

AUGUST 2009

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



**WHY
AMERICA FAILED
AS GLOBAL SHERIFF**

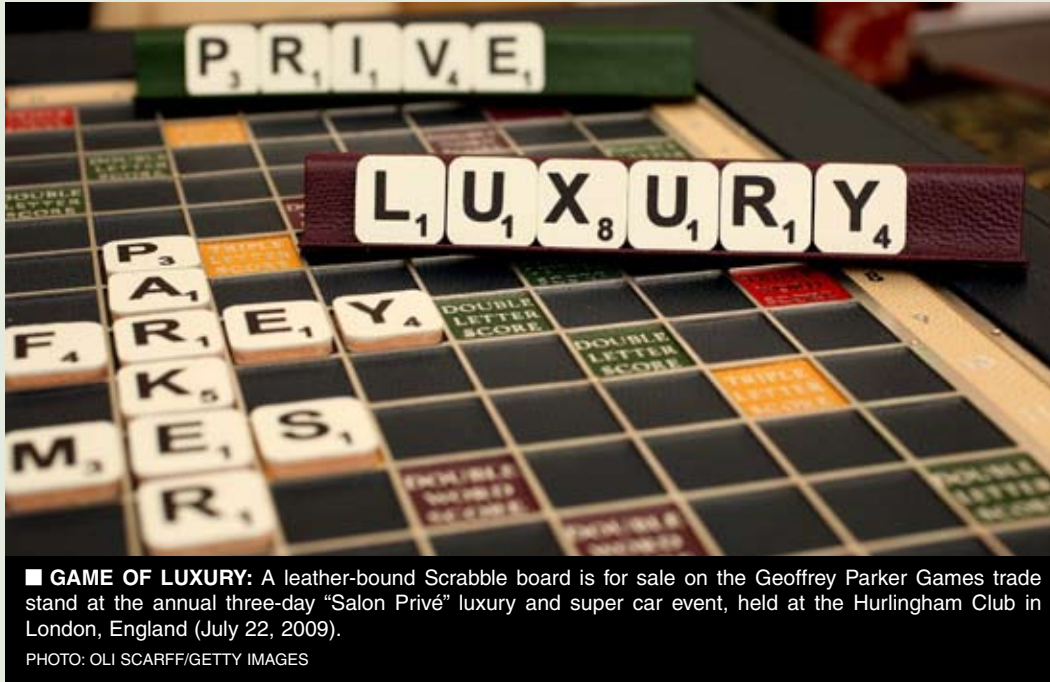
THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. VII | NO. 7 | AUGUST 2009

ARTICLES

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■ **GAME OF LUXURY:** A leather-bound Scrabble board is for sale on the Geoffrey Parker Games trade stand at the annual three-day “Salon Privé” luxury and super car event, held at the Hurlingham Club in London, England (July 22, 2009).

PHOTO: OLI SCARFF/GETTY IMAGES

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■ **FRONT COVER:** Sailors “man the rails” aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) as she returns to her homeport of Norfolk, Va., from deployment to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (June 25, 2003).

PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHER’S MATE 3RD CLASS
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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAVID C. PACK

SENIOR EDITORS
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
JAMES F. TURCK

MANAGING EDITOR
KEVIN D. DENEY

ART/GRAPHICS DIRECTOR
BRUCE A. RITTER

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
SAMUEL C. BAXTER
ABDON V. BUENA
RYAN L. CASWELL
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
KEVIN D. DENEY
MARK P. DENEY
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BRIAN K. JACKSON
KELLY A. DJURICIC
ROSLYN D. MCFARLAND

ART/GRAPHICS
DARNITRA D. MAIDEN
PAULA C. RONDEAU

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

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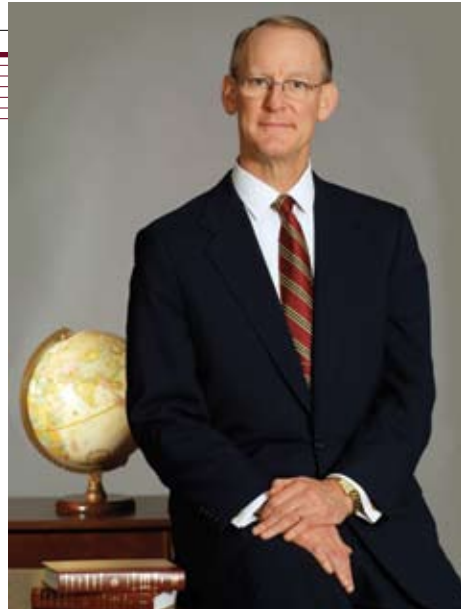
Contact *The Real Truth*:

P.O. Box 23295
Wadsworth, OH 44282

www.realtruth.org
info@realtruth.org

PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Identifying the Church Jesus Christ Built

MY MOTHER REQUIRED her three children to read numerous books when growing up. I spent many summers reading her assigned “book a week.” On occasion, perhaps two or three times, I picked up the Bible and attempted to read it. But I never got far, because it made no sense to me. I simply *could not understand the Bible*.

Despite this lack of understanding, when quite young, I was “confirmed” into the church that I had been born into. I recall having to appear briefly before a panel of “deacons” to answer a couple of questions, which I no longer remember. I do recall making some kind of general affirmation about this denomination, but I also remember that I was not concerned in the least with whether or not I was in the right church, or if I was fulfilling the Bible definition of a Christian.

Neither of these questions *remotely* interested me. I did vaguely believe God existed, but He was not *real* to me. I had certainly never attempted to build a personal relationship with Him or to find His one Church. I did not pray or study His Word for guidance or doctrinal instruction. These concerns did not enter my mind until some years later, in 1966, when I heard a powerful voice

on the radio introduce me to Christ’s statement in Matthew 16:18. I began to question where I could find this true Church. I immediately realized that it *had* to exist because, through just basic study, I came to understand Christ’s promise that it would remain and could not be destroyed.

Jesus declared something in Matthew that almost none seem to believe, or even know about. He wrote, “*But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (15:9). In Mark’s parallel account, Christ added, “*Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition*” (7:9).

The world’s Christianity is filled with traditions. One of the largest is the traditional view of the New Testament Church. Most ministers, theologians and religionists typically define the Church this way: “All those who *sincerely believe* in Jesus Christ, and accept Him as their Savior, comprise the true Church,” I might add, without regard to their denomination or beliefs. This is often followed with the familiar statement, “There are many routes to heaven” or “There are many spokes on the wheel of salvation.”

Though the Bible does not teach that heaven is the reward of the saved, the clear implication of these clichés is that people can believe what they want, or be a part of any group or organization they choose, and still be Christians—still receive whatever is salvation. While people

may sincerely believe these traditional ideas, *they are sincerely wrong!*

My research led me to absolute PROOF of *where* the Church was that Christ promised to build. I learned that this Church, foretold to span seven eras or phases, could be carefully traced through the centuries.

I was shocked. I could not believe the Bible was *so clear* on a subject that confuses *so many*.

Your Bible declares, “God is not the author of *confusion*, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints [the context shows this means *all congregations* of the true Church, not *all* of the *many organizations* of men]” (I Cor. 14:33).

God’s Church was to reflect *peace*—not confusion. You need not be confused about its identity—about the location of the true Church. God commands, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). While this refers to *scriptural* matters (not the car you drive or the house you buy), it does say “ALL things,” not “*some* things,” should be PROVEN! Surely God would not exclude something of such magnitude—such supremely vital importance—as the matter of where His true Church is found. And He would never emphatically tell people to prove things that *cannot be proven!*

The more I studied the other doctrines of the Bible, the more I learned that the churches of this world were *wrong*—on virtually EVERYTHING! One plain scripture after another contradicted each *traditional*, supposed Christian idea I had been taught. I was amazed—actually stunned—at how easy it was to find direct, clear, undeniable proof that even the most popular—the most *widely* believed—traditions of the big denominations were not based on the Bible—*at all!*

Each time I studied a Bible doctrine—salvation, baptism, who and what God is, the gospel, death and hell, law and sin, grace, being born

again, the Christian Sabbath, the true origin of supposed “Christian” holidays, where the modern-day tribes of ancient Israel are found today, the sequence of prophecy in the last days, including events surrounding Christ’s Return—and so much more—I gained *undeniable proof* of what the Bible really taught! I was excited and fascinated. I found that the churches of this world were confused on *every one* of these and many other plain points of Bible teaching. I came to realize there had to be a church that correctly believed and practiced *all* of the doctrines of the Bible—including perhaps the most central—*what is the true Church*.

So, I learned that this Church existed, and that the proofs *identifying* it and setting it apart from all the churches of recognized, mainstream Christianity were no different from the proof of any other biblical doctrine. I also learned that the *scope* of the proof—the sheer volume of facts—about God’s Church was vast, almost overwhelming in amount. Of course, therefore, I came to see that those who were in this Church absolutely KNEW they were—and it could not be otherwise.

Church, Not Churches

In one of the most powerful, dramatic, and profoundly important statements in the Bible, Jesus Christ declared, “I will build *My Church*” (Matt. 16:18). He did not say “churches,” “fellowships,” “sects,” “denominations” or “communities of believers.” No matter how men try to place an interpretation on it, this passage speaks of a single Church—of one, undivided organization!

Jesus continued, “and the gates of hell [meaning, the grave] shall not prevail against it.” He promised that *His Church* could not be destroyed. This Church—Christ’s Church—the *true Church*—was foretold to *never*

be extinguished—to *never* die out.

Unrecognized and discounted as a cult or a fringe sect on the edge of supposed Christianity, the Church of God has endured every trial and storm it has faced.

For nearly 2,000 years, almost everyone has been looking in the wrong place for God’s Church. The true Church was called out of this world—out of its religions, creeds, customs, beliefs and traditions. The word translated throughout the New Testament as “church” comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning to be “called out”—and Christ’s Church has come out of the world. This has made it more difficult for traditional historians to locate it. Unlike historians *within* the Church, they simply did not know where to look, or what to look for.

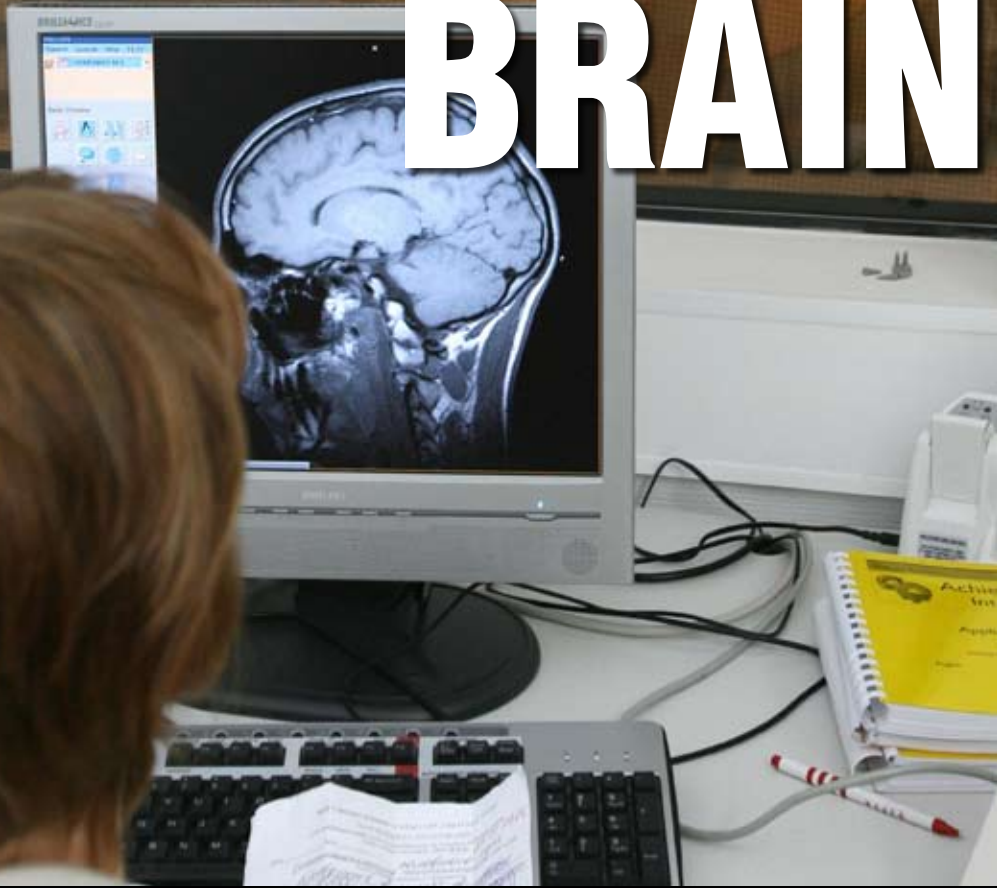
Since the Bible states that the whole world is deceived—Rev. 12:9—and blinded—II Cor. 4:4—as well as cut off from God—Isa. 59:1-2—it is evident that civilization as a whole could never be greatly influenced by the truth or by the true Church that always strove to uphold it. This helps explain why so few would become converted in this or any previous age. In fact, it is evident from just one other passage that the true Church of God would never be large. Notice how Christ addresses His Church in Luke 12:32: “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give *you* the kingdom”—not the masses yet, but to “you,” the “*little flock*.”

The respected and accepted churches of this world are so because they teach the popular doctrines and traditions, familiar to the masses. By no means could any of these well-known denominations be considered a “little flock.” Instead, many of them are comprised of millions, or even hundreds of millions of members. One has over a billion.

Over 2,000 different Christian or-

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HUMAN MIND VERSUS ANIMAL BRAIN



Why So Different?

Human beings possess a capability far beyond animals. Many ideas exist to explain the mind. Knowing the truth has vital implications!

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

■ **BRAIN EXAMINATION:** A scientist inspects a human brain in a research center in Academgorodok, outside Novosibirsk, Russia (Jan. 4, 2007).

PHOTO: VALERY TITEVSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

BOTH EVOLUTIONISTS and religionists agree there is “something” about mankind that differs from animals. Each offers explanations, certain the other side is wrong.

How can we know which is correct?

What is the human mind? How does it relate to the brain? Why do we not see animals with minds? Most people do not understand the plain answers that have been available for thousands of years.

The argument can be summarized as the “mind-body problem.” It has been recognized that the physical characteristics of the human brain do not warrant the extreme creative and processing power that defines human ingenuity.

The answer is either physical or spiritual in nature—it can be explained no other way.

Unique to Humans

Consider just a few of the qualities man possesses that are unique among all living creatures. Many attributes are so common and assumed that few give them much thought. Yet it should become clear how special human beings are.

Ask yourself: *Why does man have so many distinctive characteristics?*

■ **Humor:** No other creature is able to appreciate, create and express humor. Not only does it require creativity, but humor also requires the ability to detach oneself from one’s surroundings to see the odd, surreal or ironic.

■ **Appreciation of beauty:** Man is able to appreciate all kinds of beauty. This can be as simple as a sunset, a work of art, or the intricate design of a flower.

For example, take someone to see New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, and he will likely feel emotionally moved by the seemingly limitless number of paintings and sculptures on display, dating hundreds of years. Take a dog to the same museum, and

it will be more excited about the trip and seeing the crowd of art lovers than anything else.

■ **Self-consciousness:** Beyond a simple recognition of self (as seen in a few animals), man can step back and become a spectator, critic or admirer of the world around him. He is able to see his place in the greater picture and analyze what needs to be done to affect his role.

■ **Awareness of death:** While animals have a survival instinct, man is able to consider that he will one day die. Aware that his days will not last forever, he has a deep respect of his mortality. In fact, nearly all cultures perform some form of funeral ritual. This is not found in the animal world.

■ **Understanding time:** Animals are only able to relate time to themselves; they have no ability of relating time to third parties. Humans can wonder, speculate and search the annals of history for lessons, and apply those lessons to goals far into the future.

■ **Connections between words:** While animals can understand simple words or tones, they do not comprehend syntax or communicate in complex sentences. Human beings have created hundreds of languages (and thousands of dialects), even though they are born without any way in which to communicate.

■ **Meaning of life:** The simple act of asking about life's meaning and purpose makes man unique. No animal contemplates its reason for living—nor would it be willing to live or die for specific values and ideals.

■ **Malleability:** Humanity is able to adapt to its surroundings. We wear clothes, build shelters or modify our environment to suit our needs.

■ **Lack of harmony with nature:** When left to its own devices, nature will reach balance and harmony. Only man disrupts that natural balance: deforestation, changing the course of rivers, pollution, over mining for resources, etc.

■ **A sense of morality:** Animals always take the path of least resistance. They do not have a conscience or sense of right and wrong. On the other hand, mankind will go so far as to control his thoughts based on what he considers right or wrong.

■ **Character:** This is the ability to know right from wrong, and turn from the wrong and do what is right, even in the face of pressures and temptations. The desire to build character is only found in man.



A biblical answer exists to the mind-body question, which has been missed by the masses. There is a spiritual component to man that elevates him above the physical.



■ **Free moral agency:** Unlike animals, man can deviate from his course of thinking and living however he sees fit. Animals react through instinct—programming.

■ **Capacity for wisdom:** Without the ability to place themselves in time, animals are unable to weigh situations with previous experiences. While animals are able to develop behavioral patterns based on positive or negative stimulation, they are completely unable to analyze actions before they are performed. This ability, known as wisdom, is unique to human beings.

■ **Desire for worship:** No matter what part of the world or his culture, man exhibits a desire to seek, follow and worship a higher power. Animals do not.

■ **Love:** While some animals form lifelong relationships for the purpose of reproduction, none exhibit a parallel

with the human characteristics of love, in which a couple shares experiences, goals, dreams, hopes and aspirations.

The mind-body problem is a towering issue—one that dramatically separates us from the animal world. There must be a reason for why the human mind is different from the animal brain.

Evolutionary Answer?

The mind is one subject most evolutionists will not engage. Simply put, the physical differences between the human brain and that of animals are insufficient to explain the “horsepower” described above. Three aspects of the human brain demonstrate this point.

■ **Weight:** Human beings do not have the heaviest brains in overall weight, or even weight in proportion to their bodies.

■ **Anatomy:** Correlations differ between man's brain and that of animals.

■ **Cerebral Cortex:** The nerve center of the human brain is only *slightly* more complex than that of animals.

No physiological explanation exists for man's mind!

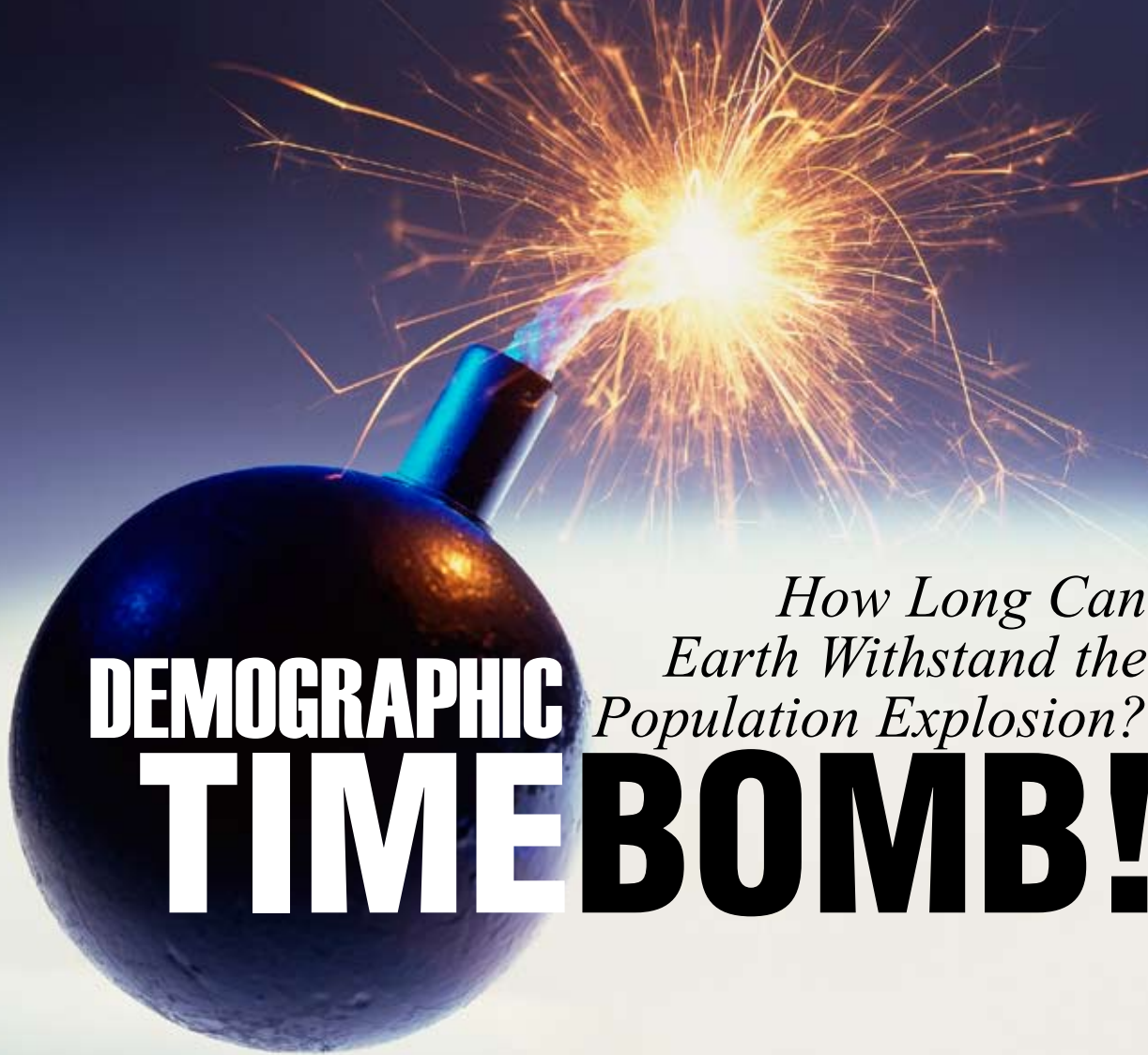
Biologists have no irrefutable evolutionary evidence. Psychologists are stupefied by the human brain. And evolutionists are left with only one answer: There is no scientific answer to the mind-body problem!

An Immortal Soul

If the differences between animals and human beings cannot be explained by physical means, we *must* look for a spiritual explanation. Most professing Christians would quickly agree there must be a spiritual aspect to the human condition. The most common attempt to offer explanation considers the non-physical component an immortal soul. Those who support this approach try to use the Bible for proof.

Certainly, if man had an immortal soul, this would help explain the

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DEMOGRAPHIC TIME BOMB!

*How Long Can
Earth Withstand the
Population Explosion?*

As the planet becomes overcrowded, problems and troubles abound—what's next for mankind's future?

BY H. CHRIS LOMAS

WITH THE WORLD'S population nearing 7 billion, humanity faces critical demographic challenges. Figures indicate that 2,000 years ago the global population was 200 million, and increased to 275 million over a 1,000-year period. Thereafter, the increase was gradual until the 15th century.

Due to the Spanish and Portuguese explorations, the world began to open up, with the establishment of colonies in America, Africa and Asia, which grew rapidly because of trade.

By the 18th century and the Industrial Revolution, the world population reached 1 billion. In a mere 120 years, it doubled, and 40 years later reached the 3 billion mark. Fifteen years later, the population grew to 4 billion; subsequently, a billion people are added every 12 to 15 years. Clearly, we are on the verge of a population time bomb—too many people and too few resources.

The United Nations announced in 1999 that the world contained 6 billion people. It is now over 6.8 billion. At current growth patterns, the UN expects the population to exceed 10 billion by 2050. Sudden growth in the last century brought unforeseen

problems, which threaten life on the planet. World leaders convene summit upon summit to find solutions to poverty, disease, pollution, and the global financial crisis—just some of the complications for which experts seek answers.

Cause and Effect

The cause of this escalating predicament can be traced to the first generations of humanity. From the beginning, man chose to reject God's instructions given in the Garden of Eden and began to practice the way of GET—selfishness, competition, strife—instead of God's way of GIVE—selflessness, cooperation, unity.

Historian Flavius Josephus wrote, “But Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground.” Josephus also recorded that Cain was the first to *force* the ground (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, chapter II, section 1).

The rapid increase in world population has resulted in the development of destructive farming methods to supply high demand. “Factory farming” (in which the ground and resources are over-used), has caused greater challenges for man. Animals are bred in confinement for faster turnaround time and higher profits; farmers feed them growth hormones and antibiotics, which are passed on to consumers.

This type of intensive farming puts pressure on natural resources, and is the main cause of deforestation used to accommodate increased production.

The effects of factories and industry are also at the forefront of creating the planet-wide time bomb threatening man. Land, air and sea pollution are fast destroying the ecosystem.

The wickedness of Cain—the way of *get*—did not end after he killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:1-11). His expulsion was the beginning of wicked generations to come. History bears record of the way of Cain: countless wars and greedy empires.

An example is Genghis Khan and his descendants, who ruled the Mongolian empire during the 13th century. Their reign of terror, which involved the mass rape of countless women, resulted in a population explosion unlike any other. A *National Geographic* study noted that in the region of Khan’s empire, which spread across Asia, eight percent of men carry an almost identical chromosome linking them to Genghis Khan. “That translates to 0.5 percent of the male population in the world, or roughly 16 million descendants living today” (ibid.).

In Sudan’s Darfur region, soldiers use rape as a weapon of war, resulting in thousands of unwanted babies each

year. The UN reports that the situation requires major intervention.

Throughout history, man has been his own worst enemy. The Romans, Assyrians and others rendered uninhabitable vast areas of land by salting fertile ground to prevent conquered peoples from rising economically. Undoubtedly, man’s way of “get” under the banner of “progress” is destroying Earth.

Men’s Solutions

As with all problems facing humanity, man has attempted to address overpopulation with his own solutions. For instance, China’s official family planning policy, introduced 30 years ago, has prevented “some 300 million births,” said the vice minister of the State Family Planning Commission (*China Internet Information Center*). He added, “The great population pressure is a significant factor restraining China’s further development.” The government mandates abortion as a tool to limit population growth, with some doctors performing abortions as late as the ninth month.

In Western society, contraception and the promotion of “safe sex” have made a huge impact on the way people relate to each other, with traditional marriage soon becoming obsolete—an ancient ritual in modern society. Abortion has become the solution to unwanted pregnancies. According to *The Guttmacher Institute*, approximately 114,000 abortions are performed worldwide every day. It is the silent holocaust of our time.

Desperate Times Spur Desperate Measures

With 7 people billion expected to be alive in the next two years, legislation of any kind cannot stem the rapid increase. All countries face the same problem, with no *real* solutions in sight.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that the situation is moving fast to the point where retirees will outnumber the employed, putting a strain on economic systems. To stabilize the

global economy, the workforce imbalance is one of the immediate problems that needs to be addressed. Job losses worldwide add to the crisis.

Nations such as India will add more than 300 million people to their workforce in the next 20 years—more than the combined workforce generated by the European Union and the United States over the same period.

Leaders grapple with the scarcity of food supplies due to adverse weather patterns, pollution and dwindling resources. Also, garbage dumps, sanitation needs, and the breakdown of aging infrastructure creates unusable ground.

Instead of society advancing, by abusing the environment, poverty increases. Civilization has come to the crossroads of its existence. The planet cannot survive continuous abuse.

Rejecting Wisdom and Truth

When considering all the factors of famine, disease and overpopulation, the future holds a bleak picture of nations fighting for survival. No matter how many laws he passes, man entangles himself with the age-old problem of “get” versus “give” for survival.

Scripture reveals the solutions to manmade problems—a way of life that *must* be implemented, or civilization will cease to exist: “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matt. 24:22).

Man rejects critical instruction in laws that could help him. The Bible outlines laws of the right—and *ONLY*—way to live: principles governing kings and commoners, laws of marriage and family, rules to preserve the environment, and almost every imaginable situation. Still, man chooses to reject the truth.

Thankfully, God’s Law—which *is* truth (Psa. 119:142, 151), and brings wisdom and understanding crucial for humanity’s ultimate success (Deut. 4:6)—will be administered throughout all nations upon the establishment of the world to come. □

MIND

Continued from page 4

immeasurable capacity of his mind. But what does the Bible state?

The word “soul” appears in Scripture over 400 times, and for a variety of reasons. The first instance occurs during the description of man’s creation. Notice Genesis 2: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *man became a living soul*” (vs. 7).

The wording here is important. Note that man *became* a “living soul.” The Hebrew word from which “soul” was translated is *nephesh*, which means “a breathing creature.” This passage states that man became a living, breathing creature.

However, was the soul that man received different from that of animals, in that it was *immortal*?

Again, let’s allow the Bible to speak for itself: “The soul that sins, it shall DIE” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). If a soul dies, then it cannot be immortal! How can so many believe that man has an immortal soul when just two passages from God’s Word prove this to be absurd?

If the immortal soul does not come from Scripture, what is its origin? Even the briefest look at the historical record makes this plain: “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture...The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended” (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Immortality of the Soul”).

Early Catholic writer Tertullian (A.D. 155-220) details where the immortal soul doctrine has its roots: “For some things are known even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for

instance, is held by many...I may use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, ‘Every soul is immortal’” (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Chapter III).

If the mind-body problem cannot be solved by professing Christianity’s immortal soul doctrine, then what is the answer?

“The Spirit in Man”

A biblical answer exists to the mind-body question, which has been missed by the masses. There is a spiritual component to man that elevates him above the physical.

Notice a passage in the Old Testament: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, says the LORD, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and *forms the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1). This clearly states that God created a spirit inside you.

Proverbs 20:27 sheds some light on its purpose for this spirit: “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

God uses the spirit in man as a way of interfacing with humanity. This is further expounded in the book of Job: “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (Job 32:8).

Putting these two passages together clarifies that God uses the “spirit in man” to impart understanding. Through this spirit, God is able to teach physical man a degree of spiritual knowledge. However, he is spiritually incomplete; he needs *another* spirit.

Physical and Spiritual

Man is a physical being with a spirit component. For centuries, mankind has experienced awesome progress and advancement, but—at the same time—continues to suffer ever-worsening and appalling evils, troubles and ills. This is because man’s problems are *spiritual* in nature.

Great leaders have recognized the link between humanity’s problems and the need for spiritual answers. General Douglas MacArthur, while attending the signing of imperial Japan’s sur-

render, Sept. 2, 1945, said, “Men since the beginning of time have sought peace...Military Alliances, Balances of Power, Leagues of Nations, all in turn failed leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh” (*The Reports of General MacArthur*).

Over half a century has passed since General MacArthur uttered these words, yet problems worsen. Man is desperate for spiritual knowledge—a solution to his problems. He must turn to God to learn HOW to resolve his deep-rooted problems. Again, man is spiritually incomplete: he needs another spirit: “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 2:11).

God’s Spirit, when combined with our spirit, enables us to know “the things of God”—and to build holy, righteous character.

The spirit in man also records the events, experiences and lessons in the life of each person, and then returns to God when we die: “Then shall the dust [man] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7).

God stores the vital ingredient of man until we are resurrected.

The human spirit allows man to reason, analyze and create. We are able to greatly exceed the capability of animals because of this special, unique spiritual component.

If you would like to learn much more about humanity’s incredible future, read our book *The Awesome Potential of Man*. □

A photograph of a jewelry store. A woman in a green top is looking at various pieces of jewelry displayed on mannequins and in trays. The jewelry includes necklaces, earrings, and rings. The scene is lit with spotlights, creating a dramatic atmosphere.

AFFLUENZA

The Virus of Greed

Rising materialism in the nations of the West has led millions to become discontent with life. What drives this worsening phenomenon?

BY ROBERT R. FARRELL AND ABDON V. BUENA

IN THE WORLD'S RICHEST countries, many who live comfortable lifestyles are discontent with what they possess, feeling they do not have enough. Millions are unhappy with their lot in life.

And looking at what others have only exacerbates the problem. A growing number are busy trying to "keep up with the Joneses"—or, perhaps more accurately stated, "outdo the Joneses."

The pursuit of material wealth is nothing new. But this has escalated in recent years at a pace previously unseen—so much so that just before the dawn of the 21st century, sociologists gave this phenomenon a name: "affluenza." This social "virus," first diagnosed in America, is spreading throughout the prosperous nations of the West.

What drives it? What stokes people's desire to want more and more, despite already having all they need?

Virus of Desire

Affluenza is coined from two words: *affluent* and *influenza*. Just as a virus spreads until it consumes its host, the social "virus" of affluenza infects millions of people, consuming their lives with the shameless pursuit of material possessions.

One hundred years ago, affluenza was virtually unknown. During World War I and the Great Depression, most people had very little, yet learned to



be content. Those of the “Greatest Generation” worked hard, saved money, and bought only what they could afford, usually with cash. Times were hard, so thrift and frugality were the order of the day. As the saying

■ **EXTRAVAGANCE FALLS ON HARD TIMES:** A woman waits for customers at a jewelry store in New York City (July 7, 2009). Like many other luxury industries, 2009 has been one of the worst years in decades for the jewelry business. Sales fell 22 percent in the last quarter for the esteemed Tiffany & Co., and the Italian jeweler Bulgari posted its first quarterly loss in 10 years.

PHOTO: SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

went, “a penny saved is a penny earned.”

After World War II, America returned to prosperity, with companies employing aggressive tactics to attract new customers. The concept of “targeted advertising” sprang to life, as companies bombarded clearly defined age demographic segments with carefully tailored advertisements, especially targeting teenagers, and young singles and couples. The emergence of television as the major media increased advertising effectiveness, allowing companies to reach multiple millions of people simultaneously with each commercial.

Meanwhile, the Greatest Generation gave birth to the “Baby Boomers.” Parents who had suffered hardship in the Depression years did not want their children to ever go through what they had endured. In their desire to give their sons and daughters a better life, parents showered them with material possessions. This unintentionally led to a culture of entitlement, as well as an insatiable desire for attaining the “good things in life.” As Baby Boomers matured, they too sought to give their children an easier life—and so the cycle continued throughout the decades, with each successive generation feeling entitled to the best things in life, regardless of whether they could afford it.

Added to these factors was the longest period of unparalleled prosperity in modern history. Successive generations born after World War II had never known hardship. They had never known anything other than good times. The standard of living in Western countries rose to heights never before experienced.

Relentless advertising, combined with prosperity and permissive parenting, gave rise to generations that were used to getting whatever they wanted—a culture obsessed with what others had. It also produced a set of values that deemed material possessions and status as more important than character. Thriftiness, hard work, integrity, fiscal responsibility and other values were abandoned. Spurred on by

advertising, celebrities, game shows, music videos, reality television, and the media at large, many became infected with the unending desire to obtain.

A Culture of Greed

By the 21st century, the affluenza virus spread even further. For example, in 2003, the amount Americans owed on credit card bills totaled approximately \$2 trillion, a staggering \$18,654 per household. The culture of “buy now and forget about tomorrow” was well entrenched.

Even the federal government has been infected. America’s national debt has reached an astronomical \$11 trillion, equating to \$36,000 for every man, woman and child. The hope of ever repaying it is long gone, yet the government continues to overspend, leaving the burden to future generations. The situation throughout other Western nations is similar: consumers, businesses and governments loaded with compounding levels of debt.

The mood of excess is everywhere. In the book *Stop Me Because I Can't Stop Myself*, a woman described how she shopped online six to eight hours a day, ending up \$80,000 in debt. She eventually lost her job, got divorced and, finally in desperation, checked herself into a psychiatric institution after saying, “Shopping ruined my family.” She is not alone in her plight; the motto “shop till you drop” is a mantra for our time.

The extravagance even extends to such basics as food. For example, Americans buy much more food than they consume. Whatever is not used is simply thrown away, wasted. A University of Arizona study revealed that the figure included 14 percent of all purchases—a whopping \$43 billion worth of food thrown away annually.

Affluenza permeates Western society. People fiercely compete with each other for who has the largest house, the fanciest car, the most exotic vacation spot—even the cutest dog! They envy the notoriety, fame and fortune of public figures, especially celebrities.

Please see **AFFLUENZA**, page 15

...Abuja, Nigeria

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

IMAGINE YOU HAVE just been offered an all expenses paid, eight-day trip to two countries of your choosing—no exclusions. You have the incredible opportunity to visit, free of charge, any two of the 195 nations on Earth.

Which would you choose?

Would you select a tropical paradise for the first four days, and then follow with a visit to a cooler climate? What about two nations in Europe, with its long, rich history? Or would you choose to vacation in the United States, with perhaps a brief stop in Canada? Maybe you would like to visit Central and South America—or nations in northern and southern Africa.

Now consider the one stipulation to this scenario: You can never visit another country ever again for the rest of your life! No doubt, your selection would require a great deal of consideration, and you would think long and hard about where to travel—since it would be the last time.

Likely, few would choose to visit a third-world country, especially those residing in a first-world society, with all of its modern conveniences. How many would choose to lower their standard of living—even for four days? Lowering this for even a short period would be too much to handle for most.

The majority would not visit the Third World—whether or not it would be their last vacation—but they should. Here's why.

“Other Worldly”

We landed at Nigeria's Abuja International Airport at 4:30 a.m. A fellow *Real Truth* writer and I were somewhat rested after having slept soundly during our six-hour flight from London. Upon disembarking the plane, we were greeted by intense heat and humidity—at such an early hour in the morning! Even a little physical exertion resulted in breaking a sweat.

Our journey through baggage claim and customs was, thankfully, fast and uneventful. Airport staff was courteous and helpful. It was nice to see that there was no charge to use the luggage dollies. In the United States, one can expect to pay \$3.00 or more to use them. The airport was much smaller than I had anticipated, and was well maintained, yet has only several flights per day.

We soon found ourselves at the pick-up area of the airport, where we waited for transportation to our lodging. We somewhat adjusted to the temperature, but had no idea how sweltering hot the day would be.

Before we arrived we had only a vague idea of what to expect. But the trip to our accommodations left no doubt that we were no longer in the United States. The scenery was entirely different from what we were accustomed: endless lines at gas stations; numerous villages dotted the countryside—which, by American standards, would be considered substandard at best. Yet in Nigeria, these are considered average developments.

Perhaps what stood out the most was the sheer number of people. There were people *on* the road; and people *off* the road. People off the road *in* their cars; people off the road *next* to their cars. There were people *cramming* into cars; and people *exiting* cars. People were EVERYWHERE! Granted, it was morning rush-hour traffic, but we had never seen anything like it in America. We would later learn that, in Nigeria, people line major roadways at *any* time of day—and night.

Around 6:30 a.m., we entered the neighborhood where our accommodations were located. Again, the scenery was unlike that of the U.S. Even more people were alongside the street—standing, walking, running on the road, dodging cars and other pedestrians. Cars constantly weaved in and out of lanes. Before we knew it, the three-lane roadway unofficially turned into six lanes! Vehicles came within several inches of one another constantly, yet without collision. Despite bumper-to-bumper traffic, it still moved along at a steady clip. This scenario unfolded wherever we traveled around Abuja. (I was thankful I did not have to drive. I amusingly concluded that a foreigner driving in Nigeria should undergo special driver training.)

We arrived at our hotel sometime just before 7:00 a.m. Thankfully, our rooms contained wall-mounted air conditioners. But unreliable electricity quickly became evident, something totally foreign to Americans. I had heard stories of this before my arrival, but could not grasp what it meant until I experienced it firsthand. Unlike most people in first-world nations, Nigerians live with the reality of random blackouts every day, without warning—and yet they *are* able to function.

How many in the West would tolerate no electricity for hours at a time? How many would accept not being able to spend hours in front of a computer or television? Think of how those with technology-driven lives would react. Most of us “first worlders” probably don't give much if any thought to reliable electricity. We just turn on our computers...and work or play. We accept reliable power as a normal part of everyday life. Imagine, for a moment, if it were taken away.

Looking out my hotel room, I could see scores of giant black containers throughout the neighborhood. I



soon learned that many homes and businesses in Nigeria supply their own water via large holding tanks perched high in the sky. Many towns do have public water systems; however, as with electricity, these are unreliable.

That afternoon, after we had rested for a bit, we enjoyed a wonderful traditional Nigerian meal. The hotel supplied us with plenty of bottled water during our meal (and throughout the rest of our stay), for which I was extremely thankful. It doesn't take long to dehydrate in 100-plus degree heat.

Throughout our several days in Abuja, we enjoyed delicious local cuisine, which was very different from what we were accustomed. Rice was served often, and so was chicken. Various fruits and vegetables filled our plates. But the meals were not as diverse as those normally found in the United States. The reason is that most of what is eaten in Nigeria is grown locally. Large distribution networks are not in place. The incredible amount of diverse foods we enjoy in the U.S. is simply not possible in many other countries. This, too, we take for granted. Few of us could imagine not eating *what* we want, *when* we want it, and *how* we want it.

No Reason to Complain

After the meal, I toured the area. Again, pedestrians were everywhere—which led me to realize the significance of this. Without many of the modern conveniences we enjoy, most Nigerians do what human beings have done for thousands of years: they *talk* to one another; they socialize; they enjoy one another's company; they build strong friendships with their neighbors. All of these things are dwindling in the land of modern nations. Instead, we are preoccupied with our toys—our mp3 players, big-screen televisions, gaming systems, computers, fancy cars, expansive homes—and *ourselves*. When we do communicate with others, it is through technology: social networking sites, email, instant messaging and text messaging. Face-to-face, human-to-human, live interaction is becoming increasingly rare.

That afternoon, my view of Nigeria began to change. Part of me had anticipated a land of sullen faces and discontented people. Yet this was *far* from the case. Sure, people there have their problems to face, as with anywhere. But they appeared willing and able to cope with (what first worlders may consider) sub-par living conditions. Generally, I witnessed happy, smiling people wherever I went.

I am certain that if the average American had to live in Nigeria for the rest of his life, he would not be content. In fact, he would probably be miserable, unable to cope with his new standard of living.

Think about how blessed are those in Western nations. Most have access to every form of physical convenience and pleasure under the sun. Yet they lead unhappy lives, and complain at the slightest inconvenience.

We complain when we have to wait in a long line at a grocery store—while those in developing nations never have the opportunity to choose from among so many different types of food.

We complain when gas rises to \$4.00 a gallon—while others pay much more than that, or do not even have the chance to buy gasoline because they do not own a vehicle.

We complain when electricity or cable television service is interrupted for an hour—while others do not have electricity, or have service that is constantly interrupted.

We complain when we lose our jobs and the government does not step in to bail us out—while others never hold a job, or if they do, they earn in six months what we in the West earn in several hours.

We complain when our roads have a pothole or two—while others maneuver through dirt paths on which it is faster to walk than drive.

We have nothing to complain about—but we do anyway. Americans and those in other affluent nations enjoy blessings beyond comprehension. And they take them for granted.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

As we departed Nigeria, I counted myself incredibly blessed for having the opportunity to visit. I entered the country with one perspective; I left with another. My experience was beyond what words could possibly summarize.

If you live in a prosperous nation and someday have the opportunity to visit a third-world country, I recommend you do so, even if it is the only trip you will ever take. Witnessing firsthand how most of humanity lives is worth its weight in gold—and it helps to place one's own life in proper perspective. One quickly learns that most people live entirely differently from those in the Western world—but they can still laugh, smile and enjoy life, despite not having a tenth what we have. Modern conveniences are not a necessity. We only *think* they are, because we know no other way of life.

Yet try telling your average American that “a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Try telling *yourself* that. Do you believe it? □



WHY AMERICA FAILED AS

Due to crippling domestic problems, the United States can no longer play world policeman. Can the great free nation ever return to unrivaled international prominence?

BY JAMES F. TURCK
AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

THEY PULLED BACK. Six years, three months and 11 days after declaring war on Iraq, United States troops moved out of the nation's major cities. America's armed forces ceded control to the new Iraqi Army, beginning a timeline for complete withdrawal by 2011.

Iraq and Afghanistan are a microcosm of America's role as a global police force, with both successes and failures: free democratic elections, toppling Saddam Hussein's brutal regime, and keeping the War on Terror away from the U.S. home front—persistent terror attacks overseas, a lucrative heroin trade, billions of dollars spent on military operations while U.S. citizens reel from financial downturn, and no clean exit strategy in sight.

These two fronts of the War on Terror are the latest efforts of the self-styled world policeman. But, as with police officers in any metropolitan area, global law enforcement is a virtually thankless job. One that never ends.

Regardless of how one views the victories and losses in these two Islamic nations, one thing is clear: The United States of America has been burned, its reputation damaged, by trying to “rid



■ **PROTESTS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES:** Activists burn a mock U.S. flag and shout anti-American slogans during a demonstration in Dhaka, Bangladesh (May 27, 2005).

PHOTO: SOBBIR MIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

GLOBAL SHERIFF



the world of evil.” The global sheriff now wears a tarnished badge with its bruised reputation.

To the international community, U.S. military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have left Uncle Sam with two black eyes. Foreign newspaper editorials make this clear (articles taken from translations on the *Watching America* website, emphasis ours):

An article from Hong Kong paper *Wen Wei Po* stated the Iraq war “cost America its international support”—“showed international terrorist organizations its weaknesses”—and “belittled America in the eyes of its enemies.” Further, the conflict “marked the decline of the American empire from its peak.” In all, “America has broken its domination as the only superpower, a pattern of dominance that formed in the late Cold War era. America is *unable to be the world policeman anymore.*”

Regarding the ongoing war in Iraq, French paper *l’Humanité* remarked, “The legitimacy of the American superpower has been called into question. The *capitalist policeman* has shown itself to be nothing more than an insatiable oaf and the economic crisis has thrown light on the wasted resources and human lives that lay by the wayside of American progress. This constant push for profit at any cost—even war—has become too much of a threat to our planet for us to put up with the empire any longer.”

The title of an editorial from *Sohu*, a China-based search engine, asked, “America Is Backing Off So What Do We Do Now?”

“America is still the world’s only super power but it is a super power that has *given up the role of the global policeman*. It is more willing to influence international affairs through cooperation and diplomacy rather than brute force.”

Washington has its hands full, with a near 10 percent national unemployment rate, a declining housing market,

and a federal government stretched thin by behemoth corporate bailouts.

As the *Sohu* editorial put it, “America cannot afford to embroil itself in a new predicament, but the resetting of its relationship with the world is going [to] take some getting used to.”

For decades, America wielded the authority of global policeman. *Suffering injustice?* The U.S. stood ready to swoop in and save the day. *Under the bondage of tyranny?* The U.S. was prepared to remove oppression, and rebuild with freedom.

But no more. America appears to have shed its star-shaped badge in a last-ditch effort to fix its internal problems. Has the “Great American Experiment” failed? Why has America continued to tumble—and how will it return to international preeminence?

Model Nation

No other single nation in history has ever rivaled America. Not one. The U.S. has had it all: freedom, abundant wealth and unmatched power.

From the time it broke from the British Empire, America grew to become a world power generations later—a nation built on principles centered on *freedom*—religion, press, speech and equality for all.

These ideals, detailed in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, spread like wildfire. America became the poster child for budding democratic nations.

Canada borrowed from the U.S. (but mostly from Britain) for its constitution, as did Australia, in 1900, almost jot and tittle. France, Belgium, Switzerland and other European powers owe a nod to the U.S. for their laws.

America often shares its *wealth* abroad. Over \$25.4 billion went to foreign aid in 2008—only 0.0017 percent of the nation’s \$14.3 trillion gross domestic product. Germany comes in at a distant second, with less than

\$13 billion in aid, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Then there is America’s *power*. The country saw military successes (World War II, the outcome of the Cold War), and gallantly weathered stalemates (Korea) and defeats (Vietnam). If there is any credence to the saying “money is power,” Washington’s proposed \$533 billion 2010 defense budget should prepare a military ready for anything.

This is the nation President Ronald Reagan called a “city on a hill,” borrowing the saying from pilgrim John Winthrop, who borrowed the term from the Bible: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill *cannot be hid*” (Matt. 5:13-14)—an apt description of America’s view of itself.

But that light must be shared: “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it *gives light unto all that are in the house*” (vs. 15).

Track Record of Intervention

America wants all nations to enjoy what it has. And it has had the freedom, wealth and power to make this come to pass—a line of thinking that has long permeated U.S. foreign policy. For decades, presidents have agreed.

President Theodore Roosevelt declared in 1904, “Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”

In other words, *chronic wrongdoing* requires intervention from an international *police power*.

Fast-forward through two world wars, rebuilding war-torn Europe, the space and nuclear arms race, Vietnam, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, to the end of the 1990s. Responding to

Iraq's failure to cooperate with United Nations weapons inspectors, President Bill Clinton said he was "prepared to act without delay, diplomacy or warning." The Operation Desert Fox bombings followed. After the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush approved the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

But the year 2009 brought a subtle shift. Newly elected President Barack Obama said while "we don't want stronger nations bullying weaker nations...where you have nations that are oppressing their people, isn't there an international responsibility to intervene?"

Yet Mr. Obama qualified his remarks that military action should only occur in "exceptional circumstances." He said the focus should be on extensive diplomacy and peaceful measures. If these fail, only then "the need for *international* intervention becomes a moral imperative" (emphasis ours).

But how should Washington pick and choose its battles? While stuck in two war fronts, more problems crop up each day: a coup d'état in Honduras, contending with saber-rattling from Iran, nuclear threats from North Korea, war and starvation in Africa, global warning fears...

Amid all this, America's wealth evaporates before its eyes, which the world blames for the global economic turmoil. The country's military might is spread thin. Will freedom fall next?

Got It Wrong

The American mindset has been wrong for years: "*We* have built this nation. *We* have defended freedom. *We* built the greatest nation of all time."

Yet it is not this nation's ideas that have set it "upon a hill" as the "light of the world." Identifying the country's ancient roots is *key* to understanding how it rose to prominence as the lone superpower, the self-appointed world policeman.

The United States began as a haven for religious freedom. Every American dollar proclaims, "In God we trust." Its citizens proudly sing, "God bless America, land that I love!"

In a strange irony, God *has* blessed America—yet few truly understand this or give Him credit. The entire nation is clueless as to *why* it enjoys such abundant, unprecedented blessings.

It all started thousands of years ago with Abraham. Because of the patriarch's faithful obedience, God promised his "seed" (modern descendants) national, material blessings. From Abraham came the 12 tribes of ancient Israel, from which America, Britain and other Western nations descended. (Our book *America and Britain in Prophecy* explains this in stunning detail.)

God promised Jacob, Abraham's grandson, that his descendants would become "a nation and a company of nations" (Gen. 35:11)—the U.S. and United Kingdom, which skyrocketed from obscurity to become the greatest single nation and company of nations in history. Britain and America descended from the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh, respectively), and received the birthright blessings (Gen. 48:14-16).

God wants the modern peoples of Israel, just as He did with Old Testament Israel, to be a model nation: "Behold, I [Moses] have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me...Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, *Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people*" (Deut. 4:5-8).

Nonetheless, the American and British peoples have acted in the same stubborn, rebellious and stiff-necked fashion as did ancient Israel. Unthankful, ungrateful and proud, America stumbles on, trying to make its own way—instead of seeking God and yielding to Him so that such unrivaled blessings continue.

Unlike Abraham, U.S. citizens have not obeyed God. Rather, they have worshipped in their own way, with every American doing "that which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg. 21:25).

The result? When other nations demean and ridicule it abroad, or when its citizens or government officials are

kidnapped or attacked, or in the face of international atrocities, the American giant can only issue weak verbal warnings.

Why? Because God is also keeping His promise to "break the pride of your power" in the face of the nation's disobedience (Lev. 26:19). The U.S. has already lost its sense of patriotic loyalty to the political, economic and military might it once so freely enjoyed.

Increasingly, America is vilified and despised throughout the world, even by nations that benefit from U.S. aid. This also is a result of disobedience: "Behold, I will raise up your lovers [former American allies] against you, from whom your mind is alienated, and I will bring them against you on every side" (Ezek. 23:22).

The once-great country is neither grateful for these birthright blessings, nor has sought God in repentant obedience. And without turning to God and keeping His ways, the U.S. cannot pull out of its downward spiral.

From Shame—to True City on a Hill

Still darker days will soon slam into America. Without national repentance, it will sink to the lowest of nations—even enduring national captivity!

Yet, as occurred time and again in ancient Israel, Jacob's descendants will cry out in captivity, and REPENT.

God will hear and restore the glory of the nation: "*Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things*" (Jer. 31:4-5).

At that time, America (along with Britain) will become the model nation God originally intended. However, it will not appoint itself to police the world through wealth and military might. Rather, it will be a shining CITY-ON-A-HILL example of keeping God's Law. The entire world will wonder at its prominence, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." □

AFFLUENZA

Continued from page 9

This social “virus” particularly affects young adults. Research by *American Demographics* found that among 18- to 34-year-olds (children of Baby Boomers and Generation X), 23 percent of men and 26 percent of women confessed to “always or frequently” coveting their neighbors’ goods. Sixty percent of the same age group confirmed they were jealous of “celebrities or public figures,” whose lifestyles television shows glamorize. Not surprisingly, money is the item most coveted among this age group.

Truly, as the prophet Jeremiah prophesied about the modern English-speaking nations in our time, “From the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to *covetousness*” (6:13).

Excessive Corporate Spending

Even corporations have caught affluenza. Prior to the current economic global crisis, companies attempted to lure top executive talent with contracts worth tens of millions of dollars (some even in the hundreds of millions) and guaranteed bonuses, regardless of performance.

Compensation packages provided “golden parachutes”—large sums of guaranteed money if a poorly performing executive was fired. No expense was spared: stock options, corporate jets, palatial homes, condominiums, all-expense paid vacations, exclusive country club memberships, and other lucrative perks. In many cases, CEOs received compensation thousands of times larger than other employees in the company.

Global Economic Crisis

Attempting to satisfy ceaseless shareholder demands for bigger profits, companies abandoned the principles of prudent investing, and engaged in junk bonds, derivatives, financial futures and other high-risk investments. This eventually led to the downfall of several corporations.



■ **AFFLUENZA PERMEATES “BLACK FRIDAY”:** A crowd of shoppers hunt for bargains at Macy’s in New York City (Nov. 28, 2008). The day after Thanksgiving, often referred to as “Black Friday,” is looked at as an indicator of the holiday shopping season’s health and the possible demise of retailers on the brink.

PHOTO: YANA PASKOVA/GETTY IMAGES

Nowhere has this been truer than in the banking industry. Banks, seeking higher profits, abandoned prudent lending practices, and lent to those who were unqualified for mortgages (subprime customers). These included borrowers without jobs, low (and in some cases, *no*) incomes and no assets. In several cases, subprime customers were not even required to make a down payment to qualify. Banks then passed the risk of these loans to third-party investors through a process known as “securitization.” Affluenza-infected borrowers took the easy money as a way to get the type of house they could not previously afford.

As long as the economy stayed strong, house prices increased and interest rates stayed low; the game held up.

However, prices fell in the wake of a housing glut. The economy slowed. Interest rates rose. Millions of homeowners defaulted on their mortgag-

es—leaving investors and banks with huge losses.

Another practice among companies seeking high investment returns, investing in “credit default swaps,” insurance policies on loans in which the investor (insurer) is held liable for payments if a borrower defaults. Many of these were linked to the loans in “securitization,” in which institutions seeking protection from default on mortgages spread the risk to other parties through credit default swaps. When the subprime mortgage bubble imploded, suddenly there were numerous claims on these insurance policies. Investors were responsible for billions of dollars in claims. According to experts, credit default swaps were responsible for bringing down Bear Stearns, AIG and other financial giants. Famed investor Warren Buffett referred to them as “financial weapons of mass destruction.”

Risky practices, particularly in the banking sector, have led to the glob-

al financial crisis. It is believed that banks are hoarding cash in expectation of payouts from \$200 billion to \$1 trillion. Unless the situation changes, Western governments will have to continue bailing out credit default swap contract holders. Unless the government regulators rein them in, credit default swaps may well continue to deepen the current economic recession and prevent a recovery. Dicey investments and uncontrolled speculating in the financial markets have brought multiple economies to the brink of disaster.

Nothing New

Throughout history, affluenza has infected great empires to one degree or another. To find examples, you need look no further than the Bible. The first recorded worldwide epidemic occurred millions of years ago: the archangel Lucifer and one third of all angels became infected by the “virus.” Desiring to outdo God, Lucifer sowed discontent among his followers, leading them to rebel against their Maker. Along with his cohorts, Lucifer tried to overthrow God, but failed—and was sent back to the earth (Isa. 14:12-15).

Millions of years later, affluenza led Adam and Eve to sin—to transgress God’s Law (I John 3:4). Eve listened to the deceptive “advertising” of the serpent (Satan the devil, formerly Lucifer), who promoted the “forbidden fruit.” “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband” (Gen. 3:1-6).

Another Bible example is King Saul of Israel, whom God stripped of his position and removed his descendants from the royal line for his covetousness and disobedience (I Sam. 15:1-28).

Perhaps the greatest example of affluenza is King Solomon, who enjoyed a life of excess and splendor unlike any other in history. He directed great public works projects, built palatial houses, planted lush vineyards and gardens, had large numbers of ser-

vants, generated tremendous riches—so much that gold and silver were as abundant as stones in Jerusalem in his day—and, to top it off, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Whatever he wanted, he got.

Yet Solomon, the richest and wisest man who ever lived, wrote, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was *vanity* and *vexation* of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Ecc. 2:11).

Despite his great wealth and accomplishments, Solomon felt empty, unsatisfied. As with so many, affluenza does not satisfy. The more one has, the more one wants.

Learn to Be Content

With such a pervasive influence, how can you know whether you have affluenza? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you frequently buy things you do not really need?
 - When shopping, are you unable to control how much you spend?
 - Do you envy the lifestyles of the rich and famous?
 - Do you feel bad when your neighbors have things you do not?
 - Do you measure yourself by what others have?
 - Do you ever use shopping as a means of escape?
 - Do you use your possessions to impress others?
 - Do you compare your possessions with what your peers have? If so, do you experience a feeling of superiority?
 - Do you speak often about the things you want?
 - Do you find yourself complaining about the things you want, but cannot afford?
 - Do you think of spending your money more often than saving it?
 - Do you often think your life would be happier if you had more money and possessions?
- If you find yourself answering yes to any of the above, you may well be infected.

Psychologist Oliver James, in his book *The Selfish Capitalist: Origins of Affluenza*, said that “selfish capitalism” (affluenza) is literally making us sick. He added that the emergence of selfish capitalism in the late 1970s has led to an increase in mental illness. The World Health Organisation, along with nationally representative studies in the United States, Britain and Australia, show that incidences of mental illness have almost doubled between the 1980s and the turn of the 21st century—to the point that an average of 23 percent of Americans, Britons, Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians suffered from it in 2007 (*The Guardian*).

Affluenza leads to worry, anxiety, depression and possibly, if left unchecked, mental illness. Why?

The reason is that it creates unrealistic expectations that cannot be met. Those affected end up blaming themselves, feeling like failures. With their self-esteem battered, they work even harder to attain their unreachable goals, and eventually end up anxious, nervous, sad, and depressed.

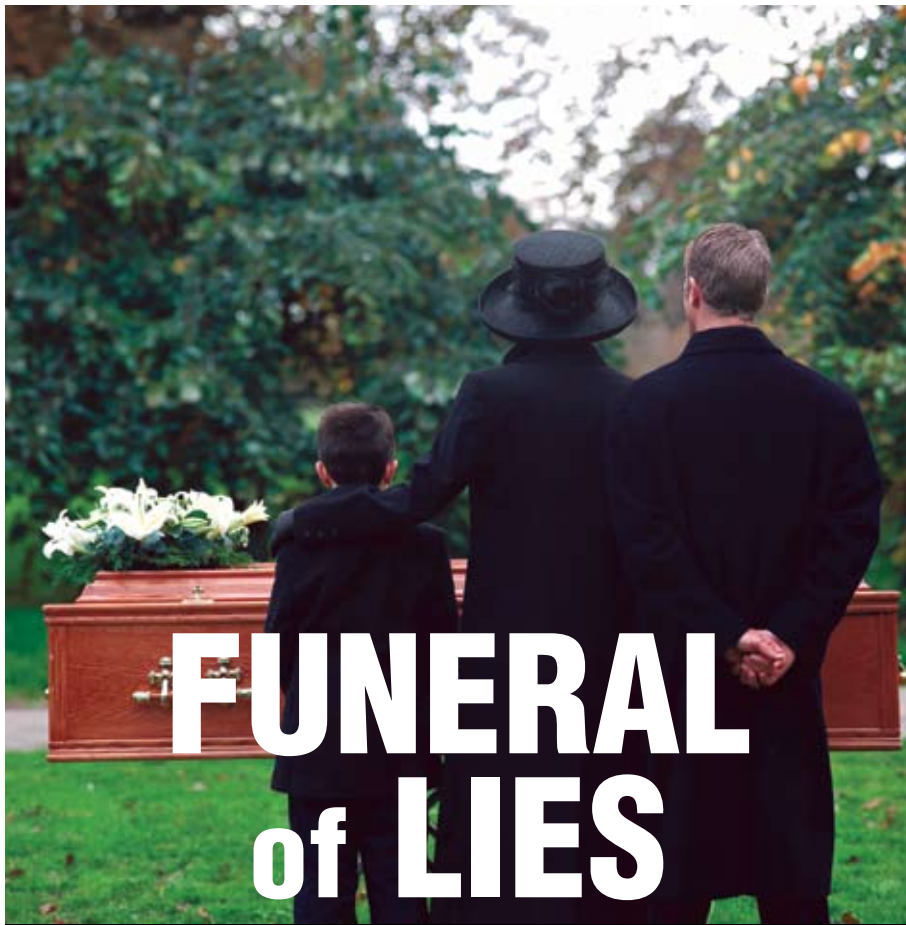
Ultimately, basing one’s values on material success leads to an unsatisfied, unfulfilled life: “He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance with increase” (Ecc. 5:10). Jesus Christ warned, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consists not of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

There are only two ways of life.

One is the way of striving to acquire as many possessions as possible. Those infected by the pervasive social “virus” live this way—of competition, vanity, jealousy, envy, lust and greed. In short, affluenza is the way of GET, which ultimately leads to empty, discontented lives. Sadly, the vast majority of the world’s nearly 7 billion people live this way.

On the other hand, there is another way of life—of caring, sharing, cooperating, looking out for one’s fellow man—the way of GIVE, leading to happy, successful, productive lives, full of achievement and joy.

To learn how, read our article “You Can Live the Abundant Life!” □



FUNERAL of LIES

Nine Deceptions Mourners Can Expect

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

MEET MARIE. She fights back tears as she attends the funeral service of her beloved Aunt Grace, whose pearls of wisdom had guided her niece through life's hardships. Now that Grace is dead, Marie wonders, *Is this all there is—birth, a few decades of existence, then death? Is there anything else?*

Marie is not of any particular Christian religion. Other than believing that God (or some “higher power”) exists, she holds to few religious beliefs. Marie occasionally attends worship services at her neighborhood nondenominational

church, mostly on Christmas or Easter, and sometimes when she feels lonely, or hopes to understand why she exists and how she fits into God's Plan.

At the funeral, Marie sits among other mourners in a small church building used for Sunday worship services, and observes her surroundings. Her eyes rest on the stained-glass windows and the biblical scenarios they portray. She then notices the pulpit at the front of the main hall and the three chairs lined against the wall, occupied by ministers (two of whom are women). At stage-left, an “amen chorus” of singers repeat pithy comments—“yes,” “that's right,” and “amen”—while fam-

ily and friends take turns at the lectern and extol the deceased.

One man, a pillar and longtime member in the local congregation, says, “I've known Grace most of my life. So I know she would agree when I say, ‘Read the Good Book and do what it says.’ That's the best advice I can give.”

Yet he says this while surrounded by images of crosses and the popular long-haired, effeminate-looking, sallow-complexioned “Jesus,” and with two female pastors sitting behind him. Does “the Good Book”—the Bible—teach anything about all of these things?

One of the female ministers begins the traditional altar call to “give your heart to the Lord.” She tries to soothe grieving listeners with words meant to comfort: “Grace is at peace now; she's gone to heaven.” She warns that “man was born to die” and “hell is real,” adding, “You never know when your time is up—are you ready to meet your Maker?”

Marie thinks about all she has seen and heard. She tries to find meaning in them, yet this does not ease her pain and sense of loss—these fail to bring PURPOSE to the bigger issues of life. Despite her desire to find answers to life's greatest questions, all she finds here are empty platitudes dressed with sincere intent.

The manmade traditions of professing “Christianity” deprived Marie—and countless others who have attended the funeral services of men's world—of learning the *truth* of God's Supreme Plan for humanity. Life, death, life after death—these are so plainly taught in the Word of God. Yet instead of letting the Bible interpret itself, religionists rely upon human inventions of false teaching masquerading as doctrines from God.

When a leader of “churchianity” advises listeners to “live according to the Bible,” his words only have authority if he actually practices what he preaches. Scripture warns of false teachers who go about “deceiving,” even as they themselves are “deceived”

(II Tim. 3:13). Such leaders often appear to be earnest servants of God. Perhaps some may have good intentions—which they unwittingly use to pave the path toward destruction for those unaware of the true teachings and commands of the Bible.

The world of traditional Christianity has struggled to fill the void of fewer and fewer men becoming priests and ministers. Time brings change, particularly in standards of behavior and tradition. Two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul wrote, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak,” that is, to not preach or perform other ministerial duties. Professing Christianity long understood this, yet today religious leaders treat Paul’s words as chauvinistic, outdated, of his personal opinion, or similar charges.

How can one advise, “Just do what the Bible says,” yet treat God’s Word as a spiritual buffet in which people can pick and choose what to follow and what to reject?

Let’s examine nine common funeral lies used to deceive and prey upon the biblically ignorant.

(1) False Images of Worship

Think. Would the God who became flesh, was beaten beyond human recognition, then nailed to a cross and left to die in excruciating pain want to be continuously reminded of His instrument of death? Would that make sense? Yet millions of self-professed “Christians” see nothing wrong with displaying crosses—the weapon used to murder Jesus Christ—in virtually any manner and every occasion.

The worship of crosses, beads or any other image violates the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:4-6).

Now consider. The Bible speaks of *two* beings called “Jesus.” The real Jesus Christ is the least understood Personage of all time. The false christ—called “another Jesus” (II Cor. 11:4)—comes by the power of “another spirit” and preaches “another gospel,” which is actually a *false* one.

The religions of men popularly depict the “another Jesus” as a long-

haired, effeminate-looking, soft-bodied weakling. It is *this* “Jesus” that mourners at funerals routinely hear about. It is the followers of *this* “Jesus” who ignorantly deny the bereaved from hearing words of the *true* gospel—the GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom of God.

Our comprehensive book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity* addresses the popular false images of Christ:

“For hundreds of years, artists have used their vivid imaginations to illustrate what Jesus looked like as a man. But in doing so, they err in two ways. Some little space will be taken to clarify this.

“First, creating illustrations of Jesus breaks the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:4-6; Deut. 5:8-10).

“Second, artistic renditions of Christ’s image depict Him as deathly thin, with long hair, soft, effeminate features, and a sentimental, sanctimonious look in His eyes. This is the common portrayal of Jesus found in paintings across the world, which started appearing on the scene hundreds of years after Jesus’ death.

“While common as daylight, this depiction is simply not historically accurate on a number of fronts. It should be noted that the New Testament does not explicitly describe what Jesus looked like, and no eyewitness drawings of Him have ever been found. That said, Jesus Christ was Jewish, and as such would have looked like any other Jewish man of His time.

“In a 2004 *Reuters* article, ‘physical anthropologist Joe Zias, who has studied hundreds of skeletons found in archaeological digs in Jerusalem’ stated, ‘Jesus didn’t have long hair... Jewish men back in antiquity did not have long hair.’

“If Jesus did have long hair, contrary to the accepted style of the time, He would have stood out in a crowd like a sore thumb. Yet on multiple occasions, Jesus managed to slip away amongst the masses and hide from His enemies, who wholeheartedly sought to kill Him (Luke 4:30; John 8:59; 10:39). This would have been most dif-

icult to do if He had been the only man with long hair. Jesus was able to flee because He was an ordinary-looking Jewish man, not a long-haired ‘exception to the rule.’

“Consider the account of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus in the book of Mark: ‘And he [Judas] that betrayed Him had given them a token [sign], saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely [securely]. And as soon as he was come, he went straightway to Him, and said, Master, Master; and kissed Him. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him’ (Mark 14:44-46).

“If Jesus had long hair, would it have been necessary for Judas to use a special sign—a kiss—to betray Jesus to His enemies? Of course not. The scribes, chief priests, and legionnaires would have easily spotted a singular long-haired person—a kiss would not have been required.

“Though not in an obvious way, a particularly strong indication of Jesus’ hair length is given in the Bible, in I Corinthians 11:14. The apostle Paul states, ‘Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have *long hair*, it is a *shame* unto him?’ The Greek word for ‘shame’ means *disgrace, dishonor, reproach, vile*. These are strong words! No doubt, Paul and some of the people to whom he was writing would have seen Jesus face-to-face, or at least heard descriptions of His appearance, including His hair length.

“We might ask: Would an individual (Paul) who proclaimed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ make such a statement about hair length if Jesus had long hair? This would seem most foolish for Paul to do. It would have been a blatant contradiction, and would have probably incited anger or at least bewilderment from those in the Corinth congregation.

“Further confirming that Jesus did not have long hair is a wall painting that was erected after Jerusalem was captured in AD 70 to celebrate Rome’s victory. It pictures Jewish men with *short hair* being taken into captivity.

“An article in the December 2002 issue of *Popular Mechanics*, titled

‘Real Face of Jesus,’ also challenged the commonly held view of Jesus’ appearance. The article opens: ‘From the first time Christian children settle into Sunday school classrooms, an image of Jesus Christ is etched into their minds. In North America he is most often depicted as being taller than his disciples, lean, with long, flowing, light brown hair, fair skin and light-colored eyes. Familiar though this image may be, it is inherently flawed. A person with these features and physical bearing would have looked very different from everyone else in the region where Jesus lived and ministered.’

“The article continues: ‘Using methods similar to those police have developed to solve crimes, British scientists, assisted by Israeli archeologists, have re-created what they believe is the most accurate image...of the most famous face in human history.’

“Using modern technology, this team recreated a face that appears nothing like traditional artist renderings.

“Until about the age of 30, Jesus was a carpenter. The building trade of that time involved strenuous, back-breaking labor. Those who worked in this field were required to move and lift heavy stone (carpenters were also stonemasons at that time) and lumber without power tools or mechanical digging equipment of any kind. Week after week, Jesus cut down trees, hauled lumber and giant rocks, and constructed buildings.

“Due to working in such an environment, Jesus would have been a rugged, physically fit, masculine-looking man. And He would have worn durable, practical clothing, which would have helped Him to blend in with the crowd, indistinguishable from the common ‘blue-collar’ fishermen with whom He associated. This was another reason He needed to be identified with a kiss when arrested. Also, since Jesus spent most of His time under the Mediterranean sun, His skin would have been tanned—not pale and even chalky as Christendom portrays.

“Only a strong, physically fit human being could have survived being severely scourged (Mark 15:15)

and fasting 40 days (Matt. 4:1-2), as Jesus did.

“The above article also stated, ‘From an analysis of skeletal remains, archeologists had firmly established that the average build of a Semite male at the time of Jesus was 5 ft. 1 in., with an average weight of about 110 pounds. Since Jesus worked outdoors as a carpenter until he was about 30 years old, it is reasonable to assume he was more muscular and physically fit than westernized portraits suggest.’

“Ultimately, if we think about Christ’s appearance at all, we ought to think, in general terms, about how He looks today. Inspired by God, the apostle John in Revelation described Jesus’ present appearance: ‘His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire’ (Rev. 1:14).”

(2) The Fallacy of Sunday-keeping

Most of the world’s professing Christians observe Sunday as the “Lord’s Sabbath,” believing that God somehow changed His seventh-day Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. In their thinking, “Saturday worship is for the Jews.”

Yet the seventh-day Sabbath is a special sign between the Creator God and those whom He identifies as His people. Observing the seventh day reminded the Jews (the tribe of Judah, along with Benjamin and Levi) of their historical background. Yet failing to “remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy” resulted in the northern house of Israel forgetting its ancient roots; they virtually disappeared in history, and are known today as the “lost ten tribes.”

What irony! The modern nations descended from the ancient Israelites—who have inherited the national, material blessings of becoming the greatest single “nation and a company of nations” in history (Gen. 35:11)—are ignorant of their biblical identity and their role in end-time prophecy.

We recommend reading the book *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*, written by David C. Pack, publisher/editor-in-chief of *The Real Truth* magazine.

(3) Vain Repetition—a Waste of Time!

In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a showdown (I Kgs. 18:17-20) to determine before the tribes of the house of Israel which deity was the most powerful. He charged the people, “How long halt you between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him” (vs. 21).

Their response? “And the people answered him not a word” (same verse). They wanted to appear as the people of God, but lacked the whole-hearted desire to live according to His Way.

In the New Testament, Jesus—who was also the God of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:1-4)—forbade “vain repetitions” in prayer and other forms of worship (Matt. 6:7). Yet this does not prevent people from mindlessly repeating the same prayer or uttering “amen” and “praise the Lord.”

God said of Israel’s end-time descendants, “And they come unto you [the final servant God works through to warn nations] as the people come, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they will not DO them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. And, lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they *hear* your words, BUT THEY DO THEM NOT” (Ezek. 33:31-32).

Megachurches attract massive crowds of hand-waving, “Praise the Lord!”-shrieking, emotionally charged followers. They seek after a deity who requires nothing in return—no obedience to law, no adherence to standards defining character—just “show love.” In other words, love as defined by *men*. Yet the true love of God has *standards* (I Cor. 13:4-7). It requires ACTION! And it has *everything* to do with keeping God’s Law (Rom. 13:8-10).

(4) Does God Ordain Women as His Ministers?

Amazingly, religionists who profess to follow a personal “calling” into

the ministry (based on one's feelings) ignore clear biblical instructions about whom God calls to be a minister of Jesus Christ.

The example of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-23) shows that no one can take the office of the ministry to himself. Only by one's fruits can this be determined. The person himself cannot do this—only properly trained and experienced ministers of God can.

Inspired by God, Paul gave clear instructions to Timothy and Titus—two men he himself had trained—about the qualifications of the ministry. Notice that in both Titus 1:6 and I Timothy 3:2 Paul instructs that a ministerial candidate must be “the husband of *one* wife.” (This does *not* mean that only married men can be candidates for the ministry; rather, such men cannot be polygamists!) Paul wrote, “husband.” Despite today's movement to redefine marriage so that adults can legally marry their own gender, obviously this is referring to *men*. Only MEN can qualify for Christ's ministry.

Regarding women, the same apostle—selected and personally trained by Jesus Christ Himself—wrote this: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (I Cor. 14:33-35).

Now notice I Timothy 2:11-12: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

How can female pastors ignore PLAIN SCRIPTURE as they preach from the Bible every Sunday?

Also, note that Jesus selected *men* to be His apos-

ties. Of course, women served in other areas of the Church, such as older women “teach[ing] the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4-5). But God only chooses qualified men whom He calls to the ministry to publicly preach and teach.

God does NOT favor one gender over another. In His ultimate plan of salvation, all human beings—male and female alike—will receive opportunity to be born into His Family.

To learn more, we recommend reading our article “Who Should Become God's Ministers?”

(5) Is Now the Only Time of Salvation?

Contrary to popular teaching, God is NOT trying to save every man, woman and child *at this time*. The Creator has a Plan.

Hebrews 9:27 states, “And as it is appointed unto men to die once, but after this the judgment.” That judgment “must begin at the House of God” (I Pet. 4:17)—that is, upon the true Church, whose members have been begotten with the Holy Spirit. For those few whom God is calling now into His Church, before the Second Coming, it is in this lifetime that they

must qualify for eternal life in the kingdom of God.

As for the vast majority of mankind, every human being in history who has lived without ever learning God's Way will be resurrected to physical life to receive their first (and only) opportunity for salvation. The overwhelming majority will be given this chance after the Millennium; those who live according to the laws and ways of God will be given eternal life (Rev. 20:5). However, any who choose to reject His way of life will be destroyed (vs. 14-15).

Read our booklet *Just What Is Salvation?*, and learn what mainstream “Christianity” will not teach.

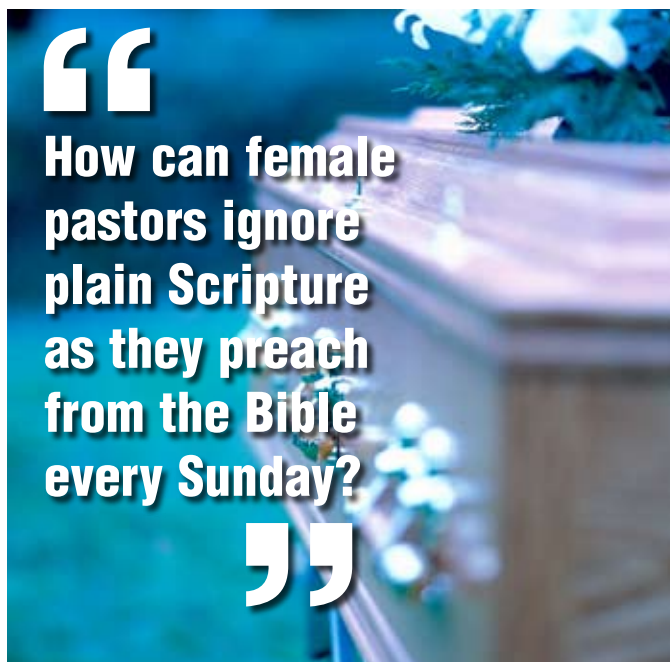
(6) Altar Calls to “Give your heart to the Lord”

No one can come to God of his own volition. God *calls* people to come out of the ways of this world, to live according to His ways. Jesus said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw* him” (John 6:44).

Notice an excerpt from our article “Am I Being Called?”:

“Actually, people of all ages and backgrounds puzzle over just what a ‘calling’ is. Many reduce it to little more than a particular feeling that comes over them, which they attribute

to God. Millions in the world feel ‘called’—in some cases to the ‘church,’ in other cases to the ‘ministry,’ or ‘missionary work,’ in still other cases to work with children, and in yet others to serve in the medical profession or even in the military. Ignorant of what God says, so many people are left to rely on mere feelings, assuming that their lives—and the paths they choose—are divinely inspired. They attribute this ‘inspiration’ to being called of God. Sadly, most never learn that these ‘callings’ have nothing to do with following the true God of the Bible.



“A true calling from God is far more than a kind of abstract feeling that human reasoning concludes is from God!”

(7) Is Man “born to die”?

What nonsense! If man was born to die, why would God bother to warn Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? “For in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17).

If man was born to die, why did God give the Israelites His Law, defining how to live, and then warn, “I have set before you *life* and death, *blessing* and cursing: therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that both you and your seed [descendants] may LIVE” (Deut. 30:19)?

If man was born to die, why does God’s Word call death man’s enemy, to be “swallowed up in victory” in the First Resurrection (I Cor. 15:54-57)?

Man was born to live!—to spend a lifetime of developing holy, righteous, godly character, and learning to conquer human nature, which the Bible defines as “*enmity* [hostile; an enemy] against God” and His Law (Rom. 8:7).

Scripture describes the carnal mindset as “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). How deceitful? “All the ways of a man are clean *in his own eyes*” (Prov. 16:2); “There is a way that *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH” (vs. 25).

False, manmade fables such as “man was born to die” are byproducts of carnal reasoning. To grasp the reason for human existence, read our booklet *Why Do You Exist?*

(8) “Hell is real”—or Is It?

Would a merciful God punish people in eternal, unending torture of excruciating pain and turmoil? Of course not! The record of history shows that the teaching of never-ending punishing in hell is a human invention.

Consider an excerpt from the booklet *The Truth About Hell*, also written by David C. Pack: “The Valley of Hinnom—Gehenna—came to represent a place of final punishment—a

place of ‘absolute ruin’—for all who go there. The reference to hell fire [in Mark 9] actually refers to the ‘lake of fire’ described in Revelation 20:13-15: ‘And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [hades] were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the *second death*. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the *lake of fire*.’

“All who enter this lake suffer permanent death. They suffer complete destruction—a final punishment that is *everlasting—eternal—permanent!* It is not *punishing* but is rather *punishment* that is everlasting. Christ understood this just as anyone that knew of the fires in the Valley of Hinnom recognized that the bodies of criminals and animals thrown there *burned up*. When I walked the valley, I did not see any of them still burning. I could not even find any evidence that there had ever been fires there. Two thousand years have completely changed its appearance.

“Jude 7 speaks of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah having received the ‘vengeance of *eternal fire*’ for their sins. Those cities are not burning today and have been so completely destroyed that archaeologists have never been able to prove with certainty their exact location. What happened to these cities does not reflect a permanent state of visible fire burning for all to see today. Their *destruction* was eternal. When those cities completely burned up, the fires went out. However, their punishment continues to this day!

“It should be clear why Paul recorded that the wages of sin is death, not eternal punishing and torment in an ever-burning hell. Most people have seen fires go unquenched. But they always burned out after they consumed whatever combustible material was available to them. Read Jeremiah 17:27 and 52:13. Over twenty-five hundred years ago, after God warned Jerusalem that He would burn her with an ‘unquenchable fire,’ if she did not repent, this happened. I have also seen Jerusalem. You, too, have probably

seen it many times on television. It is not still burning today.”

(9) “Gone to heaven”?

The false teaching of heaven being the reward of the saved was taught long before the birth of the New Testament Church in 31 A.D.

Scripture is plain. Even the most faithful servants of God have died, and have *not* gone to heaven, for “*no man* has ascended up to heaven” (John 3:13). King David—whom God called “a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will” (Acts 13:22)—“is both DEAD and BURIED” (Acts 2:29), and “is NOT ascended into the heavens” (vs. 34).

Our booklet *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?* thoroughly examines the truth of this topic. For example, it answers whether Enoch, Moses, Elijah, Paul, the thief on the cross or others were taken to heaven, and identifies the “souls under the altar” and the “four and twenty elders” of the book of Revelation.

Why the Falsehoods?

Of course, the deceptions that traditional Christianity promotes are not limited to the nine addressed above. Far too many falsehoods exist than a single article could cover.

Understand that some of the teachers of these and other religious lies might appear sincere in their beliefs. However, whenever they discover something in the Bible that contradicts their traditional understanding of Scripture, they pass it off as a “mystery” that cannot be known. But Psalm 111 states, “A good *understanding* have all they that DO His [God’s] commandments” (vs. 10). Obeying God brings understanding!

Still, these “leaders” unwittingly deceive the masses because they themselves are deceived! (See II Timothy 2:13). No matter their sincerity, they rob mourners of hearing the true purpose and plan God has for humanity.

Do not allow this to happen to you. To know more, read our article “Seven Questions Your Minister Does NOT Want You to Ask.” □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

ganizations have been “built” by men just in the United States. Estimates place the number of professing Christians at over 2 billion. While *attendance* seems to be increasing, it is not growing as fast as the confusion surrounding the question of which is the *right* church.

While it has been said, “They can’t all be *wrong*,” it is more correct to say, “They cannot all be *right*.” If Christ built His Church as He said, then it can be found somewhere on Earth today—and it is the only *right* Church. But we must ask: How do we find it—what do we look for—how do we identify it—and how do we know it if we see it?

A Little Flock

Let’s begin to take a closer look at *what* Jesus built. Recall He said, “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Jesus recognized His people might naturally conclude, “We just don’t seem big enough.”

Now think. By no stretch can any church comprised of millions—let alone over 2 *billion* collectively—be considered a “little flock.” And such numbers would not have to be reassured.

Christ understood that *His* Church—His *little* flock—would be persecuted and despised by the world. Just before His crucifixion, He warned, “Remember the word that I said unto you [He must have taught this previously], The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have *persecuted Me*, they will also *persecute you*” (John 15:20). In the preceding verse, Jesus had reminded His disciples that “I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world *hates* you” (vs. 19). Of course, Christ *was* persecuted to the point of horrible torture and crucifixion. Therefore, the true Church could also expect to be persecuted—and *hated*! Those in it are not “of the world.” The world senses this and hates them for it. The apostle Paul recorded, “Yes,

and *all* that will live godly *in Christ Jesus* shall suffer *persecution*” (II Tim. 3:12).

The word “all” means what it says! What church do you know where absolutely *every person* in it is suffering at least some form of persecution? Any? Even one? And remember, Jesus said His servants would be HATED! We will learn momentarily what *causes* the hatred.

First, consider what just these points reveal. How many churches can you name that are small, persecuted, not of this world—and to the point of being hated because of it? Think about those you are familiar with. Again, do *any* fit this description? If so, surely not many! And we have only *begun* the proofs.

The Importance of the Name of the Church

The world’s churches have many different names, which are derived in various ways. These include the particular doctrines they teach, the names of the men who founded them, the humanly devised type of church government they espouse, their location, or their intended scope and size, such as universal or catholic—in this case to be seen as all-encompassing and therefore being a BIG flock.

On the night of His betrayal, Christ prayed for His Church: “Holy Father, keep through *Your own name* those whom You have given Me, that they may be *one*, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them *in Your name*...I have given them *Your word*; and the world has *hated* them [there it is again, and notice this hatred is tied to God’s Word], because they are *not of the world*” (John 17:11-12, 14).

They believe and they act differently.

There are 12 verses where the New Testament records that the true Church *has* been kept in the name of the Father—meaning *God*. Let’s look at three:

First is Acts 20:28—this verse instructs elders: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...

to feed *the church of God*.”

Next is I Corinthians 10:32: “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to *the church of God*.”

Last is I Corinthians 15:9: Paul wrote, “For...I persecuted *the church of God*.” And there are nine other places where it says much the same.

In the modern age, for corporate reasons, God’s Church may use an additional descriptive name to distinguish itself from other “churches of God”—those merely *appropriating* God’s name to themselves (and many groups do)—but who are not obeying His Commandments, believing His true doctrines, or doing His Work. Because of circumstances in our time, we use the name *The Restored Church of God*.

Just as various mainstream denominations may have a few correct doctrines mixed with much error, some appropriate to themselves the name of God’s Church. A *few* churches may have some amount of truth, while accepting many false doctrines. Only one Church on the face of the earth has the correct name AND teaches all the additional many true doctrines of the Bible! Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them [meaning, set them apart] through *Your truth*: Your word is *truth*” (John 17:17). The Church that Jesus works through, directs and guides is sanctified—is set apart—by its belief of the *plain truth* of God’s Word!

In addition to (1) carrying the name “Church of God,” we have seen the true Church has (2) come out of the world, (3) is small, and (4) is persecuted. This Church is then also (5) set apart by its *beliefs* and *practices*—which are in complete agreement with the *truth* of the Bible!

But we are still only beginning with proofs.

Unified Through God’s Word

Let’s go further on this last point by asking an all-important question. What is the *Bible definition* of the *true* Church? Have you ever wondered? The answer has everything to do with

why this Church is *unified*. Men have their own differing definitions of what the Church is—and these could be listed almost without end—but only *God's* definition matters.

Paul wrote this: "...that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the *house of God*, which is the *church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of *the truth*" (I Tim. 3:15). Note the words "the truth."

In the end, no other definition devised by men is acceptable. This description of the Church *Christ* built will guide us. So then, God's Church has and teaches THE TRUTH!

This world's churches are split by endless disagreement over doctrine and practice. Amos 3:3 asks, "Can two *walk together*, except they be *agreed*?" The answer is an obvious NO! Just ask any divorced couple what caused their split. They didn't agree!

The problem is these churches do not practice the principle of "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word...of God*" (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4), meaning, exactly as written. Instead—since they follow the many differing traditions and ideas of men—endless disagreements separate, divide, and create more and more churches of *men*. These organizations generally do not *walk together*, because they do not *agree*—either with each other *or with God*! (And this starts with how they define the New Testament Church.)

God's Church is different. Many verses show that the Church *Christ* built is *unified*—with all its members and congregations walking *together* in complete agreement with each other—and with God and Christ.

A crucial point, revealing the kind of unity to be seen in the true Church, emerges from Jesus' earlier-referenced prayer of John 17. Notice: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be *sanctified* [again, set apart] *through the truth*... That they *all* may be ONE; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be ONE *in Us*: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the

glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be ONE, *even as We are ONE*: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made *perfect in ONE*" (vs. 19, 21-23).

These are powerful statements! Christ intended that His Church be unified—"one"—bound together—*no less than were He and His Father!*

There is no room for disagreement in a Church that is *this* unified. These verses describe a perfect oneness through the truth—the *same* kind the Father and Christ enjoy. It is *this* kind of unity that allows true Christians to be "in" them—be *in Christ* and *in the Father*.

Even in the *Old Testament*, David wrote, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psa. 133:1).

Notice this earliest picture of Christ's Church. In Acts 2, verse 1, on the day of Pentecost—the very first day the New Testament Church came into existence—with the disciples reported as gathered in "one accord," 3,000 converts were baptized. They formed the very beginning of Christ's building of His Church. The description of them was "and they *continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship*"—verse 42—and "*all that believed were together*"—verse 44—as well as "they, continuing daily with *one accord*...did eat their [food] with gladness and *singleness of heart*"—verse 46.

From these verses, we clearly see that the Church *Christ* built was unified. It was in agreement over doctrine—and was *together*. Notice verse 47: "And *the Lord added* to the Church daily such as should be saved." In the Church *Christ* guides and directs, He is the One who adds to it, and builds it!

Think. Reason alone says Jesus would not add to thousands of different churches that cannot agree on His teachings—that cannot agree on what is truth.

We must ask one more question before concluding: How did mankind get into the state of confusion, division, war, competition and disagree-

ment existing all over the earth today? Of course, this includes religion. God's original command to Adam in the book of Genesis, chapter 2, was, "But of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*, you shall *not* eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely *die*" (vs. 17).

In chapter 3, Eve, with Adam following, rebelled and ate of this wrong tree. Notice that this tree represented *knowledge* that was both "good and evil." In other words, the tree was not entirely evil—it contained a *mixture* of true and false—good and evil—knowledge! It is the same with the churches of this world. Some do have small amounts of true (or "good") doctrinal knowledge, mixed with much false (or "evil") doctrinal knowledge.

For 6,000 years, God has told His servants to avoid mixing truth with error. He warned Adam that eating of the wrong tree would result in death. And it did.

The warning is the same for us today!

When I was first learning the truth, I heard an analogy that I had never considered before—but have never forgotten since: Think of a delicious cake laced with either arsenic, cyanide or any other poison, while otherwise containing nothing but good and healthy ingredients. Eating such a cake would always result in death.

The good ingredients would not be sufficient to overcome the hidden poison. Likewise, God's Church does not and cannot mix truth with error. As with the cake, the result for those who do is fatal!

We have already seen some of the truths taught by the Church that Jesus built. But do not take my word. Take the time to prove these things to yourself from the Bible.

One article could scarcely contain a simple *listing* of all the truths taught in God's Word, let alone a detailed scriptural explanation proving each and explaining *why* God teaches it. To learn more, read my book *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!* □

HEALTH ISSUES

Britain: Swine Flu Virus Doubles in One Week

Swine flu cases in Britain doubled to 100,000, in one week of July. The disease has had such a significant impact on the country that within minutes of opening, the National Pandemic Flu service website appeared to have crashed. This included the new phone line for those suffering symptoms, which is capable of handling 1 million calls per week.

According to the Department of Health, the website received an unprecedented 9.3 million hits per hour.

The chief executive of the Health Protection Agency (HPA), Justin McCracken, said that the number of doctor consultations for the flu is at

epidemic levels. The HPA estimates that new cases are somewhere between 60,000 and 140,000.

According to statistics, the areas of the country experiencing the highest increases in rates of infection include North Tyneside at 745 percent, Blackburn with Darwen at 568 percent and Stockport at 553 percent. The east London borough of Tower-Hamlets continues to have the highest number of doctor consultations, followed by the north London borough of Islington.

Other hard hit areas include Greenwich, Leicester, and Telford.

Health officials said that of deaths resulting from the virus, one third have

been children under 15 and 16 percent have been people previously thought to be healthy.

Medical experts indicate that there are some signs that the disease may be slowing, but it is still too early to conclude it is a trend. While the number of new cases doubled, the number of people admitted to the hospital increased by only 28 percent. While chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson said this might be a "little bit of possible good news," it means that the disease has not gotten any worse (*Telegraph*).

British officials encourage those with symptoms to contact the national flu service or log on to their website. □

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

U.S. Federal Corruption Arrests Include Religious Leaders

A 10-year federal probe, launched by the FBI, IRS and the U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, led to charging 44 suspects for public corruption and international money laundering.

The arrests of New Jersey politicians included two state legislators, three mayors, a deputy mayor and a city council president. Federal officials also charged five orthodox rabbis with money laundering.

The commissioner of the state's Department of Community Affairs resigned after officials raided both his home and office.

Ralph J. Marra Jr., the acting United States attorney in New Jersey, said at a news conference, "For these defendants, corruption was a way of life. They existed in an ethics-free zone" (*The New York Times*).

Federal law enforcement authorities arrested one suspect for trafficking human organs: allegedly buying kidneys on the black market from Israel for \$10,000 each, and selling them to U.S. patients for up to \$160,000. □



■ **ABOVE:** Authorities take two suspects into custody (July 23, 2009).

PHOTO: AMY NEWMAN/THE RECORD/MCT

■ **LEFT:** Edward Kahrer, Assistant FBI Special Agent in Charge of Newark, speaks at a news conference to announce the arrests (July 23).

PHOTO: JEFF ZELEVANSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Forecasters: El Niño to Cause Wild Weather This Year

■ **WILDFIRES:** Firemen try to extinguish a blaze near the eastern village of Ures de Medina, close to Medinaceli, Spain (July 23, 2009).

PHOTO: PIERRE-PHILIPPE MARCOU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

■ **HAIL, FLOODING AND DROUGHT:** Below left, a child holds hailstones the size of chicken eggs in Les Esserts near Lausanne, Switzerland (July 23). Middle, commuters make their way through a waterlogged street after a heavy downpour flooded parts of Amritsar, India (July 23). Right, farmers walk across their parched paddy field in Matiya village, India (July 25).



PHOTO: FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO: NARINDER NANU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO: STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Forecasters predict the return of a medium-strength El Niño, the worldwide weather pattern caused by a change in ocean temperatures every three to seven years, could once again wreak havoc on worldwide climates this year, prompting severe flooding in some countries and extreme drought in others.

Europe is already experiencing erratic climate patterns, with the weather considered the main factor in the deaths of up to 18 people continent-wide. Golf-ball-sized hail fell in Switzerland, hurricane-force winds swept across Poland, abnormally high temperatures continue to plague Greece, and wildfires have

scorched Spain, France and Italy.

Climate scientists also said they expect an unusually hot summer in the United Kingdom, and predict that the next few years could likely be Earth's hottest on record. They said while Indonesia and India could see increased flooding, already malnourished Africa and water-deprived Australia could experience further drought (*The Guardian*).

The weather phenomenon will even affect the United States. While El Niño is responsible for a decrease in hurricanes, fewer Florida wildfires, wetter conditions across the Southwest and less severe northern winters, its "nega-

tive impacts include damaging winter storms in California and increased storminess across the southern USA" (*Associated Press*).

The effects of El Niño —"the little boy" in Spanish—are not only experienced through the wild weather it brings, but also through the economic devastation it causes. In 1998, El Niño killed more than 2,000 people worldwide, resulting in billions of dollars of damage to crops and infrastructure.

As the current recession forces nations to cut back expenses, aid organizations are concerned that this year's projected weather will cause severe food shortages in Africa and Asia. □

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