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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Lessons from 2008

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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COVER PHOTO: Left, a woman cries out as she arrives at the murder scene of her 15-year-old niece, who was stabbed to death in Lambeth, London (June 3, 2008). Top right, Russian soldiers leave a checkpoint near Khurvaleti, on their way toward the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali (Aug. 22, 2008). Bottom right, U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama makes a speech in front of the Victory Column in Berlin, Germany (July 24, 2008).

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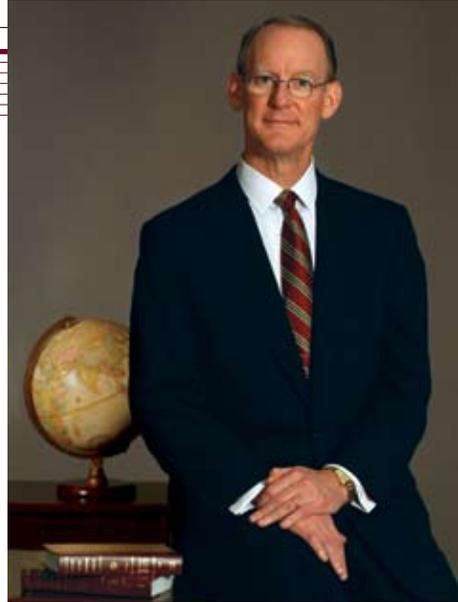
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Christmas Unveiled!

CHRISTMAS IS THOUGHT to be a wonderful time, focusing participants on giving, family togetherness, beautiful music and decorations, feasting on special foods and singing traditional carols. All of this is supposedly centered around the worship of Jesus Christ, and His birth on December 25.

Where did Christmas originate? What is the origin of Santa Claus—mistletoe—Christmas trees—holly wreaths—Yule logs—and exchanging gifts? Many seek to “put Christ back into Christmas.” Was He ever there? Surely the Bible instructs to do all these things. Or does it?

I grew up keeping Christmas, and it was a big event in our family every year. We left out none of the usual trimmings of this occasion. On Christmas Eve, excitement grew with every passing minute. After going to bed, I could neither sleep nor wait until morning to see all that “Santa” had brought me.

Christmas certainly *felt* wonderful to me. I trusted what my parents told me. I had no reason to doubt them. I was not taught to question the *true* origin of Christmas!

Most never reflect on *why* they believe what they believe or do what they do. We live in a world filled with customs, but few ever seek to understand their *origin*. We generally accept them without question. Most people basically do what everyone else does—following the crowd because it is easy!

Let’s look at the roots of Christmas. Let’s see *why* people follow the customs associated with it. *Why* is it kept on December 25? The early New Testament Church never

kept it. Why? This article introduces facts from history and Scripture that, when placed together, paint a complete picture. Let’s avoid all assumptions and only accept what can be *proven*!

The truth of this holiday celebration will *shock* you!

True Origin

Nearly all aspects of Christmas observance have their roots in Roman custom and religion. We will look at many respected sources (all emphasis will be mine), starting with the following admission from a large American newspaper: “The earliest reference to Christmas being marked on Dec. 25 comes from the second century after Jesus’ birth. It is considered likely the first Christmas celebrations *were in reaction to the Roman Saturnalia*, a harvest festival that marked the winter solstice—the return of the sun—and honored Saturn, the god of sowing. *Saturnalia* was a rowdy time, *much opposed by the more austere leaders among the still-minority Christian sect*. Christmas developed, one scholar says, as a means of replacing worship of the *sun* with worship of the *Son*. By A.D. 529, after Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire, Emperor Justinian made Christmas a civic holiday. The celebration of Christmas reached its peak—some would say its worst moments—in the medieval period when it became a time for conspicuous consumption and unequalled revelry.”

Think. It was *300 years* after Christ when the *Roman church* began keeping Christmas!—and not until hundreds of years after this that it was mandated to be kept throughout the empire as an official festival honoring “Christ.”

Consider these admissions from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, under “Christmas”: “Christmas was *not*

among the earliest festivals of the Church...the first evidence of the feast is *from Egypt*.” Further, “Pagan customs centering around the January calends [the early days of each month] gravitated to Christmas.” Under the topic “Natal Day,” Origen, an early Catholic writer, admitted, “In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday. It is *only sinners* (like Pharaoh and Herod) who make great rejoicings over the day on which they were *born* into this world.”

The *Encyclopaedia Americana* reveals, “Christmas...was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian church, since the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the *death* of remarkable persons rather than their *birth*...a feast was established in memory of this event [Christ’s birth] *in the 4th century*. In the 5th century the Western church *ordered* the feast to be celebrated [forever] on the *day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of the Saturnalia*, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ’s birth existed.”

Here are more facts from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under the heading “Christmas”: “In the Roman world the *Saturnalia* (December 17) was a time of merrymaking and exchanging of gifts. *December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra*, the Sun of Righteousness. On the Roman New Year (January 1), houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. To these observances were added the German and Celtic Yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain, and central Europe. Food and good fellowship, the Yule log and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, gifts and greetings all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with

the winter festival, both pagan and Christian.”

Stunning information! I ask: Do you care?

Consider what *The Democrat and Chronicle* admitted regarding who mandated the celebration: “The Roman festival of *Saturnalia*, Dec. 17-24, moved citizens to decorate their homes with greens and lights and give gifts to children and the poor. The Dec. 25 festival of *natalis solis invicti, the birth of the unconquered sun*, was decreed by the emperor Aurelian in A.D. 274 as a *Winter Solstice* celebration, and sometime (later)...was Christianized as a date to celebrate the birth of the Son of Light.”

Dr. William Gutsch further publicly confirmed the true origin and nature of Christmas with this: “The early Romans were not celebrating Christmas but rather *a pagan feast* called the *Saturnalia*. It occurred each year around the beginning of winter, or the winter solstice. This was the time when the sun had taken its lowest path across the sky and the days were beginning to lengthen, thus assuring another season of growth.

“If many of the trappings of the *Saturnalia*, however, seem to parallel what so many of us do today, *we can see where we borrowed...our holiday traditions*. And indeed, it has been suggested that while Christ was most likely *not born in late December*, the early Christians—then still an outlawed sect—moved Christmas to the time of the *Saturnalia* to draw as little attention as possible to themselves while they celebrated their own holiday.”

Let’s understand. *Saturnalia* simply means “festival or celebration of Saturn.” Saturday derives from the name of this god, as do all the other days of the week from pagan gods—Sun’s day, Moon’s day, Tiws day, Woden’s day, Thor’s day, Frigga’s day and Saturn’s day. But who *was* Saturn? Saturn was the god of sowing—or planting—the fire

god—because heat from the sun was required to allow for planting and growth of crops. He was also worshipped in this dead-of-winter festival so that he would come back (remember, he *was* the “sun”) and warm the earth again so that spring planting could occur. The planet Saturn was later named after him because, among all of the planets, with its rings and bright red color, it best represented the god of fire!

Virtually every civilization has a fire/sun god. The Egyptians (and sometimes Romans) called him Vulcan. The Greeks named him Kronos, as did the Phoenicians—but they also called him Saturn. The Babylonians called him Tammuz, Molech or Baal, as did the Druids. These were all simply the various names for *Nimrod*, the infamous biblical rebel of Genesis 10. Nimrod was considered the father of all the Babylonian gods.

There is no mistaking the origin of the modern Christmas celebration. And many more sources could be cited. Let’s tie in other facts.

Christmas Tree

The modern Christmas tree originated in Germany. But the Germans got it from the Romans, who got it from the Babylonians and the Egyptians.

The following quote demonstrates what the Babylonians believe about the origin of the Christmas tree: “An old Babylonish fable told of *an evergreen tree which sprang out of a dead tree stump*. The old stump symbolized the dead Nimrod, the new evergreen tree symbolized that Nimrod had come to life again in Tammuz [a false god condemned in Ezekiel 8 as abominable]! Among the Druids the *oak* was sacred, among the Egyptians it was the palm, and *in Rome it was the fir*, which was decorated with red berries during the *Saturnalia*!”

The book *Answers to Questions*, by Frederick J. Haskin, states, “The

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IF THE OIL RUNS OUT...

Will mankind find a solution before it is too late?

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

IN A REMOTE JUNGLE in South America, an Indian tribe has devised an ingenious trap to catch monkeys. It consists of a hollow coconut chained to a stake. Inside the coconut is some rice, which any monkey can reach via a small hole.

But there is a catch. The hole is large enough for a monkey to reach inside, but too small for a fist full of rice to be withdrawn. The only way for a monkey to remove its hand is to let go of the rice, but then it is not able to feast upon the tasty treat. A monkey must choose between trying in vain to remove its hand with a meal inside or letting go and saving its life. Native villagers found that, more often than not, monkeys choose the former, to their own peril.

Mankind finds itself in a similar situation with oil. Just over a century ago, man eagerly grabbed hold of this tasty treat. Since then, he has built his entire global economic foundation upon oil.

It is the lifeblood of modern civilization, with more than 80 million barrels consumed worldwide every day. It is cheap, easy to acquire, addictive, and allows many of life's conveniences to exist. Without it, life for many of the earth's over six-and-a-half billion inhabitants would be radically different. Day in, day out, human beings are dependent upon it more than any other resource—and yet most rarely think about it.

But, like the case of the monkey and the coconut, there is a catch. Man may soon find himself with a rapidly dwindling supply of oil—and eventually none at all. Will he choose to keep his fist clenched around the black liquid until it is too late—and bring about catastrophic upheaval? Or will he overcome seemingly insurmountable odds and let go—thus avoiding disaster?

Formed Long Ago

It is widely believed that a majority of the crude oil (or petroleum, meaning “rock oil”) used today was formed during an age scientists refer to as the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. During that time, conditions

were ideal for oil formation, unlike possibly any other period in earth's history. The oceans and swamp areas were abundant in microscopic plants and animals, namely algae and zooplankton, and large areas of water were devoid of oxygen.

As these tiny organisms died, they sank to the bottom and formed layers of organic material, which became trapped between layers of mud. The mud prevented oxygen from reaching the dead organisms, and a lack of oxygen interacting with the organic material prohibited it from rotting. As the thickness of the layers of sludge increased, greater and greater pressure was exerted on the dead plant and animal life. Adding to this were increasing temperatures inside the earth, as well as anaerobic microorganisms (bacteria able to live in the absence of oxygen) feeding on the organic material.

Very slowly, the combination of high temperatures, high pressure and anaerobic bacteria caused the dead plants first to chemically change into a waxy substance called *kerogen*. Then with more heat, crude oil and natural gas formed. In general terms, higher

temperatures lead to the formation of natural gas; lower temperatures lead to crude oil.

Oil and natural gas are often found together in dome-shaped reservoirs deep beneath the surface of the earth. However, crude oil and bitumen (a thicker form of oil) can sometimes naturally flow to the surface via “oil seeps.”

In a sense, oil is little more than chemically altered microscopic creatures. Yet due to the amount of latent energy (in the form of hydrocarbons) found in their converted state, these tiny prehistoric organisms turned out to have a monumental impact on humanity that has forever changed the course of history.

In Ancient Times

Mankind’s exposure to oil is believed to stretch back several thousand years. Throughout millennia, oil in one form or another has been commonly used for lubrication, fueling a variety of items, waterproofing, medicinal purposes, ointments, construction, and dressing wounds. The Persians even used oil-soaked flaming arrows in their siege of Athens in 480 B.C.

According to Greek historians Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, bitumen was used for mortar and waterproofing in the construction of buildings and walls in ancient Babylon. Ancient Egyptians used oil for embalming. Native Americans used tar to bind stone tools to wooden handles.

In the Bible, Genesis 6:14 references Noah using pitch to build his ark. Also, in Exodus 2:3, there is an indication that a woman used pitch to build a small boat-like object. The Hebrew word for pitch is believed to be a reference to bitumen. Often in the ancient world, this tar-like substance was used as a type of caulk to prevent leaks.

Around the middle of the fourth century A.D., oil wells began appearing in China. These are the first known attempts to extract oil from deep beneath the surface of the earth. Bits attached to bamboo poles were used to

drill holes as deep as 800 feet. The oil was used to evaporate water that contained a high concentration of salt.

Dawn of “Oil Age”

From the fourth century until about the mid-1800s, a number of petroleum-related advancements were made. For instance, in 1849, a Canadian geologist distilled kerosene from oil, which would serve as the primary source of fuel for lanterns and street lights for decades. This invention replaced whale oil in lamps, and has been credited for helping to save whales from possible extinction.

But it was not until the mid- to late 1800s that oil began to transition from a low-key commodity to a global phenomenon. It all started in 1859, when Edwin L. Drake was contracted by American entrepreneur George Bissel to drill the first oil well in the United States, in the small town of Titusville, Pa. On August 27, he “struck gold” at a depth of 70 feet. Though the well produced only 25 barrels of oil per day initially, and 15 barrels per day by the end of the year (small output compared to today’s standards), this critical moment is often cited as the birth of the modern commercial era of oil.

From this point forward, advancements in science, coupled with entrepreneurial innovation, began to change the world of petroleum—with the United States leading the way. Within 11 years of the defining moment in the small Pennsylvanian town, John D. Rockefeller founded Standard Oil, the largest U.S. corporation in its day, with \$1 million in capital. By 1878, Standard Oil was responsible for 90% of America’s refining capacity.

In the years to come, an oil boom ensued across the United States, in California, Texas and Oklahoma, among other states.

However, a slight downturn occurred after Thomas Edison’s invention of the incandescent light bulb in 1878. Soon the kerosene-burning lamp, the most common form of light in existence at that time, became obsolete, and the oil industry lost a major source of revenue.

Then, in 1913, the age of the automobile dawned, when U.S. entrepreneur Henry Ford invented an improved assembly line, with conveyor belts, for mass-producing his Model T. New techniques reduced production costs and allowed the Model T to sell for an affordable price tag to millions of consumers, opening the door for the average citizen to own a car.

By 1927, 15 million Model T cars had been built, and Ford Motor Company quickly became the world’s largest car manufacturer. Previously preferred modes of transportation—horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, trains and even walking—were soon thrown out in favor of a new and more exciting mode of transport. In short order, railroad companies were bought out and bike paths were destroyed. With the automobile’s strong appetite for gasoline, a byproduct of oil, demand for oil quickly skyrocketed. A proliferation of oil exploration around the world soon followed, in Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, among other nations.

By the mid-20th century, the age of oil was well underway, and with it a transition to a new way of life.

Integral to Modern Society

Today, producing, distributing, refining and retailing oil is the single largest industry, in terms of value, on earth! Yet, like most, you probably give little if any thought to the black liquid.

Gasoline, home heating oil and engine oil probably come to mind first when you think of oil. Yet its impact goes far beyond these items. Nearly *all* goods are connected to oil in one way or another.

For instance, most plastics are derived from oil. Look around and notice how many things are made from plastic. The keyboard on which you type, along with the casings of your monitor and printer—all made of plastic. And so is the pen you used today. Much of our food and drink is packaged in plastic containers. Hospitals rely on disposable plastic supplies. Much of a vehicle’s interior is plastic.

What about the tires on your car, the

carpet under your feet, the cellphone in your hand, the shingles on your roof, or the tar paper used to build your home? Oil was involved to manufacture all of these. The medications taken by millions of people require oil to produce. Synthetic textiles such as nylon and rayon rely on petroleum. Even the shirt you are wearing is likely made from oil, if it is polyester.

Now think about all of the things that burn oil-based fuels: automobiles, airplanes, ships and trains. Think about the millions of homes heated with oil or natural gas. Consider how interwoven oil is with manufacturing many of the goods used daily by millions around the world.

But there's more.

You probably do not equate food with oil. Yet the agricultural business is heavily dependent upon oil. Machines, artificial fertilizers and artificial pesticides are used to raise, harvest and transport large quantities of grain, fruit and vegetables. Fertilizers and pesticides require oil to manufacture and transport, and machines need oil for their engines to run. In addition, the cattle, chicken and turkey industries rely on heavy use of oil.

Richard Heinberg, a leading "peak oil" scholar and author of *The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies*, asked, "How dependent on oil is our food system?" He answered, "Enormously dependent. Fatally dependent, I would say" (*Global Envision*).

In the same article, Ronnie Cummins, executive director of the Organic Consumers Association said he was also concerned: "This era of increasing globalization of our food supply is going to draw to a close here in the next decade or so. I think it [eventual oil scarcities] is going to mean the end of importing billions of dollars of food from overseas. It's going to mean the end of relatively cheap food in the U.S. And it's going to mean a significant increase in starvation and malnourishment across the world."

Simply stated, oil is everywhere—in every business, every home, every

technology and every industry. And it affects every one of us every day. Our lives are bathed in oil.

What Next?

Now consider. What if there were no more oil? What if the lifeblood of modern civilization stopped flowing? The global economy would collapse in a heap of ruin—and fast! Life as we know it would come to an end. All the everyday items made from oil (such as those mentioned previously) would no longer be produced. Virtually all transport would stop, and so would nearly all manufacturing. Scores of millions would be unemployed. Millions in colder climates would freeze. Food production would come to a grinding halt. Scores of millions would starve to death.

But long before the world's oil supply is exhausted, which some believe is 40-plus years away, effects will be noticed. When oil demand begins to outweigh supply, the price of oil-related items, including food, will begin to rise and stay at unprecedented levels, bringing about unimaginable consequences for the world economy and how the average individual lives his or her life. Experts warn that without a gradual shift away from a petroleum-based society, economies will be devastated. Some scientists say this could occur in as little as four years; others say it is decades away. No one knows for sure.

Whatever the case, all agree it will happen someday. Oil is a non-renewable, finite resource. From the moment that man began to harvest it from the earth, the supply of petroleum has been shrinking—and the rate of decrease is increasing every year. Millions of years of natural process were necessary to form oil, but man is on pace to extinguish earth's entire supply in under 200 years.

Many are touting a number of alternative forms of energy as potential replacements to oil. Among those leading the way are biofuels, which are fuels derived from recently dead biological material, such as corn, soybeans or other similar crops. Fuel from

these sources power modified engines and are also made into plastics. A bio-fuel-gasoline mixture is already being used in many automobiles.

However, experts caution that bio-fuels are unlikely to be a permanent, long-term solution to the oil supply crisis. The main reason is that making biofuels requires large amounts of land. If these fuels were to become the "new oil," nations would face a choice between growing crops for food and growing crops for fuel, as there is not enough cultivable land on earth to satisfy man's need for both.

All other forms of alternative energy are also considered doubtful solutions to the oil crisis. Hydrogen fuel cells would provide a renewable, clean source of energy; however, the technology is expensive and presents a number of inconveniences. Though clean and relatively inexpensive, solar and wind power are unlikely to produce enough energy to match that of oil. Nuclear energy is efficient and clean, but the more reactors that are in use around the world, the more likely a nuclear disaster will occur—never mind the increased chances of the material ending up in the hands of terrorists.

While all of these alternative sources of energy could help reduce mankind's dependence on oil, most agree that no *single* form will be able to entirely replace it. Oil simply has no equal—it is incredibly energy dense and relatively inexpensive. Conveniently, and at a low cost, a teacup full of gasoline has enough energy to propel a several thousand pound automobile down a highway. What other form of energy can match this?

But as the old adage goes, all good things must come to an end. In this case, the age of cheap oil will end, someday—and so will a way of life, with its abundant conveniences never before experienced, let alone imagined, in man's history.

The question is...will man remove his fist from the coconut in time? If history is any indication, the answer is no. □

Fatherless

The Nuclear Family Meltdown

RCG PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU



For thousands of years the family unit has been under assault. One of two vital players—fathers—is increasingly not showing up on the job. Why? And where will it end?

BY KEVIN D. DENEÉ AND H. CHRIS LOMAS

WHO ARE YOU? What made you the way you are? What do you look like? What do you value in life? What are your hopes, dreams and goals?

None of these questions can be answered in a word, or even a sentence. However, the basis of these answers, the material that you would need, began to be compiled when your life started.

A plethora of other “deep” or “probing” questions could be asked about your person—but in almost every case, you could not turn to a single event that forms the answer. This is because your life experience

from the day you were conceived has helped shape the person you are today.

From a scientific perspective, any answer to the above questions would come from your brain. Let’s notice how your brain has been working from the beginning of your life (emphasis ours): “Brain cells are ‘raw’ materials—much like lumber is a raw material in building a house. Heredity may determine the basic number of ‘neurons’ (brain nerve cells) children are born with, and their initial arrangement, but this is just a framework. A child’s *environment* has enormous impact on how these cells get connected or ‘wired’ to each other.”

“A brain is not a computer. The

brain begins working long before it is finished. And the same processes that wire the brain before birth also drive the very *rapid growth* of learning that occurs immediately after birth. At birth, a baby’s brain contains 100 billion neurons, roughly as many nerve cells as there are stars in the Milky Way...During the first years of life, the brain undergoes a series of extraordinary changes” (“Brain Development,” University of Maine).

From a young age, you were a giant sponge, drinking in your environment—sounds, shapes, lights, faces, voices, languages, music, emotions, etc. As you grew, more complex things impacted your world, ultimately developing who you are today—parents, other caregivers, siblings, friends, education, physical environment, etc.

Now ask: Which individuals were most responsible for your developmental years of life? For almost every reader, the answer is your father and mother.

For millennia, this has been the cycle for the family unit: A man and woman come together in marriage. They have children. They care for their children and teach them how to live. The children grow up, take what they have learned and live their own lives, usually becoming parents. And thus, the cycle continues.

That cycle is quickly falling apart. The social experiments of the 20th and 21st centuries—which have attempted to redefine the roles of parent and child—have caused the family to come under assault. One of the greatest factors is that families are increasingly becoming fatherless.

The Facts

Over the last 50 years, more and more children have been growing up without their fathers. The role of a father should, simply from a mathematical perspective, be one that contributes 50% to the development of any child. But millions of children in the United States, and the world at large, will put their heads on a pillow tonight in a home without a father.

Here are some statistics from Focus on the Family (emphasis ours):

■ “The United States leads the world in fatherless families, with roughly *24 million children* (or 34% of all kids in the United States) living in homes where the father does not reside.”

■ “Nearly 40% of children in father-absent homes have not seen their dad during the past year.”

■ “More than half of all fatherless children have never been in their dad’s home.”

Stop and consider the first two points. Twenty-four million children are growing up without a father figure—without the teaching, guiding, experience-building, correcting, nurturing that a father can bring. When you see 20 children, realize that seven are not living with their father. Then realize that nearly 10 million have not even seen their father in the past year!

Consider a point of reference: “In 1960, less than eight million children under age 18 were living in families where the father was absent” (U.S. Bureau of the Census). This means that the number of children being raised in single-mother homes has tripled in less than 50 years!

In the 1950s, the term “nuclear family” was coined. This essentially described a family of a father, mother and children. This was to distinguish from an “extended family,” which could include grandparents, or others. By the 1960s, 80% of America’s children lived with two married parents—today under 60% do.

A 1996 Gallup poll revealed 79% agree that “The most significant family, or social problem facing America

is the physical absence of the father from the home.”

Additionally, the poll stated that 54% feel that fathers do not know what is going on in their children’s lives and that 90% feel it is important that a child lives with both a father and a mother.

The nuclear family is facing a meltdown. Where will it all end? What impact will this have on millions of minds—generation after generation? How can we solve the mess in which our social experiments have put us?

Foretold Long Ago

Today’s environment of fatherless families was foreseen long ago in the world’s bestseller, the Holy Bible. Scripture explains the problems mankind is now experiencing.

Notice in the last book of the Old Testament, in Malachi 4:6: “And he shall turn the *heart of the fathers to the children*, and the *heart of the children to their fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [Hebrew: utter destruction].”

By implication, this describes a time when the hearts (a biblical way of saying “mind”) of fathers would be turned away from their children, and vice versa, and that this will have to be changed.

The previous verse adds more context: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” The “Day of the Lord” is a time of impending, unprecedented trouble that is explained throughout the Old Testament and New. Verse 5 explains that an individual would come in the power and spirit of Elijah, and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. If this would not happen, then the entire world would be utterly destroyed (vs. 6)! (We do not have space in this article to explain the fulfillment of this event. Take the time to read our book *Herbert W. Armstrong – His Life in Proper Perspective.*)

Biblical Instruction

We live in a time when children’s minds are turned away from their fathers.

Again, millions of children do not see or live with their fathers. Then there are those who still live under the same roof, but with fathers who are emotionally distant because of work schedules, or the child is distant because he or she is always watching television and playing video games.

In the end, fathers are absent from their children *physically* and, in even more cases, mentally and emotionally.

In regard to fathers and their children, consider just a few proverbs from the Bible:

■ “Hear, you children, the *instruction of a father*, and attend to know understanding” (Prov. 4:1).

■ “A *wise son* hears his father’s instruction: but a scorner hears not rebuke” (13:1).

■ “A *fool* despises his father’s instruction: but he that regards reproof is prudent” (15:5).

■ “A *foolish son* is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him” (17:25).

■ “He that *wastes his father*, and chases away his mother, is a son that *causes shame*, and *brings reproach*” (19:26).

■ “My son, *keep your father’s commandment*, and forsake not the law of your mother: Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck. When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you” (6:20-22).

These proverbs are expressed to children regarding the need to listen to the instruction and teaching of their father. If they do not take heed, they are simply foolish. The child brings shame and reproach. In the end, a child who does not adhere to wisdom lives an unhappy life. But sons and daughters cannot apply these scriptures if the father *is not at home*—or is not fulfilling his duty when he is!

Let’s notice a clear, powerful indictment of fathers who do not care for their families—who fail to do their part as one half of the team in rearing their children. It is found in the New Testament, in I Timothy: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially

THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERHOOD

The National Fatherhood Initiative reported that a father's involvement in a child's life affects every aspect of mental, social, psychological and physical development.

Consider the following statistics:

- Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school.
- Obese children are more likely to live in father-absent homes than are non-obese children.
- A study of 13,986 women in prison showed that more than half grew up without a father.
- Children who grow up in fatherless homes are five times more likely to be poor.
- Youths in households without an active father figure had significantly higher odds of being incarcerated than those in two-parent families.
- Teenage girls in the United States and New Zealand who grow up without fathers are twice as likely to engage in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to become pregnant as an adolescent.

Additionally, in a survey of 701 fathers across the U.S., the Initiative found that:

- 91% of respondents agreed there is a father-absence crisis in the nation.
- 81% agreed that men generally perform better as fathers if they are married to the mothers of their children.
- 99% of fathers agreed that being a father was a very important part of who they are.

Across the world, the numbers tell the same story. At the International Fatherhood Summit in Britain, experts provided an international sampling of fatherhood statistics:

- A review of 156 cultures concluded that only 20% of these societies promoted men's close relationships with infants.
- South American countries, including Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, maintain the lowest percentages of childhood years spent without a father, while African countries boast the highest, reaching over 30%.

Although the role of fathers is not taken as seriously as it should be, statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau demonstrate that some fathers are doing their part. In 2003, for instance, 30% of children younger than age six living with married parents ate breakfast with their fathers every day; 63% of children six years or younger received praise from their fathers three times a day. □

for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and *is worse than an infidel* [Greek: unbeliever]" (5:8).

Strong words! Fathers who do not take care of their families, who do not fulfill their role as head of the household, who do not rear their children—and all that the verse means—are worse than infidels, or unbelievers!

Marriage: God Ordained

Millennia ago, the Creator of life ordained the marriage institution between man and woman. The purpose of marriage is to bring great happiness and peace, creating a wonderful environment in which children can grow up in a correct way. It is a God-ordained

structure that is to be followed and adhered to. Both wife and husband have distinct jobs or duties—both of which are very important! You cannot have one without the other.

Let's look at the father's role. Often those who are active in the home do not know how to properly rear their children! The father's role in a family is ridiculed and lambasted in an endless fashion. Look at television advertisements or sitcoms where both a husband and wife are present. The father is almost always portrayed as a bumbling buffoon who needs his wife to make every decision for the well-being of the family. Ultimately, both husbands and wives have followed

this way of thinking in their own marriages.

The modern husband and father stands in stark contrast to how the Creator of man defined his duty: "For the husband is the *head* of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, *love your wives*, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:23-25).

Around the globe, fathers are not taking charge—they are not leading their families as they should. The end result is that children do not have two parents—the GOD-ORDAINED team—to guide them, to develop their minds, to teach them, to correct them and to love them.

Fathers, Who Are Your Children?

Fathers, you were asked at the beginning of this article, "Who Are You?" The answer to the question lies with the responsibility of the actions you take in addition to the choices your parents made. You must ask, who will your children become? You have the potential to create human beings who will succeed, make the right decisions, have their own happy families—and in the end, reach their ultimate potential.

Fathers, you have brought children into the world, and properly rearing them is your responsibility. All the physical possessions you gain in your life, the riches and the material things, are not permanent. But your children will live on, and they, in turn, will also have children, who will have children, and so on. The parenting decisions you make will affect generations to come.

Take time to read our thorough book *Train Your Children God's Way*. Included in it are hundreds of specific principles you should be applying as a father. Mothers should also study this book so they can better understand their role in the family as well as that of their husbands'.

Will you contribute to the nuclear family meltdown? The power not to is in your hands. □



Evolution Exposed

Part 6
Deconstructing False Science

Evolutionists can be their own worst enemies. You be the judge...

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

THE BITTER ARGUMENTS between scientists of competing disciplines of evolution provide incredible insight into the theory's weaknesses. Evolutionists questioning evolution is more common than one might assume. Yet disagreements are often hidden or ignored.

Compare this to religion. Imagine an archeological find revealed that the first-century apostles doubted that Jesus Christ was God-in-the-flesh. Such a discovery would shake the very foundation of Christendom.

Why should statements from experts in evolution be viewed in a different light? Their statements show a growing and deepening chasm in the theory of evolution—one that the tenets of evolution are no longer able to bridge.

Experts on Evolution

At this point in the series, we have already thoroughly disproven evolution. Allow the following quotes from

evolutionists to close the case against evolution.

We begin with widely published French evolutionist Jean Rostand: "The theory of evolution gives *no answer* to the important problem of the origin of life and presents only *fallacious solutions* to the problem of the nature of evolutive transformations...We are condemned to believe in evolution...Perhaps we are now in a worse position than in 1850 because we have searched for one century and we have the impression that the different hypotheses are now *exhausted*" (Georges Salet, *Hasard et Certitude: Le Transformisme devant la Biologie Actuelle*). (Emphasis ours throughout.)

While we have uncovered many assumptions, there are still others. Evolutionist and zoologist Dr. Gerald A. Kerkut, Dean of Science at University of Southampton, England, wrote a revealing conclusion to his book *Implications of Evolution*. Keep in mind that the term *biogenesis* used in the quote refers to "origin (genesis) of life (bio)," and not the *Law of Biogenesis*, as covered earlier. Notice: "The first assumption was that non-living things gave rise to living material. This is still just an assumption...It is therefore a matter of faith on the part of the biologist that biogenesis did occur..."

"The second assumption was that spontaneous generation occurred only once. This again is matter for belief rather than proof..."

“The third assumption was that Viruses, Bacteria, Protozoa and the higher animals were all interrelated...We have as of yet no definite evidence about the way in which the Viruses, Bacteria or Protozoa are interrelated.”

“The fourth assumption was that the Protozoa gave rise to the Metazoa...Here again nothing definite is known...”

“The fifth assumption was that the various invertebrate phyla are inter-related...The evidence, then for the affinities of the majority of the invertebrates is tenuous and circumstantial; not the type of evidence that would allow one to form a verdict of definite relationships.”

“The sixth assumption is that the invertebrates gave rise to the vertebrates...As Berrill states, ‘in a sense this account is science fiction.’

“We are on somewhat stronger ground with the seventh assumption

that the fish, amphibia, reptiles, birds, and mammals are interrelated. There is the fossil evidence to help us here, though many of the key transitions are not well-documented and we have as yet to obtain a satisfactory objective method of dating the fossils...The evidence that we have at present is insufficient to allow us to decide the answer to these problems.”

James Watson, Nobel laureate and co-discover of the structure of DNA, wrote, “One could not be a successful scientist without realizing that, in contrast to the popular conception supported by newspapers and mothers of scientists, a goodly number of scientists are not only narrow-minded and dull, but also just stupid” (*The Double Helix*, p. 14).

Concluding this series of quotes, an editor of *Science* magazine once remarked, “One of the most astonishing characteristics of scientists is that some of them are plain, old-fashioned

bigots. Their zeal has a fanatical, egocentric quality characterized by disdain and intolerance for anyone or any value not associated with a special area of intellectual activity” (Phillip Abelson, “Bigotry in Science,” April 1964).

Allow these quotes to sink in! These are words straight from the mouths of leading scientific minds, not “biased” creationists or fringe religionists.

Unanswered, Unproven and Untrue

You now understand many of the myths and fallacies surrounding evolution. It has been said that it is much harder to unlearn error than to learn new truth. You should be able to disprove the dishonest assertions made by evolutionists. And you should be able to see past the illogic they employ. The theory of evolution can now be clearly seen for what it is—ridiculous and absurd.

A TASTE OF CREATION

SPECTACULAR CELLS

IMAGINE a hot summer day in which you spent too much time in the sun. Perhaps you were a little red or even badly sunburned. Over the following days, an amazing process takes place as your body heals from overexposure. Through several processes, your skin sheds its damaged cells and replaces them with new, healthy ones.

Your entire body—including your skin, eyes, organs and brain—is comprised of cells. In fact, it consists of over 250 different kinds of cells, totaling about 100 trillion. The design of each type varies in shape, size, function, density and purpose. The body is so efficient, so effective, that within seven years, *all* 100 trillion cells will be replaced!

The inner functioning of the cell is most fascinating. Each is like a miniature factory—and miniature it is! Red blood cells, for instance, are 10 times smaller than the width of a single human hair. Yet even though each cell is microscopic, if you placed all of the cells in your body end to end, they would encircle the earth *200 times!*

Cells are made primarily of three parts: membrane, cytoplasm and nucleus.

The *membrane* surrounds the cell and has the ability to “recognize” hundreds of substances. Acting as a “traffic cop,” it controls what enters the cell and what is purged.

The *cytoplasm* is the cell’s “factory floor,” on which are *thousands* of machines called *organelles*. At any

given time, there are over 20 different chemical reactions happening in the cytoplasm, for purposes such as communication, waste removal, repair, nutrition and reproduction. There is even an elaborate transport system to move products and waste throughout the cell.

All of this is controlled by the “brains” of the cell—the *nucleus*. It stores all the information that the cell needs to repair and reproduce. This blueprint is made of chromosomes and genes containing DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid).

When properly understood, DNA is one of the most awe-inspiring creations in the entire universe. If one transcribed the genetic information for just *one* person, it would fill 600,000 pages! DNA is stored in a spiral “staircase” so efficient in design that if one were to unravel it from any human cell, the result would be about *six feet in length*. In fact, it has been estimated that if one placed all the DNA in the human body end to end, it would reach to the sun and back **400 TIMES!**

Yet when in its natural form, all the genetic information needed to replicate the over 6.5 billion people on earth today fits into an area of about *1/8 of a square inch*.

The nucleus, cellular membrane and all the machines in the cytoplasm make up every cell in your body. Recall that there are 100 trillion cells in it, with these little machines, factories and supervisors constantly working and reproducing.

Truly, the human body is amazing! □

The intricate design inferred in biological science is why Nobel laureate and co-discoverer of DNA's structure, Francis Crick, encouraged his fellow evolutionists that "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed but rather evolved" (*What Mad Pursuit: A Personal View of Scientific Discovery*).

Rather, it is obvious that *nothing* has evolved! Yet, science continues to blindly try to prove this impossible theory. They are doomed to failure, as stated by Nobel laureate Dr. Robert A. Millikan: "The pathetic thing is that we have scientists who are trying to prove evolution, which no scientist can ever prove" (Bowden, *The Rise of the Evolution Fraud...*, p. 216-218).

No longer should confusing arguments blur your thinking from the truth of the matter. Each assumption has been systematically broken down, point by point. At the beginning of this article series, it was stated that you were about to read something unlike anything you have read before. And as you walk away from the ruins of evolution, you should now see *why*.

However, clearing the slate—and your thinking—of this manmade theory is only the beginning. The Bible states, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, being understood by the *things that are made*, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

Evolutionists have corrupted the truth of life's origins. Even when presented with the facts, they ignore them—actually *deny* them—drawing from a blind faith that "what they see was not designed but rather evolved."

You can understand what so many have chosen to ignore! You have unlearned many false concepts. Your slate has been cleaned—your cup emptied—and now you are ready to understand the profound implications of disproving the theory of evolution... □

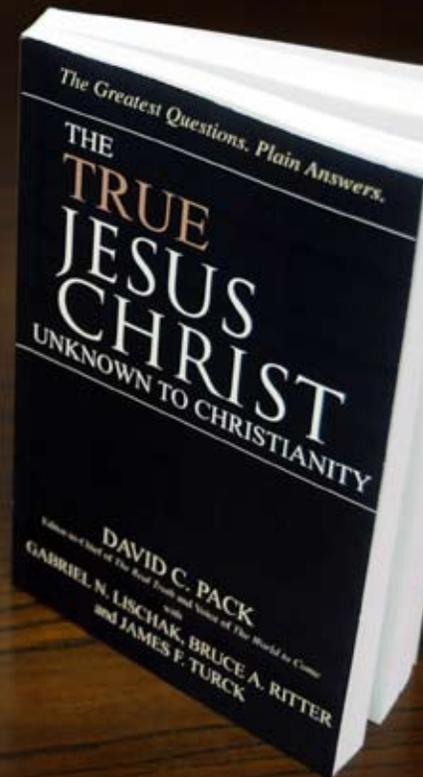
Get Out of Debt NOW!

Few people think they have enough money. Many are concerned with—even obsessed by—the need for more. Despite the majority of households having more than one income, this is often still not enough to pay the bills. Budgeting does not always help. Everyone wants to end their money worries. The Bible holds the key!



Professed by billions, known by few.

Of the nearly 2.1 billion people who profess to be followers of Jesus, virtually NONE have been taught about the *true* Jesus Christ—who He was—the purpose of His First Coming—what He is doing today—and why He will soon return. While 99.9 percent of professing believers have been taught a gospel *about* Christ—in reality, "*another* gospel" about "*another* Jesus" (II Cor. 11:4)—they have never heard the gospel the true Jesus Christ preached! Our new book sheds light on these matters and much, much more.



THE YEAR

IN REVIEW

ANOTHER YEAR PASSES and a new one takes its place, bringing us deeper into the 21st century.

So what have we learned? Seldom does anyone step back and take inventory of their lives and the course upon which humanity is headed. Each year brings lessons to be learned—IF open minds are willing to receive them. Some lessons are unique to the age; others are universal, repeated by successive generations. The year 2008 saw technological advancements and scientific breakthroughs—but also unrest, upheaval and uncertainty, warning signs of an ever-darkening future...

BY BRUCE A. RITTER



■ **STANDING GUARD:** A paramilitary policeman keeps watch during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in Beijing, China (Aug. 8, 2008).

PHOTO: CHINA PHOTOS/
GETTY IMAGES

The Rise of Powers

2008 was the year of nations assuming greater roles on the international stage of influence and prestige, as America continues its downhill slide.

Take Russia, for instance. On August 8, it sent troops into Georgia, a former Soviet satellite nation, capturing territory and crippling the Georgian military. Meantime, the European Union and the United States could do nothing other than issue strong statements.

Yet Russia's quick and decisive clash with Georgia was in itself a strong statement. To Europe: *We control the oil flowing into the continent; do not oppose our national interests.* To other former Soviet satellite nations: *We will not tolerate unrest on our borders.* To the rest of the world: *We will take matters into our own hands, when necessary.*

Until the recent global financial crisis, the Russian markets boomed. The nation now has more billionaires than any country other than the U.S. Russia's state-owned oil monopoly, Gazprom, controls the flow of oil into Europe. Its national leaders, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev, are highly popular among the Russian citizens, despite fears of the democratic Russian Federal returning to totalitarianism. Largely in response to Washington's determination to station U.S. missiles in NATO nations bordering Russia, Moscow is building strong ties with national leaders in America's backyard, regional players such as Cuba and Venezuela who openly oppose U.S. interests. In a move analysts and government leaders view as a thumb-to-the-nose gesture to Washington, Moscow deployed its fleet to South America to conduct naval exercises, where it received a

W: *Lessons from 2008*

more-than-warm reception from outspoken Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

All this begs the question: *What will the Russian bear do when—not if—America is no longer the world's lone superpower?*

Elsewhere, another emerging world power is China, which has produced fiscal success in a strange, polar opposite mixture of communism and capitalism. Having labored to change its image and improve relations with neighboring countries, China plays a tremendous role in Asia (including strengthening its ties with Taiwan), Africa and beyond. It is far easier for the typical U.S. shopper to see “Made in China” labels than “Made in the USA.”

Beijing cemented a grand, long-lasting impression before an international audience when the Chinese capital hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics.

The developing nation of just a generation or two ago, where daily traffic was comprised of an endless sea of commuters riding bicycles instead of cars, is gone, replaced with a fast-rising economic counterweight to the United States. China's success has proven that a nation need not follow America's lead in embracing democracy—of “one man, one vote”—to achieve national prosperity.

And let's not forget India. Though it still grapples with illiteracy, a stringent caste tradition, extreme poverty and other problems, India has taken moves to ensure a brighter future: pursuing peaceful ties with Pakistan—benefiting from U.S. businesses outsourcing American jobs—sending spacecraft to the moon and planting the Indian flag on the lunar surface.

We must ask: What leading international roles will China, Russia and India play once global markets no longer “catch a cold” whenever the U.S. economy “sneezes”?...



■ **RUSSIAN TROOPS ON THE MARCH:** A Russian soldier shows a V-sign as his tank leaves a checkpoint on the Gori-Tbilisi road near the village of Khurvaleti, on their way toward Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital (Aug. 22, 2008).

PHOTO: DIMITAR DILKOFF/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Governments in Turmoil

It was also the year of failing governments void of lasting solutions: economies on the brink of collapse; empty store shelves; clashes with rebel troops; the poor going without; the wealthy accumulating far more than they need.

Months have passed since Kenya's presidential elections, yet opposing sides contested the results, and bloodshed ensued among the masses. While both candidates have finally agreed to work together and share power, each side is concerned with how much power the other will gain.

Zimbabwe suffers from runaway inflation and the scarcity of vital

goods, foodstuffs and other necessary supplies. Decades ago, Zimbabwe was held as a beacon of hope; with the removal of colonial masters and a new government in place, prosperity and justice for all was in reach. Yet it has been a hope unfulfilled.

Elsewhere, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and Pakistan have recently had governments in which the military held the reigns.

Since the Tower of Babel, governments from dictatorships to democracies become crippled with the four basic components of human nature: pride, vanity, greed and lust. Unless man's nature changes, the problems that plague nations will always exist...



■ **TEEN MURDERS IN LONDON:** Left, girls look at floral tributes for a murdered school boy. Right, a girl carries flowers in tribute of a school girl who was murdered.

PHOTOS: PETER MACDIARMID/GETTY IMAGES

Growing Tide of Lawlessness

2008 was the year of disregard for law, morality and the value of life, of the strong preying upon the weak, of wanton violence and thievery both within and among nations.

In a land once known for civility, duty and protocol, of drinking afternoon tea and exhibiting bulldog resolve, Britain's teenagers murder one another. A 15-year-old boy is stabbed the moment he opens the front

door of his home. A 14-year-old girl is pummeled to death by a gang of hooligans who think nothing of ending a life. The world would expect this from the United States, home of drive-by shootings, domestic killings and school massacres—but youth murdering youth in Britain?

Now let's step back and see an international crime becoming prevalent: piracy. Pirates exist worldwide, striking with speed and ruthlessness,

particularly in the waters of Somalia. Small boats have seized tankers, freighters, cruise ships and other large vessels, holding hostages, ships and precious cargo for ransom. It's a lucrative "business."

But what do the escalating murder rate of British youth and piracy have in common? The unleashed desire to GET, to control, to seize power at all costs.

The Bible points to the heart of all crimes, small and great: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, *that you may consume it upon your lusts*" (James 4:1-3).

Jesus Christ foretold of a day when "iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound [because] the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). That time is now...

Dramatic rise in pirate attacks

Somalia, Nigeria and Indonesia remain international piracy hotspots.



2008		Pirate raids	
Jan.-Sept.	199	Vessels boarded	115
Q I	53	Vessels hijacked	31
Q II	63	Vessels fired upon	23
Q III	83	Crew members taken hostage	581
		Crew kidnapped	9
		Crew killed, missing	9, 7

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Source: AP, Reuters, International Maritime Bureau Graphic: Jutta Scheibe, Eell Polli

Consequences for Fiscal Recklessness

Of course, 2008 was also the year of global financial crisis, leaving many wondering about the future. Housing foreclosures—the collapse of financial institutions—government bailouts—falling world markets—sluggish economies—what’s next? Many wonder, “Are we at the threshold of another Great Depression?”

While experts and analysts strive for answers to repair the physical effects, all ignore the root CAUSE: pride, vanity, lust and greed. *Lust* led people to buy homes they could not afford, and *greed* motivated banks to provide them mortgages. Government leaders, swayed by *vanity* to believe they knew what was best for society, pressured banks into providing mortgages for those who had neither the credit nor the funds to provide a sizeable down payment toward buying property. And, when the financial

bubble finally burst, *pride* kept these same leaders from accepting personal responsibility.

Perhaps our article “The Global Credit Crunch! – How You Can Protect Yourself” stated it best: “There is a cause for every effect. The scales tipped when the first set of interest rate increases (resets) kicked in. Around the same time, house prices fell slightly, resulting from the glut in the market. Suddenly, millions of homeowners were faced with much higher mortgage payments they could not pay. Loan delinquencies soared. Repossessions of homes skyrocketed. Investors backed away from risky bonds. Stuck with loans they could not sell, banks began to fail.

“The financial carnage has been sobering. Great names from the past—Bear Stearns, Countrywide Financial and now Lehman Brothers—no longer exist.

“The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that losses by U.S. banks could reach as high as \$1 trillion; some industry experts believe this number could even reach as high as \$2 trillion. Since the beginning of 2008, over ten U.S. banks have gone bankrupt, and it is believed that number could exceed 100 financial institutions within the next 12 months (*Daily Telegraph*). Famous investor Wilbur Ross has placed the figure at 1,000 (*Reuters*)!

“A grim scenario is rapidly unfolding, a financial catastrophe of epic proportions. Millions of people in Europe, the United States and the rest of the world will likely lose their homes, jobs and savings. This could include you!”

No one knows what will be the outcome of the global credit crunch, but one thing is certain: Until man’s nature changes, we can expect worst things to come...

■ **IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS:** World leaders meet during the “Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy” at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. (Nov. 15, 2008).

PHOTO: TOLGA ADANALI/ABACA PRESS/MCT





■ **A DECISIVE VICTORY:** President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden, along with their wives, Michelle and Jill, wave to supporters after Mr. Obama gave his acceptance speech at his Election Night Rally in Grant Park, Chicago, Ill. (Nov. 4, 2008).

PHOTO: OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT

New Leadership, High Expectations

Throughout his long, grueling, yet ultimately successful, campaign, Barack Obama repeatedly delivered a message of unity, hope and determination, and addressed accusations of being a “hope-monger” full of “blind optimism,” of speaking “eloquent but empty” words.

He told voters, “Change only happens because of you. So this campaign is about you. About your dreams, your hopes, your courage, your readiness for change.”

Mr. Obama freely expressed his desire to change America’s tarnished global image, beginning with pulling U.S. troops from Iraq as soon as possible, and “sitting down with” enemies of the United States.

After 20 years of Bush-Clinton-Bush presidencies, a majority of American citizens voted for something new, different—“change.”

Now that he has decisively won the election, the inspirational messages of “hope” and “change” have brought not just the eyes of the nation, but also

Europe and the rest of the world to fall upon President-elect Obama.

Will they expect the new president to heal the problems of America and the world—addressing not just the effects, but also the root *causes*, which are ultimately spiritual in nature? Will they expect him to turn back the growing tide of lawlessness and bring order, unity and peace to governments in turmoil?

Such towering expectations are unfair of any human being, but they are longed for nonetheless. □



PHOTO: Chuck Kennedy/MCT

GORDON BROWN

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

Who is Gordon Brown? A workaholic politician? Or dedicated family man? An austere, hard-line, unilateral prime minister? Or a champion for uniting nations to tackle the world's most pressing problems?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

“**H**AS THERE EVEN BEEN a more enigmatic politician than Gordon Brown?” The *BBC* asked this in an opening subhead for an article covering Mr. Brown after he was chosen as the next British prime minister.

In the same article, the *BBC* said the public paints Mr. Brown as a “dour, self-absorbed figure, a ‘control

freak,’ who has spent more than a decade coveting the job of his more charismatic Downing Street neighbour [Tony Blair].” Yet his family and friends attest he is “warm and generous and engaging.”

Even after Mr. Brown has been in office for over a year, *The Economist* seemed equally perplexed: “Can the prime minister who had sunk beneath criticism into ridicule really be the same man who, last week, called for the world to emulate his bank-rescue package, and saw the world obey? Which is the real Mr Brown?”

Son of a Scottish Minister

Before beginning his ongoing, nearly 40-year run in British politics, Gordon Brown was born in Glasgow Scotland in 1951. His father, Dr. John Ebenezer Brown, was a minister in the Church of Scotland. Gordon Brown is the middle son of three children, with an older and younger brother.

Mr. Brown proved ambitious at a young age. After hearing one of their father's sermons on the humanitarian crisis in Africa, the Brown brothers began a paper, *The Gazette*, which the boys wrote and printed themselves, donating the proceeds to help the African cause.

The young Gordon Brown excelled at sports and in his studies, and played in the school orchestra. He was on a fast-track education program and graduated from Kirkcaldy High School as the leading scholar of his year, going on to Edinburgh University at 16 years old.

During his first term at the university, Mr. Brown lost sight in both eyes, only later regaining 30% use in his right. He was diagnosed with detached retinas, thought to be caused by a kick to the head during a rugby match.

Despite being out of class for most of his first term, Mr. Brown's brush with total blindness had a substantial impact on him.

“It made him more determined,” his older brother, John, told the *Daily Telegraph*. “He was in more of a hurry; he feared he might lose his sight altogether. It was a bleak time.”

After a productive time at Edinburgh, where he was editor of the school paper and was Rector, the third-highest position at the university, presiding over the University Court, Gordon Brown graduated in 1972 with First Class Honors, receiving his Master's Degree. From 1976 to 1980 he was a lecturer in politics at the Glasgow College of Technology, and completed his doctorate in 1982.

Early Political Career

After a few political defeats and time working as a television journalist and producer, a 32-year-old Gordon Brown won a seat in Parliament representing Dunfermline East and soon fell in with another newcomer to the Labour Party, 30-year-old Tony Blair.

Both Messrs. Blair and Brown were frustrated by the

condition of their party, which was being torn apart by in-fighting and dwindling in influence in Parliament. The pair was soon inseparable, accompanying one another on foreign trips, using each other as a sounding board for ideas and writing speeches for one another.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock soon recognized their potential and added them to his shadow cabinet (an alternate cabinet for the government selected by the opposition party). As they rose, both politicians saw their hopes to modernize the party begin to be realized.

But 1994 saw Mr. Brown pitted against Mr. Blair for the leader of Labour, following the death of party leader John Smith. Rather than engage in a brutal battle for the position, Gordon Brown promised to back Mr. Blair, in return for conditions never made public.

With Tony Blair as prime minister, following a landslide Labour Party victory, the new Chancellor of Exchequer Gordon Brown (a position similar to Secretary of Treasury in the United States) extended the Treasury's influence into nearly every area of domestic policy.

After years as a bachelor politician, Mr. Brown married Sarah Macaulay in 2000. The couple has two sons.

He continued as Chancellor until becoming prime minister following Mr. Blair's resignation in July 2007. The biography provided on Mr. Brown's website summarized those 10 years: "As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown presided over the longest ever period of growth. He also made the Bank of England independent and delivered an agreement at the Gleneagles Summit in 2005 to support the world's poorest countries and tackle climate change."

Pendulum of Popularity

Upon taking office, the new prime minister inherited the unpopular War on Terror and, domestically, a country at the cusp of an economic downturn.

From early in his premiership, Mr. Brown has struggled to appease a wary public, his every move scrutinized. For example:

■ After years as chancellor, during which he prudently cut back on spending, Prime Minister Brown was seen increasing government expenditures, causing a backlash of criticism.

■ He signed the European Union's Lisbon Treaty, despite strong calls for a referendum.

■ A previous ruling as chancellor of exchequer came into effect, increasing taxes. The change hit low income households hardest, as food and fuel prices were rising.

The prime minister's ratings worsened after the September culmination of the banking crisis, which saw stock markets drop and governments forced to step in to prop up mismanaged banks. A mid-April poll by YouGov published in the *Sunday Times* showed Mr. Brown's "personal rating has plunged further and faster than any other British leader since political polling began in the 1930s."

Mr. Brown's ratings fell from plus 48 last August to minus 37 (on a zero midpoint scale) at the time of the poll.

Additionally, the YouGov poll showed a drop in support of the Labour Party down to 28%, with the Tories at 44% and the Liberal Democrats 17%. It was even rumored Mr. Brown's own party had plans to oust him.

Only months later, the pendulum of Mr. Brown's ratings swung back to 35%, according to a November 2008 Ipsos MORI poll, apparently bolstered by his handling of the credit crisis. However, despite the swing, the poll found that 59% of Britons were still dissatisfied with his leadership.

The week after the U.S. Presidential elections, Mr. Brown gave a speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet outlining a plan to bring financial stability back to the global markets, calling the crisis "a chance for the world to work together."

"While I see a world that is facing financial crisis and still diminished by conflict and injustice, I also see the chance to forge a new multilateralism that is both hard-headed and progressive," he said.

The prime minister also urged unity on tackling other major global crises. "And I believe that in our international cooperation on finance, climate change, terrorism and ending conflict, there is evidence of this new multilateralism at work in the world—fairer, more stable and more prosperous because it is rooted in cooperation and justice.

"And if we learn from our experience of turning unity of purpose into unity of action, together we can seize this moment of profound change to create, for the first time, the age of the truly global society, one where progressive multilateralism, not narrow unilateralism, is the norm."

Mr. Brown's financial rescue plan has seen positive responses, though slightly hesitant, even from the media that had panned him only months earlier.

The Daily Mail wrote that "short-term favour is with Mr Brown, whose confidence has been boosted, although he will now need to translate his 'man for a crisis' image into credible plans for the long term."

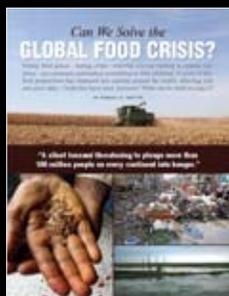
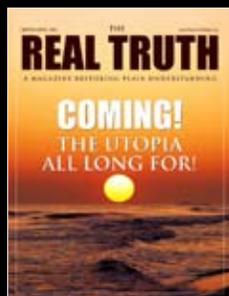
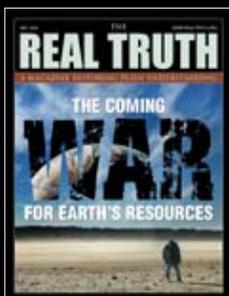
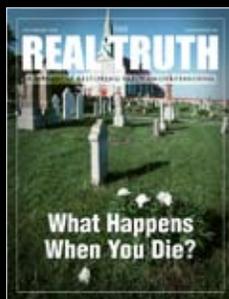
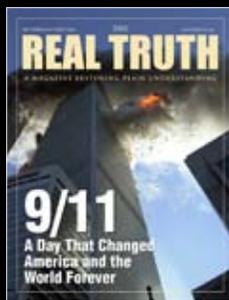
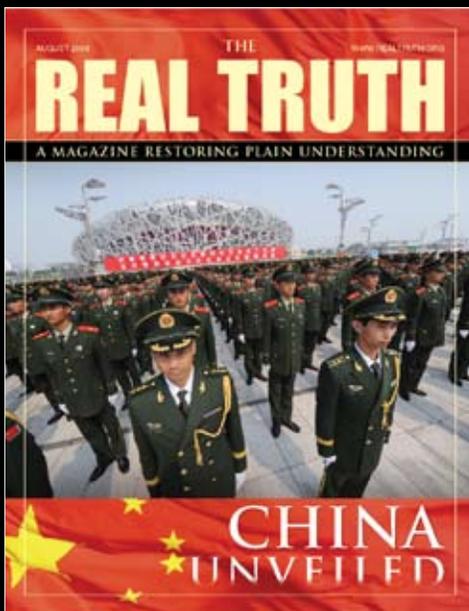
With the surprising turn in public opinion, *The Independent* responded: "Mr Brown is firmly out of the woods—for now. Any talk of getting rid of him from No 10 would be laughed out of court among most Labour backbenchers."

The positive response to the financial plan even prompted a *New York Times* op-ed columnist to semi-seriously ask, "Has Gordon Brown, the British prime minister, saved the world financial system?"

Mr. Brown appears to have the world's attention and continues to improve in popularity at home—all this in stark contrast to his first year-plus in office. □

How This Magazine Is Supported

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



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

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

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

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

World Events Explained

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

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

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

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

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

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

How Can This Be Free?

The Real Truth magazine, which provides quality articles and up-to-date news briefs and analyses, is produced by The Restored Church of God (www.thercg.org), a non-profit organization devoted to practicing God’s way of life—the way of GIVE, of outgoing concern for others, versus the world’s way

of GET, looking out for self first. The Restored Church of God (RCG) is dedicated to teaching Christ’s gospel—the good news of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15)—to “all the world for a witness unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14).

This is how it is being accomplished:

■ *The Real Truth* (with past issues accessible at www.realtruth.org).

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

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

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

Also, unlike other religious organizations, The Restored Church of God (RCG) never solicits the public for financial support. Dedicated members, co-workers and donors voluntarily support this Work of preaching the gospel—the good news of the soon-coming kingdom of God—through tithes, offerings and donations. They recognize the abundant blessings promised by God to all who obey His financial law of tithing: “Bring you all the tithes into the

storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10; also read verses 8-9).

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

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

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

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Christmas tree is from Egypt, and its origin dates from a period long anterior to the Christian Era.” How many know the Christmas tree *long preceded* Christianity? Did you?

What the Bible Says

Most aspects of Christmas are not referred to in the Bible. Of course, the reason is that they are not from God—they are not part of the way He

wants people to worship Him. The Christmas tree, however, IS mentioned in the Bible! Turn to Jeremiah 10, verses 2-5, “Thus says the Lord, *Learn not the way of the heathen*, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them [I ask: why do countless millions ignore God and read their horoscopes every day?] For the *customs* of the people are *vain*: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They

are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.”

This description of the modern Christmas tree is plain. God directly refers to it as “the way of the heathen.” Just as directly, He commands His people to “Learn *not* the way of the heathen,” calling these customs “*vain*.” (Remember this word “*vain*.” It will return.)

Next, the *Encyclopaedia Americana* states, “The holly, the mistletoe, the

Yule log...are relics of *pre-Christian times*.” In other words, PAGANISM! The Yule log was commonly used in a rite of Teutonic nature worship.

Frederick Haskin further states, “The use of the *Christmas wreath* is believed by authorities to be *traceable to the pagan custom* of decorating buildings and places of worship at the feast which took place at the same time as our Christmas.”

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* exposes the origin of the holly wreath, under the topic “Celastrales,” which are flowering plants: “European pagans brought holly sprays into their homes, offering them to the fairy people of the forests as refuges from the harsh winter weather. During the *Saturnalia*, the Roman winter festival [how many times have we seen this celebration directly referenced?], *branches of holly* were exchanged as tokens of friendship. The earliest Roman Christians apparently used holly as a decoration at the Christmas season.”

There are dozens of types of holly. Almost all come in *male and female varieties*—such as “Blue Prince and Blue Princess” or “Blue Boy and Blue Girl” or “China Boy and China Girl.” Female holly plants cannot have berries unless a nearby male plant pollinates them. It is easy to see why the holly wreath found its way into pagan rituals as a token of friendship—and *fertility*!

Christmas is incomplete to many unless it involves “kissing under the mistletoe.” This also pagan custom was natural on a night that involved much revelry during what were *drunken sex orgies*. Just like Christmas today, this “kissing” usually occurred at the beginning of the *Saturnalia* celebration. Mistletoe was considered to have special powers of healing for those who *reveled* under it.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under “Santalales,” states, “The European mistletoe is thought to have had special ritual significance in Druidical ceremonies and lives in folklore today, its special status as the Christmas mistletoe having come from Anglo-Saxon times.” Mistletoe is a parasite that lives on oak trees. (Recall the Druids worshipped in

oak tree groves.) The ancient Celts—associated with the Druids—used to give mistletoe as an herbal remedy to barren animals to make them *fertile*. This herb is still referred to as “all healer” in Celtic.

Like mistletoe, holly berries were also thought to be sacred to the sun god. The original “sun log” came to be called the *Yule log*. “Yule” simply means “wheel,” which has long been a pagan representation of the sun. No wonder people today commonly speak of the “*sacred yule-tide season*.”

How interesting—and sobering!—are the facts of history.

The most common justification one will hear regarding Christmas is that people have *replaced* old pagan intents and customs by asserting that they are now “focusing on Jesus.” I have heard many say they are “honoring Christ” in their Christmas-keeping. The problem is that *God* does not say this is acceptable to *Him*! *We saw He plainly commands against it*! Keeping Christmas *dishonors* Christ!

First, Jesus made a stunning statement—but how many believe it? He said in Matthew, “But in *vain* they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (15:9). Christmas is not a command of God, it is a tradition of men—a vain one, meaning empty or useless. Christ added this in Mark: “Full well you *reject* the commandment of God, that you may keep your *own tradition*” (7:9). Every year, throughout the world, on December 25, hundreds of millions do just that! No wonder Jesus asked this in Luke: “Why call you Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not the things which I say” (6:46).

We saw God plainly commands, “Learn not the way of the heathen.” But most people do not fear God, and He allows them to make their own decisions. Human beings are free moral agents—free to learn or not learn what God instructs—free to obey or disobey Him!

God Warned!

Notice how specific God’s warning was to ancient Israel in Deuteronomy 12—and *why* His warning! “When

the Lord your God shall cut off the nations from before you...and you succeed them, and dwell in their land; Take heed to yourself that you be not snared by following them...and that you *enquire not after their gods*, saying, How did these nations serve *their gods*? *Even so will I do likewise*. You shall *not* do so unto the Lord your God: for *every abomination* to the Lord, which *He hates*, have they done unto their gods” (vs. 29-31).

Let this passage sink in. Then read Deuteronomy 20:18, which bluntly labels any practice of pagan customs to be sin. Many similar verses condemning the practices of false gods should be studied. Read Exodus 34:10-17 and 23, verses 23-33, as well as Leviticus 20:22-26, among others. These passages are so clear, so strong—and so *many*!

In the Second Commandment—forbidding all forms of idolatry—and in other passages, God declares He is a jealous God. He wants His people doing what *HE* commands, not what false gods say!

Men want to observe their own holidays—including New Year’s and Easter, Halloween and Valentine’s Day—in place of God’s annual Holy Days, and then tell themselves that they are pleasing and worshipping the true God.

Deuteronomy 12:32 makes clear that God does not want us to mix His ways with ANY *false* ways: “What thing soever I command you, observe to do IT: you shall not *add* thereto, nor *diminish* from it.” In other words, do *exactly* what I say—nothing more, nothing less!

These are God’s *plain words* to all who say they can mix the horrible customs of outright paganism with a supposed “focus on Jesus.” Am I a scrooge for reporting the truth? Then what about God, who declares He hates the pagan customs associated with a pagan celebration? Will you listen to confused, deceived ministers—or to *God*?

The real Jesus Christ was *never* in and *never will be* in Christmas! Nor can He be put back into where He

never was. You cannot re-enter a house you never entered. But the “god of this world,” Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4), has *always* been in Christmas. In fact, he is seen to be its author!

The God of the Bible commands that His true worshippers “MUST worship Him in spirit—and in truth” (John 4:23-24). This does not mesh with all the pagan Christmas lies.

There is no “safety in numbers” for those who keep Christmas, because Satan, the Bible states, has “deceived the *whole* world” (Rev. 12:9)! He is also called the “father of lies.” Recognize that Christmas is truly a testimony to the tremendous power of deception.

Christ calls His Church a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). Other verses show this. This Church does not have the large numbers of the respected, established brands of what can only be called humanly-devised *Churchianity*. But it does obey God!

Whatever you do this season, read our booklet, *The True Origin of*

Christmas. You will learn Christ was not born on or near December 25—whether it is scriptural to exchange gifts—the origin of Santa Claus—about Christmas’ roots in child sacrifice, and how this connects to parents today with the *Santa Claus* and *Christ is in Christmas* falsehoods—about religious leaders the Bible warns will *change times and laws*—and how the day is associated entirely with “another Jesus,” the one the apostle Paul directly warned against.

Jesus said twice that “you shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16, 20). Everything that people say or do, good or bad, has fruits. The *fruits* of Christmas are terrible. Christmas is about getting for the self—and pure commercialism.

This season also leads the entire year in adultery, loneliness, jealousy, drunkenness and drunk driving, family arguments (and worse), and accumulation of debt that often lasts until March. This problem

is so significant that almost all churches report that their incomes *drop* during this period as people recover from all their spending! How ironic.

Obey God!—and *save your money!* Reject the falsehoods about the supposed right, purpose-driven Christmas. Don’t be fooled by Christian sounding names pasted over rank paganism and idolatry.

God declares it is *sin* to observe the customs of false gods! Make yourself read this in Deuteronomy 20:18, before reading I John 3:4.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (58:1).

This has been done. The writers of *The Real Truth* magazine do this, and will continue to do it, on many topics.

But you have only *begun* to learn the *real* origin of Christmas. I repeat, read *The True Origin of Christmas*. □



READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

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

CANADA

■ “Is this the magazine formerly known as *The Plain Truth*?”

[**Editor’s note:** *The Real Truth* magazine continues the same good news and unique analysis as *The Plain Truth* under the editorial stewardship of Herbert W. Armstrong.]

■ “I am really interested in knowing exactly what is going on in the world today. TV and radio put their own spin on information. I want the truth.”

[**Recommended article:** “Why We Analyze World News, Trends and Conditions From a Biblical Perspective”]

PHILIPPINES

■ “I remember my dad reading *The Plain Truth* when I was a kid...Now my dad is gone and I just want to find out why he was fondly reading your magazine.” [**Recommended article:** “Why This Magazine!”]

SOUTH AFRICA

■ “There is a general lack of knowledge of these important things that you talk about in your publications...Thank you very much for what you are doing.”

UNITED KINGDOM

■ “Read one article of yours and...wow. Thank you.”

UNITED STATES

■ “What is your background or affiliations?”

[**Recommended booklet:** *Here Is The Restored Church of God*]

■ “...*America and Britain in Prophecy* was one of the most eye-opening books I have ever read. Thank you for making things clearer; I can see God’s plan in action throughout the ages.”

■ “I was scanning the fall of the Roman Empire and comparing it to the

decline of the U.S. and came across your site. Interesting.”

[**Recommended article:** “Seven Signs of a Falling Nation”]

■ “I’m interested in the end-times, which I believe we are in. World events are rapidly coming together according to God’s Word.”

[**Recommended literature:** *America and Britain in Prophecy* and *Are These the Last Days?*]

■ “I don’t want my marriage to fall apart, because I need to know how to love and give my full attention to my wife.”

[**Recommended booklets:** *You Can Build a Happy Marriage* and *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?*]

■ “Looking at information on predestination vs. reincarnation.”

[**Recommended booklet:** *Does the Bible Teach Predestination?*] □

AFRICA

UNABATED VIOLENCE IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



■ **UNENDING STRIFE:** Above, an 18-year-old woman stands in the Kibati camp for internally displaced people outside of Goma, Congo, where she says her family is suffering from malnutrition. Aid groups say that more than five million people have died due to conflict and the humanitarian crisis in eastern Congo over the past decade. Below, soldiers loyal to renegade Congolese General Laurent Nkunda stage a pro-Nkunda rally in Rutshuru (Nov. 1, 2008).

PHOTOS: SHASHANK BENGALI/MCT

Renewed conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has forced 250,000 civilians to flee, else face brutality and rape in their villages. Most have moved to makeshift camps with conditions of squalor.

The most pressing conflict is between DRC government forces and Tutsi rebels led by General Laurent Nkunda, a self-fashioned protector of ethnic Tutsis after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Roughly 6,000-strong, the well-trained rebel group has increasingly fought government forces in recent months.

Negotiations for ceasefires are viewed with suspicion. Recently, Gen. Nkunda and a UN special envoy discussed suspending fighting in the area. However, during the well-publicized, two-hour talks,



battles continued to rage elsewhere between DRC forces and Gen. Nkunda's men.

The African nation has long been torn by violence, most notably during a drawn out civil war, which ended in 2003. The war claimed approximately three million lives, mostly to

starvation and disease. After the war ended, some rebels refused to disarm or join the army.

Today, outbreaks between rebel factions, government forces and militia groups, from at least 12 dif-

*Please see **CONGO**, page 25*

ECONOMY

1.82 MILLION OUT OF WORK IN UK



■ **HARD TIMES AHEAD:** Above, jobseekers head for a Westminster employment agency in search of employment. Below, a couple looks at job vacancies offered in the window of an employment agency in Victoria, in London (Nov. 12, 2008).

PHOTOS: OLI SCARFF/GETTY IMAGES

The ongoing financial meltdown affecting many countries around the world is having an adverse affect on the job market in the United Kingdom.

The *BBC* reported that, in the three months leading up to September, unemployment jumped by 140,000, putting the total workforce unemployed in the UK at 1.82 million or 5.8%. It is also reported that individuals claiming "Jobseekers Allowance" have greatly increased, and is more than 150,000 higher than a year ago.

With unemployment the highest in 11 years, jobseekers are lining up at employment agencies across the country. Mel Groves, chief executive of Jobcentre Plus, said they were coping with an increase in new jobseekers allowance claims, which have risen from 45,000 a week in the spring to 63,000 last week.

The downturn has caused many businesses across the UK to down-

size and many have closed their doors.

With banks under stress and withholding credit, major developments in all sectors of industry are being put on hold.

The British Chamber of Commerce said, due to the current downward spiral, it is expected that another 300,000 to 350,000 jobs will be lost in the next 12 to 24 months. This will put the unemployment figure at more than two million. Analysts predict that if current trends continue, unemployment could reach three million by 2010. □



HEALTH ISSUES

SMOG THREATENS FOOD SECURITY

According to scientists with the United Nations Environment Programme, a toxic cloud of poisonous gases and chemicals, three kilometers thick, is affecting "air quality and agriculture in Asia increasing risks to human health and food production for three billion people"—almost half of the world's total population. It has also produced a 10 to 25% reduction of sunlight in major cities across the continent.

The "increasing amount of soot, sulphates and other aerosol components in atmospheric brown clouds (ABCs) are causing major threats to the water and food security of Asia and have resulted in surface dimming, atmospheric solar heating and soot deposition in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan-Tibetan (HKHT) glaciers and snow packs. These have given rise to major areas of concern, some of the most critical being observed decreases in the Indian summer monsoon rainfall, a north-south shift in rainfall patterns in eastern China, the accelerated retreat of the HKHT glaciers and decrease in snow packs, and the increase in surface ozone...All these have led to negative effects on water resources and crop yields" (ibid.).

Over the past few decades, smog clouds have appeared worldwide, with dozens of cities reporting health issues stemming from it.

"For those who breathe the toxic mix, the impact can be deadly. Henning Rodhe, a professor of chemical meteorology at Stockholm University, estimates that 340,000 people in China and India die each year from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases that can be traced to the emissions from coal-burning factories, diesel trucks and kitchen stoves fueled by twigs" (*International Herald Tribune*). □

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BAN—WHAT NEXT?



■ **DEMONSTRATIONS:** Protesters line Lincoln Avenue during a protest against Proposition 8, which changes the California constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage, in front of the Mormon Temple in Oakland, Calif. (Nov. 9, 2008). Protesters claim the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints contributed more than \$20 million to the “Yes on 8” campaign.

PHOTO: D. ROSS CAMERON/OAKLAND TRIBUNE/MCT

On Nov. 4, California voted “yes” to Proposition 8, which amends the state constitution, allowing only marriages between a man and woman. The proposition, which passed with a just 52% majority, overturned a May 15 state Supreme Court ruling that allowed same-sex marriages.

Protests began immediately following the vote results. One demonstration in Los Angeles saw more than 10,000 gather and march peacefully through the streets, bearing posters with slogans such as “Keep Your Church Out of My Religion” and “No on H8.” The *Associated Press* also reported of demonstrations in Boston, New York and other major U.S. cities.

Suits have been filed against Proposition 8, claiming the measure violates fundamental rights of equality and contradicts the constitution’s provisions to protect minorities.

Mathew Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel, a group supporting the ban, said in a statement that the suits were “patently frivolous” and that “it makes



■ **PRAYER VIGILS:** Worshippers pray during a sermon at “The Call, Fast and Prayer Service” at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, Calif. (Nov. 1, 2008). The central theme of the rally was a call to support Proposition 8, and for upholding family values.

PHOTO: SANDY HUFFAKER/GETTY IMAGES

no sense that four judges can rewrite the historic definition of marriage and more than five million people (who voted for Prop. 8) cannot restore it to its common understanding” (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Until the state Supreme Court renders a decision, all homosexual marriages are postponed. The court will also have to address the validity of the 18,000 marriages already performed. Hearings on the suits are scheduled to begin in March of next year. □

CONGO

Continued from page 23

ferent ethnic groups, form the basis of the fighting.

Concrete causes for the skirmishes are not clear. However, one motive may be to control the nation’s vast mineral resources, particularly coltan, a metallic ore used in cell-phones.

With conditions worsening, the UN is working to get aid to civilians, but is often prohibited due to the intense conflict.

In addition to disease and starvation, citizens must face other harsh realities—especially women and young girls.

“Every month, hundreds of women and girls continue to be victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all provinces of the DRC,” said Kemal Siki, spokesman for the UN Mission in the Congo (*The East African*). □

Fierce fighting between Congolese army and rebel Gen. Laurent Nkunda

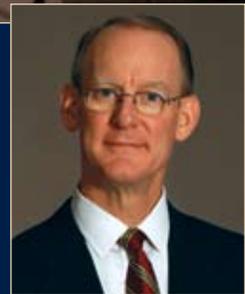
- **North Kivu:** 1 in 6 people forced from homes; 250,000 since September
- **Nkunda**, a Tutsi; says government aids rival Hutus, blamed for Rwandan genocide
- **45,000 people die** monthly in Democratic Republic of Congo

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Source: McClatchy Washington Bureau, ESRI



THE WORLD TO COME

VIDEO PROGRAM | PRESENTED BY DAVID C. PACK



Since Jan. 21, 2003, *The World to Come* audio program has addressed life's greatest questions—*Is world peace possible? Is heaven the reward of the saved? What is real faith? Have we entered the last days? What is human nature? What is salvation? What is the true gospel of Jesus Christ?*—with crystal clarity and easy-to-understand answers.

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