

DECEMBER 2007

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

IRAN...The Untold Story

Desire for Change



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VOL. V | NO. 10 | DECEMBER 2007

A R T I C L E S

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ABOUT OUR COVER: A woman leaves the Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran. Iranian women have gained a degree of political power in the nation, and have had some success in changing laws that affect them.

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How This Magazine Is Supported

In a world awash with a variety of sources of information—Internet news, newspapers, periodicals, email updates, daily television and cable shows—*The REAL TRUTH* cuts through the opinions, ideas, theories and biases of individuals, bringing answers—and hope! Who produces this singular publication, and why?

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Published monthly (except March-April and September-October issues).

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

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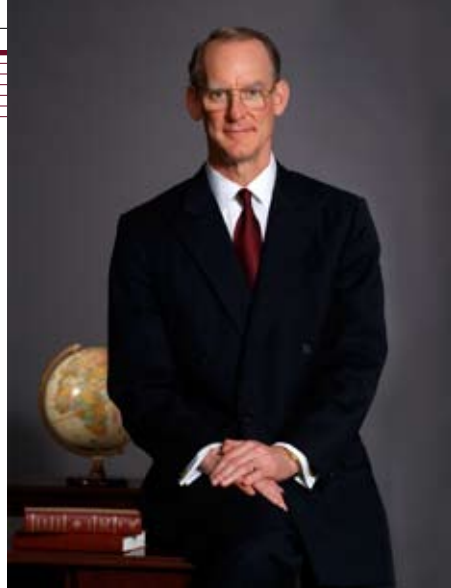
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



Do Christians “Just Show Love”?

MOST PROFESSING Christians speak endlessly of the “love of God.” Modern preachers speak just as endlessly about the need for Christians to “love their fellowman.” Aren’t Christians merely those who “show love”? If so, what is it? How can one show love if he does not know what it is?

Let’s consider several verses—and remove all confusion!

The apostle Paul wrote, “...because *the love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy [Spirit]* which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). When a Christian receives God’s Spirit, he receives some (a very small amount at first) of the love of God. Over time, through actively exercising it, the depth and amount of love *grows*. It is actually one of the nine “fruits of the Spirit.”

God’s Way is practiced by exercising these FRUITS: “LOVE, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, MEEKNESS [or humility, the opposite of vanity and pride], temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23).

There are two different ways of life. One is the “GIVE” way—the way of love and outgoing concern—God’s way! The other is the “GET” way—the way of *self*-ishness and *self*-concern—the way of this world.

Most people are interested in enjoying pleasures and the accumulation of physical things. One man observed, “Life is about seeing who can die with the most toys.” That may be true of this world, but it is not true of God’s Way and the way of a Christian.

Jesus Christ taught, “It is more blessed to GIVE than

to receive” (Acts 20:35). Practicing *this* way of life leads to abundance, peace, prosperity, supreme happiness and joy. Christ likened God’s Spirit to a river flowing out of each person. Notice: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly *shall flow rivers of living water*. (But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...)” (John 7:37-39).

The fruits of God’s Spirit are to be visible and abundant to all who view God’s true people. But it was only through and *after* Christ’s resurrection that He could send His Spirit to be present and active in each Christian. Christ continued in John 7:39, “...for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; *because that Jesus was not yet glorified* [resurrected].”

Carnal minds cannot obey *spiritual* laws. It is impossible! One must have, be actively led by, and utilize the power of the Spirit of God (II Tim. 1:7) to be able to keep God’s spiritual law—or to demonstrate real love.

Now read the Bible definition of love: “For this is the love of God, that we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and His commandments are not *grievous*” (I John 5:3). Many people who *claim* to have love believe that the Commandments ARE, in fact, grievous. God says they are not. He calls His law “holy, and just, and good... spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14).

Through Paul, the Bible explains that the *Commandments* and the *Law* are the same: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW” (Rom. 13:10). God’s Word reveals that love is “the fulfilling of the law.” Keeping the

Commandments is fulfilling the law—and doing this “WORKS NO ILL TO HIS NEIGHBOR.”

Did Christ Change the Law?

Did Christ bring a new definition of sin? Did He alter God’s Law in some way? And did it relate to the subject of love?

Christ declared, “*Think not* that I am come to *destroy* the LAW, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). He also taught that the New Testament Church is built, in part, on the prophets of the Old Testament, where the law of God is first given. Notice: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and *prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). The law of God is not done away.

Immediately after Matthew 5:17, Christ examined several of the Ten Commandments. He magnified and strengthened each one He referenced.

Concerning the Sixth Commandment, He explained that not only is *killing* your brother a sin, but it is also a sin to *hate* him. Regarding adultery, He said that even *lusting* after a woman violates the Seventh Commandment.

Violating the *spirit* of the law is sin—and all sin is against God (Psa. 51:4). God’s spiritual law governs every action in life. It is best described in a single word—LOVE. It is outgoing concern for others. The way of this world is incoming, not outgoing. It practices the “get” (for self) way of life. But the first four Commandments teach how to *love* God and the last six how to *love* our neighbor (Matt. 22:36-39).

Jesus said, “I have *kept* My Father’s Commandments” (John 15:10)—and He expects us to do the same thing. Christ’s obedience to God’s law did not somehow take us off the hook. This same verse explains, “If YOU keep My

Commandments, YOU shall abide in My love.” This means you.

If you want to “show love” to others, OBEY GOD!

God’s Law—A Mirror

God’s law shows how to have a right relationship with God and with our neighbors. Think of it as a spiritual mirror. Here is James’ description: “But be you DOERS of the word, and *not hearers only*, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a *glass* [mirror]: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso *looks into the* PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (1:22-25).

Do you ever hear preachers describe God’s law as a “perfect law of liberty”? Almost certainly not! Yet it is, for those who practice obedience to it.

Like any mirror, God’s law must be used. While it cannot wash your face, it will expose the dirt that is there. Remember, Paul wrote that “by the deeds of the law is the KNOWLEDGE of sin,” and that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” The law will not remove the dirt. It simply notifies you that dirt is present.

The law also has no power to forgive sins. Only Christ’s sacrifice can do this. But, at conversion, Christ’s blood only forgives *past* sins. The law points out how to obey God in the future, but it has no inherent ability to forgive sins that are past (or for that matter, future sins).

Notice what Paul wrote: “Being *justified freely* by His GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through *faith in His blood*, to declare His righteousness for the remission of SINS THAT

ARE PAST, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:24-25).

Christ’s blood, and nothing else, covers past sins.

Of course, some conclude that since the law cannot forgive sins, we do not need to keep it. This is like saying that, because the mirror cannot *remove* dirt, there is no need to ever use one to *find* it. No one would say this about a mirror.

This is why Paul stated, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? GOD FORBID. How shall we, that are dead to sin, *live any longer therein*?” (Rom. 6:1-2).

Once you have been forgiven, you are “dead” to the penalty of sin. It no longer has any effect on you. But God did not send His Son to die for you so that you could go right back to practicing what brought His death in the first place. Regarding sin, we are not to “live any longer therein.”

A few verses later, Paul is even plainer: “What then? *shall we sin*, because we are not under the law [under its death penalty], but under grace? GOD FORBID. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness*?” (vs. 15-16).

Allow no one to twist this verse into stating that we are no longer “under” an obligation to keep the law. The Bible’s answer to such deceit is “God forbid.” But the newly forgiven is clearly now no longer under the law’s penalty. Would you throw away a mirror because it exposed dirt on your face? Or would you appreciate it because without it you could not have seen the dirt—either accumulated from the past (and now to be covered at conversion) or future dirt that will periodically be seen during the rest of your Christian life? (To learn more read our booklet *What is true CONVERSION?*) □

SINCE BECOMING president of Iran in August 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been vocal on the world stage, making endless inflammatory remarks. Never mind the number of fiery comments he directed toward the United States. Perhaps two of his most controversial statements are the claims that the Israeli regime must be wiped from existence and that the Holocaust is a myth—creating a firestorm the world over.

In defending his nation's nuclear aspirations, Mr. Ahmadinejad asserts that Iran desires nuclear technology for peaceful energy purposes.

But the nations of the West view this as fiction. They believe Tehran is seeking nuclear weapons, and the White House has firmly declared that the U.S. will pursue whatever means necessary (stopping short of using the word “war”) to prevent Iran from developing nuclear technology.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, on the other hand, has stated numerous times that Iran will defend, at all costs, what it feels is its inherent “right.”

As mainstream news media outlets bombard citizens of the West with countless stories of potential war with Iran, even painting a picture of rampant Islamic extremism in the nation, the average Westerner associates Iran with nuclear bombs, war, religious fanaticism and death-chanting Islamic militants. Most might even conclude that all Iranians are bent on the destruction of the West, particularly the United States and Israel, since this appears to be Tehran's position. More than once their president has referred to America as “the great Satan.”

For many, a military confrontation looms just over the horizon, with the drumbeat of war growing louder and louder.

Yet within Iran's borders, a storm is brewing—of which few outside the country are aware.

In December 2006, a notable crowd

IRAN...

The Untold Story

Desire for Change

While the world focuses on a potential nuclear showdown with Iran, an internal crisis of a different nature is gripping the Persian nation.

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK



PHOTOS: MCT

of Iranian students participated in an event called “University is Alive.” They chanted, “Nothing to lose but our chains!” “Death to dictators!” “We want bread, not bombs!” This demonstration occurred despite the government’s tough measures on political dissent.

Elsewhere, as Iran’s president delivered a speech at Amirkabir University, students heckled him and set his picture on fire.

A “war of words” is spreading among Iran’s youth, with talk of “change” and “revolution.”

Change of Command

Within the last 75 years or so, the people of Iran have lived under two vastly different forms of governance.

Prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran existed as an autocratic, pro-West monarchy, ruled by a Shah (the title of the hereditary monarch). Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah from 1941-1979, maintained good relations with the American government. However, his policies conflicted with traditional Muslim views on alcohol, gambling, premarital sex, and other social taboos he refused to ban. The Shah faced continual opposition from religious figures (who were generally poor) and the urban middle-class who did not benefit from his extravagant lifestyle.

The poor and middle-class, who constituted a majority of the population, opposed the Shah’s efforts to bring about modernization—in effect, they opposed being Westernized. Instead, they yearned for a return to an Islamic lifestyle, which is at odds with the decadent lifestyles now found in every Western country. The Shah’s reforms were viewed as self-serving, and his march toward “progress” was seen as a lie, based on the huge gap between rich and poor.

In time, religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini led an opposition movement, speaking out against the monarchy and claiming that the Shah’s reign was tyrannical. This led to Khomeini’s exile in the early 1960s.

After the Shah was removed from power in January 1979 and forced to flee the country, Khomeini was welcomed back into Iran and later given the newly created office of “Supreme Leader” (or “God’s Representative on Earth”), a role that an individual would retain for life.

The world’s first theocratic Islamic government was taking shape.

In his first address to the people of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini stated, “Muhammad Reza Pahlavi... fled stealing everything. He ruined our nation and filled our cemeteries. He ruined our country’s economy. Even the

projects he carried out in the name of advancement pushed the country toward decadence. He suppressed our culture, destroyed people and ruined all our manpower resources.”

In contrast to this picture, the new Supreme Leader promised a type of Islamic paradise on earth. Among other things, he assured all would enjoy independence, and that there would be an Islamic classless society. The nation’s wealth would be distributed equally, so all would be financially equal. There would be free electricity, free water and free transportation for everyone, to be paid for by the nation’s vast oil revenues. The Ayatollah was deemed the “leader of the world’s underprivileged.”

Along with these promises came Sharia law, or law based upon Islamic principles.

After the monarch was removed from power, much disagreement ensued over how and by whom Iran should be governed. Liberal, secularist, Marxist, anarchist and religious groups were eager to seize authority over the country.

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

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

Eventually, a new constitution based solely on Islamic law was drafted. It is this law that has become an issue of intense contention among young Iranians.

Iranian Blogosphere

It has been nearly three decades since the Islamic Revolution. Although those who lived through it are now in the minority, nearly every Iranian is aware



■ **WESTERN INFLUENCES:** A 21-year-old model and textile designer (left) and her 18-year-old sister are Iranian women who “surf” the Internet for the latest Western styles to imitate, which they then modify to fit the Islamic Republic’s modest dress code.

PHOTO: MCT

Please see *IRAN*, page 22



From physical appearance to wanton behavior, sex dominates the thinking of young people. How did we get here? Is it too late to turn the tide?



INNOCENCE LOST

The Sexualization of Youth

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

NEARLY ALL FACETS of children's lives are in some way influenced by sex. The more you learn what society is teaching your children, the more you will want to protect them from its pernicious influence.

Thronged of young people are being brainwashed by a daily diet of perversion, debauchery, titillation and stimulation from the moral wasteland that is Hollywood, teen magazines, television, music videos and even aspects of the modern education system. This indoctrination of pop culture has led to a disturbing picture.

This is especially apparent during Halloween, where sales boom at costume shops. Every year certain costumes quickly sell out, such as the "Sexy Rock Star," which comes with a micro-miniskirt, a top exposing the midriff and fishnet stockings, or the "Playboy Racy Referee," also with a micro-miniskirt, as well as a tight-fitting striped spandex top with laced sides, designed to be accessorized with thigh-high black go-go boots.

Other costume options include dresses with lace bodices, mini-skirted French Maids or Sexy Cop costumes. This should not be a surprise, as Halloween is well known as an opportunity for teenagers and adults to wear something risqué.

However, these costumes are not only for adults or even teenagers, they are also designed to fit girls as young as age *eight!*

A Picture of Society

A few examples begin our journey into what young people deal with each day. Today, it is common to lose one's virginity by age 15 or younger. Of course, thoughts and discussions about sex begin much younger. It may come as a surprise that oral sex—even in the classroom!—has now reached epidemic levels. *Fifth grade* graduation parties feature scores of children "freak" dancing—a form of dancing

in which people simulate the sex act while clothed.

A focus on being “sexy” starts even younger. Several years ago, Mattel introduced a version of Barbie called “Lingerie Barbie.” Although toymaker Mattel stated the doll was for ages 14 and up, the average market for Barbie is ages 8 to 12. The product description shows how children are forced to confront sexuality issues: “Barbie exudes a *flirtatious* attitude in her heavenly merry widow bustier ensemble accented with intricate lace and matching *peekaboo* peignoir.”

Fast forward to 2007. Barbie has been replaced by the wildly popular Bratz dolls. Their name typifies what these dolls represent. They range from infants wearing makeup to preteen dolls wearing fishnets, miniskirts, *heavy* makeup and outrageous outfits. The Bratz marketing machine is growing. Their website features a magazine, games, toys, a clothing line in sizes for six- to eight-year-olds and even an upcoming movie—everything a girl needs to be a “brat”!

Children and Sex

Children are bombarded with an array of media glamorizing sex. Along with an onslaught of sexual images and innuendos, modern society pushes a ridiculous body image—for girls *and* boys. If you are a young girl, your role model is to be a scantily-clad, anorexic runway model with a body impossible to achieve.

The fashion industry has responded with products. Little girls are able to purchase clothing that would make many adults blush. Several years ago a major fashion chain made news when they sold child-sized *thong underwear* with sexually suggestive phrases on them. Should a ten-year-old have underwear with phrases such as “eye candy,” “kiss me” or “wink wink”?

It is nearly impossible for young girls to find shirts or tops covering their midriff, or pants that are not skintight and revealing. Children are forced to

confront the concept of “sexy” before they are capable of understanding what it means.

The trend is not limited to girls. Boys also aspire to “ideal” body images and attitudes. Their peers and the media teach them it is cool—and even essential—to be as promiscuous as possible. A boy’s ability to “conquer” the opposite sex is directly related to how much

Bratz Dolls

Five ethnically diverse fashion dolls marketed to youth.



PHOTO: MCT

of a man he feels he will become. This has created a generation of young boys aspiring to be like what they see on television and in movies and music videos. Their dress reflects their wayward role models: baggy clothes, sloppy looks, and a general disinterest for almost anything—except for girls.

The result of the immoral sexual focus in children? Researchers in Washington, D.C., wanted to start a program to prevent sexual activity in youth. After initially offering the program to seventh-graders, it was ineffective because *too many seventh-graders were already having sex!* The program was then reworked and offered to *fifth-graders*—10- and 11-year-olds.

The study, which followed these students from 1995 to 1999, showed that 20% of the students—one in five!—had sex before they were 15 years old. The 1999 results also showed that 19% of girls reported having sex. This was a 42% increase from 1988. Nearly a decade later, today’s results would be even worse.

There is simply not enough space to recount the multitude of news reports of *children* caught in the sex act. No wonder a *New York Times* article stated, “...some studies indicate three-fourths of all girls have had sex during their teenage years and 15% have had four or more partners.”

Sex Instruction—Not Education

Educators have sought to compensate a lack of emotional maturity by flooding young people with information. However, it should go without saying that children are not ready to have sexual relations of any sort. They are not equipped to make such life-altering decisions. One may assume that simply teaching children about sex will help them make right choices. Even the brief picture above demonstrates such an assumption is dead wrong. Time and again, children prove they are unable to see past their teen years and understand the far-reaching consequences of their decisions.

This has not stopped the popular “Comprehensive Sexual Education” programs from being taught throughout the Western world. Two examples demonstrate how far sexual education has gone:

Imagine your child studying the following lesson: “What They Didn’t Tell You About Queer Sex & Sexuality in Health Class: A Workshop For Youth Only, Ages 14-21” or “Teach Out,” which was held in Massachusetts. It featured that state’s Department of Education employees—*government* employees—instructing children as young as 14 how to properly perform homosexual acts!

And then there is the book *One Teenager in Ten: Writings by Gay & Lesbian Youth*. Recommended reading in the California school system, it discusses in *explicit* detail a 16-year-old’s first lesbian experience with her 23-year-old dance teacher. The book explains how she hid the homosexual, pedophilic experience from her religious parents.

Sexualized Generation

A preoccupation with sex grips an entire generation. The systematic sexualization of youth is destroying what should be the innocence of childhood. Children as young as five have been taught to view themselves as “sexual beings.” They want to be as sexy as those they idolize on television and in movies.

No young teen—and certainly no five-year-old!—should be wondering whether she or he is sexy. Why has society created an atmosphere pushing children to meet expectations once placed only on adults?

You have read examples of sexually suggestive clothing for little girls, toys that encourage and promote a sexual image, statistics of various sex acts committed by children and teenagers, and curriculums designed to teach children to be sexual, even instructing them about sex.

Further, children of varying ages are taught to be tolerant of *all* forms of sexual expression. Many Hollywood movies show minors in sexual situations and, at times, sexual acts with adults. In high school, teens are taught experimentation is nothing more than “learning who they are.”

Western society is organized to sexualize young people. It goes without saying that in an age of pedophilia and other perversions, such conduct is not only immoral, but dangerous.

Tolerance—A Foundation of Permissiveness

It is popular to believe that tolerance is a basic tenet of a healthy society. Many would echo that people should not judge others or discriminate against anyone. Tolerance is based on what appears to be a noble foundation. It seems to be based on a concept of caring for and accepting people of all backgrounds.

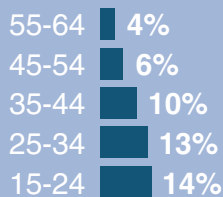
However, the underlying root of the tolerance movement goes much deeper.



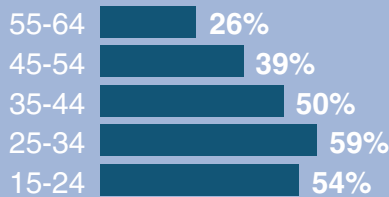
Premarital Sex

In 2003, percentage of Americans (ages 55-64, 45-54, etc.) who had sex prior to marriage:

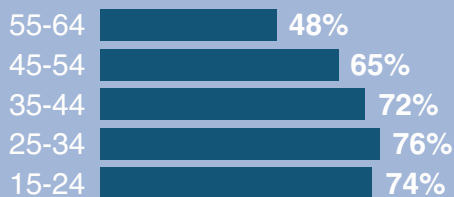
By age 15



By age 18



By age 20



By age 30



A new study shows that 9 out of 10 have had premarital sex by age 44.

Source: Public Health Reports, The Guttmacher Institute

MCT

Educators have gone beyond simply teaching tolerance and acceptance of someone with different physical attributes, such as race, height, weight, body type, etc. Tolerance now encompasses acceptance and promotion of every action—every type of behavior—no matter how extreme or perverse. There is now always a reason—an excuse—for what is simply wrong conduct. “Being tolerant” has become that excuse.

In a society claiming to be based upon Judeo-Christian values, one might assume that tolerance is biblical. Many say God tolerates all forms of conduct as long as we “love each other.” As long as “Jesus is in our hearts,” conduct is considered secondary.

The Bible teaches NO SUCH THING! While it *does* teach much about love and mercy, it also clearly states that only by living the laws of God is love perfected (I John 2:5; 5:3). Sinful conduct leads to unhappiness and ultimately death (Rom. 6:23). Therefore a perfect, loving and merciful God instructs His children to obey His laws so they can be happy (John 10:10). He knows that when His laws are broken, sadness, emptiness and confusion result.

Therefore, unless God is a cruel and heartless being, He could never *tolerate* sin.

When Jesus was confronted with an adulterous woman, instead of condemning her (as the scribes and Pharisees wanted), He first showed mercy and then commanded her to “sin no more” (John 8:11). In other words, Christ told her to stop committing adultery—to stop breaking God’s Law (I John 3:4).

Is It Too Late?

Decades have shown that modern entertainment and educational systems have failed hundreds of millions of children. Abstinence and virginity are ignored as the only wise choices. Perverse attitudes

Please see **LOST**, page 18

“It’s Lunacy!”

When the Unrepentant Pray for Divine Intervention

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

LED BY THE governor of Georgia, hundreds of constituents assembled at a public prayer vigil in Atlanta, the state capitol. Some held Bibles and crucifixes. Some linked arms and swayed as a choir sang “Amazing Grace” and “What a Mighty God We Serve.” Some raised their arms to the sky in prayer, as Moses did when the Israelites were in the midst of battle.

They came to ask the Creator and Designer of one trillion galaxies to send rain to the Southeast United States, a region experiencing severe drought.

“As the state’s drought has intensified,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “[Georgia Governor Sonny] Perdue, a Baptist, has repeatedly urged Georgians to pray for rain. In June [2007], he prayed for rain in Macon as part of the Georgia Farm Bureau’s day of prayer for agriculture.”

Did God, the Source of America’s blessings, listen?

From North Carolina to Georgia, recent population explosions have heavily taxed regional water supplies. Living under a water ban, residents are no longer permitted to use water for recreational uses, such as for lawns and washing cars. The drought has also made a significant impact on local businesses, with regulators imposing new water restrictions. Even serving a complimentary glass of water at restaurants has been eliminated.

Every water measurement record in Georgia’s history has been broken, with conditions such as inches of rain, soil moisture and stream flow rate at all-time lows.

An Atlanta-based consultant working on the current situation with an engineering firm, remarked, “We’re in a very stressful situation now...come next spring, if we don’t have substantial rainfall this winter, these reservoirs are not going to refill” (*The New York Times*).

With the drought growing worse, Georgia’s governor prayed, “O Father, we acknowledge our wastefulness. But we’re doing better. And I thought it was time to acknowledge that to the Creator, the Provider of water and land, and to tell Him that we will do better.”

Is acknowledging one’s “wastefulness” enough? Is this what the God of the Bible requires before He intervenes?

“Worth a Shot”?

Certainly, acknowledging one’s misuse of the environment is a start—but *only* a start.

Since the creation of Adam and Eve, God has charged mankind with properly managing the earth’s natural resources.

Yet for the past 6,000 years, man has forced—environmentally raped—the land. He has rejected God’s command to allow the soil to rest every seventh year (Lev. 25:1-4). He has polluted crops season after season with pesticides that permeate our fruits, vegetables and grains, and soak into the earth. He has joined “house to house” and laid “field to field, till there be no

place” (Isa. 5:8), creating overcrowded urban conditions, spawning problems—both physical and spiritual—that should never have been allowed to develop.

Referring to the prayer vigil, one man said, “It’s got to be worth a shot”—and essentially reduced the all-powerful Supreme God to a roll of the dice, a back-alley game of chance!

No wonder atheists and secularists alike view God as superstition! No wonder a Georgia college student, commenting on the public gathering, said, “It’s lunacy”! It IS “lunacy” to expect a “worth a shot” mindset to bring about divine intervention!

Are “acknowledging our wastefulness” the words that the God of Abraham desires to hear? Are these the words that will cause the Creator of the universe to intervene?

On Pentecost in 31 AD, when the New Testament Church was born, the apostle Peter gave his first public message. He addressed thousands of Jews who had traveled to Jerusalem from lands throughout the vast Roman Empire.

How did they react to Peter’s sermon? “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37). “Pricked”—which in the original Greek means pierced thoroughly!—violently agitated! Their hearts were cut to the quick! They said to Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we DO?”

Religion was more than just an emotional or academic exercise—they drank in his inspired words and wanted to put them into ACTION!

Now what did Peter tell them? Verse 38: “REPENT”—change your mind, including your attitudes, thoughts and behavior.

The rest of the verse speaks of being baptized in Jesus Christ’s name “for the remission of sins...” But what is sin? What is the *biblical* definition of sin? “Whosoever commits sin transgresses [breaks, violates] also the law: for sin is the transgression [breaking] of the law” (I John 3:4).

Have you ever heard a televangelist teach this verse to the tens of thousands of his viewers? Have you ever heard religious leaders give the *Bible’s* definition of sin?

They speak of “having love,” but fail to reveal that “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). That is, when you keep God’s Law, you automatically show love—selfless, outgoing concern for others—to your fellow man (vs. 8-9).

Yet religionists of this world teach that the Law of God is “done away,” “abolished,” “kept for you by Christ.” According to their reasoning, there is no need to repent, no need to change one’s thoughts, words and conduct.

These are the same false ministers God foretold would lead people astray in this modern age. Notice: “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. 22:26).

A counterfeit gospel *about* Christ (actually, “another gospel” about “another Jesus” – II Cor. 11:4) started soon after the birth of the New Testament Church. That false message thrives today, proclaimed by churches, denominations, movements and religionists who *appear* to serve God—but are utterly different from what they seem to be.

The Rift Between God and Man

In Matthew 6:26-29, Jesus Christ explained that God knows every part of His creation to the tiniest detail.

This includes the needs and necessities of human beings, to which He says, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (vs. 31). God promises to provide His servants their every need—IF they apply His command: “But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (vs. 33).

“Righteousness” means to keep God’s commandments (Psa. 119:172), a truth seldom discussed from the pulpits of seemingly God-fearing churches.

In the past, Georgia and South Carolina have been forced to remove displays of the Ten Commandments from state government facilities. In effect, those who legally pushed this move through the court said, “We don’t need God to teach us right from wrong! We’ll make our own laws and judgments!”

Now that the people cry out to God for rain, how should He answer?

Traditional Christianity, which is well-entrenched throughout the American South, loudly proclaims a message of “getting to know Jesus”—a “gospel” that centers on the *Person* of Jesus, but ignores the message—the true gospel (literally “good news”)—that Christ preached.

Immediately after being baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9), and qualifying to replace Satan the devil for world rulership (vs. 12-13), Jesus Christ began His ministry “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent you, and believe the gospel” (vs. 14-15).

“The kingdom of God” and “righteousness”—how often are these preached by the leaders of megachurches, which are mushrooming across the United States?

The God who promises to provide for the needs of His servants also says this: “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). He is a reasonable God, approachable, patient, willing to listen.

Yet there remains a spiritual gulf

between humans and their Maker, an ever-widening rift that prevents them from drawing close to God. “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your *sins* have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

Sin—lawlessness!—separates man from God. And until sin is repented of—until people change how they live—their prayers will go no higher than the bedroom ceiling!

Abuse of Power?

The treasurer (an atheist) of the Atlanta Freethought Society, which organized a small protest rally against the public vigil, said, “The governor is exceeding his constitutional authority. He has no right to set up prayer services on behalf of the people of Georgia, particularly not on the grounds of the state Capitol.”

What would he have thought of Abraham Lincoln, who proclaimed in 1863 a “National Day of Fasting and Prayer”?

Lincoln said, “It is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God...and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord... We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God.

“We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

ARUBA

■ “I am a new member of a Christian Church and I am doing my utmost to learn as much as possible of the Bible teaching.”

CHINA

■ “This is a good source of godly information.”

IRELAND

■ “Your work is great. We never knew the Bible. Now we are learning the Bible, but with the help of *The Real Truth*.”

MALAYSIA

■ “I find your articles very illuminating and very informational. It gives me a better perception of world events in the light of scripture. Very helpful!”

■ “I like to read biblical comments and interpretations by learned people and make my own decisions on what I should or should not do based on my readings.”

NAMIBIA

■ “Very informative and positive. Thank you very much.”

NIGERIA

■ “Very interesting magazine of understanding. Keep it up.”

■ “I appreciate your words of advice towards a standard of happy, real love. I give you double cheers.” [Editor’s note: **The reader is referring to our article “LOVE—What It Is and Is Not.”**]

■ “I want to be updated about the happenings around the world.”

■ “I love your scriptural backings of your points given. Thanks.”

PAKISTAN

■ “I would like to subscribe to know the real truth about unrevealed information.”

SINGAPORE

■ “Your articles are great. Thank you for sharing.”

SOUTH AFRICA

■ “I am excited to learn about prophecy.” [Editor’s note: **Our booklets *REVELATION – Explained at Last!* and *Who or What is the BEAST of Revelation?*, among others, address this topic.**]

UNITED KINGDOM

■ “After feeling a spiritual void for several years, I have started to examine my true feelings and have felt a strong need to find out more about the teachings of Jesus Christ. Most of the branches of Christianity, and other religions for that matter, seem (to me at least) to be inconsistent and rife with hypocrisy. The Restored Church of God [Editor’s note: **The Restored Church of God publishes *The REAL TRUTH*.**] seems to answer the questions that I have and I am eager to learn more. Thank you for your time.”

■ “Just reading through your materials on marriage has moved me to take some corrective decisions and action towards my own marriage. I believe they contain truths distilled from God’s Word. Being so motivated, I hope to visit your web site more often for more information on life and godliness.”

UNITED STATES

■ “I was searching the meaning of Pentecost and found your site. I would like to receive your updates of today’s news concerning REAL TRUTH. Thank you.”

■ “You have helped open my eyes... and helped me with Bible study with showing me the REAL TRUTH. Thanks.”

■ “I am very interested in learning about ‘the way, the truth and the life’ as in regards to the Bible and Jesus Christ.”

■ “I love the articles explaining another Jesus, as I have for sometime realized that the churches in America are fleeing the flock.” [Editor’s note: **The reader is referring to our article series on Jesus Christ, found on our website, www.realtruth.org.**]

“It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson made similar statements.

Imagine if the U.S. President made such proclamations today. He would be vilified by the news media and political opponents. He would be scoffed at and mocked by society. He would be accused of abusing presidential powers. Enraged critics would cry even louder, “Separation of church and state! Separation of church and state!”

As the years go by, and generations come and go, societal tastes and values change. What was acceptable and fully embraced in Lincoln’s day would now be considered taboo and, for some, a “threat”—all because every man chooses to do what is “right in his own eyes” (Jdg. 21:25).

Millennia ago, the God of Israel sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh, capitol of the Assyrian Empire, to warn them of divine destruction. Despite being pagan idol worshippers and a bloodthirsty warrior kingdom, the Assyrians heeded the warning and humbled themselves. Their obedience became a historic turning point for Assyria and ancient Israel—just as the continuing disobedience of the modern house of Israel will be a future turning point for a united Europe and the American and British peoples.

Another person who expressed his opinion about the prayer vigil said, “God is not an ATM machine to go to and get whatever you need and whenever you ask.”

Yet this is essentially at the heart of the popular “prosperity gospel,” a message that remains strangely silent on advocating personal responsibility. No mention of observing God’s Law. No biblical distinction of right from wrong.

Prayers Laced With Hypocrisy

One-third of the Bible is prophecy, most of which describes the deteriorating spiritual condition of the modern nations are descended from the house of Israel (not to be confused

with the Jewish people, descendants of the house of Judah).

Here is an irony: The modern-day descendants of Israel—primarily the birthright nations of the American and British people—are ignorant of their prophetic identity! They have no idea their vile conduct—relying on political alliances, which God calls spiritual adultery; favoring the rich over the poor, and vice-versa; murdering unborn children; exchanging sex partners as easily as changing one's clothes; practicing pagan and idolatrous customs and traditions, then calling them "Christian"—will bring the greatest time of trouble the world will ever see: "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

Acknowledging "wastefulness" is far from the type of prayer that God will answer. So what does He expect from people who beseech Him?

"Therefore also now, says the LORD, Turn you even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents [regrets, pities] Him of the evil. Who knows if He will return and repent [return, turn back], and leave a blessing behind Him?" (Joel 2:12-14).

But like the scribes and Pharisees, the American and British peoples see no reason to heed God. In Matthew 23, Jesus called the religious leaders of the day "Hypocrites!"—"Blind guides!"—"Fools!"—"Serpents!"—"Generation of vipers!"

Why? "For you are like unto whitened sepulchers [white-washed tombs], which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of HYPOCRISY and iniquity" (vs. 27-28).

Millions within America's religious community are quick to proclaim their religious fervor. But among them are those leading hypocritical lives, speaking out against sexual immorality, yet

secretly engaging in it. Among priests, preachers and other prominent religionists are serial adulterers, child abusers and men who, "leaving the natural use of the woman, burn in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly" (Rom. 1:27).

The hypocrisy of religious leaders has jaded millions, and their message of a "God" without laws—who does not hold followers to a higher standard of conduct and thinking—a "prosperity gospel" without expectations from believers—is ultimately empty. The result is a spiritual wasteland of human-based ideas that may sound appealing, but are not of the Bible and have nothing to do with the true gospel Christ preached.

Calling the civic and religious leaders and citizens of the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and other sister nations "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah," God asks, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" (Isa. 1:10-11).

The peoples of the birthright nations, especially those of the "Bible Belt," show great religious fervor and are quick to "praise Jesus" and offer solemn prayers.

"When you come to appear before me," God asks, "who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?" (vs. 12).

"Bring no more vain oblations [tribute]; incense is an abomination unto Me," He declares. "The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies [such as prayer vigils], I cannot away with; IT IS INIQUITY, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts MY SOUL HATES [because they are "Christianized" pagan holidays, not of God]: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear" (vs. 13-15).

Why? Because "your hands are full of blood" (same verse).

What does God expect of those seeking Him? "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings

from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment [true justice], relieve the oppressed, judge [defend] the fatherless, plead for the widow" (vs. 16-17).

Prayer without true repentance—without a 180 degree change in personal conduct—will go unanswered: "He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

Regrettably, the American and British nations will not take heed, and each person stubbornly lives as he or she pleases.

Their stiff-necked defiance will be "rewarded" with famine: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth [from lack of food] in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have you not returned unto Me, says the LORD" (Amos 4:6).

Rain will come to some regions, while others will suffer drought: "And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have you not returned unto Me, says the LORD. I have smitten you with blasting [wildfires] and mildew [too much rain]" (vs. 7-9).

Disease pandemics, military invasion and mass death will follow: "I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have you not returned unto Me, says the LORD" (vs. 10).

Only after being carried away into national captivity in foreign lands will the modern peoples of Israel be ready to seek God—to do more than merely "acknowledge wastefulness." This is the unsettling future that lies ahead.

And so, we are left to ask: *What do you call it when an unrepentant people ask for divine intervention from a God they refuse to obey?*

"Lunacy!" □

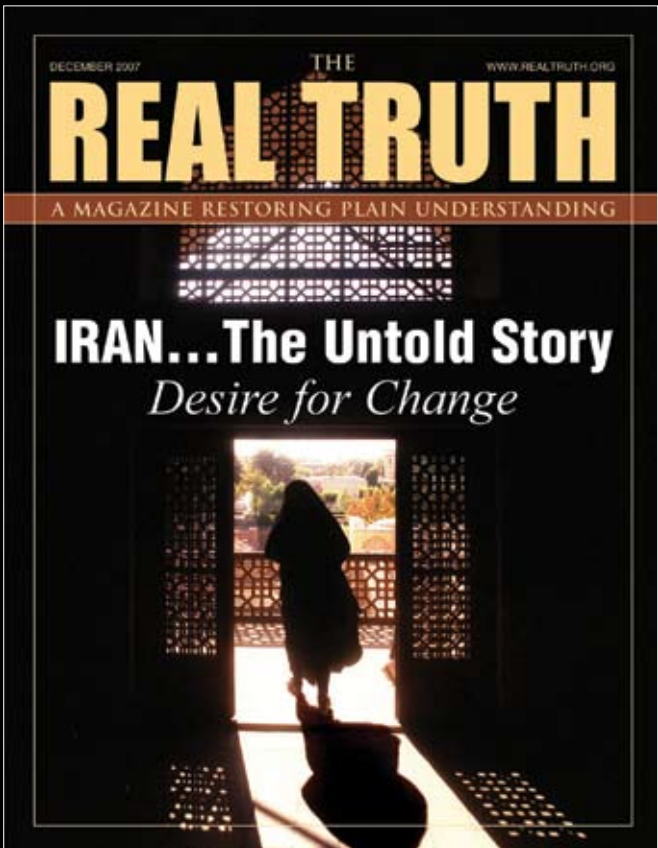
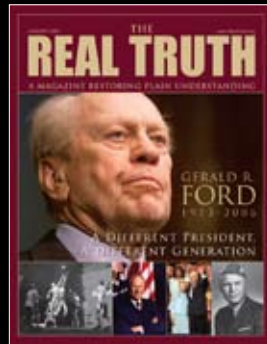
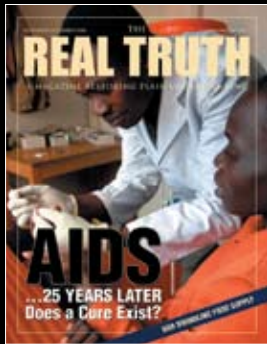
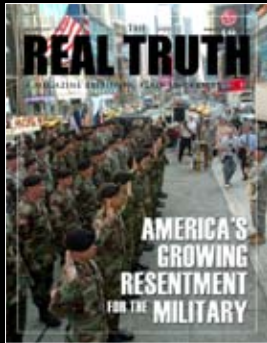
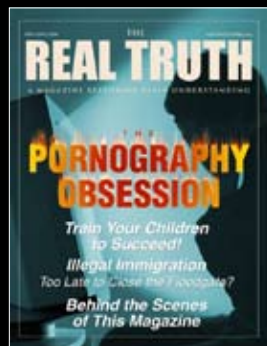
How This Magazine Is Sup

In a world awash with a variety of sources of information—Internet news, newspaper updates, daily television and cable shows—*The REAL TRUTH* cuts through the opinions and biases of individuals, bringing answers—and hope! Who produces this singular public



Supported

papers, periodicals, email
 newsletters, ideas, theories and
 education, and why?



OFTEN LETTERS filled with questions find themselves on the desks of *The REAL TRUTH* (RT) staff: *What is this magazine? What is its angle? Who supports it? How can it all be free? What is the catch?*

The RT not only details society's rampant problems, it also explains the solutions. Using *the Bible* as a lens to view world events is a perspective many find odd, spurring questions such as *What does the Bible have to do with today, with my life?*

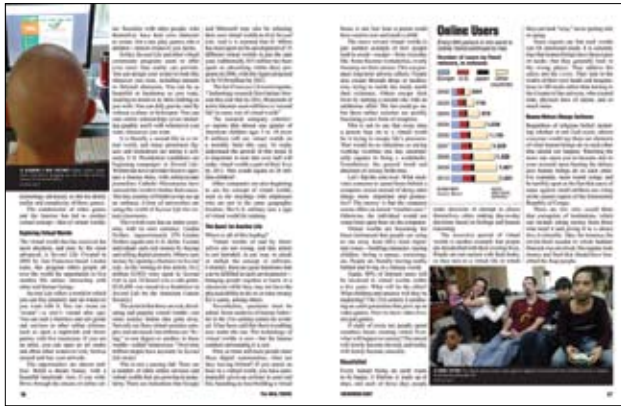
Each issue of *The REAL TRUTH* provides answers to today's troubles—and points to a time when mankind will enjoy great *peace, abundance and prosperity!* The RT is a vehicle to deliver this message, giving this publication a purpose—and drive!—like no other.

In addition to its relevant content, this magazine is backed by a history of quality and excellence, as well as a loyal group of financial supporters.

World Events Explained

Bad news—and trivial *escapism* “news”—fills television screens and publications the world over. As a result, *The REAL TRUTH* stands apart, bringing to light important issues of the day and explaining the *solutions* to these problems—how and why change will happen. In addition, it contains information on how to lead a more successful and fulfilling life.

Each issue covers a broad range of topics—articles explaining the *root cause* of war; what is wrong with the



weather; what will come of events in Europe; why earthquakes are increasing; why science has failed to bring the utopia all long for; how and why racism and bigotry will soon disappear; where the world economy is going; what lies ahead for all nations; the value of right ethics; the definition of true character; the real cause of the moral crisis in the West; what is wrong with modern education; why so many seek escape and pleasure; the definition of true success, and much more.

In addition to addressing world trends, problems and events, *The REAL TRUTH* gives practical answers to problems dealing with the family unit and how to properly rear children.

Other articles explain how the worldwide void of great leaders will be filled and how peace will come in our time; how to end all your financial worries; why new diseases are appearing and older ones are reappearing, this time resistant to medication and vaccines; and whether the United Nations is the ultimate answer to the problems plaguing mankind.

The *RT* brings plain understanding to the insoluble problems now overwhelming mankind, and points to the lasting peace of a coming world, just over the horizon. We explain why there are thousands of differing, and disagreeing, forms of "Christianity," and why religion has failed to solve the world's great troubles.

Tailored after the former *Plain Truth* magazine, *The REAL TRUTH*—its successor—continues to tackle seemingly unanswerable topics, providing answers and solutions from a spiritual perspective.

How Can This Be Free?

The REAL TRUTH magazine, which provides quality articles and up-to-date news briefs and analyses, is produced by The Restored Church of God (www.thercg.org), a non-profit organization devoted to practicing God's way of life—the way of GIVE, of outgoing concern for others, versus the world's way of GET, looking out for self first. The Restored Church of God (RCG) is dedicated to teaching Christ's gospel—the good news of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15)—to "all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14).

This is how it is being accomplished:

- *The REAL TRUTH* (with past issues accessible at www.realtruth.org).

- *The WORLD TO COME* program (www.realtruth.org), presented by David C. Pack, answers crucial questions facing mankind: Where is the world going?—Why is it filled with problems, troubles, evils and ills, causing unhappiness, confusion and misery of every kind?—What lies ahead?

- www.thercg.org, the largest biblically-based website on earth, offers a vast array of tools to guide people seeking plain answers to the greatest questions.

Unlike other religious organizations, there is nothing to buy. Following Christ's instruction, "Freely you have received, freely give," we offer everything free of charge.

Also, unlike other religious organizations, The Restored Church of God never solicits the public for financial support. Dedicated members, co-workers and donors voluntarily support this Work of preaching the gospel through tithes,

offerings and donations. They recognize the abundant blessings promised by God to all who obey His financial law of tithing: "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10; also read verses 8-9).

This magazine, through the publishing power of the Internet and other means, is spreading the gospel at a rate and efficiency the world has never seen. Every week, hundreds of thousands of people now learn as much as they want, *when* they want. Every nation and territory has access to learning sound, proven principles, helping many to live happier lives.

Christ commanded His disciples to "teach all nations...to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). The RCG understands the need to spread a clear, *plain* and real message—to reach out to a struggling, suffering world. This magazine delivers that message!—the GOOD NEWS of the soon-coming kingdom of God—even to hard-to-reach nations such as Zimbabwe, Somalia, North Korea and others.

This age of competition, greed and strife will soon give way to the wonderful World Tomorrow, which will be ruled by the government of God at Christ's Return. This is the GOOD NEWS *The REAL TRUTH* magazine is delivering month after month, and it is this message that a dedicated number of people are financially supporting. (To learn more, read *Here is The Restored Church of God* and *Which is the TRUE GOSPEL?*) □

INSIDE MYANMAR

CYCLE OF FAILURE

PART TWO

PHOTO: MCT

**Will emerging as a democratic state
be enough for Myanmar to overcome
its internal problems?**

BY ROBERT W. PACK

THE WORLD is watching with increased anticipation in hope that Myanmar's once-budding democracy will emerge from national turmoil, and usher in peace, liberty and abundance to the oppressed.

But will it?

Consider the diversity—and subsequent barriers—of Myanmarese people:

Religion: Approximately 70% of the country's 50 million citizens practice Buddhism, with 4% practicing traditional Christianity and another 4% observing Islam. In past years, the military regime has persecuted professing Christians and Muslims.

Language: Although Burmese is the official national language, more than 100 distinct languages and dialects are spoken and recognized.

Race and ethnicity: The population is comprised of an estimated 135 distinct ethnic groups.

Living conditions: Some live in abject poverty in northern jungle villages; others reside in large metropolitan areas such as Rangoon, which has about five million residents.

Diversity is widely celebrated and all but deified in the democracies of the West. However, with Myanmar's various religions, ethnic groups and languages—and the competing interests and factions these bring—reaching a consensus on any issue is next to impossible. In a perfect world, diversity can yield multiple benefits, IF diverse groups unite under and move as one toward an overarching purpose.

However, we do not live in a perfect world.

Ultimately, a diverse democratic society will take one of two paths: degenerate morally and socially, exchanging long-held values for political correctness—or become a caldron for competing socio-religious and ethnic schisms.

In one of his most powerful indictments of Myanmar's military regime, U.S. President George W. Bush said,

“Burma’s rulers continue to defy the world’s just demands to stop their vicious persecution...They continue to reject the clear will of the Burmese people to live in freedom under leaders of their own choosing.”

If a new democratic government is installed, news images of protests and government crackdowns will be replaced with images of demonstrators dancing in the streets and quiet jubilation of monks—but will this bring universal happiness to the oppressed? Will democracy find a way to end Myanmar’s cycle of failure and despair?

Although Westernized governments and their leaders are often able to identify the problems facing humanity, and democratic societies provide the freedom to speak out against injustices, they lack the capacity to bring about lasting solutions. This inability to find answers to the biggest problems facing mankind leaves citizens of every nation dissatisfied and frustrated with their governments’ executive, legislative and judicial systems.

British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, one of history’s greatest leaders, summed up the sad paradox of the democratic system: “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.”

The next quote (usually attributed to Alexander Tyler, circa late 1700s), while pertaining to the fall of the Athenian republic, gives unique insight into the cycle of failure all democracies are doomed to repeat: “A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the [public treasury]. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most money from the [public treasury], with the result that a democracy always collapses over a loose fiscal policy followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world’s great civilizations has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty,

from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, from dependency back to bondage.”

If this pattern holds true, then every democracy today lies somewhere in this cycle of failure—and each is in the process of failing. Whether it is Pakistan, perched on the brink of outright disaster—Venezuela, which is hurtling toward becoming a socialistic totalitarian state—or Iraq, which is at the beginning of the democratic cycle—all modern democracies are destined to return to bondage.

Yet if democracy—“the worst form of government, except for all the others”—cannot solve humanity’s growing troubles and ills, then what form of government can usher in the security, abundance and success—personal, national and world wide—that all long for?

The Only Solution

Myanmar is not the only country struggling with misery and despair. This universal struggle is shared, to varying degrees, with every nation on earth, in every society and across all levels.

In places such as Sudan’s Darfur region and the Democratic Republic of Congo, systematic rape and torture are commonplace, with victims ranging from 90-year-old women to innocent little toddlers. We live in a world in which monsters do not exist only in fairy tales; they are alive and well, and treat fellow human beings in ways that even the wildest beasts do not treat other animals.

In the affluent nations of the West, teens throw away their innocence in exchange for premarital sex, changing sex partners as easily as changing one’s socks. They abuse their minds and bodies with alcohol, illegal drugs and medication without restraint. They live their lives in an endless cycle of chasing after momentary pleasures and emotional “highs,” afterward suffering a long, hard crash—only to return to the spiritual vomit of substance abuse and sexual depravity. They are trapped. They are miserable. And they are igno-

rant of the only way that will set them free.

If history is an indication of future trends, the chaos and confusion that exists in every one of mankind’s governments and societies will only grow worse. From First World moral degeneracy and corruption to nightmarish Third World realities, man is ensnared in a cycle of failure that must be broken—and soon!—else “there should no flesh be saved [alive]” (Matt. 24:22).

When faced with hopeless situations, people tend to blindly gravitate toward the latest leader or newest government. (In Myanmar, for example, many are looking to Dr. Aung San Suu Kyi, Oxford-educated leader of the National League of Democracy, to lead their nation to an optimistic future.) However, it usually does not take long for this hope to be dashed when the next administration fails to bring lasting solutions—they never do! The cycle then repeats itself, as the people search for the next great hope on the horizon.

Even the greatest of history’s leaders have not permanently solved man’s ongoing troubles. The reason humanity has failed to break free from this cycle is because there is an unknown dimension—the only path to true understanding—that is absent in man’s vast knowledge. Human beings solve physical problems with physical solutions. But the ills plaguing humanity are spiritual in nature—and can only be solved spiritually.

The Bible is God’s instruction manual to mankind, and it answers life’s greatest questions: Who are we? Where are we going? What is the ultimate purpose for our existence?

The solutions to humanity’s spiritual problems are found only in God’s Word, which contains vital knowledge man cannot discover by his own intellect or through experimentation. In the case of Myanmar and all other nations, the problems of governments are spiritual. Human beings do not possess the ability to govern themselves and produce universal peace, prosperity, harmony and abundance. They do not understand “that the way of man is not

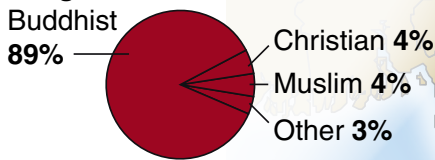
Myanmar Profile

Population: 47 million (2007 est.)

Life expectancy: 62.5 years

GDP per capita: \$1,800 (2006 est.)

Religions:



Independence:

1948, from U.K.

Government: Military junta since Sept. 1988

Chief of state:

General Than Shwe

Head of government:

General Thein Sein

Cabinet:

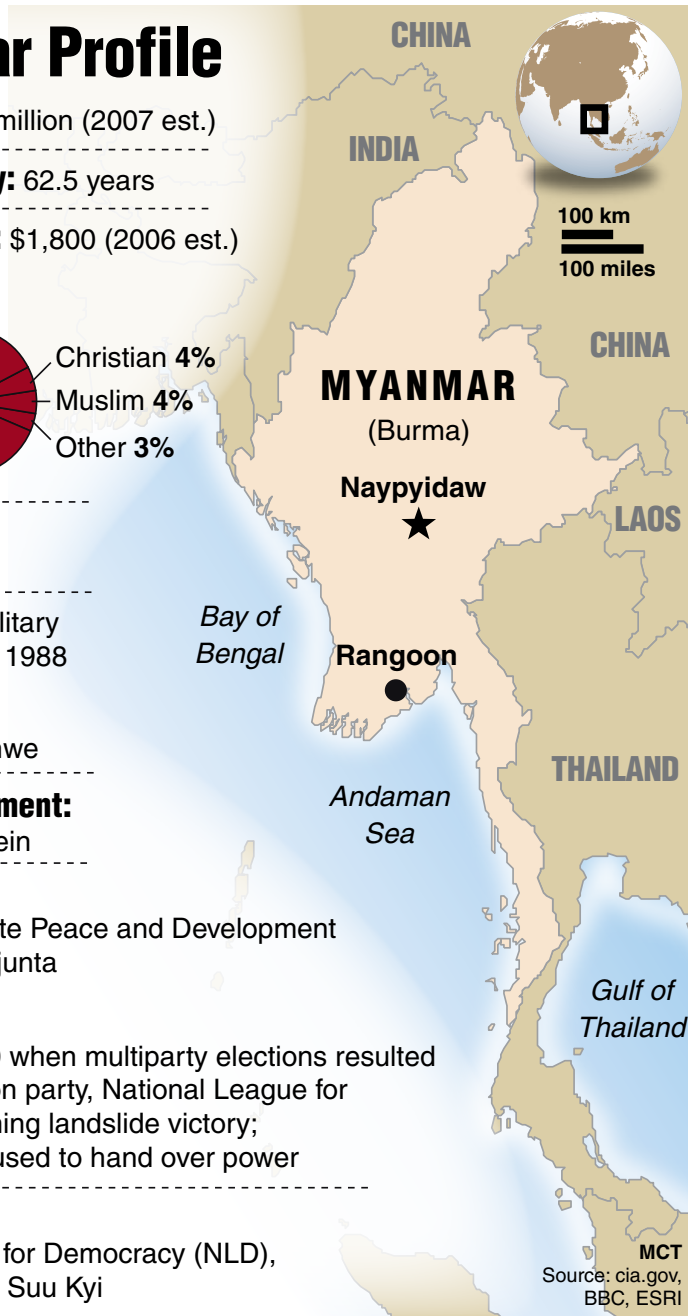
Overseen by State Peace and Development Council; military junta

Elections:

None since 1990 when multiparty elections resulted in main opposition party, National League for Democracy, winning landslide victory; military junta refused to hand over power

Opposition:

National League for Democracy (NLD), leader Aung San Suu Kyi



the laws of men have utterly failed to bring equity, justice and fairness across all levels of civilization. Only spiritual laws can do this! And only leaders who are led of God's Spirit and who have developed godly character can be trusted to administer such laws—the Law of God, which is spiritual in nature (Rom. 7:14) and is fulfilled through the way of love (13:8-10), the way of selfless, outgoing concern for others.

God's Word states that a future world Leader will establish and administer such a government, but the masses are looking for Him in the wrong places. This Leader is Jesus Christ. As Head of both state and Church, the returning Christ will establish a unified world-ruling supergovernment. Notice: "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, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

An incorruptible King, Christ will direct His supergovernment—the kingdom of God—to teach humanity true family values. Place educational institutions upon the right foundation. Empower true religion to provide guidance and purpose to empty lives. Maintain a global economy that will never see a depression or even a recession. Ensure that government on all levels—local, national and international; executive, legislative and judicial—will be free of bureaucracy and corruption. And convert all weapons of war into instruments of peace that will serve a greater purpose (Isa. 2:4).

God's government will not be based on the way of get, as evident among all nations today, but rather on the way of give. It will dispel chaos and confusion, replacing these with order, structure and peace.

Only when the government of God is finally established on earth will the people of Myanmar—as well as all nations—find the hope, peace and prosperity billions today so desperately seek. The kingdom of God is coming—and soon! □

in himself: it is not in man...to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

For the past 6,000 years, mankind has experienced wars and conflicts—between nations, between governments within nations, between corporations, between neighborhoods, between next door neighbors. Scholars, historians and political thinkers believe the causes are complicated. But the Bible teaches otherwise: "From where come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?...You ask, and receive

not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts" (Jms. 4:1, 3).

Human beings lust—covet—after things possessed by others. And they will do anything to get what they desire: go to war to seize another country's natural resources, slaughter the helpless in the name of religion, launch cutthroat corporate takeovers, smear a man's reputation with false charges, commit adultery, etc.

The purpose of government is to establish and administer law. Yet



LOST

Continued from page 7

and entertainment are marketed to extremely young children as normal and viable options. Worse yet, teens and small children are exposed to alternative lifestyles without parental knowledge.

Yet nothing is done.

Under the banner of *tolerance*, parents have been removed from teaching proper morals to their children. Has society gone too far? Is it possible to purge the unbridled immorality that has saturated our culture?

Ask yourself: How likely is our society to remove sex from advertising? Are there any signs the fashion industry is interested in curbing the sale of suggestive clothing to children and teens? Are educators changing curriculums to explain that sex can be fulfilling *only* if it is within the confines of marriage?

Of course not!

General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) said, "History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to *moral decay* have not passed into political and economic decline."

Decades have passed since these wise words were spoken. Things have become much, much worse. Time is

short—humanity must pay attention *now!*

The Solution for Youth

Leaving better judgment behind, educators flood children with information on sex in the hope they will somehow make "correct" sexual choices. This is tantamount to giving detailed instructions to a terrorist on how, when and where to plant a nuclear weapon. Then imagine that, after such a weapon is detonated, we deduce the solution is to give terrorists more information—with even MORE detail. No one would suggest such a ridiculous idea!

Yet every day, children and teens are being given what they need to commit *moral terrorism*.

There is hope—one short-term and the other long. The ultimate solution is to change the educational system, change the entertainment and fashion industry, and change human nature into something positive and fulfilling. This cannot be done by man alone. It takes a fundamental shift in humanity's focus—one that can only be realized by the Return of Jesus Christ and a systematic reconstruction of society as we know it.

There is something you can do *now* to make a difference in the lives of your children. You can take steps *now*

■ **EARLY PROGRAMMING:** (Left) Like many of her peers, a high school teenager prefers the shiny leather look made popular by pop stars. (Top right) Private school girls cruise a posh shopping mall in Mexico City. (Bottom right) Teens show off their "saggy pants" look in Dallas, Texas, a city that has earned nationwide attention for its campaign to convince youths to hike up their pants.

PHOTOS: MCT

to protect your children from the storm they are weathering.

The greatest gift you can give your children is to arm them with right knowledge and correct understanding. This will give them a fighting chance to withstand the pressure from peers and society confronting them on every side.

No matter the age of your children, our sister website, www.thercg.org, provides tools to assist you. For young children, there is a seven-volume *Story of the Bible* series. Also, parents can learn much from David C. Pack's book *Train Your CHILDREN God's Way*. Teenagers can find plain answers to complicated questions on our *AMBASSADOR YOUTH* website (www.thercg.org/youth). These resources are only a sampling of the vast array of materials we provide.

Use these tools and prepare your children for life's challenges. You can help save them from becoming just another statistic and prepare them for the permanent solution: Christ's Return, which is just over the horizon! □

Is God Liberal or Conservative?

With Republicans and Democrats turning to churches and religious leaders for political support, which platform does God support?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER AND JEFFREY D. DAVIS

CONSIDER A typical election season in the United States: Candidates run for office and publicly embrace religion. They visit Sunday church services, singing hymns and shaking hands with ministers and parishioners—the perfect “photo op.”

They solemnly invoke the name of God and Jesus, and give political testimony of how the Bible’s teachings and principles relate to the social issues of the day—as if to say, “God is on my side—a vote for me is a vote for God!”

Despite the increasing secular outcry for total separation of Church and State, religion has been an influential force in the U.S. political scene since the nation’s birth.

The 1970s saw the disgraceful exit of an American President and the fall of Saigon; the rise of oil shortages, runaway inflation and job layoffs nation-

wide. It also saw a pro-Washington ally, the Shah of Iran, replaced by an anti-American theocracy that held U.S. citizens hostage 444 days. The American people wanted a change, a return to the national resolve and optimism of the 1940s and 50s.

Enter the Reagan Revolution, largely made possible by the voting power of the Christian Right. The 1980s saw optimism return to the nation, as well as a robust economy, the growth of small businesses and the corporate sector, the expansion of the middle class, and undaunted U.S. military strength in the final years of the Cold War.

But all this waned by the end of the decade and into the 1990s, as the secularist movement gained momentum, strength—and a national voice.

In reaction to the rising tide of secularist agendas and the gains these achieved, political-minded Evangelical Christians called for other changes: “no” to abortion; “yes” to prayer in public schools; display the Ten

Commandments at government facilities; limit the legal definition of marriage to “one man, one woman”; teach public school children to abstain from premarital sex. Standing on the platform of family values, the Christian Right was influential in helping the Republican Party capture the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994 and the White House in 2000 and 2004.

Moderate and liberal Democrats took note. Today, politicians on the left and center-to-left are just as willing to campaign for votes from the churches and denominations of professing Christianity as are their conservative counterparts.

Yet rather than wave the political banner of “traditional family values,” the Liberal Left campaigns under a much *different* set of values—one that trumpets, “A family can be defined as anything.” Here, abortion is called “being responsible.” Teaching young minds “safe sex” over abstinence is considered more practical. Any display

■ **RELIGION AND POLITICS:** (Left) U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.), evangelical leader Rick Warren, and Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) pray at the closing of their session at the 2006 Global Summit on AIDS. (Right) U.S. President George W. Bush chats with Bishop Sedgwick Daniels after speaking at the Holy Redeemer Institutional Church of God in Christ in Milwaukee, Wisc., in July 2002.

PHOTOS: MCT



of religion or religious beliefs in public schools or government buildings must be suppressed. Denying same-sex couples the right to marry and/or adopt is viewed as intolerant and judgmental.

Speaking about the U.S. presidential campaign, author Paul Kengor expressed the following in an interview with *Frontpage Magazine*: “Hillary Clinton realizes that if she is to win in 2008, she needs more than the atheist vote. She needs to win a sizable enough sliver of those 2000 and 2004 moral-religious ‘values voters’ who twice elected George W. Bush. Those who attend church weekly or more went overwhelming for Bush, by two-to-one ratios, and each time provided him with an absolutely decisive vote margin of about five million ballots.

“It became clear in the immediate days after the November 2004 vote... that [presidential candidate Hillary Clinton] was going to go after that values voter. She angrily complained that it was a sign of ‘such disrespect’ to think that liberal Democrats who believe in God cannot be attractive to these religious voters. Ever since, she has pursued a strategy to win them over in 2008.”

“[Senator Clinton] is also part of a long tradition of ‘social justice’ Christians. These are the folks who have concluded that when Jesus calls on them to help the poor—which He did quite clearly, of course—that He favored a system of collectivism and forced wealth redistribution, including 50-plus percent upper-income tax rates, an estate tax, a capital gains tax, sales taxes, taxes on fuel, taxes on cigarettes, property taxes, government-subsidized healthcare, daycare, \$5,000-bonds for newborns, and so on; and that’s just a starter. They rightly understand that God wants all of us to be good stewards of the environment, but can be downright dogmatic in insisting that if the Almighty were here today He would cast into a lake of fire all those who don’t support the Kyoto Treaty.”

Since both the Conservative Right and now the Liberal Left, in effect, claim that the God of the Bible is on

their side, this naturally begs the question, “Is God liberal or conservative?” In other words, what “social issues” and positions does He support?

God’s Perspective

As recorded in the Old Testament, God revealed His Law to ancient Israel. Comprised of commandments, statutes, judgments and precepts, God’s Law evidences His viewpoints on a wide range of civic, social, environmental and other issues.

In revealing the Ten Commandments to the Israelites (Ex. 20:1-17), God established that there is right and wrong behavior. He also explained

“
In every aspect
of life—whether
personal, social
or educational—
God demonstrates
both liberal and
conservative
thinking.”

there are penalties—swift punishment!—when one breaks His laws (Lev. 26:14-39). All this would seem to align God’s views with traditional conservative ideas.

On the other hand, God also explains that He is merciful and gracious (Psa. 116:5). He promises to bless and care for those who heed Him (Deut. 28:1-14). He also says that He watches over the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners among His people. This would seem to place Him strongly in the camp for the “social justice” Christians.

In addition, God proclaims His love for all human beings and countries (John 3:16), going so far as to

promise that one day *all nations* will be blessed (Gen. 26:4). His love and compassion extends so far that He promises to do away with all pain, sorrow and death (Rev. 21:4).

However, this same God who explains that He *is love* (I John 4:8) also announces that He will bring His furious wrath upon those who disobey Him (Nah. 1:2). He will “by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7) and will bring destruction on the wicked (Psa. 37:20).

God’s unique and perfectly-balanced combination of compassion and swift justice is unseen in the political philosophies of men.

Using Moderation

To those reared in traditional Christianity, many of these verses might seem to contradict the concept of God they have been taught all their lives—a deity who has never matured beyond the point of a moody teenager. The world’s ministers, pastors and religionists teach either an out-of-control, fire-and-brimstone “God” who devours those who upset Him—or a pacifist, weak, “come as you are,” permissive “God” who allows everyone to do whatever they please, as long as they “just have love.”

Both extremes completely contradict the true God of the Bible, who exercises perfect moderation, judgment and discernment in all His decisions. In every aspect of life—whether personal, social or educational—God demonstrates both liberal and conservative thinking. If this sounds strange, recognize this: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

God does not limit His ability to make correct and just decisions by locking Himself into any of man’s political ideologies.

Fiscal Responsibility and Service

Citing III John 1:2, many churches correctly teach that God wants

Christians to be blessed and prosperous. Yet these same religious organizations often neglect to teach that He requires people to do their part—to work hard, save their income and be wise stewards (or managers) of their personal finances.

Few today understand God has a detailed financial system that, when obeyed, yields blessings. The core component of this system is tithing. God wants men to demonstrate their ability to save money and “stretch a dollar” by giving Him the first 10% of their income. In return, He promises those who trust Him wonderful blessings and a significant gain on investment (Mal. 3:8-10).

God’s financial system also includes mercy upon the poor and those who struggle with economic difficulties. He commands men not to oppress the impoverished by exacting interest from them (Ex. 22:25), and to mete out debt relief by a fair and forgiving standard (Deut. 15:1-2). In addition, all citizens are to do their part in taking care of the poor by making sure their needs are met (vs. 7-11).

For instance, God required farmers to leave enough crops during the harvest season “for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow” for their food (Deut. 24:19-22). However, these same disadvantaged people had to labor—they had to work in the fields and glean the crops for themselves.

Clearly, *both* sides of the political and social spectrum—conservative investment and fiscal responsibility on the one hand, relieving the poor on the other—are simultaneously reflected within God’s view on money.

Crime and Punishment

Modern criminal justice systems struggle with how to effectively uphold the laws of the land. Some governments follow a permissive course, such as tolerating illegal drug use and other social ills. Other governments exact terrible punishment for the simplest infractions—and even punish victims of the crimes along with the criminals who committed them.

Take note of the following report

from the *Associated Press* regarding “justice” in Saudi Arabia: “The Saudi judiciary...defended a court verdict that sentenced a 19-year-old victim of a gang rape to six months in jail and 200 lashes because she was with an unrelated male when they were attacked.”

“Judges have wide discretion in punishing criminals, rules of evidence are vague and sometimes no defense lawyer is present. The result, critics say, are sentences left to the whim of judges. A rapist, for instance, could receive anywhere from a light sentence to death.”

“Canada’s minister for women’s issues, Jose Verger, has called the sentence ‘barbaric.’”

“The New York-based Human Rights Watch said the verdict ‘not only sends victims of sexual violence the message that they should not press charges, but in effect offers protection and impunity to the perpetrators.’”

Many legal systems find themselves powerless in punishing criminals, with the most horrific offenders sometimes released without punishment.

Even those who are imprisoned live comfortable lives often better than the ghettos and other dying communities that inspired them to a life of crime in the first place.

As well, the slow process of court systems, legal battles and appeals often takes years—allowing criminals to gloss over the whole purpose of reform. As a result, Ecclesiastes 8:11 becomes reality: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

In contrast to these extremes, God designed a balanced system of justice and equity. He explains that the penalty for any crime should be as serious as the original infraction (Ex. 21:23-25), and that some crimes require the perpetrator to restore more than the initial damages (Ex. 22:1).

Natural Resources

The world’s religions and philosophies often profess extreme and opposing

opinions regarding the environment and wildlife. Some believe the entire earth is sacred and therefore man should not harm it—even going so far as to not eat animals or tap natural resources. At the other extreme are those who believe animals can be slaughtered without cause, and that all the earth’s resources are man’s to squander without repercussion.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God says that He gave man dominion over the earth and over all the animals (vs. 26-30). This includes the earth’s natural resources. God also gave certain animals for man’s diet, and explicitly outlined which animals should and should not be eaten (Lev. 11).

Concerning natural resources, God also set a clear example for using these resources by commanding that Noah’s Ark, as well as articles in the Holy Tabernacle, be constructed of fine wood, precious metals and the best materials available (Gen. 6:14; Ex. 25-27).

Along with using natural resources, mankind is charged with taking care of the earth (Gen. 2:15). Part of this responsibility includes giving the land a rest from farming every seventh year (Lev. 25:1-4).

Clearly, God’s view is to conserve the land. He created the earth to be properly used, not abused.

No More Doubt

Religionists of traditional and modern “Christianity” selectively choose which of God’s views and laws to preach, and which ones to ignore. So do those of the Conservative Right and Liberal Left who turn to this world’s churches and religious leaders for political support.

Thankfully, the God who hates evil (Prov. 8:13), and yet is reasonable—who says to all who are willing, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18)—will soon establish His government upon the earth. It will administer true justice and equity for all nations.

And there will never again be any doubt as to whether God is liberal or conservative in His ways. □

IRAN

Continued from page 4

of its significance. The revolution was supposed to be a monumental turning point in the nation's history, one that was to bring change for the better.

But Iranians, especially those under age 30, who constitute 70% of the population, are beginning to resent the Islamic government that the previous generation wholly embraced. They are growing to despise the rules and regulations being imposed (sometimes with force) upon them. They are tired of a religious system that governs every aspect of their lives. Large numbers are speaking out against what they view as oppressive and restrictive laws limiting their "freedom."

Calls for yet another change in government are ringing ever louder. And the Internet "blogosphere" has become the medium of choice in voicing dissent.

In late 2001, a young Iranian journalist created one of the first weblogs, or "blogs," in Farsi (the most widely spoken Persian language), and eventually taught others how to create them. Today, Farsi blogs have mushroomed in popularity, surpassing the number of Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese or Russian blogs existing today. A 2004 NITLE Blog Census reveals that there were more than 64,000 Farsi weblogs, most emanating from Iran—staggering numbers, especially considering that neighboring Iraq had less than 50 bloggers.

Iranians are turning to blogs at increasing rates for a number of reasons, but mainly because blogs have provided a safe medium to freely voice opinions on a wide variety of topics, especially the government and its effect on life in Iran. Unlike the nations of the West, in Iran one cannot freely voice opposition to the government. Doing so means risking imprisonment—even death! In the past decade, the Islamic regime has shut down

more than 100 print publications, 41 of which were daily newspapers, and has thrown a number of journalists into prison.

This is in stark contrast to what bloggers recall Ayatollah Khomeini saying in 1978: "In Iran's Islamic government the media have the freedom to express all Iran's realities and events, and people have the freedom to form any form of political party and gathering that they like" (*Paese Sera*, November 2, 1978).

Even weblogs, however, are not untouchable by the government. In 2003, Iran became the first country to imprison a blogger. Since then, many more have been arrested.

Still, the anonymity of the blogosphere means it is the safest avenue to voice political opposition, since one does not need to provide his or her name. This makes it difficult for authorities to track down specific bloggers.

The following statement written by an Iranian blogger perhaps best summarizes the view of most of Iran's younger, Internet-savvy generation: "The...killings at the dawn of the Revolution, the assassination, eight years of devastation and war, the bombing of towns, the...killings of prisoners en masse in the 1980s [are] all the bloody roots of our story. Yet today these blood feuds are fading from the minds of a new generation...A generation that was created

for martyrdom is suddenly aware of its predicament and the world around, and no longer believes in the endless wars of its forefathers. A new generation is pressing forward to destroy the old formula" (*New Internationalist*).

Even those who profess to be religious are speaking out. A notable Islamic scholar stated that 25-plus years of Islamic rule "has not made Islam stronger, but it has brought about a decline in the position of the clergy and religion in society" (*ibid.*).

Cultural Invasion

Due to the Iranian blogging phenomenon, outsiders are able to view Iran in a new light. Before the advent of Farsi blogs, they were generally forced to rely upon stories and images coming straight from the Iranian regime. A former *Guardian* correspondent who was expelled from Iran said, "Stifling the flow of information means that the nuances of Iranian society are often obscured to the outside world. Any foreigner who visits Iran is struck by the gap between the reality of society and the image cultivated by the regime" (*Guardian*, May 24, 2004).

Many Iranians look favorably toward America, mostly due to a desire to have all the freedoms that America's citizens enjoy. After visiting Iran in 2004, a *New York Times* columnist commented, "Finally, I've found a pro-American country" (*We Are Iran*, by Nasrin Alavi).

Virtually everywhere he traveled, the Iranian people he encountered were "exceptionally friendly and fulsome in their praise for the United States, and often President Bush as well," adding that being pro-American in Iran "is a way to take a swipe at the Iranian regime."

The columnist also said, that based on his stay in Iran, there is a better "chance of a strongly pro-American government in Tehran in a decade than in Baghdad."

Surprising to some, after



■ VOTING FOR CHANGE: Women in Iran are growing a voice and beginning to speak out for change.

PHOTO: MCT

the infamous 9/11 terrorist attacks, there was strong sympathy in Iran for Americans. For instance, “On the evening of September 11, 2001, young people gathered in Madar Square, on the north side of Tehran, in a spontaneous candlelight vigil to express sympathy and support for the United States. A second vigil, the next night, was attacked by the Basij, a volunteer force of religious vigilantes, and then dispersed by the police. The vigils may have been the only pro-American demonstrations in the Islamic world after the terrorist attacks on the United States” (*The New Yorker*).

Yet one must not conclude that Iranians are *entirely* pro-American; there is some reservation in their thinking. Many recall the 1953 American-British coup that overthrew the democratic Iranian government led by Dr. Muhammed Mossadegh. A Central Intelligence Agency report published by *The New York Times* in 2000 confirmed what Iran had known for a long time: The coup garnered an intense and long-lasting hatred for the U.S. and Britain, which has only recently subsided among Iran’s population.

Dr. Mossadegh is still highly regarded by those pushing for democratic reform. On what would be his birthday, it is common for bloggers to commemorate his life and lament over what could have been—a true Iranian democracy.

Today’s young Iranians are caught in a conflict between tradition and globalization. Satellite television and the Internet have allowed outside influences to enter Iran as never before. A whole new world has become visible.

Traditional Islamic culture and values are being challenged by what Iranian officials call a “cultural onslaught” from the West. Shielding the youth from Western culture has led to intense curiosity and a desire to embrace it.

A veteran journalist commented, “Many Iranians, even those on very limited incomes, own illegal satellite dishes that give them instant access

to American television. CDs, videos and computer programs are pirated and sold on the streets for a fraction of their price in the United States. Email is more widely available in Iran than in many other Middle Eastern countries” (*Persian Mirrors*, 2000).

After nearly 30 years of Islamic rule, the goal of creating Islamic “model citizens” who willingly and wholeheartedly adhere to cultural dress and moral codes has all but failed. Interestingly, a society that was at one time willing to fight for its cultural identity is now extremely receptive to outside traditions.

Instead, young people in droves are embracing Western influences, including even Valentine’s Day. The nation has become almost overrun with this once foreign holiday, and it is a subject of much debate among the Iranian press. Numerous references to this day are found throughout Iranian blogs on February 14.

In February 2004, *Sharg* newspaper reported, “Valentine’s Day or as they say the Day of Lovers, a totally Western tradition, is gradually entering the hearts of the youth of the East. Just a glance at the shops scattered around town selling presents for this European celebration and you can grasp the reality” (*We Are Iran*).

To help combat this “foreign invasion” of Western influences, Iran’s Morality Police wander the streets enforcing the cultural rules of the regime. Alcohol, dancing, make-up, pop music and holding hands in public, to name a few, are strictly forbidden. Traditional skin- and hair-covering dress for women is mandatory.

In 2002, the Morality Police were strengthened by “Special Units,” adding to the already-large number of individuals who enforce public morality and fight against “social corruption among the youth.”

Yet a growing sentiment is that it is next to impossible to suppress the youth culture. As a result, young Iranians have been granted some little reprieve from cultural mandates—but still not close to the full freedom they would like.

What If...?

Calls for democracy are ringing across Iran. Calls for freedom are echoing loudly. A desire for change is stronger than ever.

What if democracy came to fruition in Iran? What if the freedom young Iranians yearn for were given to them? Would they experience a utopian existence? Or is theirs a case of “the grass is greener on the other side” mentality?

While all governments of men, especially democratic ones, promise “pie in the sky” success, they are *all* filled with graft, corruption, immorality and every form of deception. Political infighting and division of every kind abound.

In democracies, there is freedom to live and act as one pleases, which appeals to those living under a totalitarian government that dictates every aspect of life. But this so-called freedom, which gives license to rampant immorality, leads to shallow lives and everyone doing what is right in his own eyes. Right and wrong becomes blurred by “individual expression” and the “right” to live one’s life as he or she desires. Lawlessness sets in. Degeneracy and vileness of every imaginable sort take over.

The democracies of the West serve as prime examples.

Government by the people means that everyone has a voice, with many advocating their view of right and wrong. A society that has nearly unlimited freedom ultimately *loses* its freedoms. Why? Because eventually the majority wins and forces its view upon others. The freedoms that were sought become lost. A government once yearned for becomes despised.

The liberty and utopian existence that young Iranians seek *cannot* be achieved by a democracy. In fact, no government in the hands of men can provide true and lasting freedom.

However, there is a government that can—and will!—bring this, and it is on the horizon. To learn more, read our book *TOMORROW’S WONDERFUL WORLD – An Inside View!* □

EUROPE

“Urban Guerillas” Riot in France



■ NOV. 26, 2007: Teens vandalize an abandoned patrol car during clashes with police.

PHOTO: ABACA PRESS/MCT

Repeated clashes between police officers and youth, which began after the death of two teenagers, in the suburban housing project Villiers-le-Bel injured over 77 officers—five seriously.

Rioters torched numerous cars and buildings, including a library and a car dealer’s showroom.

Violence spread from the northern Paris suburb to neighboring projects and towns. Using their knowledge of the complex network of streets in the Villiers-le-Bel project, the rioters lured

authorities into open areas, where they attacked with baseball bats, hunting rifles and Molotov cocktails, among other homemade projectiles.

Hoping to disband the mobs and end the escalating situation, police officers countered with rubber flash-balls and tear gas.

The rioters were highly organized in their attacks. One senior police union official labeled them “urban guerrillas.”

The rampages began after two teenage residents from the project were

killed when their motorcycle struck a police car.

According to the official report, the teens drove through a red light without helmets on an unregistered bike. Eyewitnesses confirmed the youths were at fault.

President Nicolas Sarkozy called for “everyone to calm down and let the justice system decide who was responsible.”

The family members of the teens who died in the accident also called for the violence to end.

In 2005, three weeks of rioting began with similar events—the death of two teenagers, anger at the police and the unrest of residents (mainly ethnic immigrants) in low-income suburbs.

Mr. Sarkozy was France’s Interior Minister during the 2005 riots and took a hard line against the rioters, even calling them “scum.”

However, since becoming president, he has promised to improve conditions in the crime-laden suburbs.

Residents remain skeptical, though, as previous President Jacques Chirac made similar promises, which brought about little visible change. □

AUSTRALIA & SOUTH PACIFIC

Australia Elects a New Prime Minister

Australians voted for a new administration, denying incumbent John Howard a fifth term as prime minister, choosing Kevin Rudd, leader of the liberal Labor party, to head the nation.

The election results mark a change in direction for Australia after 11 years of conservative leadership. Several reports described the outcome as a “humiliating” defeat for Mr. Howard, who even failed to win in his own constituency.

Mr. Howard was a staunch U.S. ally, sending Australian troops to fight in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Rudd has promised to pull

Australia’s troops out of Iraq in a phased withdrawal. He has also promised to quickly sign the Kyoto Protocol, leaving the United States as the only industrialized country that has not signed it.

Australia is the latest nation that supported the war in Iraq to undergo a political shift. Earlier in 2007, Poland’s new prime minister also made statements regarding withdrawal.

As reported by the Associated Press, Mr. Rudd, a Chinese-speaking former diplomat, said in his victory speech, “Today the Australian people have decided that we as a

nation will move forward. To plan for the future, to prepare for the future, to embrace the future and together as Australians to unite and write a new page in our nation’s history.”

Mr. Rudd has stated that global warming will be his administration’s top priority, but is otherwise unlikely to significantly alter the alliance with the U.S., and/or growing economic and political links with Asia.

Based on his diplomatic experience, Australia’s new prime minister is expected to take a more cautious and non-confrontational approach in foreign policy. □

HEALTH ISSUES

U.S. Rise in STDs Breaking Records

A study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis are all on the rise once again in the United States.

In fact, 1,013,000 cases of chlamydia were reported in 2006, the most ever for a sexually transmitted disease (STD), according to an Associated Press report.

While the CDC stated that the higher chlamydia rate might be due to “better and more intensive screening,” it did not apply this explanation to the rise in gonorrhea or syphilis.

In the case of gonorrhea, in which

rates are again going up after hitting a record low, an increasing number of cases are caused by a “superbug” version that is resistant to several antibiotics.

The rate of congenital syphilis, the type that deforms or kills babies, rose for the first time in 15 years.

“Hopefully we will not see this turn into a trend,” said Dr. Khalil Ghanem, an infectious diseases specialist at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Medicine.

The 2006 rate of reported chlamydia cases broke the 1978 record for single-year cases of an STD.

Concerning the “better and more intensive screening,” the CDC has recommended annual screening in sexually active women ages 15 to 25 since 1993. However, Dr. John M. Douglas Jr., director of the CDC’s Division of Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention, said he believes 2.8 million new cases of chlamydia may be occurring each year.

Regarding the “superbug” gonorrhea, doctors are increasingly worried, as they are seeing higher rates not only in California and Hawaii, where it is most common, but also in the South and Midwest. “Suddenly we’re starting to see the spread,” Dr. Ghanem said. □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

Report: Global Warming Is “Unequivocal”

A comprehensive report on climate change, which was compiled by over 2,500 leading researchers, states with high confidence “that the net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming.”

Findings include that temperatures are likely the highest in 1,300 years, glaciers and sea-ice is melting, and as intense rainfall increases in some regions, drought-like conditions persist elsewhere.

Most dramatically, the researchers detail that with the current levels of green house gases in the atmosphere, even if the use of all factories and cars ended, sea levels would rise to an average of 4.6 feet globally.

In response to the report, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked that some the “treasures of our planet” are being “threatened by humanity’s own hand.” He then said that “slowing—and reversing—these threats are the defining challenge of our age.”

Included in the report was a climate forecast for the regions around the world if current green house gas emissions persist:

■ By 2020, 75 to 250 million Africans will be experiencing severe

drought. Crop yields are expected to decline up to 50% by the same year.

■ Asia will experience an increase in flooding by 2050 for sea-side villages and those living along rivers, bringing about elevated death rates due to diarrheal diseases.

■ Australia and New Zealand are expected to see dramatic loss of biodiversity in the Great Barrier Reef and Queensland Wet Tropics by 2020. Coastal development is also projected to exacerbate risks of rising sea levels,

intensity and frequency of storms, causing coastal flooding.

■ Europe is also expected to see increases in flooding, both coastal and inland. Mountains are projected to lose 60% of their glacier cover by 2080, causing dramatic species loss.

■ North America will continue to experience heat waves. Warming in the Western mountains will lead to decreased snow pack, increased winter flooding and decreased summer water supplies. □



■ NOV. 1, 2007: Speaking from Nashville, Tenn., via satellite, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore addresses the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Summit at Benaroya Hall in Seattle, Wash.
PHOTO: MCT



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