer Healthcare Products Association is pushing for federal legislation to ban online sales of pure DXM, and is also working to shut down websites that promote the drug's recreational use.

Why the Problem Exists

Generally, there is a simple answer as to why prescription and OTC drug abuse exists: They are easy to get! Convenience stores sell certain over-the-counter medicines, and almost every major grocery store and mass merchant now includes a pharmacy as part of their operation.

The accessibility of these drugs extends to the Internet; with a simple search, one can find online pharmacies willing to sell the pills. Some companies will even sell the raw form of DXM. In a recent study, over half the teens surveyed claimed that the drugs are "available everywhere"!

Again, not only are the pills easy to get, but information on how to abuse them abounds on the Internet. Social networking sites provide detailed instructions and accounts of personal experiences. Some even provide videos



of their latest "trip" and announcements of the next time users plan to get high!

Ultimately, the worldwide web provides a synergy of information offering a quick exchange of approaches, ideas and methods promoting abuse at a speed and depth that is hard, if not impossible, to stop.

Teenagers today are the most medicated generation yet, earning the name "Generation Rx." They have such a false security about the safety of abusing prescription and OTC medicines, over 40% consider them safer than illegal drugs; 31% believe there is nothing wrong with abusing them once in a while; 29% believe pain medication prescribed by doctors is not addictive; and alarmingly, 55% do not strongly agree that using cough medicines to get high is risky (*Partnership for a Drug-Free America*).

Because pain relievers and cold medicines are legal, many teens presume these to be "safer" to abuse than illegal drugs, further driving this growing trend.

Yet there is a greater underlying CAUSE behind mankind's tendency to abuse medicine and drugs.

Irony of Our Age

As never before in history, knowledge is freely available throughout nearly all walks of life. Yet the knowledge that mixing certain chemicals can produce fatal side effects seems to be widely disregarded. As mentioned earlier, partygoers randomly take handfuls of pills, not stopping to consider what they are ingesting or the consequences of combining excessive amounts of potentially harmful medication.

Consider how a former DXM abuser finished a recount of what can only be described as a horrible episode of tremendous drug abuse: "*There was nothing better to do, and there still isn't.*" Even the lessons that should be learned by experience—by the "school of hard knocks"—are ignored.

Today's Information Age was foretold long ago in the Bible, a time when people would run "to and fro" around the earth and knowledge would be increased (Daniel 12:4). Exactly as prophesied, the volume of knowledge in the whole world *has* dramatically increased. Yet, paradoxically, ignorance has *also* dramatically increased! A recent poll in the United States revealed the appalling level of ignorance regarding the Bible—the FOUNDATION of all knowledge.

Few are aware that there are two opposite ways of life: (1) the way of GIVE—outgoing love and concern, first to God and then to neighbor—and (2) the way of GET—putting the self before everyone and everything else, seeking every sensual pleasure possible and deciding for oneself right from wrong.

Human beings have produced great works of art, gone to the moon and back, built mega-cities, reduced illiteracy, made great advances in medi-

Please see **EASY**, page 16



GERMANY'S Vision for EUROPE

BY RICHARD H. HEYMANN

GERMAN CHANCELLOR Angela Merkel proposed her nation's vision for the future of Europe on Sunday, March 25, 2007, as she hosted the signing of the "Berlin Declaration" in Germany's capital city.

The two-page document—brokered for months by Ms. Merkel

among 27 European leaders—is an acknowledgement of the European Union's past achievements, a call for the revival of a draft constitution, and a reminder to reform respected but ill-equipped political institutions.

Failure for reform to accommodate an ever larger European Union "would be a historic error," she told

fellow leaders prior to the signing ceremony.

Ms. Merkel is persuasively and insistently working toward a more unified Europe—one that would be able to "act decisively to satisfy hopes and needs of people of Europe, for a secure and prosperous future."

Despite the fact that only three pens inked the Berlin Declaration—those of Angela Merkel, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and

President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Poettering—all 27 member countries were represented at the ceremony. A tentative agreement of a “renewed common foundation” for Europe—an allusion to a revised draft constitution—was established. These member states were not even asked to sign to prevent “embarrassing refusals,” according to a *Stratfor* intelligence report.

Vocal Opposition

Most notable among the constitution’s detractors are France and the Netherlands, which together had suspended the hopes of EU constitutionalists in 2005 by vetoing the draft treaty through referenda until at least 2006, after which the mandatory period of “pause and reflection” ended.

Since then, Ms. Merkel has been working closely with the French government—even refraining, at times, from disturbing political waters—to facilitate a preeminent partnership between the two influential nations. Thus far, the fruit of those efforts has been largely symbolic.

Adding to Germany’s struggle toward European unification, Poland’s President Lech Kaczynski recently stated, “The present idea would allow the EU to take over much of the running of national states, and that is not right in my opinion. Poland understands that, in certain issues, it is good to be a stubborn partner” (*Euronews*).

Only days after the staging of the Berlin Declaration, Poland demanded the proposed EU voting system detailed in the draft constitution be tailored to increase the authority of countries smaller than France and Germany.

The power struggle between EU members appears continuous and the situation remains unstable; a unifying force or circumstance will likely be required to allay differences.

A Draft Constitution

The current draft of the EU constitution is a 1,000-page document that centralizes power, provides for common symbolism (e.g., a motto, anthem,




**German Chancellor
Angela Merkel**

Motto: “Creating Europe together”

GERMANY’S EU AGENDA

- Resuming debate on EU constitution
- EU energy policies
- EU foreign policies (Turkey, Middle East)
- EU economy
- Environmental issues (global warming)
- Cooperation on security and trade

MCT \ Source: European Council, AP

flag, annual holiday, etc.) and offers the populace a somewhat left-of-center adaptation of America’s Bill of Rights. The draft requires abdication of national sovereignty to EU courts, inaugurates a single EU president to replace the current rotating office shared by member nations, and institutes a single office of foreign minister—with the opportunity and authority to address its own foreign policy.

Nations that ratify this draft will find themselves, as a whole, bound to a currency, military, populace and religion that will become a counterweight to the United States, though possibly more cumbersome to govern.

German Political Models

Ms. Merkel’s current ambition is to present a “road map” at a June EU Summit in Brussels, which will reveal

plans for constitutional ratification by mid-2009. However, she rejected the possibility for a European *übernation* to emerge: “There will not be a European federal state, we will maintain the diversity of the nation states” (*Bild*).

Recent and more aggressive attempts to unify Europe through the German ideal have failed.

In a 2001 gathering of fellow leftist leaders in Berlin, then-German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder pressed a vision for a centralized Europe: “We need to strengthen our European institutions and decisively to further develop the European integration process.”

Only hours earlier, Mr. Schroeder had led a committee of his Social Democratic Party, which, without a single dissenting vote, approved plans for a strong EU executive branch, accompanied by a two-chamber parliament with expanded powers.

The emerging German political model sparked a contentious and emotional debate over the future of Europe. Many nations within Germany’s sphere bristled with alarm at the mention of a federated EU, citing their desire for autonomy. Among those were France and Britain, represented by then-leaders Lionel Jospin and Tony Blair, respectively. However, at that time both dodged public requests to confront the German proposals.

Providential Opportunity

Angela Merkel’s philosophy of garnering consensus and safeguarding her vision through careful political accommodation has been largely successful. As captain of the third largest economy in the world and Europe’s single largest population, having EU leadership thrust upon her affords Ms. Merkel the flattering role of reluctant hero—far preferable to that of firebrand, as was the case with her predecessor.

Consequently, the chancellor’s vision is moving forward step by step, vote by vote, month by month.

Advancing a distinctly German strategy in 2007 is expedited by the coincidental timing of Germany’s simultaneous presidency of the EU



PHOTO: MCT

THE POPE'S VIEW

A reference to Europe's foundational Judeo-Christian ethic or even the mention of religion is noticeably absent in the Berlin Declaration.

Pope Benedict XVI commented from Rome, "It is no surprise that today's Europe, while it purports to be a community of values, seems to increasingly contest the existence of absolute and universal values."

He added that Europe is committing an apostasy of itself in the process, warning of loss of identity.

As far as the Vatican is concerned, to accuse European leaders of apostasy is the ultimate insult. Benedict hopes it will grab the attention of the influential in Europe.

The *Catholic Reporter* observes, "Christianity is post-Western, Europe is post-Christian." A changing religious demographic on the old continent dictates delicate lan-

guage in order to attain unanimity and ratification of a revised draft constitution.

For example, France has taken a secular stance toward the preamble of the draft EU constitution, pressuring (in part) the drafters to write, "the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe," instead of agreeing to a direct reference to God or Christianity. France's opposition highlights the animosity of the political wrangling and the sensitivity to religious matters between EU member states.

However, mindful of Rome (even before the pope's criticisms surfaced), a center-right division of those leaders in recent attendance in Berlin—including the German Chancellor—adopted a separate declaration mentioning "Judeo-Christian roots" as well as the contribution of Christian Democrats in Europe's integration. □

for the first half of the year, and of the Group of Eight (G8). Representing roughly 65% of the world's economic power, the G8 nations assemble annually, with the rotating presidency selecting the agenda.

Leading up to the G8 conference in June, Germany remains a formidable exporter of goods worldwide, its unemployment rate has eased and a recent major tax increase has not dampened economic activity as much as many had feared.

Adding to Ms. Merkel's favor, U.S. President George W. Bush's political capital is being spent on a campaign of thrust and parry with America's Democratic Party, while Britain's Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac are heading toward the electoral exits, creating a timely vacancy of leadership on the world stage.

Lastly, Ms. Merkel is largely supported by EU leaders due to political successes, including negotiating a consensus on global warming. The European Parliament stated, "We used Commission proposals to get agreement in Council on far reaching

conclusions...if it succeeds in setting ambitious objectives a lot of work is still needed to flesh them out—but that is how politics works."

Make no mistake: Angela Merkel owns a providential opportunity to advance a German political vision.

Continental Rewards

German benefits from a federalized European Union are cultivated from a broad palette. They include a single European market hungry for German exports, a highly competitive euro, a favorable employment situation due to artificial barriers favoring its citizens, a debate over smaller than feared net contributions to the EU and largely successful foreign policy, according to a study by two German non-governmental organizations.

Additionally, national prestige and power naturally accompany leadership in important areas of economy, voting bloc size and political momentum.

Success nourishes success.

Unlikely Support

For as much as Britain has embodied the Atlanticist ideal of coopera-

tion between Europe and Northern America, Prime Minister Blair has espoused a stronger, more centralized Europe. Mr. Blair suggested he could hand over plans for a Mark II constitution to his successor, arguing a new treaty was needed to modernize the enlarged EU's voting system and institutions.

Mr. Blair, whose attendance at the Brussels summit this year will be one of his last acts as prime minister, said the issue "needs to be resolved, and the sooner it is resolved the better" (*Business Day*).

Despite resultant agreement with Chancellor Merkel on the issue of a draft constitution and institutional reform, Mr. Blair has always favored a "European defense policy to complement NATO, while [French leader Jacques Chirac] wanted the EU to have a defense doctrine independent of the United States" (*International Herald Tribune*).

As unintentional accomplices to achieve a German ambition, both Britain and France successfully lob-

Please see **GERMANY**, page 16

Who is JESUS CHRIST?

PART III

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

ONE OF THE most central tenets of Christianity is that Jesus was the prophesied Christ, the Messiah. Time and again, Jesus referenced His fulfilling that role—sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly. If it can be proven He was not whom He claimed He was, then Christianity would collapse. If He was not the Christ—the prophesied coming King of an eternal kingdom—then why should anyone believe His words? He would be an imposter, and thus should be rejected.

Can it be verified that Jesus fulfilled the numerous Old Testament prophecies concerning the Christ? If so, why did the Jews of the first century reject Him?

Expecting a Deliverer

Sprinkled throughout the Old Testament, mainly in what are called the Major and Minor Prophets, are scores of prophecies describing a coming “messianic age,” or “Millennium”—a time of universal peace, prosperity and abundance. A time when war and nonstop bloodshed will be a thing of the past. The world peace all long for will finally be achieved during the rule of Jesus Christ. Even the nature of animals will be changed.

Here are but a few of these prophecies:

■ “And He [the Christ] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*” (Isaiah 2:4).

■ “*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Isa. 11:9).

■ “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isa. 11:6).

■ “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but *Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited*” (Zechariah 14:9, 11).

The Jews in the first centuries B.C. and A.D. were very familiar with these scriptures and looked forward to their fulfillment with eager expectation. They well understood that the Messiah would usher in a time unlike any other.

Under years of Roman occupation, the Jews expected the Christ to arrive and free them from Rome’s rule. Conditions for the common Jew were harsh. Peasants had to depend on crops for survival. Not only did they need enough crops to last until the next harvest, they also needed extra grain to seed the next round of crops, adequate food for their livestock, food to use in trading, and food for religious rituals and celebrations. Many found it difficult to meet these needs.

Making matters more difficult, the Roman government demanded more, taxing the peasants as much as 40% of what they produced. This was in addition to the 10% (tithe) they paid to the Temple. Many peasant families would borrow to survive, which often led to a loss of their land and becoming sharecroppers on the very land they had once owned.

However, not paying tribute was also an undesirable option, as the Roman government viewed this as rebellion and would not hesitate to use military force. On occasion, during times of war the Romans would also pull resources from those under their authority. They could demand additional food from the Jewish province to help other areas fight invaders.

All of this amounted to an impossible situation for the Jews. But the only options left were to (A) accept the oppression of the Romans, or (B) reject it and become enemies of the empire, which would lead to war.

Thus, the idea of one coming to end the tyranny became ever more present in the minds of most Jews. Conditions were ripe for the Christ’s arrival. This led to a number of self-proclaimed false christs rising up and convincing some they were in fact the long-awaited deliverer of Israel, leading insurrections against the Roman government. But they were nothing more than imposters, and all of them failed in their self-appointed missions.

It is in this Messiah-hopeful environment that Jesus was born, in 4 B.C. But it wasn’t until He reached the age of 30 that He began to preach to the masses, in 27 A.D. Over the course of His three-and-a-half-year ministry, only a tiny few believed His claim to being the long-awaited Christ.

Why?

Rejecting the Messiah

Numerous times throughout His ministry, Jesus informed others that He was the Christ, though usually in a subtle fashion. Most rejected His claim, often citing Old Testament scriptures as proof He could not be the coming Messiah. This rejection generally stemmed from

Jewish tradition or from misinterpreting the scriptures.

The first account of this is found in the book of Luke. Just after His baptism and being tempted by Satan in the wilderness for 40 days, Jesus entered a synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and read from the book of Isaiah:

“And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:17-19).

When He finished reading these scriptures, Jesus sat down, with everyone in the synagogue looking curiously at Him. Then He said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).

Those present were no doubt familiar with this prophecy in Isaiah, and that it was one the Christ would fulfill. The people in the synagogue marveled at His words, asking, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22). In other words, “How could Jesus of Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, possibly be the Christ? We have known Him since He was a little boy. This can’t be the Christ.” Jesus simply did not fit their profile of the Messiah.

A common thought was that the Christ would sort of “magically appear.” Many believed that, after His birth, Christ would hide Himself from the masses for a considerable amount of time. Thus when He would begin to preach, no one would know His background.

Notice John 7:27: “Howbeit we know this Man whence [from where] He is: but when Christ comes, no man knows whence [from where] He is.” This thinking can be found in a common Jewish proverb of the time: “Three things come unexpectedly: (1) a thing found by chance; (2) the sting of a scorpion; and (3) the Messiah.” Since many knew Jesus’ parents and even knew

Him as a boy, in their minds, He could not possibly be the Christ.

Consider in the book of John another example of why Jesus was rejected. There He explained that He would be “lifted up from the earth,” or crucified (12:32). This idea of the Christ being executed in this manner perplexed some, as they believed the Messiah would live forever: “We have heard out of the law that Christ abides for ever: and how say you, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” (12:34).

The Old Testament, which was the only Scripture available during the time of Jesus, nowhere states that the Christ would not die. In reality, it clearly states the opposite, which we will see later.

However, there are prophecies that show the Christ’s *reign*—and His *kingdom*—will endure forever, as found in Daniel chapter 7: “And there was given Him [the Christ] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an *everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*” (vs. 14).

Many read these and other scriptures and correctly noticed that the Messiah’s kingdom was to last forever. They then concluded that, once He appeared, He could not possibly die. To them, His death would appear to directly contradict God’s Word.

Yet Jesus’ death did not conflict with Scripture. In fact, it was clearly foretold! Perhaps more than any other series of verses, the 53rd chapter of Isaiah unmistakably identifies that the Christ was to be killed—and for a reason.

The chapter opens by asking, “Who has believed our report?” Certainly few have believed what God has spoken through the prophets, and ancient Israel had a track record of not heeding their words. It is fitting that this chapter on the Christ opens with this question, as many have not believed this report.

Verse 2 describes there would be nothing significant about the Christ’s appearance; He would look quite ordinary, and there would be nothing beautiful about Him. Verse 3 indicates He would be despised and rejected, and

would not be noted as having any value. These verses have been confirmed by history. Jesus was not of noble appearance and was despised and rejected—to the point of being executed.

Verses 5 and 6 explain exactly why the Christ, as Savior, had to suffer: “He was wounded for *our transgressions* [sins], He was bruised for *our iniquities* [sins]: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the *iniquity* [sin] of us all.”

Before coming as a conquering King (upon His Second Coming), the Christ had to first take mankind’s sins—both physical and spiritual—upon Himself (at His First Coming). This happened when Jesus was severely beaten (“wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities”) and crucified. And right before dying on the stake, the Father forsook Jesus (Matt. 27:46), as at that point He took on the sins of humanity, and thus was counted as sin—of which the Father can have no part. All have sinned (Dan. 9:11; Rom. 3:23); as a result, all are under the penalty of death, which both the Old and New Testaments make clear (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). Jesus paid the penalty of death in our stead.

Amazingly, Jesus was viewed by the Jews as having been rejected by God because He was *not* the Christ. They counted Him as cursed and afflicted by God because of what He did—what He taught. The people did not comprehend that Jesus’ death was necessary. Notice Isaiah 53:4: “Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: *yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*”

The reality was that “it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief” for “an offering for sin” (vs. 10). “He [the Father] shall see of the travail of His [the Christ’s] soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities” (vs. 11).

Please see **JESUS**, page 17

Fulfilled Scriptures

Throughout the past 2,000 years there have been about 40 cases of individuals claiming to be the Messiah, but only one individual is backed 100% by Scripture: Jesus of Nazareth. And only He has used those Scriptures to prove His claims and has fulfilled every prophecy in thorough detail.

Recorded hundreds of years before Jesus' arrival, as many as 60 major prophecies concerning the Christ can be found in the Old Testament. Twenty-nine of these were fulfilled within the final 24 hours before Jesus' crucifixion.

Here is a sampling:

■ **Jesus would be betrayed by a trusted friend.** Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus was prophesied in Psalm 41:9: "Yes, My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up His heel against Me."

In John 13:18 and 26, Jesus explains this prophecy would be fulfilled by Judas Iscariot. He said that the disciple to whom He would give a piece of bread would be His betrayer: "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me. He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

Jesus explained why He informed the disciples of this prophecy: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am He [the Christ]" (13:19). Jesus knew He was the long-awaited Christ, but wanted to ensure that His disciples, both then and throughout the centuries, would believe Him.

■ **The price of the betrayal would be 30 pieces of silver.** The silver paid to Judas for the betrayal of Jesus was prophesied in Zechariah 11:12: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

The fulfillment is found in Matthew 26: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (vs. 14-15).

■ **Jesus' disciples would forsake Him.** "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zech. 13:7).

Upon being arrested, the disciples (sheep) of Jesus (Shepherd) "all forsook Him, and fled" (Mark 14:50).

■ **Jesus would not retaliate when being accused.** "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

Matthew 27:12 indicates that "when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing." Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, also tried to get Jesus to answer His accusers: "Then said Pilate unto Him, Hear You not how many things they witness against You? And He answered him to never a word; inasmuch that the governor marveled greatly" (vs. 13-14).

■ **Jesus would be executed with criminals.** "And He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). In Matthew 27:38 we find that there "were...two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left."

■ **Jesus' body would be pierced.** The books of Psalms and Zechariah reveal that the Christ would be pierced. "They pierced My hands and My feet" (Psa. 22:16). "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10). These were fulfilled when Jesus was crucified, His hands and feet nailed to a stake, and when a soldier pierced Jesus' side. The apostle John explains part of the fulfillment:

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34). John was an eyewitness to this event, as indicated in verse 35, and verifies this was fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah: "And again another scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (John 19:37).

■ **None of Jesus' bones would be broken.** "He keeps all His bones: not one of them is broken" (Psa. 34:20). The fulfillment is indicated in John 19: "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs" (vs. 32-33).

Once again, John verifies that this prophecy was fulfilled: "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken" (vs. 36).

■ **Those witnessing Jesus' crucifixion would cast lots for His clothing.** "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture" (Psa. 22:18). John testifies, in John 19, that this was fulfilled by Roman soldiers: "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots" (vs. 23-24).

■ **Jesus would be offered vinegar and gall.** Matthew 27:34 indicates that Jesus was offered vinegar before dying on a stake. This was prophesied in Psalm 69:21, centuries beforehand: "They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

Various studies have been performed calculating the odds of these prophecies being randomly fulfilled by one individual. The odds of just eight being fulfilled in any one person are one chance in 10^{17} , which equates to the number 1 with 17 zeros behind it!

To comprehend the enormity of this number, we can compare it to the probability of a blind man locating a marked silver dollar in a sea of silver dollars scattered across Texas two feet deep, each one stacked on top of the other!

What about the probability of 48 of the 60 major prophecies on the Christ being fulfilled by one individual? 1 in 10^{157} , or the number 1 with 157 zeroes behind it! This is greater than the number of atoms in the entire known universe!

As you can see, though many still raise numerous objections and reject Him, a number of prophecies exist that point to one individual as having fulfilled the role of the Christ—the Jesus found in the New Testament. □



PHOTO: MCT

THE VIRGINIA TECH MASSACRE MAKING SENSE OF THE CARNAGE

ON APRIL 16, 2007, all eyes were on Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University as the deadliest school shooting in America's history played out. The nation watched for hours as the body count continued to rise, finally resting at 33.

Only days after the tragic event, people looked to place blame on someone, something—anything that could be held responsible for the bloodshed. In hindsight, they scrutinized decisions that were made and the warning signs of the troubled student-killer; many offered their opinions on how things could have been done differently. Some asked, “How can we prevent this in the future?”

Thousands searched for hope and healing. Some meditated on the state of the nation. Others looked ahead, trying to find a way to bring about a world in which such appalling violence never occurs.

The REAL TRUTH magazine examines and explains tragic events from a unique perspective—through the spiritual lens of the Bible, offering the “big picture” as to why such events happen, and what to expect in the future.

The following article is part of a series of online articles (www.RealTruth.org) in which *The REAL TRUTH*—using the plain truths found in the Scripture—provides answers most readers have never heard before, truths not expressed by the world of traditional religion. Together, these articles present good news, along with a sobering warning. ■

Articles in the Online Series

- “Why Does God Allow Suffering?”
- “Is Anyone Safe?”
- “The Disappearance of True Courage”
- “Just Ahead!—Healing, Comfort and Recovery Worldwide!”
- “A Bloody Day, A Bloody Nation”

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

IT'S NOT SUPPOSED to happen here!, thought millions of Americans. Iraq, certainly. Elsewhere in the Middle East and parts of Asia, Africa and other regions of the world, definitely. *But not here!*

No one expects to be gunned down in a college classroom; no one anticipates being murdered in the hallway of his campus dormitory—certainly not in the most powerful and prosperous nation in history.

Yet on April 16, 2007, 32 lives were brutally taken at Virginia Tech—without warning—the result of a deranged mind seeking “revenge” on students and faculty who did him no harm.

A bloody day.

In the aftermath of the bloodshed, bomb threats were made against schools across America. Plans for potential copycat massacres were uncovered. A NASA contract worker “went postal,” apparently over a poor employment review, and murdered a hostage before killing himself. A fourth-grader brought a disabled hand grenade to school because he thought it would be “cool.”

And in the wake of these events, a young woman stared into the camera of a cable news network, pleading for the American people to pray for her friend, who she said was shot in the leg during the Virginia Tech shooting spree.

Yet her story was a lie, a callous hoax, a cold-hearted deception before millions of television viewers. Meanwhile, 32 people had died in a pool of their own blood and others suffered from gunshot wounds, broken bones and bruises.

A bloody nation.

Speaking of the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel, prophecy states, “The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery,

A Bloody Day, A Bloody Nation



■ **PAIN AND SUFFERING:** Virginia Tech freshmen (top) support each other during a memorial service on Tuesday, April 17, 2007. The widow of a professor (bottom), who was shot to death in Norris Hall, is helped by her son.

PHOTOS: MCT

they break out, and blood touches blood” (Hosea 4:1-2).

In Ezekiel 22, God likens the modern house of Israel—primarily the American and British peoples, along with Canada, Australia and other birth-

right nations—to ancient Jerusalem, which is spiritually called Sodom (Revelation 11:8). He declares, “The city sheds blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and makes idols against herself to defile herself. You are become guilty in your blood that you have shed” (Ezek. 22:3-4).

Turn on the TV, and what will you see? The pursuit of pleasure at almost any cost: prescription drugs for sexual enhancement—

music videos glamorizing all things debased—reality shows giving the untalented and the uncouth their “15 minutes of fame”—television “comedies” and dramas that place adultery, profanity and foul living on a pedestal,

to be emulated by millions of fans.

Surf the Internet, and what will you encounter? The pursuit of pleasure taken to the extreme, with images of wanton sex acts in every combination depraved minds can devise—with filth passing itself off as music, freely available with just a mouse click—with shallow celebrity gossip masquerading as “news”—with email scams fishing for unsuspecting prey who can be lured into financial snares—with teens proudly posting to their webpages intimate details of their lives, unknowingly setting themselves up to be stalked, harassed...or worse.

A generation of pleasure seekers, living recklessly and without discretion, ignorant of the divine fury scheduled to be unleashed from above. A people whom God says “sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face,” and “are all estranged from

Me through their idols” (Ezek. 14:4-5).

What happens when a people “shed blood” and defile themselves with their idols?

“And you have caused your days to draw near, and are come even unto your years: therefore have I made you a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from you, shall mock you, which are infamous and much vexed” (Ezek. 22:4-5).

Anti-Americanism is on the rise around the world. European nations were quick to criticize America’s “gun culture,” but dared not criticize the Islamic world for its share of violence. Countries that once feared the saber-rattling of Washington have grown voices, loudly calling for the downfall of the “American Empire.” The U.S. can no longer even count on Britain as it had done in past generations.

What happens when leaders in government and industry wield power over the weak and helpless to “shed blood”—to extort, receive bribes and impose high-interest usury upon the “have nots” (vs. 6, 12-13)—leaders whom God likens to “wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain” (vs. 27)?

“The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yes, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully...Therefore have I poured out My indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, says the Lord God” (Ezek. 22:29, 31).

What happens when a nation spouts religious rhetoric, asserting to be righteous and God-fearing—yet claims God’s Law is “done away” and “Grace, not works, is all you need”?

Of religionists who falsely claim to represent Him, God declares, “They have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned My holy things: they have put no difference

between the holy and profane, neither have they shown difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them” (Ezek. 22:25-26).

What happens when a nation removes God’s Law from being prominently displayed on government property—commandments, statutes and judgments that serve as “wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)?

Its citizens walk in spiritual darkness: “We grope for the wall like the

blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men” (Isaiah 59:10).

Failing to heed Proverbs 14:34—“Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”—the hypocrisy and adultery prevalent among leaders in government, industry and religion naturally trickle down to the family unit, ripping it to shreds: “In you have they discovered their fathers’ nakedness: in you have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one has committed abomination

Virginia Tech timeline

Monday, April 16

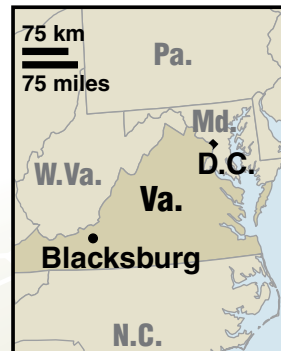
7:15 a.m. Gunfire reported in West Ambler Johnston dorm; two found dead

9:01 a.m. Package received at Virginia post office and addressed to NBC News in New York

9:45 a.m. 911 call alerts police to gunfire at Norris Hall; police find 31 dead, including gunman

Tuesday, April 17

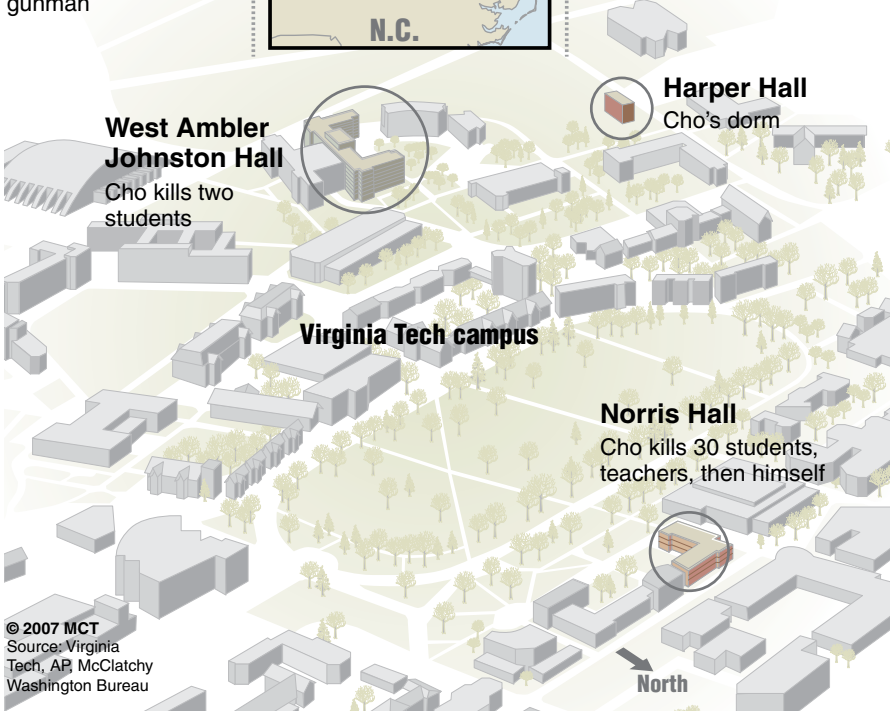
Gunman identified as Cho Sueng-Hui, senior English major and resident of Harper Hall



Wednesday, April 18

Authorities reveal that in 2005 Cho was confronted by police after stalking two female students and spent time in a mental facility

4:42 p.m. AP reports NBC received a package from Cho including a 1,800-word recorded manifesto, 23 video files and 29 photographs; package handed over to FBI



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Source: Virginia Tech, AP, McClatchy Washington Bureau

with his neighbor's wife; and another has lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter" (Ezek. 22:10-11).

Husbands and wives no longer understand or appreciate their God-defined roles. Fathers and mothers have no idea of what it means to "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6). Thus children are left to their own devices.

What happens when a nation seeks every pleasure imaginable, people whom God says "have despised My holy things, and have profaned My Sabbaths" (Ezek. 22:8)?

They no longer remember the special sign that identifies the Creator and His people (Ex. 31:13-17), and end up losing their national identity. They scoff at the idea of being descended from ancient Israel, who lost their identity after being carted off as slaves to foreign lands. They ignore God's annual Sabbaths, which together reveal

the path to achieving the wonderful future in store for humanity.

What happens when nations that have benefited from the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—abundant crops and land, healthy livestock, and protection from military conquest—rely on international alliances rather than on the God who gave them national success?

They reject their Maker, His divine protection and deliverance, to engage in spiritual adultery, taking on "lovers"—political allies—who will eventually turn on them (Lamentations 1:1-2).

And when all the lovers of the modern house of Israel turn on her, these words, written thousand of years in advance, will become reality: "Thus says the Lord; Behold, I am against you...Seeing then that I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall My sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: that all flesh may

know that I the Lord have drawn forth My sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more...every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it comes, and shall be brought to pass, says the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 21:3-5, 7).

A sword is being prepared, "sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furnished that it may glitter" (vs. 10), an instrument of bloodshed for a nation consumed with shedding blood daily.

What happens when a "rebellious nation...impudent children and stiffhearted" (Ezek. 2:3-4) refuses to examine itself and take heed?

Another bloody day will come. Another university massacre—another 9/11 attack—another day of bombings in London and other world-renown cities—future massacres that will appear suddenly, increasing in number and intensity.

An onslaught of bloody days for a bloody nation. □

READER COMMENTS

As part of our goal to continually improve the quality of our online magazine (www.RealTruth.org), we have recently enabled Internet users to comment as they sign up to receive weekly email updates of new *REAL TRUTH* articles, "World News Desk" briefs and special reports. The response to this new feature has been tremendous.

Below is a sampling of the responses received over the past month:

INDIA:

- "Simply great!"
- "There is something different from other magazines."

JAMAICA: "Thanks for your informative magazine..."

JORDAN: "It is my pleasure to sign up for *The REAL TRUTH* online. Thank you very much for sending me your Bible Introduction Course lessons."

NIGERIA: "I feel the publications are educative and objective in terms of knowledge and updates on global issues."

PHILIPPINES: "Keep up the good work. Very informative and inspiring!"

UAE: "Excellent articles."

UNITED STATES:

- "For so long I have been searching, not knowing what I was searching for, but realizing I had to be missing something and I wouldn't find it in the traditional churches. Then I found you, quite by accident...I can't seem to stop myself, I've become a human sponge desiring to know the truth. Thank God for you."
- "This is only the second

or third time that I have visited your website. I have used a couple articles as sources for school projects. Each time I read one of your informative articles I learn something new. Keep up the good work."

■ "I found you by Googling the question: 'How can we relate (explain) a tragedy from a biblical perspective?' Thank you for your insight into the world's situation!"

■ "You have no idea how excited I was to find your website with all of these wonderful truths explained. My extra bonus was the [*World to Come*] broadcast.

I added you to my favorite site so I can listen to you as I work. Thank you so very much for your willingness to walk in the truth of God's Word."

■ "I once received *The Plain Truth* magazine several years back in the 1990s. I have read *Mystery of the Ages* by Herbert W. Armstrong and *The Incredible Human Potential*. I would like very much to reconnect with this magazine and any literature from you that can help me grow..."

EASY

Continued from page 5

cine—while at the same time struggle to solve universal problems: starvation, disease, social injustice, government corruption, terrorism, war, poverty, crime, unwanted pregnancies, divorce, broken families—and drug abuse!

Why? Man is incomplete.

While animals can build nests and dens, men build houses, skyscrapers, office complexes. While fish and other creatures make their home in the sea, man can cross the ocean, explore its depths, transport goods and peoples from continent to continent. While birds and insects can fly through the air, men fly in state-of-the-art jets from city to city, country to country, across the world.

What makes human beings different from animals?

While God created animals with brains, He gave man a *mind*—the human brain combined with the “spirit

in man” (Job 32:8). It is the mind that empowers man to be creative. Yet the human mind is incomplete, only being able to know and increase in physical matters. In order to understand *spiritual* knowledge, the mind needs to be infused with God’s Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit there is a void in the lives of men. In a world cut off from God, mankind has sought to fill it by turning to and abusing the physical creation—by trying to find peace, joy and happiness *chemically*.

Galatians 5:19-21 outlines the fruits of human nature, what the labors of human beings produce without God’s Spirit. Verse 21 lists “drunkenness,” a form of substance abuse. And verse 20 lists “witchcraft,” which in the original Greek is *pharmakea*. This can also be translated as “medication,” and is the root of our modern word “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals.” (In ancient times, witches and sorcerers abused drugs to practice magic and sorcery.) God’s Word reveals that it has always been in man’s nature to abuse drugs.

All long for peace, joy and prosperity—but instead of turning to God, the TRUE source of lasting peace, happiness and security—humanity always turns to the physical, as with drugs.

Verses 22 and 23 describe the fruits of God’s Spirit—and the first fruit listed is joy. True joy CANNOT be obtained through chemically-induced feelings! The “highs” or experience a user gets from drugs—whether prescription, over-the-counter or illegal—are temporary at best, leaving behind an addiction that craves increased dosages.

Neither preventative techniques, endless calls for “education,” nor government regulation of drugs will remove this ever-growing problem. Illegal drug use may have decreased, but substance abuse is still a way of life for many trying to fill a *spiritual* void, especially among teenagers.

A time is coming when the true and lasting joy that God offers through His Spirit will be offered to every human being—past, present and future. □

GERMANY

Continued from page 8

bied in 2003 for the creation of the EU’s special battle groups, which are comprised of highly mobile and well-trained combat troops.

Ms. Merkel concurs with the vision: “We need to get closer to a common army for Europe,” she told the mass-circulation German *Bild* newspaper two days before presenting the Berlin Declaration.

Last November, Kurt Beck, leader of the German Social Democrats, said the EU should become a “global peace power.” The statement marked the first time a German political party had advocated an independent European military with its own command structure and objectives.

In the world of a ratified EU constitution, former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer—an ardent, outspoken opponent of U.S. foreign military policy and at one

time, Germany’s most popular politician—is widely speculated to covet the office of EU foreign minister.

Despite differing political ties, Mr. Fischer supports Ms. Merkel’s indisputably German brand of political

“Representing roughly 65% of the world’s economic power, the G8 nations assemble annually, with the rotating presidency selecting the agenda.”

hopes. In a landmark speech given at Berlin’s Humboldt University, in 2000, Mr. Fischer irritated many by suggesting the problem of overly

bureaucratic EU political institutions can be solved by “the transition from a union of states to full parliamentarization as a European Federation... and that means nothing less than a European Parliament and a European government which really do exercise legislative and executive power within the Federation. This Federation will have to be based on a constituent treaty.”

March Forward

Chancellor Angela Merkel deftly advances a vision for a united Europe by remaining diplomatically cautious, anticipating signs of opportunity like a coiled spring.

Ms. Merkel reflected, “the people of Europe will measure the performance of leaders on their success in strengthening Europe as a community providing people with prosperity and social cohesion. As I said in Berlin, the world won’t wait for Europe. We must ensure we bring Europe to [the] forefront of events on basis of shared values and objectives.” □

JESUS

Continued from page 10

God was pleased to bruise Jesus Christ because it was a necessary part of His overall plan for mankind. If this had not happened, man would have no hope of salvation.

The chapter concludes, “Therefore will I [the Father] divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (vs. 12).

Because Jesus was willing to bear “the sin of many,” the Father will provide Him an everlasting kingdom—a divine government that will bring true justice and world peace. Clearly, however, it has not arrived. This is perhaps the major reason many rejected Jesus as the Christ.

To the first century Jews, Jesus failed to accomplish what they expected the Christ to do—destroy evil and all of their enemies (the Romans) and establish an eternal kingdom, with Israel as the preeminent nation in the world. The Jews believed that the Christ would deliver them from Roman bondage and set up a kingdom where they would be the rulers. Although they could read the prophecies in Isaiah describing a suffering Christ who would be persecuted and executed, they instead chose to focus on prophecies addressing His glorious victories and time of world peace. Since Jesus did not at that time come as the long-awaited conquering King, He was rejected. He “failed” to live up to the people’s expectations of the Messiah. As stated in John chapter 1, “He came unto His own [people], and His own received Him not” (vs. 11).

To this day, followers of Judaism reject Jesus as the Christ, citing similar reasons as their first-century counterparts.

“Cut off...in the midst of the week”

There is a specific prophecy that designates the precise time when the Christ

would begin His ministry. It is called the “seventy weeks prophecy.” More than any other, this prophecy not only firmly establishes *when* He would appear, but also that He would appear *twice*. It is doubtful anyone could have rejected Jesus as the Christ if they truly understood this prophecy.

The passage is found in Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

Before one can begin to understand this prophecy, it must first be established why the seventy-week time frame is actually *490 years*. The “day-for-a-year” principle, as it is called, in biblical prophecy is generally understood by most Bible students. This principle is acknowledged in *Halley’s Bible Handbook* (p. 349).

The day-for-a-year principle is first found in Numbers 14:34: “After the number of the days in which you searched the land, even forty days, *each day for a year*, shall you bear your iniquities, even forty years, and you shall know My breach of promise.” This verse clearly shows that God punished Israel by withholding or delaying their inheritance of the Promised Land. This happened because the people refused to believe Him. Instead, they chose to believe the bad report of the ten spies.

The next example of this principle is found in Ezekiel 4:6: “And when you have accomplished them, lie again on your right side, and you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: *I have appointed you each day for a year*.” Ezekiel was required to lie on his left side for 390 days (to represent a siege against Israel) and forty days on his right side (to represent a siege against Judah). As verse 6 plainly shows, each day represented a year.

When this principle is applied to the seventy weeks prophecy, we arrive at 490 years, since seventy weeks equals 490 days.

With this backdrop, Daniel 9:25 can now be examined: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

“Going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” is a reference to Persian King Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild Jerusalem (see Ezra 7:21, 23). This occurred in 457 B.C., and is the starting date of the seventy weeks prophecy.

The sum of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (or threescore and two weeks) equals a total of sixty-nine weeks, from the time of the decree to build Jerusalem until the time of the Christ. Applying the day-for-a-year principle, we find that sixty-nine weeks equals 483 days ($69 \times 7 = 483$), which equates to 483 years.

Counting forward 483 years from the year 457 B.C. (the year of Artaxerxes’ decree) brings us to the year A.D. 26. When counting from B.C. to A.D., since there is no year “0,” astronomers correctly add one year. Historians and chronologists, on the other hand, generally neglect to do this. Adding one year brings us to A.D. 27. This is the prophesied year of the beginning of the Christ’s ministry, which history confirms as true.

Daniel 9:26-27 continues explaining the seventy weeks prophecy: “And after threescore and two [62] weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

The term “threescore and two weeks,” which means 62 weeks, assumes that this time frame was preceded by the seven-week period mentioned in verse 25. Here the reference means 483 years, as established in verse 25.

Notice the phrase “And He shall confirm the covenant” in verse 27. Jesus certainly did confirm, or usher in, a covenant with Israel—the New Covenant. Yet He was *cut off* in the midst of confirming it. Thus the New Covenant will not be fully in effect until Jesus Christ returns to finish confirming it. (More on this later.)

Further, verse 27 shows that the Christ would cause the sacrifice and oblations to cease in the midst (middle) of the week—after three and one-half years. Finally, consider that Jesus was crucified in the middle of a literal week—a Wednesday.

Isaiah 53:4-5 helps to answer why the Christ would be cut off in the midst of His ministry, something the Jews of the first century were not expecting: “Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But *He was wounded for our transgressions* [sins], *He was bruised for our iniquities.*”

Isaiah 53:8 clinches the point: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was *cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.*”

How clear! This can point to none other than Jesus, as He was *cut off* from the “land of the living” when He was crucified. His death was not for Himself, but for “the transgressions of My people.”

Before discussing the details of that final week, we need to complete a thought presented in Daniel 9:26: “... and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This was to occur after the Christ had been *cut off*—crucified. The “people of the prince” (the prince of this world, Satan – John 12:31 and Ephesians 2:2) is a reference to the Roman armies under Vespasian, and later under his son, Titus. These Roman armies under Titus finally managed to destroy not only the city, but also the Temple, slaughtering the people during and after the siege of A.D. 70.

Now notice the last part of verse 26: “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war deso-

lations are determined.” This looks well beyond the time of Jerusalem’s destruction in the first century. The “flood” pertains to future armies that will surround Jerusalem at the outset of the Great Tribulation and also upon Jesus Christ’s Return. The “end” pertains to the many turbulent events that will occur during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

Returning to Confirm

We have examined the seventy weeks prophecy up to the point when the Messiah was to be cut off in the midst of the week. It is clear that the final three and one-half years of the prophecy remain to be fulfilled. No one would doubt that the Christ’s reign of administering world peace has not occurred. The Bible reveals when He will confirm the New Covenant after His Return.

Romans 15:8 states, “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, *to confirm the promises* [covenant] made unto the fathers.” Tremendous promises were made to the Israelite Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as other faithful servants of God. These will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns and establishes the kingdom of God here on earth. At His Second Coming, Christ will usher in the New Covenant with Israel. At that time, the laws of God will be written in their hearts and minds, as God has been doing with His Church for the past 2,000 years.

Hebrews 8:6-10 recounts this landmark event: “But now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

“For finding fault with them [Israel, not the covenant], He says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; *I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:* and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.”

It will be during the time of God’s kingdom ruling all nations on earth that Daniel 9:24 is fully realized: “Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and *to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.*”

The seventy weeks prophecy clearly establishes Jesus as the Christ. It precisely foretold the time of Jesus’ First Coming and the exact year that He was to begin His ministry. It then shows the length of that ministry—three and one-half years. It shows that He was cut off in “the midst of the week” after causing sacrifices to cease, as His shed blood was to atone for humanity. The blood of bulls and goats was no longer needed for physical atonement of sin. This prophecy also makes it clear that Jesus Christ is to return and confirm the New Covenant for three and one-half years.

If the prophecies discussed here were truly understood in the first century, Jesus would not have been crucified. Yet, it was part of God’s Plan for mankind. Jesus had to die to free us from the death penalty and open the door to eternal life.

But does this mean that everyone is now free from the death penalty and *entitled* to eternal life? Does all one have to do is just “believe on Jesus” to be free? Or does God require OBEEDIENCE to His Word to qualify for eternal life?

Jesus stated He is “the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). But how does one follow Jesus Christ?

In Part Four of this series, to be published next issue, we will examine the teachings of Jesus, including what He taught about His pre-existence. We will compare what the world of Christendom commonly teaches to what Jesus *actually* taught. Prepare to be STUNNED by what you will learn from the pages of the Bible! □

LOVE

What It *Is* and Is *Not*

People talk endlessly about love, but what is it? Where can it be found?



BY LARRY J. MCELROY



PEOPLE TALK and fantasize about it. Radio talk shows and psychologists give advice on how to deal with it. Newspapers carry syndicated columns in which people seek advice about it. Musical groups and performing artists make millions of dollars singing about it. Dating services claim they can help you find it. Restaurants,

bars and various well-traveled cities cater to it. Religions across the world claim to have it and preach their viewpoint of what is involved. Hollywood tries to define it through movies and television.

Despite all the talk, expert advice and the desire of so many to find real love, just what is it and where can you find it?

Modern Dating

Since most associate the term *love* with romantic relationships, several new trends in dating have appeared. Computer dating services now offer a sophisticated method of matching people based on questionnaires measuring compatibility. Without talking to or in some cases even seeing the other party, one can be matched with a list of possible candidates for a date.

Speed dating is another trend for the “do it now” generation of professionals with busy, upwardly mobile careers. In Arizona, participants of this trend took a bus ride around the Phoenix metropolitan area. As the bus made its stops, the men would move to a different seat and have a few minutes to get acquainted with each woman. The trip eventually allowed all participants to interview each other. Many were divorced, hoping to find someone for a new relationship.

Is this a formula for finding *true* love?

The World Around Us

As we go about our daily routines, the disregard for the welfare of others is apparent. The daily commute to work now includes the hazard of road rage, in which innocent drivers are injured in accidents or die because of the uncontrolled anger of others. Travelers are sometimes shot during

■ **LOVE OR SUFFERING:** The funeral of a 19-year-old (above left) shot for allegedly trying to “carjack” a taxi. (Above middle) Road rage. A woman (above right) who underwent reconstructive surgery after being shot in the face by her boyfriend.

PHOTOS: MCT

daily rush hour in major cities across America. Disregard for speed limits, vulgar hand gestures from impatient drivers, and tailgating to intimidate others is a natural by-product of the self-centered mindset of many.

Of course, physically fit drivers routinely pull into a handicap parking space—defying the law for their convenience, thereby denying a person in need the benefit of the space.

Shoplifting has increasingly become a way of life. The cost of purchasing food, clothing and other goods is dramatically increasing partly as a result of theft. Increased security personnel, more sophisticated monitors and detection equipment, and increased insurance costs to cover theft contributes to higher prices for everyone.

Video games consume the time and energy of many and are especially popular with the younger generation. Major themes found in video games are explicit violence, war, gang-related activities and brutalizing of opponents. (Television and movies produced by Hollywood also contain these themes and with ever-increasing intensity.) Players are programmed to beat the other team or to annihilate the enemy, which leads to bitter, disrespectful, uncaring attitudes outside the games, which can permeate the player's life.

Today's "me first" lifestyle shows a profound lack of concern toward others.

Found in Marriages and Families?

A *USA Today* article—"Divorce Is Declining, But So Is Marriage"—revealed a disturbing trend in the United States: "Couples who once might have wed and then divorced are not marrying at all, according to *The State of our Unions 2005*. The annual report, which analyzes Census and other data, is issued by the National Marriage Project at New Jersey's Rutgers University."

"Cohabitation is here to stay," says David Popenoe, a Rutgers sociology professor and the report's co-author. "I don't think it's good for us, especially for children," he says. "As society

shifts from marriage to cohabitation—which is what's happening—you have an increase in family instability."

The report offers other disturbing facts regarding marriage in the U.S. "The USA has the lowest percentage among Western nations of children who grow up with both biological parents, 63%."

Mr. Popenoe stated, "The United States has the weakest families in the Western world because we have the highest divorce rate and the highest rate of solo parenting."

Children are becoming the victims of failed marriages—in some cases, even being *blamed* for their parents' divorce. The emotional toll on children from broken homes or raised by a single parent is incalculable. Emotional problems, juvenile delinquency and drug dependency or addiction are often found when a loving environment is absent.

In addition, many children are now born outside of marriage, while others are abandoned instead of being nurtured in a secure environment that would allow them to bond with family.

Statistics show that a large number of American families are failing to build lasting relationships.

Why?

In Politics...Sports...Business?

Candidates for the last congressional election spent much of their time casting doubts about their opponents' ability to govern. Many used slander, twisted facts and outright lies to project them in an unfavorable light, putting them on the defensive.

Accusations and digging up past faults of others seems to be the "political" way. One high-profile national newscaster lost his job after bringing unsubstantiated charges against the U.S. President.

And then there is the sports world, in which violence and a "win at all costs" philosophy are becoming dominant. Basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, football and motorcar racing have all seen an increase in aggressive behavior.

In December 2006, the National Basketball Association ejected 10 players for violent behavior following a hard foul in a New York Knicks/Denver Nuggets game; large fines and suspensions followed.

Baseball, America's national pastime, has suffered from controversy over the use of performance-enhancing drugs, used by some to gain an advantage over other players competing for the same position, or in the pursuit of breaking records.

Recently, NASCAR racing teams have been fined for cheating. Even before the renowned Daytona 500 race began, team leaders and drivers were fined, suspended or had points taken from their standings for tampering with their cars in violation of the rules in order to get an edge over other racing teams.

In 2006, drivers deliberately ran into other drivers to bump or knock them out of races. Bitterness, foul language and fighting followed!

In collegiate sports, gambling, point-shaving schemes, and illegal recruiting of athletes are commonplace. Athletes routinely receive preferential treatment, access to academic tests and "bonus" money to further their unique status as modern "gladiators."

Whatever happened to character-building as a theme in athletic programs at high school and college levels?

Now consider the business world, which has been rocked by scandal after scandal over the past few years: the "dot com" crash—Enron in bankruptcy—insider trading—numerous corporate officials defrauding the stock-buying public. A few have been indicted and sent to jail for lying and stealing from stockholders. Many have committed perjury to cover up misleading information regarding the true status of their financial portfolios. Investors, in some cases retirees, have lost their life's savings.

Deceptive advertising is commonplace in the competitive, worldwide economy. Slanting the facts, failing to deliver on promised benefits and

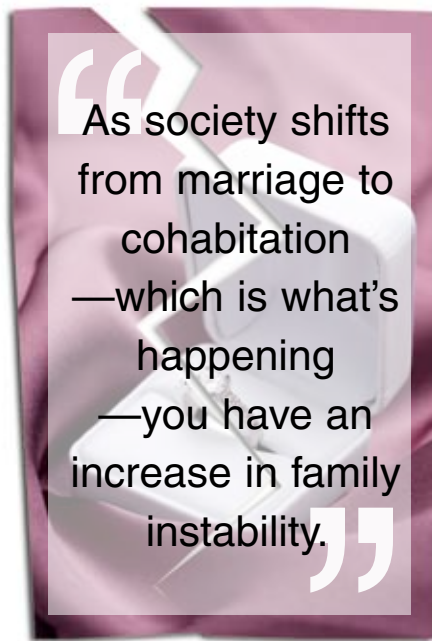
smearing the competition is “business as usual” throughout the world.

When we analyze this world, with its various cultures, families, politics, sports, businesses, its military campaigns and general lifestyle—we see little love anywhere. So the questions remain, “What is love? Where can we find love?”

The True Source of Love

To most people, love remains a mystery. It is rarely compared to anything other than a physical/chemical attraction between a man and woman.

Before continuing, we must state that people sometimes do express love between each other. For example, those who lay down their lives to save



others, such as the brave actions of a college professor during the Virginia Tech massacre.

A mother's love for her child is perhaps the greatest expression of love among human beings. Yet even the love of a mother is ultimately based on self interest: a mother is naturally more concerned over her own child than someone else's. The love human beings exhibit is, at best, a mixture of selflessness and selfishness.

But the love of God is different.

A best-selling book read by multiple millions, but understood by only

a few, offers insight into the subject of true love. The Holy Bible plainly states that the Creator is the Author of love. In fact, “God is love” (I John 4:8, 16).

If this is so, then how does God demonstrate His love? What are the requirements to receive it?

John 3:16 is one of the most well-known Bible verses in the world: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Thus we begin to see the nature of God's love: He gives.

In Matthew 22:35-40, Jesus Christ distinguished two distinct areas of love: (1) toward God and (2) toward fellow man.

This is reflected in the Ten Commandments: The first four reflect love toward God (Ex. 20:2-11); the last six reflect love toward mankind (vs. 12-17).

“Love is the fulfilling of the law”

Many people talk about loving God and claim that they are in harmony with Him. However, the real test of one's love for God was written by the apostle John. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3).

The apostle Paul wrote, “For he that loves another has fulfilled the law. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore *love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Romans 13:8, 10).

God even expects people to love their enemies: “You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully [spitefully] use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:43-44).

When someone has been wronged, human nature influences people to retaliate, whether verbally or physically. Yet doing so breaks God's Law: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto

wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

Instead, God expects a different approach: “Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (vs. 20-21).

But how often do people or governments “turn the other cheek”?

Love's Unique Characteristics

The Bible further defines love in I Corinthians 13—commonly known as the “Love Chapter”—with detailed characteristics, stating that love (charity)...

- Is patient and tender toward others (vs. 4)
- Is not jealous of others (vs. 4)
- Does not brag about its own accomplishments (vs. 4)
- Is not arrogant or proud (vs. 4)
- Is never rude or discourteous (vs. 5)
- Does not promote self above others (vs. 5)
- Is not easily offended or quick to become angry (vs. 5)
- Does not keep account of evil or impute evil motives (vs. 5)
- Does not rejoice over lawlessness (vs. 6)
- Rejoices when truth triumphs over deceitful ways (vs. 6)
- Endures without revealing what distress is taking place, is eager to believe the best, is always hopeful, and remains patient, even in persecutions (vs. 7)
- Love “never fails” (vs. 8)—it is never out of use, and always motivates a person to act in another's best interest.

God's Word reveals that love is the greatest attribute one can possess, the highest standard one can achieve.

Imagine! What if nations applied this standard of excellence when interacting with other governments? What if sports teams, politicians, businesses, families and individuals set their focus on measuring up to God's standard of outgoing concern for others?

Certainly, this world would be dramatically different! War, terrorism and all other acts of violence would cease. Bitter sports rivalries would disappear. Divorce and subsequent broken families would be a thing of the past.

Sadly, this is not the reality! And what lies ahead for a world that practices breaking all of God's laws is leading all nations and individuals along a path few understand as a form of love: CORRECTION!

Correction is Love

In a world that tolerates and condones the breaking of civil and national laws, few understand the importance of correction. And fewer still realize that correction and penalties will follow the breaking of spiritual laws that govern this violent world, even if they choose not to acknowledge them. Humanity will not recognize the authority of God's supreme spiritual law of love—the Ten Commandments—until they are one day *forced* to do so.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of a soon-coming chain of events in which God will correct this world. Isaiah 13:11-13 states, "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity [lawlessness]; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible [tyrants]. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger."

This present evil world has a rendezvous with correction from a loving, concerned Creator!

The ever-living, supreme God loves the world (i.e., the people in it), but abhors their loathsome behavior, which brings hurt, pain, suffering, torment, disease and hatred. As a loving Father, God must correct His children.

Hebrews 12:5-6 states, "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chasten-

ing [discipline] of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Christ told the New Testament Church, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

Those who heed correction are brought back into harmony and obedience to God's Law—the law of love.

When people accept correction and obey God's Law, benefits such as peace, contentment, joy, prosperity, trust and a lack of fear become a way of life.

One of the greatest concerns and fears of this modern world is terrorism. This, too, will be eliminated when obedience to God's Law produces love. Notice how the apostle John expressed this understanding. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18).

In this war-filled, crime-laden world are fearful, confused, displaced people unable to make sense of what is happening. Keeping God's law of love will correct the confusion and bring understanding and meaning to life.

Job, who was corrected by God for a spiritual deficiency in his life, stated, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects: therefore despise not you the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17).

God's love, which includes correction, will eliminate fear in the near future. Love overcomes fear and restores joy and peace of mind.

Who Has Love?

Most do not understand love, though they may offer platitudes about their love for their brothers while cursing those who are their real or supposed enemies. Many people profess their love for others, but do not live God's way of give.

Who then has love?

I John 2:4-5 states, "He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His

Commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

God's love is available to those who keep His Commandments and live their lives according to His truth, contained in His Word. II John 5-6 states: "...but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after [according to] His Commandments."

A World of Love Coming Soon

There is hope for this love-starved, dying world. The good news is that a new, world-ruling government will be established, and will enforce the laws governing love across the entire earth. Humanity will finally experience the peace and prosperity for which all desire.

Imagine a world in which parents are honored and honorable—no murder or war—no adultery, only faithfulness in marriage—no stealing of any kind—no lies or bearing false witness—a world in which no one covets or lusts after the property of others.

Further, imagine a world in which God is supreme—in which all false gods are forgotten—a world in which God's name is mentioned in utmost reverence and He *alone* is worshipped. That would be a world of love!

Isaiah recorded this advance good news: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

Humanity will come to understand and experience genuine love when Jesus Christ returns and establishes a world-ruling government over all inhabitants on earth. That is truly the BEST NEWS! □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof *you shall surely die*” (vs. 16-17). When placed together, these verses reveal that men ARE souls and that souls can DIE!

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to write (twice): “The soul that sins, it shall die” (18:4, 20). Death is the absence of life. It is the discontinuance—the cessation—of life. Death is not life in another place. It is not leaving “this *life*” for “another *life*”—the “next *life*.”

Further, on the subject of whether or not the soul can die, consider Matthew 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him [God] which is *able to destroy* both *soul* and *body in hell*.” The Bible says that souls can be DESTROYED! According to this verse, they can be destroyed as much as *bodies* can. We all recognize that bodies eventually die and that, when they do, they naturally decompose and are completely “destroyed” due to the process of natural corruption. Any undertaker recognizes this. This verse introduces the understanding that God does the *destroying* of souls IN HELL! Bodies can die and be destroyed in many different ways. However, souls are destroyed in hell by God.

Are the Dead Conscious?

Human minds are differentiated from animal brains by intelligent thought. Presumably, if the dead are not dead, but are really still alive, then they must be capable of some kind of intelligent *thought*. They must at least be conscious of their surroundings. Let’s consider a series of scriptures.

First, notice Psalm 146:3-4: “Put not your trust...in the son of man...His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day *his thoughts perish*.” When people die, their thoughts end immediately—“in that very day.” That is what it says. This verse is not compatible with the idea that the dead are

“The common belief is that, upon death, the souls of sinners go to hell forever, since they are immortal. Is this what the Bible says? If the wages of sin is *death*, could the Bible also teach that people have immortal souls?”

consciously suffering in a place of torment. We could suppose that, if they are suffering, they do not have *knowledge* that they are. They are unaware of what is happening to them. Ask yourself: What would be the point of their suffering? It would be as though they were in a coma—i.e., completely unaware of what is going on around them—while their sensory nervous system is feeling the tremendous pain sensation of burning. How would this work?

Use the following analogy. If someone is to undergo major surgery, they are anesthetized—they are made to be unconscious—so that they will *not* experience pain. Medical doctors understand this—WHY DON’T THEOLOGIANs AND RELIGIONISTs? Why do they deny the plain statements of the Bible?

Some who willingly ignore the message of scripture allege that only mortal thoughts “perish,” in the sense that the dead leave this earthly realm and experience some mysterious, different kind of thought than they previously knew. Is this true? Of course, this is ridiculous, and the Bible does not say this, but we should at least examine the idea. Now consider an even more direct verse: “For the living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not any thing...*” (Ecc. 9:5).

To the honest reader, there is no mistaking the plain meaning here!

Solomon recorded, “For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: *as the one dies, so dies the other*; yes, they have all

one breath; so that *a man has no pre-eminence above a beast...All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again*” (Ecc. 3:19-20).

Now consider Psalm 115:17: “The dead praise not the LORD, neither *any* that go down *into silence*.” Death involves “silence.” This certainly does not square with any of the popular concepts of millions of the dead wailing and screaming in agony. Such a scene could never be described as SILENCE! And, if many of the dead go to heaven, why are they not praising God?

Psalm 6:5 further explains that the dead do not experience conscious memory: “For in death there is *no remembrance of You*: in the grave who shall give You thanks?” Could anyone seriously suggest that the dead, suffering in hell, could experience the normal range of human memories *but not be cognizant of God*—not remember Him? Would God put people in “hell” and then leave them there suffering, forever wondering how they had gotten there and who had put them there—because they have “no remembrance” of anything related to God? Remember to let the Bible interpret the Bible. Always keep its truth simple, and the deceptive ideas of men will fall like a house of cards. □



SUGGESTED READING:

The preceding “Personal” was largely excerpted from Mr. Pack’s booklet *The truth about HELL*. To fully understand what the Bible teaches on the subject and how it differs from the ideas of men, read the booklet in its entirety online (www.thercg.org/books/ttah.html).

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

UK: Disenchanted Youth Cost Government Billions

In the United Kingdom, a “lost generation” is placing a heavy financial burden on both the taxpayer and economy, costing the UK billions each year.

Of those aged 17-24, approximately 1.2 million are NEETs— young people “Not in Employment, Education or Training.” They are beset with homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness and other problems, relying on social programs to survive.

The substantial price tag is making the government and citizens of the United Kingdom take notice. A recent report by the Prince’s Trust

broke down the stunning costs of providing for NEETs: 160 billion pounds per year for educational underachievement; 180 million per week for youth unemployment; and 1 billion pounds incurred for crimes committed among this group.

Most problems begin with educational underachievement, poor performance in schooling or dropping out altogether. This makes it difficult to find steady work.

With low-paying jobs or no jobs at all, the NEETs begin lives of poverty, poor health and crime—fostering a reliance on government hand-outs. The average NEET costs the

government 194,000 pounds in his lifetime, with the worst cases costing 600,000 pounds.

Martina Milburn, the chief executive of the Prince’s Trust, stated this about NEETs: “With youth crime costing upwards of 1 billion pounds [\$2 billion] and public costs for treating depression at between 11 and 28 million pounds [\$22 and 56 million], the total bill for educational underachievement is undeniably huge” (*The Telegraph*).

“These young people lack confidence and faith in themselves,” Ms. Milburn added. “They are disenchanted to the core.” □

AMERICAS

Supreme Court Rules on Abortion—and Activists React

The U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 in favor of backing the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, which Congress signed into law in 2003, saying the ban does not affect a woman’s right to choose abortion.

The decision came to the Supreme Court after the state courts of California, Nebraska and New York, as well as three appeals courts, ruled the ban unconstitutional.

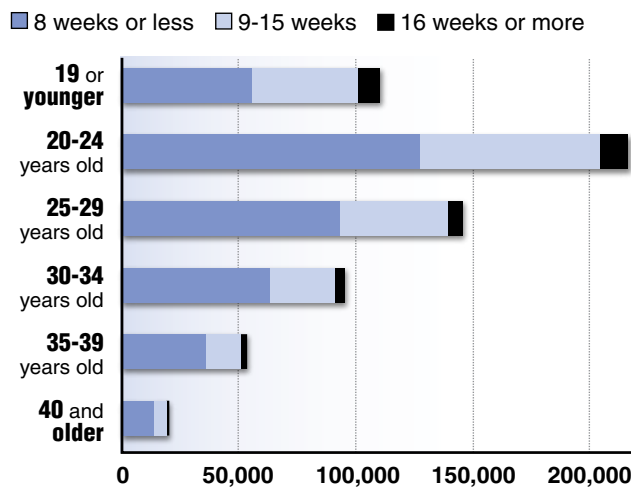
The ruling highlights the effect of President George W. Bush appointing both Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito, generally tipping the Court in favor of conservatives— especially considering the Supreme Court voted against a similar ban in 2000.

The controversial late-term abortion procedure, technically named intact dilation and extraction (or intact D&E), continues to be a hot-button topic for

Abortion in the United States

Most of the 1.3 million reported abortions in 2003* occurred to women in their early 20s before the eighth week of gestation.

By age group, weeks of pregnancy



*Latest data available
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alan Guttmacher Institute

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Shortly after the decision was made, one group stated on its website that a “majority of the U.S. Supreme Court showed...it does not care about the health, well-being, and safety of American women.”

Others who are pro-abortion feel the wording of the ban is too broad, and fear it may be applied to all late-term abortions.

On the other side, another group, claiming this as a small victory, said on its website that “finally medical common sense and human reason has prevailed,” and then asked, “Is *Roe v. Wade* next?”

But not all abortion opponents were completely elated with the ban being

upheld. Some who oppose abortion

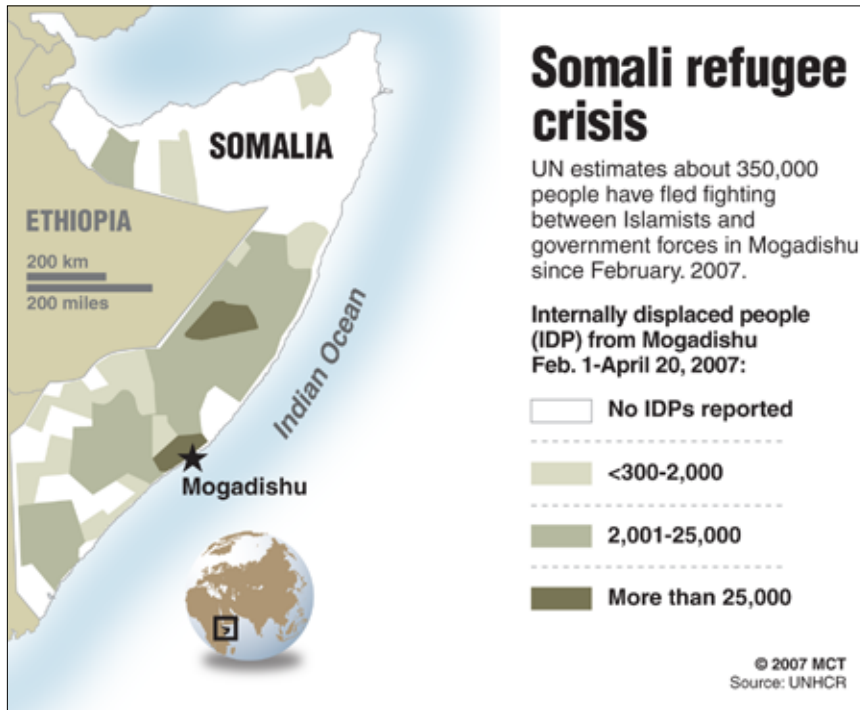
feel the ban will not decrease the number of abortions because it does not

activists on both sides of the issue. Abortion advocates feel the decision will severely limit women’s rights and their health, and will also set a precedent for similar rulings in the future.

Please see **ABORTION**, page 25

AFRICA

Thousands of Somalis Flee Constant Bloodshed



A nine-day offensive by the Ethiopian-Somali army against rebels has brought over 300 casualties and left Mogadishu, Somalia's capital city, desolate. The rebels consist mostly of Islamists who oppose the presence of the American-backed Ethiopian army.

Mogadishu has been overwhelmed with repeated gunfights, suicide bombings and regular shelling, causing civilians caught in the fighting to flee for their lives. In the streets lie rotting corpses; houses in ruins; with gunshots and explosions heard regularly. In March alone, over 1,000 people died—mostly civilians.

However, Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi recently declared, "Most of the fighting in Mogadishu is now over." He also said that the capital should hopefully be secured soon, with only a few "pockets of resistance" needing to be cleared.

Since February, an estimated 350,000 Somalis have fled the city in an attempt to escape the violence. But neighboring cities have quickly become overcrowded with the displaced citizens. Some are forced to live under trees or out in the open. Despite fleeing the violence in the capital, the refugees face new problems of starvation and disease.

Unable to help the refugees, the already taxed Somali government has begun to call for outside aid from the United Nations and Western nations. However, the UN and other aid groups have been unable to deliver food and medical supplies—due to lack of cooperation from the government and the fighting itself.

The United States has long tried to help bring peace to Somalia—backing the interim government as well as Ethiopian forces, who were brought in to help overthrow the Islamist-controlled government in late 2006. The UN, the African Union and other Western nations have also brought aid to the country and mounted many attempts to broker peace.

Nonetheless, Somalia is a maze of competing interests throughout all levels of society. High-ranking government officials struggle for dominance. Some want outside aid, others do not. Also, warlords, who have learned to make a living from anarchy, oppose any peace effort.

Yet all attempts to bring peace and aid to the country have failed, worsening the bloodshed and overall quality of life there. Even with the successful defeat of the Islamist rebels and the citizens beginning to return, the government will have a new problem on their hands—rebuilding a desolate city, thwarting a humanitarian crisis and attending to the multitude of problems that always follow in war's wake. □

ABORTION

Continued from page 24

address other late-term procedures, leaving a few options open. One procedure—which involves dismembering the fetus—remains legal.

The emotional reactions and heated debate over the ban prove how hostile the two camps are against one another.

But, despite the Supreme Court's decision, only a few abortions may be prevented. Estimates on how many intact D&E abortions are performed per year range from 2,000 to 5,000. Surprisingly, even using the highest estimates, with 1.3 million abortions taking place annually in America, only 0.4% (approximately 5,000) are prohibited by the ban!

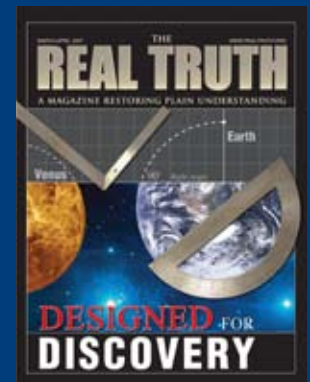
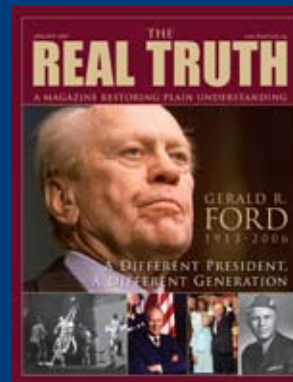
Rather than decreasing abortions, this ruling will more likely have an intense political effect, spurring activists to campaign harder for their respective causes. This Supreme Court decision is already being spun by presidential hopefuls, and could become one of the key factors in the upcoming election—further dividing an already divided government. □

What if... Everyone Kept God's Law?

FOR EVERY CAUSE there is an effect. Obeying the Ten Commandments is the cause that will produce every good and desirable effect. Now you can learn why YOU should keep this living, active Law of God.



Have you missed out on previous issues?



Read them online at your convenience!