

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2022

THE

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# REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

**THE  
POPE**  
Calls Out  
Traditionalists





Signs in favor and against the Kansas constitutional amendment on abortion are displayed along a highway in Lenexa, Kansas (Aug. 1, 2022).

KYLE RIVAS/GETTY IMAGES

**Who Settles the Abortion Debate?**

Should scientists tell us when life begins? Or bioethicists when cells become a person? What about politicians? Or ministers? For Christians, the answer should be absolutely clear.

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**Front Cover:** Pope Francis arrives to hold a weekly general audience on St. Peter's Square in the Vatican (April 27, 2022).

TIZIANA FABI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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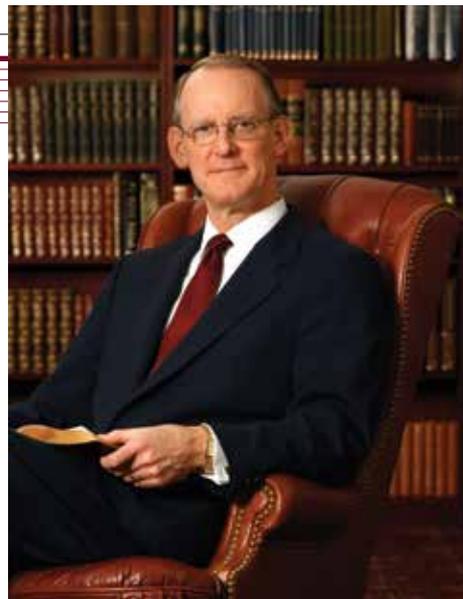
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Has Your Life Been Predetermined?

I GREW UP IN a well-known, mainstream Protestant church. The main difference between this church and other Protestant denominations was its belief in the predestination of all human beings. I learned of this central teaching at an early age.

We were generally taught to believe that our entire lives had been laid out in advance by God. Supposedly, this all happened before we were born. But I was later forced to question whether the Bible says this.

This was the church of my mother's youth. My father grew up in a different denomination. Though my parents required me, my brother, and my sister to attend, neither parent accompanied us very often. When I was about 13 or 14, I decided to ask my mother why. Her answer was direct and revealing.

She explained that she could not accept the doctrine of predestination as taught by her church. She went on to tell me, through an analogy of a man with a heart condition, why she was troubled by this doctrine. She depicted the man as being aware of his condition and yet choosing to ignore it, as he rushed up and down the stairs of his house carrying boxes of books.

My mother refused to believe that such a man could suffer a heart attack without being responsible

for having made the decision to ignore good judgment, thereby *putting himself* at risk. I will never forget this conversation because we were standing at the bottom of our staircase as she described her belief.

She went on to tell me that she believed that everything she decided in her life was, in fact, something that *she decided*. She felt that one who would *deliberately jeopardize* his health, while well aware of his condition, was mocking God with his action. This was a *choice* the person made. On the other hand, if such a man really did not have control over his actions, in the case she described, then God was mocking this man—and all men—because He has left people powerless to take action in the face of apparent danger.

My mother made a point, and I have never forgotten it. However, it was not until four or five years later that I came to understand the Bible truth about the matter of predestination.

### Just the “Lost” and the “Saved”?

Think of it. If my mother was *incorrect*, it means that human beings do not really possess free moral agency. They cannot truly make their own choices or decide their own fates. It means that all people are simply

playing a *predetermined role* in every matter that they face—even when they think that they are making their own decisions. In effect, the entire world is God’s stage and all human beings are nothing more than actors playing a scripted part!

Is this true? Is this what the Bible actually teaches when it makes reference to predestination? Did God pre-plan every sin, every act of immorality, and every crime that has ever been committed? Is God the author of every war—every act of civil disobedience—every divorce—every suicide—every murder? Did God pre-plan every rape—every act of child abuse—every lie ever told—every time one chooses to cheat on his income taxes? Understand. If God has already charted the course, in advance of everything that will ever happen, all acts of sin and unrighteousness cannot be excluded.

Now turn the coin over. Has God predetermined which people *will* obey Him? Has He decided in advance who will be *righteous*—and thus who will become Christians and ultimately be *saved*? If this is true, we must at the same time consider whether He has also decided who will be lost. And can the “lost” not choose to repent and be saved? Can the saved not fall back into, by *choice*, the way of life that will cause them to be lost? These are important questions.

Is anything missing? Yes, a great deal has been completely overlooked from the pages of the Bible. The doctrine of predestination has been shrouded in ignorance, confusion and misunderstanding for far too long.

We must ask some basic questions. What *is* the plan of God? What exactly *is* God doing with mankind? Is He trying to save all men *now*? Are all men in the category of either lost or saved? Are there any *other* categories that must be understood to properly grasp God’s Plan? Where, then, does the truth of predestination fit?

These are enormous questions. Not understanding their correct answers has caused millions to grieve needlessly about relatives who may have died in a

supposed lost state because they never accepted Christ as their Savior.

Do not ever *assume* the accuracy of any purported understanding about a biblical matter unless you can *prove* it from Scripture. On the matter of predestination, people have made two common assumptions—neither of which is correct. They have *assumed* that every human being who has ever lived is predetermined to be either lost or saved—or they have correctly recognized that people have the power to choose their own fate but have *assumed* that all people fall into one of only these two possible categories.

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These positions are both wrong. They are based on false assumptions. Most have assumed that God is trying to save the world *now*. Most have assumed that the role—the mission—of the Church is to “get the world saved.” Most have also been led to believe that God and the devil are in a great wrestling match over the fate of the world. It is as though God is desperately trying to save people from the clutches of the devil, and the devil is, just as desperately, striving to thwart God’s plan of salvation at every turn.

Of course, the devil certainly *is* striving to deceive the whole

world (Rev. 12:9). He is now the god of this world, seeking to blind people to the wonderful truth of the plan of God and the true gospel (II Cor. 4:4). However, this does not mean that God’s Plan is, on the one hand, out of His control—being lost to the devil—or, on the other hand, that His control means predetermining the fate of every human being.

#### **Is Today the Only Day of Salvation?**

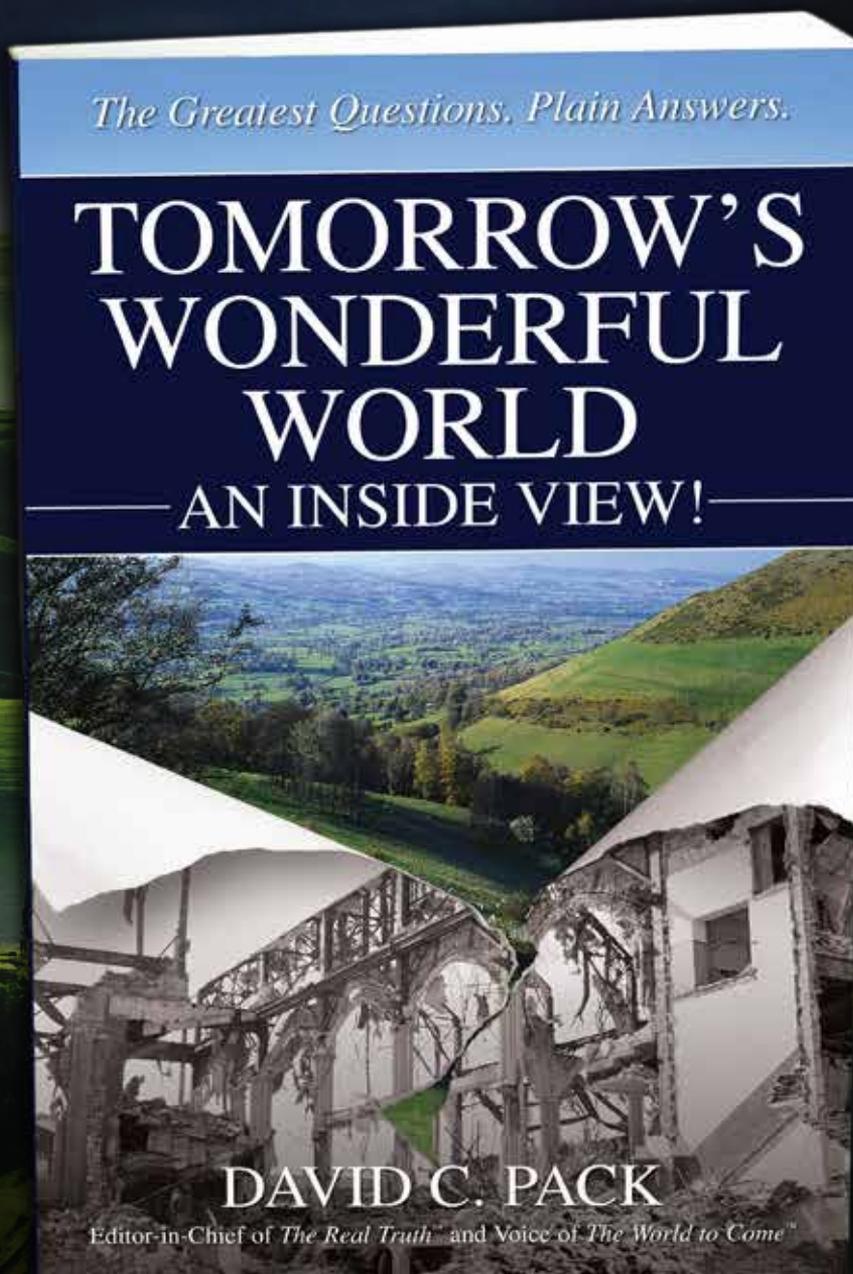
Is today the *only* opportunity for all to choose or reject Christianity? Must all people decide now to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior? Is this what the Bible teaches? The answer is an emphatic NO! If it were yes, then God is failing miserably in His struggle with the devil for control over the fate of humanity.

Consider. In 1920, when my father was born, there were about two billion people on Earth. There are now almost eight billion—and more every day. Approximately one-third believe in the name of Jesus Christ. This represents a total that includes every conceivable *brand* of the over 2,000 *different forms* of professing Christianity. Approximately another one-third of mankind has *heard* of Christ but has not accepted Him and does not even claim to follow Him. Finally, the last one-third of all people on Earth know nothing about Christ. Many in India, Africa, Japan, China and parts of South America and Southeast Asia have never even heard of Christ, let alone know who He was, what He did, what He taught, etc. Are they condemned to be lost, having never had an opportunity to understand what they missed or why?

When speaking of Christ’s name, the Bible clearly says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Further, Romans 10:13 states that men must call on *this name* to be saved. Understand! All those who have not yielded to the God of the Bible and accepted Jesus as their Savior are

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 29

# Where Will We Be in 35 Years?



**A**lmost all forecasts for the future are bleak—overpopulation, crippling pollution, skyrocketing obesity rates, disappearing coastlines, constant extreme weather—yet this is *not* what the Bible says Earth will be like! Yes, there are trying times ahead, but man's ultimate future is BRIGHT. You can know what the coming decades will bring—and in crystal-clear, astonishing detail. The book *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* offers a preview of what God's Word says is coming for the entire globe. Order your free copy at [rcg.org/tww](http://rcg.org/tww).

# UKRAINE'S SHADOW:

## Other Deadly Crises Starved of Aid



**M**ORE THAN two dozen children died of hunger in May through June in a single hospital in Somalia. Dr. Yahye Abdi Garun watched their emaciated parents stumble in from rural areas gripped by the driest drought in decades. And yet no humanitarian aid arrived.

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, a donor who was preparing to give a half-million dollars to a Somali aid group told its executive

director Hussein Kulmiye it was redirecting the money to help Ukrainians instead.

And now, as Somalis fleeing the drought fill more than 500 camps in the city of Baidoa, aid workers make “horrific” choices to help one camp and ignore 10 others, Norwegian Refugee Council Secretary General Jan Egeland said, telling *The Associated Press* he is “angry and ashamed.” His group’s Ukraine appeal was fully funded within 48 hours, but its Somalia

appeal is perhaps a quarter funded as thousands of people die.

The war in Ukraine has abruptly drawn millions of dollars away from other crises. Somalia, facing a food shortage largely driven by the war, might be the most vulnerable. Its aid funding is less than half of last year’s level while overwhelmingly Western donors have sent more than \$1.7 billion to respond to the war in Europe. Yemen, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Congo and the Palestinian territories are similarly affected.

Somalis who fled drought-stricken areas carry their belongings as they arrive at a makeshift camp for the displaced on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Somalia (June 30, 2022). The war in Ukraine has abruptly drawn millions of dollars away from longer-running humanitarian crises and Somalia is perhaps the most vulnerable as thousands die of hunger amid the driest drought in decades.

AP/FARAH ABDI WARSAMEH

The \$2.2 billion appeal for Ukraine is almost 80 percent funded, according to United Nations data, an “exceptional” level for any crisis at the midway point of the year, said Angus Urquhart, humanitarian and crisis lead for the Development Initiatives consultancy. The smaller appeal for Somalia is just 30 percent funded.

This year’s global shift in money and attention is perhaps most urgently felt in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia and Kenya, where some areas could be declared in famine within weeks. The United States Agency for International Development says regional authorities have not seen anything on this scale in well over 100 years. Millions of livestock, families’ source of wealth and nutrition, have died.

People are next.

### Staving Off Mass Death

To the shock of some exhausted Somalis who walk for days through parched landscapes to places like Mogadishu in search of aid, there is often little or none.

Hawa Osman Bilal sat outside her makeshift tent holding the clothes of her daughter Ifrah, who like many vulnerable Somalis died after the difficult journey to seek help.

“She was skinny and emaciated, and she died in front of me,” Ms. Bilal said. The girl was buried nearby, one in a growing number of tiny graves.

The crowded camp’s caretaker, Fadumo Abdulkadir Warsame, told the AP that about 100 families had arrived in one week, swelling the population to 1,700 families. There is no food to give them. “The only thing we can afford for them is bread and black tea,” he said. “There is no aid from the donors yet.”

At a nearby storeroom run by the local organization Peace and Development Action, supported by the UN World Food Program, the stock has shriveled. “The world has turned its back on Somalia to focus on Ukraine,” manager Shafici Ali Ahmed said.



Top, a local resident uses a wheelbarrow to transport the young children of a woman who fled drought-stricken areas as she arrives at a makeshift camp for the displaced on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Somalia (June 30, 2022). Bottom, Somalis who fled drought receive food donations from city residents after arriving at a camp for the displaced (June 30, 2022).

AP/FARAH ABDI WARSAMEH

The White House acknowledged the problem in a June 28 statement on global food security, saying that “while the entire globe will continue to be affected by Russia’s actions, the most immediate needs will present in the Horn of Africa,” where Somalia once sourced 90 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine but now struggles to find supplies amid soaring prices.

“We’re really trying to stave off mass deaths at this point,” Sarah Charles, assistant to the administrator for USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, told the *AP*, adding that “unfortunately, the nature of these crises is such that they go slow and then go very fast.”

Nimo Hassan, director of the Somalia NGO Consortium, and several others said they believe donor countries’ representatives on the ground understand the urgency, but decision-makers in capitals like Brussels and London appear distracted by the war in Europe.

“They’re not saying openly, ‘We’re focused on Ukraine,’ but you can see what they’re doing in Ukraine,” Ms.

Hassan said. “It should be based on need, not a political decision, you know?”

**“Not all emergencies are born equal”**

Less than 30 percent of the new arrivals at camps for those fleeing drought in Somalia were receiving immediate food or other assistance as of April, the UN humanitarian agency has said.

“Not all emergencies are born equal,” said Victor Aguayo, the UNICEF director of nutrition and child development, speaking from the Somali region of Ethiopia, where he reported a “very significant increase” in the number of children under 2 with severe wasting.

“Some emergencies all of a sudden grab the attention,” Mr. Aguayo said, adding that UNICEF is not receiving enough money to contain the Horn of Africa crisis as 1.8 million children need urgent treatment.

The World Food Program, like UNICEF, must shift limited resources from preventing acute hunger to focusing on the desperately hungry. That means more than a quarter-million children under 2 in Somalia have lost prevention help “at the peak

of famine prevention efforts,” WFP spokesman Altan Butt said.

Across Somalia, where a weak humanitarian response to the 2010-12 drought was in part to blame as a quarter-million people died, humanitarian workers watch this one with fear as a fifth straight rainy season might fail for the first time in memory.

The southern district of Dollow near Ethiopia is “overwhelmed” by new arrivals, and at least 40 people died from April through June, district commissioner Mohamed Hussein Abdi said. Displaced people now outnumber residents.

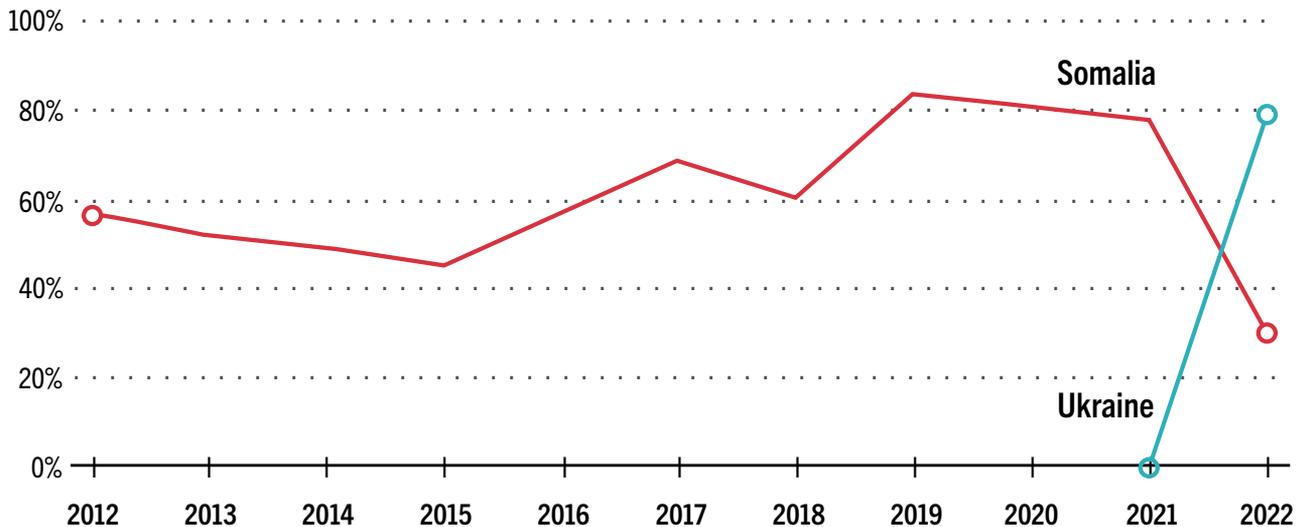
At mother-child health centers in Somalia’s northern Puntland region, nearly every other patient was severely malnourished, said Justus Liku, a food security adviser with the aid group CARE.

“We can see places where there’s not a drop of water,” said Ahmed Nasir, deputy director of Save Somali Women and Children, speaking to the *AP* from the field. “If those people in decision-making offices could see what we see now, they would just release the funds immediately.” □

## International Aid Redirected to Ukraine

Ukraine is benefiting from international aid this year while countries that could expect funding have seen a drop.

Percentage of appeals that were met



Source: [Financial Tracking Service](#), [The Associated Press](#)

# “...Neither Shall They LEARN WAR Anymore”

**Imagine if mankind turned  
from destructive pursuits to  
focus on positive achievements.  
This day is coming!**

**W**AR IS AS old as history. Like a virus filling its host, it has consumed mankind. Humans have had a murderous streak since Cain killed Abel. No deterrent—military, political or economic—has prevented it from breaking out. New weapons are constantly being developed, billions of dollars spent on artillery and forces, and endless man-hours wasted on learning how to destroy other human beings.

In a televised speech titled “The Chance for Peace” on April 16, 1953, United States President Dwight Eisenhower summarized war’s terrible cost: “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone.

“It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

Over seven decades later, Eisenhower’s words echo with even greater meaning and urgency. Nations spend unprecedented resources on war preparations, scrambling to win the arms race—not realizing that no one wins in war. Technological advancements such as tactical nuclear bombs, armed drones, and space-based weaponry have only upped the ante.

A warning often attributed to philosopher and historian Bertrand Russell has fallen on deaf ears: “War does not determine who is right—only who is left.” Left as in those not completely obliterated.

Each successive generation has passed its addiction to bloodshed on to the next. This has been done wittingly or unwittingly by media, parents, military academies, and through the most powerful teacher of all—example.

An oft-quoted passage from the Bible predicts the end of war. The book of Isaiah foretells what will happen at Jesus Christ’s Second Coming: “And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall

Soldiers demonstrate air assault capabilities in Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania (July 30, 2022).

ARMY STAFF SGT. MALCOLM COHENS-ASHLEY



beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*" (Isa. 2:4).

As wonderful as this utopian vision sounds, it seems impossible given war is so entrenched in the human experience.

We are left to ponder, which generation will fulfill this Bible prophecy and break war's vicious cycle?

### **Wasted Resources**

War is not new. For 6,000 years, mankind's most precious assets—time, human life, and money—have been poured into the black hole of the global war machine. It appears we mostly have death and destruction to show for it.

Consider time. A statistician in the 1960s found that more than 14,000 separate conflicts took place throughout man's history. In these conflicts, billions of people spent an incalculable number of hours, days, weeks, months, years and decades thinking, planning and carrying out violent acts. Now consider the thousands of conflicts that were never recorded or those that occurred *since* the 1960s.

Think about what could have been achieved if the world's greatest leaders had not been distracted by war. What if Abraham Lincoln governed in peacetime? What if the brightest minds who assembled to create the atom bomb for the Manhattan Project—including Enrico Fermi, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Albert Einstein—had tackled *world hunger* or *clean energy*? Instead of hundreds of physicists, mathematicians and engineers creating nuclear weapons that resulted in the deaths of 185,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, consider what could have been done toward productive pursuits. How far could the trillions of dollars spent during the United States' two-decades long conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have gone to solve other existential problems?

The incalculable time and money civilization has spent on war is mind-boggling—and tragic!

And what do we have to show for it? A more peaceful, stable world? No! The modern, "advanced" time in which we live is more dangerous and tumultuous than ever.

Heads of state do little else but ponder wars and even *potential* wars. They spend sleepless nights worrying about warfare. Administrations are filled with military planners who have devoted their entire lives to the topic. Giant, war-related divisions of governments exist. The U.S. alone has the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency, to name a few.

Armed conflict showcases man's creative abilities, but to what end? Take the Russia's Satan-2 nuclear missile, in development since 2009. President Vladimir Putin claims the 119-foot-tall intercontinental ballistic missile, which can travel 16,000 mph, is "invisible" to missile defense systems.

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Missile Defense Project, Satan-2 is able to carry 10 large nuclear warheads and 16 smaller ones. This means one missile can transport as much as eight megatons of TNT-explosive power or 400 times the power of either bomb the U.S. dropped on Japan in 1945.

What makes this devastating weapon "invincible" is its ability to elude another technological marvel known as a "kinetic kill vehicle." It is best described as a bullet that can take out a nuclear-tipped missile mid-air before it makes impact with its intended target. Satan-2 has advanced guidance systems and countermeasures that trick the "bullet." All of this occurs in a matter of moments.

Think of the human capital used up in these inventions. What could have been accomplished if governments focused on health advancements instead? Or other useful manufacturing?

Yet adults are not the only ones wasting their time on war. While child

soldiers are a tragic problem, there is another way today's youth are trained to be killers: video games.

Although not *actual* warfare, these games are not harmless fun. Children and teenagers learn how to kill and maim in virtual reality. One study of over 3,000 schoolchildren in Singapore found that "youths who play video games are more likely to think and act in aggressive ways" (*Agence France-Presse*).

The amount of time eaten up by these virtual battles is astonishing. According to UberFacts, gamers collectively spent 25 billion hours or 2.85 million man-years playing the popular video game series *Call of Duty*.

Note that this is not man-hours, but man-YEARS. Millions of years *wasted* stabbing, shooting and blowing up virtual opponents—in just one game series! This is time that children, teenagers and college students *could* have spent on fruitful endeavors—learning about the world around them or building skills for a career.

So much time spent on violence has led to NO positive end.

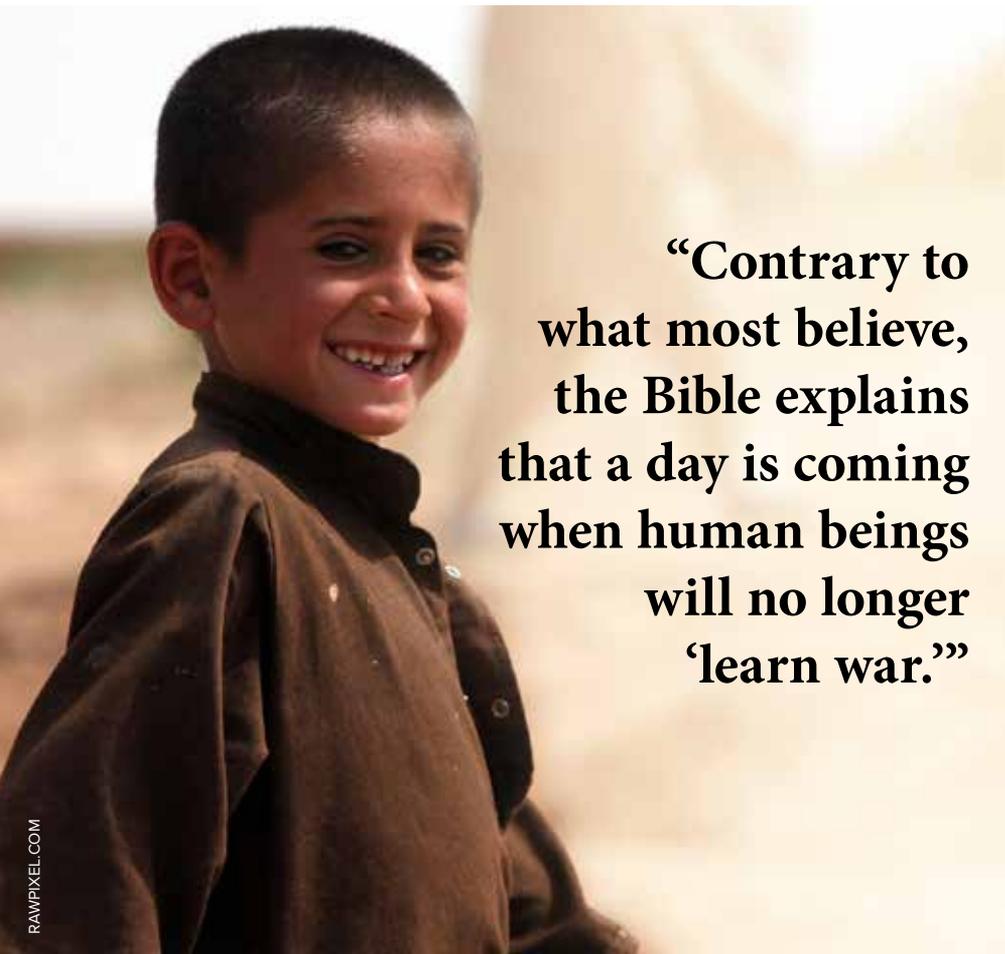
### **Lives Cut Short**

Next consider loss of life. World War I—ironically at one time called the "war to end war"—left a staggering loss of life in its wake.

The total mobilized forces of the Allied nations (the U.S., the British Empire, France, Italy, Russia and six other countries) was over 42 million. An estimated five million were killed, with total casualties (those either killed or injured) amounting to 22 million—52.3 percent of the total forces of the Allied nations.

The forces of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria) were around 23 million. Over *three million* lost their lives.

*American Forces Press Service* stated: "A generation of men died in battle on the fields of France. The Somme, Verdun, Ypres and Meuse-Argonne became killing grounds. On the Eastern Front,



**“Contrary to what most believe, the Bible explains that a day is coming when human beings will no longer ‘learn war.’”**

millions of Germans, Austrians and Russians battled. Overall, about 16.5 million people [when civilian deaths are included] were killed in the war.”

World War II, not surprisingly, proved even deadlier. An estimated 59 million soldiers and civilians were slaughtered. Poland lost nearly 17 percent of its entire population with over 35 million killed.

One of the longest, deadliest battles took place in Stalingrad, Russia. This clash between Russians and Germans lasted from July 1942 until February 1943.

“The Battle of Stalingrad was one of the bloodiest battles in history, with combined military and civilian casualties of nearly 2 million,” *History* recounted.

*All from just one battle!*

While World War II looms as the largest and deadliest war in human history, it was obviously not the end of death via warfare. Scores of millions

died in subsequent conflicts around the globe such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and conflicts in India, Sudan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq-Iran, Syria and Ukraine to name a few.

#### **Innocence Lost**

One of the worst consequences of fighting is the impact on children. War robs young people of their innocence. Children around the world are taught to murder. Numerous accounts reveal the tragic results of young kids who are taught to hate their enemies.

*A Long Way Gone – Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Beah chronicles the sad picture of war’s impact on children in Africa. A description from the book’s website stated: “There may be as many as 300,000 child soldiers, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s, in more than fifty conflicts around the world. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them. He is one of the first to tell his story in his own words.

“In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-six years old, tells a riveting story. At the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he’d been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. Eventually released by the army and sent to a UNICEF rehabilitation center, he struggled to regain his humanity and to reenter the world of civilians, who viewed him with fear and suspicion. This is, at last, a story of redemption and hope.”

Ishmael Beah’s story is an exception to the rule. Most children ensnared in war’s vicious cycle do not escape.

The Peace Research Institute estimated that nearly two-thirds of the world’s children lived in a conflict-ridden country in 2019, adding that more than 415 million children—over one in six—lived less than 31 miles from where the actual fighting took place.

According to UNICEF, children are literally under attack in conflicts around the world. The organization named what they call “six grave violations against children in times of war.” Atrocities include: the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment of children into armed forces and armed groups, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and rape and other sexual violence.

“Between 2005 and 2020, parties to conflict raped, forcibly married, sexually exploited, and committed other grave forms of sexual violence against at least 14,200 children.” This number is almost certainly low due to underreporting given the stigma around rape and sexual violence of children.

Governments and military forces are required by international humanitarian law to protect the most vulnerable, including children, during conflict. Enforcement of these standards, however, rely on the depraved minds waging war in the first place.

This heart-rending predicament should make even the most hawkish minds cry out for peace!

### Economic Price

Finally, there is the loss of money due to conflict. For the Allies, the price of World War I was \$195 billion. This amounts to about \$3 trillion in today's dollars! The cost for the Axis powers was over \$86 billion—or around \$1.3 trillion today. To further understand the size of these figures, Germany finally paid off its debt from the first world war in September 2010.

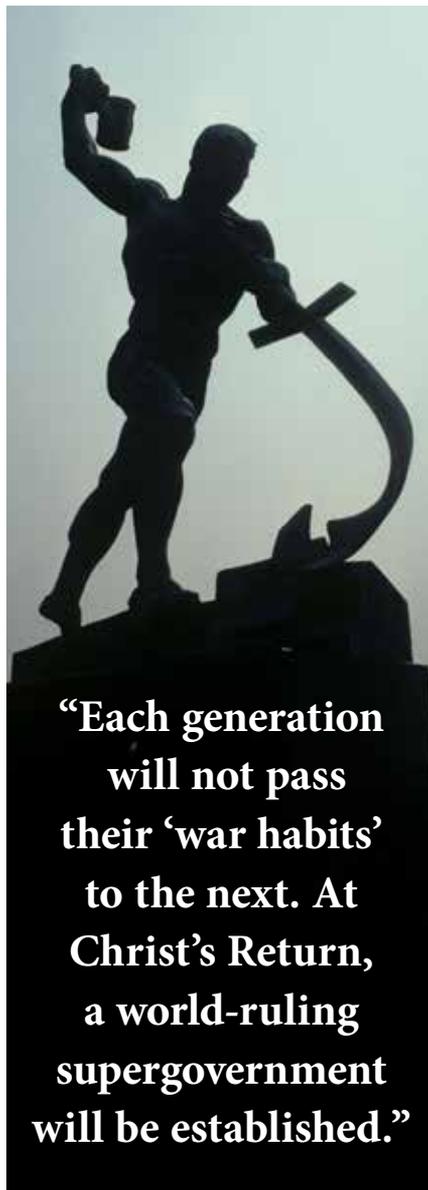
World War II resulted in even greater costs. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* recorded, "There can be no real statistical measurement of the human and material cost of World War II. The money cost to governments involved has been estimated at more than \$1,000,000,000,000 [\$1 trillion] but this figure cannot represent the human misery, deprivation, and suffering, the dislocation of peoples and of economic life, or the sheer physical destruction of property that the war involved."

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "I discovered that over ninety percent of all national deficits from 1921 to 1939 were caused by payments for past, present, and future wars" (*Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Search for Victory*).

Today, man is still addicted to war-spending. While the United States continues to far outpace other nations in military spending—\$801 billion or 38 percent of the world's total military expenditures in 2021—other nations such as China (second on the list), India, the United Kingdom and Russia also continue to pour billions into their militaries.

China, the only other country besides the U.S. with a triple-digit-billion-dollar defense budget, has seen its profile on the world stage rise with each yuan invested in its military might. "China's defense spending has grown five-fold over the past two decades, jumping from \$50 billion in 2001 to \$270 billion in 2021. This has had a significant impact on the balance of military power globally, but especially within China's neighborhood. In 2000, China was the second-

largest defense spender in the Indo-Pacific, behind Japan. In 2021, China spent more on defense than the next 13 Indo-Pacific economies combined" (*ChinaPower*).



**“Each generation will not pass their ‘war habits’ to the next. At Christ’s Return, a world-ruling supergovernment will be established.”**

Imagine if the world's wealth was instead earmarked for productive uses. Recall Eisenhower's words. How many starving mouths could be fed? How many people's thirst could be satisfied by clean, drinkable water? How many educational programs could be financed with these funds? How many cures for debilitating diseases could be discovered?

Imagine the possibilities...

### “Neither Shall They Learn War”

We read the Bible prophet Isaiah proclaiming the end of war. The United Nations yearns so much for this God-inspired vision that the organization adopted it to represent their goal. In fact, Isaiah 2:4 is inscribed into a wall across from the UN headquarters in New York City. A statue of a man beating his sword into a plowshare also stands at the UN complex.

A description of the bronze man reads, "This is called 'Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares' and...represents the figure of a man holding a hammer in one hand and, in the other, a sword which he is making into a plowshare, symbolizing man's desire to put an end to war and convert the means of destruction into creative tools for the benefit of all mankind."

Although this scripture is well-known, how many actually believe it?

Contrary to what most believe, the Bible explains that a day is coming when human beings will no longer "learn war." Each generation will not pass their "war habits" to the next. At Christ's Return, a world-ruling supergovernment will be established. Countries will be taught to not "lift up" their swords—or militaries—against other countries! Nations will no longer compete against one another for money and resources. The spirit of selfishness that has long existed will be replaced with one of selflessness. Peace will break out across all nations. Mankind will seek the knowledge of the right way to live.

Lethal weapons ("swords" and "spears") will be forged into productive tools ("plowshares" and "pruninghooks"). These instruments will then be used to provide food through a vast worldwide agricultural program. World hunger will end. Amos 9:13 describes the resulting abundance of food: "Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine..."

In fact, as part of the new anti-war policy, *all* weapons will be

destroyed. Ezekiel 39 provides one example of what will be done during Christ's reign: "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and *burn the weapons*, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall *burn them with fire seven years*: so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall *burn the weapons with fire*" (vs. 9-10).

Imagine the world's immense stockpiles of weapons—old and new—being destroyed and put to helpful use!

### **Darkest Before Dawn**

Isaiah 2:2-3 explains more about *when* this will happen: "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains [the Kingdom of God], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and *He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths*: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

This is the good news from God's Word!

Yet prophecy records that in the last days—our time now!—war will grow worse before it can be banned forever. As the saying goes, the darkest hour is just before dawn. The briefest look around in our society shows time must be short.

Jesus said of the time immediately before His Return: "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars... for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:6-7, 21-22). War is an inseparable part of this bleak future.

Those who survive the catastrophic events of the end-time will be so war-weary that they will be willing to submit to God's ways and choose peace.

### **"Way of Peace"**

During this prophesied time, mankind will replace its failed ways with *God's* ways. The world will at last discover what God calls the "way of peace" in Isaiah: "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes therein shall not know peace" (59:8).

The apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 59 in Romans 3:17: "And the way of peace have they not known."

The context of this verse brings more insight into how God views man's ways: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are *swift to shed blood* [how true of man's nature]: *destruction and misery* are in their ways: and *the way of peace have they not known*: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (vs. 10-18).

This *way of peace* has not been taught in the classrooms or institutions of the world. Instead, we have learned hatred toward our fellow man. Mankind, cut off from its Creator, and never coming to the revealed knowledge of how to live, has disobeyed God and reaped bad fruits. But bitter hatred will soon be replaced with love and concern for one another. Romans 13 explains how true, godly love is the ultimate solution to war: "Love works no ill [the Greek can also mean "harm" or "evil"] to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (vs. 10).

The Creator in numerous places is called the "God of *peace*" (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; I Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). His Son, Jesus Christ, is called the "Prince of *peace*" (Isa. 9:6). God will force peace on a mankind that will need to be taught the only right way to live—and will start with one generation.

### **Better World Ahead**

Once war is removed, never-before-seen progress will occur in all areas. Man's God-given creative genius will be channeled toward productive and positive means.

Vast resources will be unlocked. Human ingenuity—guided by God's Spirit—will be a thrilling sight to see! The world's best minds will be put to work fixing problems. Cities will be cleaned up. Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the right way to live (Isa. 11:9). New and better farming programs will be created. Effective and right educational systems will be instituted.

Think of the possibilities. The incredible brain drain that is war will finally be gone!

Besides exciting productivity breaking out in all nations, universal happiness will exist. As the psalmist wrote, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psa. 126:5). The prophet Zechariah records: "Thus says the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (8:4-5).

To learn more about how man will finally find lasting peace, request our free booklet *How World Peace Will Come!* ([rcg.org/hwppwc](http://rcg.org/hwppwc)). It brings the big picture—and the truth!—about how war will soon be abolished.

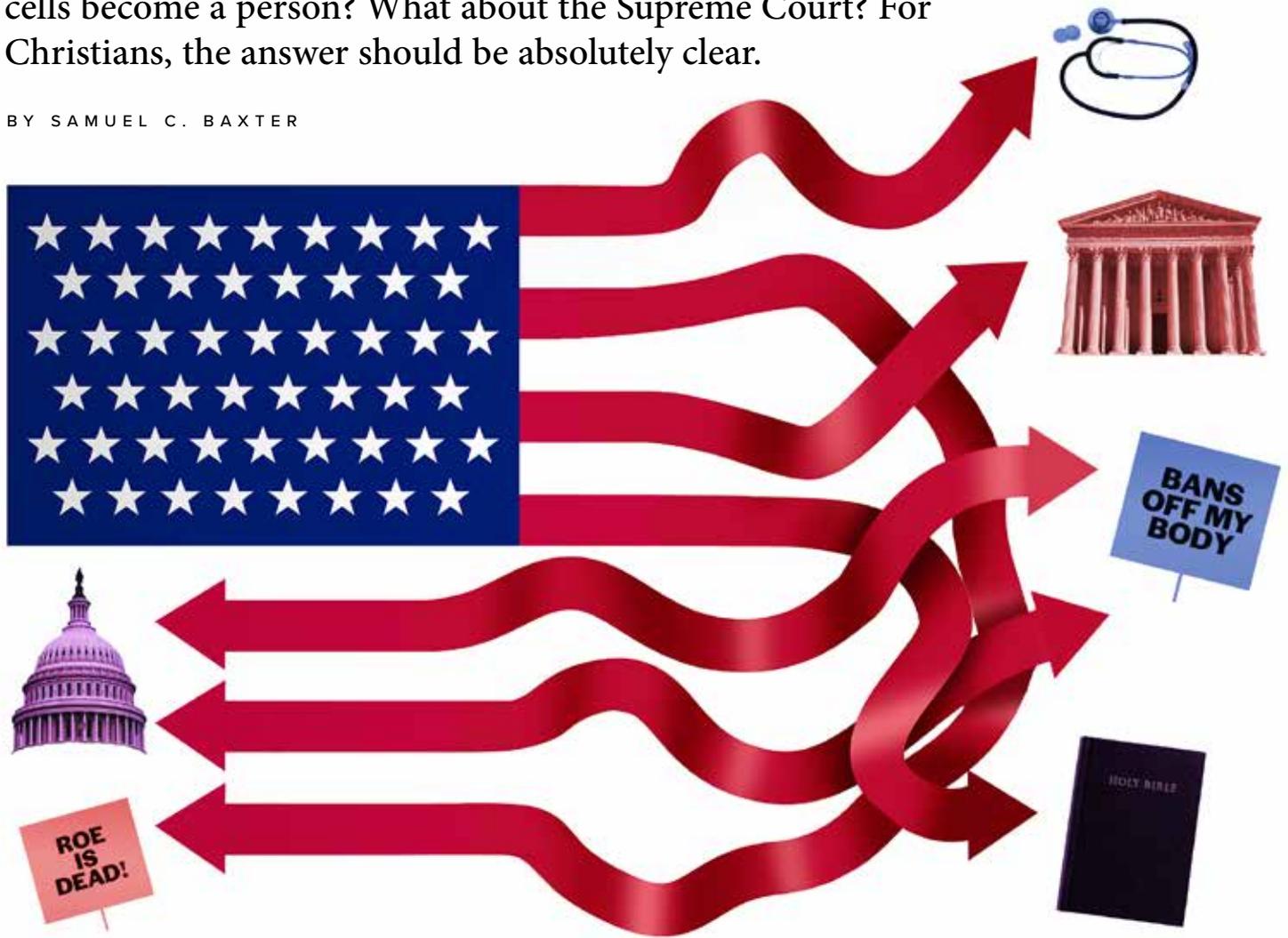
Although hundreds of generations have been addicted to war, one will soon raise the banner of peace for all future generations.

God speed that day! □

# Who Settles the Abortion Debate?

Should scientists tell us when life begins? Or bioethicists when cells become a person? What about the Supreme Court? For Christians, the answer should be absolutely clear.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER



**W**HY IS the abortion discussion so complicated? God clearly values life. The first thing He told Adam and Eve to do was “be fruitful and multiply.” “Thou shall not kill” is the sixth commandment. And He calls Himself a Father—so families are important to Him.

Yet here we are. The Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*—the land-

mark 1973 decision that made abortion legal across the United States—and the response was elation, horror and everything in between. Everything—even among Christian denominations.

“I recognize there are people on both sides of the question in the Catholic Church,” said Baltimore Archbishop William Lori, who chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’

Committee on Pro-Life Activities. “What we are finding though is that when people become more aware of what the church is doing to assist women in difficult pregnancies... hearts and minds begin to change.”

Many evangelical Christian leaders welcomed the decision, including Bart Barber, newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the

nation's largest Protestant denomination. Southern Baptists "rejoice at the ruling," he said.

The Supreme Court ruling of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* stated that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion. The move gives states the right to regulate the practice.

The decision—expected to lead to sweeping abortion bans in more than 20 states—was decried by other mainline Protestant leaders, including Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. "I am deeply grieved," he said.

The United Church of Christ, a staunch supporter of abortion rights since 1971 as a part of their Justice and Witness Ministry, responded with a joint statement by their general ministers: "Today's Supreme Court decision...discarding nearly 50 years of precedent, will endanger the lives and well-being of birthing people who do not choose to continue pregnancy. God loves and cares for people who have abortions, and so does the United Church of Christ."

Troy Newman, president of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue took the prospect of complete abortion bans an entirely different way. Many feel the same as him: "Half the states will now become abortion free and millions of innocent lives will be spared from the barbaric practice of abortion. This is a human rights victory beyond all others and justifies the decades of tireless work by selfless pro-life individuals and organizations," he said in a statement.

Rather than settle the abortion debate, the Supreme Court move has done the exact opposite, with each side digging in its heels. Pro-life backers are ready for more laws in line with their cause and pro-abortion supporters are ready to fight tooth and nail.

Jacqui Lewis, senior minister at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City, summed up the pro-abortion movement in a tweet: "This court has no legitimacy. We will not live by this decision."

The issue of abortion is incredibly visceral for most everyone. Christians on both sides are throwing heated words while they back their stances with scientific, legal and ethical arguments. Most are ready to take political action.

Yet the back-and-forth arguing does nothing to end the abortion debate. And the Supreme Court decision has only stoked the flames. Abortion-related clashes and violence are on the rise. On August 6, Pro-abortion protesters attempted to enter a Catholic church in New York City—shouting that the parishioners were Nazis. And pro-lifers regularly target abortion clinics. A masked woman set fire to a planned clinic in late May in Casper, Wyoming.

**“The issue of abortion is incredibly visceral for most everyone. Christians on both sides are throwing heated words while they back their stances with scientific, legal and ethical arguments. Most are ready to take political action.”**

The vitriol and violence can make us all feel that enough is enough.

Something is seriously wrong here. Amid all the fruitless debate, few stop to ask: What does God think of this bitter divide?

#### **Can Christ Be Divided?**

The apostle Paul answered emphatically in I Corinthians 1: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but [that] you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (vs. 10).

Regarding abortion, no one is speaking the same thing. The quotes you just read make this abundantly clear.

Division is not what God wants. Paul drove his point home in verse 13: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?"

As absurd as it is to think that Paul was the savior of mankind, so it is to think that Christ is divided. The Body of Christ—God's Church—cannot hold on to conflicting beliefs. The Bible states this!

Yet the picture of today is this: Division and debate, with both sides culpable.

Now read Romans 1:29, which lists some of the sinful works of the flesh: "fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate..."

Debate is listed here next to murder. Both are abhorrent to God. He says He is "not the author of confusion, but of peace" (I Cor. 14:33). And Paul said everything done by the Church should be done "decently and in order" (vs. 40).

So why all this disagreement and bickering among those who proclaim to follow Christ?

#### **Another Problem**

Whether they know it or not, pro-life and pro-abortion Christians agree on one thing. They both are in favor of using man's political systems to enact what they see as "God's will."

David Rhoades, lead pastor of Broadview Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, said in an email that the court decision was on a par with the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, and will reverberate for years.

He hoped church members left Sunday's service after the *Dobbs* decision with a clear understanding of what they must do next, including "minister to both the baby and its mother, and continue to work to elect pro-life representatives."

A statement from Adam Greenway, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said: “We must urge legislators to protect the unborn, and we must provide compassionate support for women that will help them choose life.”

During a service after the ruling at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, director of music Mary Pratt read aloud a denominational statement affirming it would remain “committed to reproductive justice.”

As with division and debate, there is a huge problem with using the political arena to make a religious point. Again, we turn to the words of Christ.

Just before Jesus’ crucifixion, Pontius Pilate asked the Savior if He was a king. His answer: “My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, *then would My servants fight*, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36).

Jesus said His Kingdom had not arrived. It is the same today. If it were here now, then it would look like this: “Of the increase of [God’s] government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:7).

Clearly the world is not experiencing conditions of endless peace and perfect equity. It is quite the opposite.

So if God’s Kingdom is not here on Earth, then Christians are not to intervene in political affairs.

The Lord’s Prayer adds to this. We are to pray, “Your kingdom come.” Why would Jesus tell us to pray this if the Kingdom were already here?

No Kingdom of God on Earth. No trying to change the governments of this world.

Finally, Revelation 11:15 points to a future time after many climactic events occur. At that time, God’s Kingdom will be fully established: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms

of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

Christians follow Christ. He clearly stated that we should not fight to change this present evil world. Rather we are to live in it and not be of it.

Ending an unwanted pregnancy is clearly wrong. Yet that does not mean you should lobby lawmakers or help a state senate pen a bill that then goes before the Supreme Court—as is what happened with the Dobbs decision.

Both pro-life and pro-abortion groups go sideways on this point. To them, the government is seen as the answer to lock in certain rights that align with the doctrines of their churches.

## **“Ending an unwanted pregnancy is clearly wrong. Yet that does not mean you should lobby lawmakers or help a state senate pen a bill...”**

See the many problems here? Christianity in the U.S. is utterly divided. Both sides want to use man’s governments to end the debate. But that will never work. It did not work 50 years ago when Roe v. Wade happened, nor is it going to work now.

Pro-lifers often quote Jeremiah 1:5 showing that God knew the prophet in the womb. Yet they never quote that Jeremiah also says that “man cannot direct his steps” (10:23).

Man cannot direct his steps—cannot govern himself. Do not lose sight of this. Yet the Bible says so much more to frame the subject of abortion.

### **Wrong Focus**

Contentious topics such as abortion always center on the wrong things. The arguments focus on what should be

done if a 13-year-old girl is pregnant from rape or incest. Or what to do if a woman is certain to die unless an abortion is performed. This article is *not* about such tragic instances.

Keep God’s perspective in mind. Deciding to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is far down the trail of sin and sinful consequences that it is not even worth arguing over. Fornication is sin (I Cor. 6:18). So is rape (Deut. 22:25). Aborting another life is the same.

The typical talking points from pro-life and pro-abortion groups do nothing to end the debate once and for all. To do that, we need to zoom out even more.

Back to Jeremiah 1:5. God sanctified Jeremiah as a prophet while he was in the womb. But read the start of the verse more carefully: “*Before* I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations.”

God knew Jeremiah *before* he was in the womb. That means, before the sperm met the egg, God knew about Jeremiah.

Huh? This can be difficult to wrap our minds around. Other Bible verses help bring clarity.

Ephesians 1:4 states: “According as He has chosen us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

God selected individuals before the foundation of the world. Let that sink in. This verse means what it says: God foreknew certain individuals before Earth existed. This shows He has been planning and working for millennia on His plan for mankind.

This plan is further laid out in verse 5: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” (This does not mean we lack free will. Read the personal “Has Your Life Been Predetermined?” in this issue for a fuller picture.)

Romans 8:15 adds to this: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Keep things simple here. God is expanding His Family by adding sons and daughters.

### From the Beginning

Go back to the first page of the Bible. God states His purpose for mankind on Earth—and it puts an end to the abortion debate.

God said this in Genesis 1: “Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (vs. 26).

The Creator wanted to add beings to His Family, which is why verse 27 states: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”

Now notice the very first thing God told Adam and Eve: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...” (vs. 28).

Human beings were made in God’s image. They were commanded by Him to multiply so that He would have more children.

The expansion of God’s spiritual Family is mirrored by physical families. God even uses the physical process of conception, gestation and birth to type being born into this divine Family.

Jesus explained this to Nicodemus in John 3:2-5, when he “came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

“Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

While the process of being born physically and born again spiritually are separate, both are sacred to God. Both are crucial for His master plan for all mankind.

God is working with individuals spiritually. He also is creating life physically. Remember, God said He formed Jeremiah in the womb. It is not a stretch to say He is the one forming every single child.

David added to this in Psalm 139: “You formed my inward parts. You wove me in my mother’s womb” (vs. 13).

Would you want to get in the way of God’s personal handiwork? Would you want to get in the way of His master plan?

### God’s Timing

The Bible shows God has a timeline to work with everyone who has ever lived. He is working with certain individuals now, with many others later.

This understanding helps clarify other challenging verses about God. You could think: Why did He command Israel to kill entire cities?

Deuteronomy 20:16-17 says this: “But of the cities of these people, which the LORD your God does give you for an inheritance, you *shall save alive nothing that breathes*: but you shall utterly destroy them...as the LORD your God has commanded you.”

God told Israel to leave alive “nothing that breathes.” The previous verses make clear this includes man, woman, young and old. This would also have included pregnant women.

What was God doing? Is He a monster?

God was working closely at the time with ancient Israel and longed for the nation to stay away from heathen practices.

This had an important purpose back then—and our fair and loving God will work with all of those killed at a later time. The Bible shows resurrections will occur when individuals can learn God’s Way and stop their wrong ways of living.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:28-29: “For the hour is coming, in the which *all that*

*are in the graves* shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in the Old Testament for wickedness. Yet they will come up and have a chance to receive eternal life and be born into the God Family.

Luke 10:12 shows they will receive a period of time before a judgment: “But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.”

The Queen of Sheba, who visited King Solomon, will also come back: “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (vs. 31).

So too will the men of ancient Nineveh: “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah...” (vs. 32).

Also realize that every aborted child will be given a life they were robbed of in this life.

### Your Kingdom Come

The Supreme Court did not do anything moral. It just kicked the decision to the states. Pro-lifers in those states will continue to work to enact their view of abortion. It will be the same for social justice pro-choicers.

Again, Christ said His Kingdom is not yet of this world. The key word is *yet*. But it will soon be! At that time, the complicated and convoluted debate surrounding abortion will be a thing of the past. God will make utterly clear His plan and there will be no divisions in the world.

His government will have laws completely in line with His ways. No one will have to work fruitlessly and hypocritically in an attempt to get it.

God will end the abortion debate. And His Family will expand for eternity. □

# MAGIC, HORROR AND THE OCCULT

## *Why the Attraction?*

Dark-themed entertainment is wildly popular. Yet most never consider the source of this fascination.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**A** “SLASHER” FILM is revived 25 years after its first installment. The filmmakers hoped to capitalize on the \$740 million grossed on the franchise’s four previous films. Another streaming network series about siblings forced back to the haunted house where they grew up to confront ghosts of the past is ranked among the top 10 “Creepiest Shows in TV History.”

Movie titles such as *Halloween Kills*, *Army of the Dead*, and *Demonic* leave no doubt as to their gruesome plotlines.

It does not stop with adults. Several movies and series target teens, incorporating clowns, babysitting, “truth or dare,” social media, and other youthful themes. In *Sweet Home*, teens heroically battle humans-turned-monsters, betraying the series’ innocent-sounding title.

Another macabre series resurrects classic literary characters, retelling their stories with severed limbs, blood and gore—all to the delight of a frightened audience. Undoubtedly, dark-themed entertainment in the form of

movies, books, television shows, and video games, is here to stay.

Publishing houses and film studios have turned this pop-culture phenomenon into a multibillion-dollar industry. Take vampires, for example. *DailyFinance* estimates that movies, television series, books, magazines and costumes for fanged “creatures of the night” constitute at least a \$10 billion industry in the United States. Enough vampire movies have been filmed over the decades to fill several “best and worst movies of



all time” lists. For audiences worldwide, this sort of entertainment has an unmistakable draw.

A common reason for the interest in dark storylines appears innocent on its face: “It’s entertaining.” Other factors include the pull of romance, endearing characters, or the thrill of the chase.

Yet the draw for the horror genre is more difficult to explain. McGraw-Hill Education’s *AccessScience* attempted to bring a psychological answer to why audiences enjoy watching

gruesome events unfold: “Researchers have identified various motives for viewing horror films, including the need for excitement, the desire to feel intense emotions, and distraction from everyday concerns. Although dramatic films can fulfill some of these needs, movies depicting violence and horror have features that other forms of drama do not, including the violation of social norms and the portrayal of events seldom seen in real life.

“People rarely view horror films alone...For many young people and

adults, horror films are a topic of conversation, a source of shared experience, and a means of self-presentation. Not everyone will like the blood and gore, but many may continue to watch because of other goals, such as demonstrating their ability to tolerate it, or the desire to master the threatening images.”

Scientists call this the “horror paradox”: While fear and disgust are negative emotions, moviegoers flock to theaters for the latest slasher flick, skin-crawling ghost story, or paranormal monster tale.

Stop and think. Why do so many willingly watch grotesque killings? Why are vampires and zombies so interesting? What motivates the desire to sit through 90-plus minutes of grisly images?

A connection runs through these plot lines—the occult. *Collins English Dictionary* defines it as “characteristic of magical, mystical, or supernatural arts, phenomena, or influences,” “beyond ordinary human understanding,” and “secret or esoteric.”

The few stories that do not involve mysticism or the supernatural exhibit the darkest sides of human nature, such as the inner workings of a psychopathic killer’s mind.

This sort of entertainment demonstrates an innate human attraction to the mysterious, secret and unknown. It reveals a deep desire to have knowledge “beyond ordinary human understanding.” But why?

### Nothing New

Looking through history, this is not a passing fad. The Brothers Grimm recorded extremely dark folk tales in the 1800s. Edgar Allan Poe penned paranormal short stories and poems around the same time.

These themes often have ties to religion. Greek mythology is chock-full of magical beasts such as centaurs, the Minotaur, and the snake-haired Medusa. In Japan, a shape-shifting fox-like trickster known as *kitsune* permeates folklore, as do stories of ghosts and demons. The voodoo

religion also claims interaction with supernatural powers.

Many other ancient pagan religions went to great lengths to connect with the “spirit realm.” For example, classic-era Maya royalty used bloodletting, drugs and human sacrifice to attempt to commune with the universe. Similar accounts of going to extremes can be found in nearly every ancient culture: Rome, Babylon, Egypt, etc.

This desire to understand the unknown can be found throughout the historical record of the Bible as well. The prophets of Baal attempted to reach their god through bloodletting (I Kgs. 18:28). Israel’s King Saul visited a witch at Endor in an attempt to summon the dead (I Sam. 28:7). King Manasseh of Judah sacrificed his son to the god Molech (II Kgs. 21:6). Also, Pharaoh’s court magicians used sorcery during the 10 plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7).

The early apostles ran into a man who was involved with witchcraft in the New Testament book of Acts: “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (Acts 8:9-11).

All of the above practices had roots in an ancient Babylonish mystery religion described in Revelation 17:5. And this same belief system was practiced by Simon the sorcerer. Adherents to it claimed that they had secret knowledge and spiritual power—often brought about by dark practices.

In the West today, actual bloodletting and human sacrifice seem to be barbaric acts. Yet many eagerly enjoy watching such practices in the form of motion pictures and fiction books.

### Mind Versus Brain

The innate human desire to understand the unknown not only manifests

itself through modern religions, but also through occult- and paranormal-themed entertainment.

The Bible provides a meticulously detailed map of human nature and explains exactly *why* mankind has an intense interest in spiritual things. The beginnings of an answer come from the book of Job: “But *there is a spirit in man*: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (32:8).

Many jump on this passage as a proof text for their argument of the immortal soul belief. Yet this is not the case. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated “soul” is *nephesh*, which simply denotes a living, breathing being. Every animal labeled a “living creature” in Genesis 1 uses the same Hebrew word.

Man does not have a soul—he *is* one. It is due to this “spirit in man” that the human mind is so vastly superior to animals in intellect and ingenuity, and possesses near-limitless creative power.

When one understands that the human brain *contains* a spirit, mankind’s intense desire to seek out and understand the supernatural begins to make sense.

### Conflicting Wavelengths

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, further explains the spiritual component of the human mind. Adam and Eve were given a choice between two trees (Gen. 2:9): “the tree of life,” representing access to the Spirit of God—and “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Most consider this story the stuff of Hebrew myth and folklore. But it helps provide the *only* full explanation for the attraction to dark-themed entertainment.

The first man and woman did not choose the tree of life: “Now the serpent [Satan] was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the

trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. 3:1-6).

Due to this choice, Adam and Eve were cut off from God’s Spirit working with the “spirit in man” (vs. 24).

By reading I Corinthians 2, this fact takes on further significance for all of mankind: “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?”—the spirit of man allows for self-awareness and creative genius—“even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God” (vs. 11).

Take this verse at face value: Man cannot know godly spiritual knowledge without “the Spirit of God.” The human mind was created to have a grander spiritual connection. The Creator intended each individual to have the Holy Spirit *working with* the spirit of man in order to achieve his fullest potential.

When God’s Spirit works within the human mind, it brings forth the fruit of good character listed in Galatians: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (5:22-23).

Yet remember the decision in the Garden of Eden. There was a choice between two paths. If Adam and Eve rejected one spiritual connection, they would have necessarily had to choose a different wavelength—a different spirit—since there were only two options: “Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power*

of the air [Satan], the *spirit* that now works in the *children of disobedience*” (Eph. 2:2).

The spirit of man is either influenced by the Holy Spirit or Satan’s “spirit that *now works in* the children of disobedience.”

Being tuned into Satan’s wavelength has a profound effect on human nature: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, *witchcraft*, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, *murders*, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Gal. 5:19-21).

This is a list of characteristics that are part of human *nature*—“the works of the flesh.” This means people are *naturally* drawn to these works, including *witchcraft* and murder. This is what makes horror novels, movies about serial killers, and occult-heavy video games so attractive.

Human nature also tends toward extremes. Look at the horror genre. What used to be based almost solely on suspense and the thrill of the chase now includes graphic depictions of madmen methodically torturing their victims. Of course, this is always brimming with extreme close-ups of each tear of flesh and squirt of blood. Many of these titles feature scenes that are unspeakable (Eph. 5:12). As time goes on, these titles must necessarily become *increasingly* explicit and *more* depraved. Each subsequent movie *must* outdo the one before it in scares and gore.

In addition, the nature of man exchanges darkness for light. Over the past decade there has been a substantial push by the entertainment industry to depict villains with fringe mindsets in normal, everyday situations. The audience is put in the shoes of a likable serial killer. Vampires are no longer evil—they are the “good kind” that only drink animal blood. Witches and wizards are now just awkward teenagers growing up. The intent is to turn the paranormal into *normal*. The villain into the hero.

Darkness into light. The Bible condemns this thinking: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that *put darkness for light, and light for darkness*; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20).

Lastly, man’s nature seeks after the twisted and bizarre. This fact can be seen throughout dark-themed entertainment, in which authors and filmmakers push themselves to come up with the most macabre and warped images imaginable.

### **Incredible Alternative**

Satan counterfeits all Bible truths, including how God intends to work with the spirit in man. Humans were created in the “image and likeness” of a *Creator* who deemed everything He made as “very good” (Gen. 1:26, 31). Unlike any animal, mankind has taken on this trait—the ability to *create*.

God wants all of mankind to be endowed with His Holy Spirit, build His character, and use the human mind to invent, build and construct things that are “very good”—including right forms of entertainment. He always pushes for excellence and the highest quality.

Satan, on the other hand, instigates artists to always *push* the envelope, to be *more* extreme, and *delve deeply* into chaos, disorder, twisted spiritism—and all things “dark.”

God also designed man to have a connection with His Spirit and to be taught right knowledge through it. References to His “mysteries” are found throughout the Bible. Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10 mention the “mysteries of the kingdom.” Romans 16 states, “Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to *the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began*” (vs. 25).

In contrast, the devil has counterfeited this interest in a mysterious spirit realm through occult-themed entertainment and *mystery* religions that demand blind faith.

There is a huge difference between Satan’s counterfeits and God’s truth. The Creator always explains His truths in clear and logical language. In the end, His spiritual knowledge is both incredibly exciting and plainly understood. Not one doctrine within the Bible’s pages is inexplicable or needs to be irrationally believed. Notice Daniel 2: “He [God] *reveals the deep and secret things*: He knows what is in the darkness, and the *light dwells with Him*” (vs. 22).

The pinnacle of God’s “mysteries” is the purpose for mankind. *Real Truth* editor-in-chief David C. Pack sets up this topic in the introduction to his book *The Awesome Potential of Man*: “The very greatest question is ‘Does God have a master plan?’ and, if so, what is it? The answer is that He does, and it carries many exciting details—all of which you can know. You will learn that God’s purpose is immutable, that it cannot be overthrown or defeated.

“You can also know of *your place* within it. In fact, if you read this entire book, you soon will.

“This volume answers every one of the most important questions that should be on your mind, including many others you would not know to ask—but need to understand. None of the answers are what you expect. Neither are they what ‘educated’ so-called ‘scholars and theologians’ teach, because none can teach what *they* were never taught—what they never learned.

“You were put on Earth to fulfill an astonishing purpose—you hold a potential far surpassing your very *greatest expectations*. Prepare now to be shocked at what it is—and inspired beyond your wildest imagination!”

Read the rest of *The Awesome Potential of Man* ([rcg.org/tapom](http://rcg.org/tapom)) to understand your incredible human purpose. Within its pages, it shows how God “reveals the deep and secret things” throughout the Bible, and proves He wants “the light that dwells with Him” to also dwell within you. □

# POPE CALLS OUT TRADITIONALISTS

## *The Catholic Culture War Heats Up*

Pope Francis has complained that traditionalist Catholics, particularly in the United States, are “gagging” the church’s modernizing reforms. Even so, he insisted there is no turning back.

**A**LL OVER the United States, new parish policies are giving conventional Catholics some grief.

In line with Pope Francis’ desire to crack down on the spread of traditional rites, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., will ban the use of old Latin Mass in parishes this fall.

The diocese in the U.S. capital is following those of other areas that have also left the Latin liturgy behind, including Chicago, Cincinnati and Denver.

“The change follows a ruling last year in which Pope Francis severely limited the use of the old rite, in a move he said was meant to increase global unity among the faithful,” *The Washington Post* reported. “He suggested then that those who preferred the Latin Mass were using it to reinforce ideological divisions within the church.”

Yet division has deepened amid rocky rhetoric between the camps favoring old and new.

“There can be no unity when the cardinal fires the first shot and everybody then is expected to drive from wherever they were, at a parish, to a location that’s nowhere near them,” Kenneth Wolfe, who has attended the Latin Mass in Washington for more than two decades, told the news outlet.

The pope himself delivered a blow to traditionalist Catholics, particularly in the U.S., by saying they are respon-

sible for “gagging” the church’s modernizing reforms.

Francis told a gathering of Jesuit editors that he was convinced some Catholics simply have never accepted the Second Vatican Council, the meetings of the 1960s that led to Mass being celebrated in the vernacular rather than Latin and revolutionized the church’s relations with people of other faiths, among other things.

“The number of groups of ‘restorers’—for example, in the United States there are many—is significant,” Francis told the editors, according to excerpts published by the Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

“Restorationism has come to gag the council,” he said, adding that he knew some priests for whom the 16th century Council of Trent was more memorable than the 20th century Vatican II.

Traditionalists have become some of Francis’ fiercest critics, accusing him of heresy for his opening to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, outreach to homosexual Catholics and other reforms. Francis has taken an increasingly hard line against traditionalists, re-imposing restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass and taking specific action in dioceses and religious orders where they have resisted his reforms.

The pope signaled that progressive leadership is ready for a long battle with restorers.

“It is also true that it takes a century for a council to take root. We still have forty years to make it take root, then!” he told the editors.

Traditionalists have similarly dug in their heels. Yet history shows they are fighting a losing battle...

### **Historical Perspective**

The Vatican has a long history of reversals and changes. Once ironclad rules have often been tossed out or softened.

A *Foreign Policy* article detailed a number of major reversals that have come from the Vatican over the years.

Original rule about usury: “Lend freely, hoping nothing thereby, the Bible teaches. Interpreted literally, this prohibition against profiting on loans played a major role in the creation of the European credit markets during the Middle Ages. Bankers had to devise methods of profiting from moneylending without directly charging interest.”

This rule fell by the wayside during the Renaissance when European capitalism took over—as charging interest is a mainstay of the modern financial system.

Original rule on slavery: “No less an authority than St. Augustine said

that Jesus Christ did not make men free from being slaves. As late as 1860, the church taught that it was not a sin to own another human being so long as the slave was treated humanely.”

The church did not take a firm stance against slavery until it was largely forbidden in the West. While Pope Gregory XVI first criticized the practice in 1839, it was not until Leo XIII, the first 20th-century pope, that the Vatican declared slavery a moral outrage.

Original rule about Mass: “Traditionally, Catholic Mass was celebrated in the original Latin, with priests facing away from congregants. More generally, the institutions of the church maintained a level of distance from both followers and the modern world as a whole.”

During the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, it was decided to allow Mass to be celebrated in local languages. The council also began a number of initiatives including greater dialogue with other faiths and more decentralization of authority from the Vatican to local districts.

Original rule on limbo: “In traditional Catholic theology, limbo is the halfway point between heaven and hell where the unbaptized, including infants, go after death. Even though they had committed no sins, such people had not been cleansed of the original sin through baptism.”

Parishioners never really latched onto the idea of limbo and it was rarely discussed from the pulpit. *Foreign Policy* wrote: “In 2004, John Paul II formed a commission to come up with a more coherent and enlightened way of describing what happens to infants who die. In 2007, Benedict signed a report recommending the concept be dropped. Instead of going to limbo, unbaptized babies would enjoy eternal happiness after death, but would not achieve communion with God.”

#### What Everyone Misses

This all brings out important questions for Catholics and Protestants alike: Should Christianity change with the times? Using modern technology

and equipment is a given. Yet what about doctrines? Should those adapt as well?

In the culture war of modern Christianity, there is one thing rarely mentioned—if at all. That is what the Bible *actually* says.

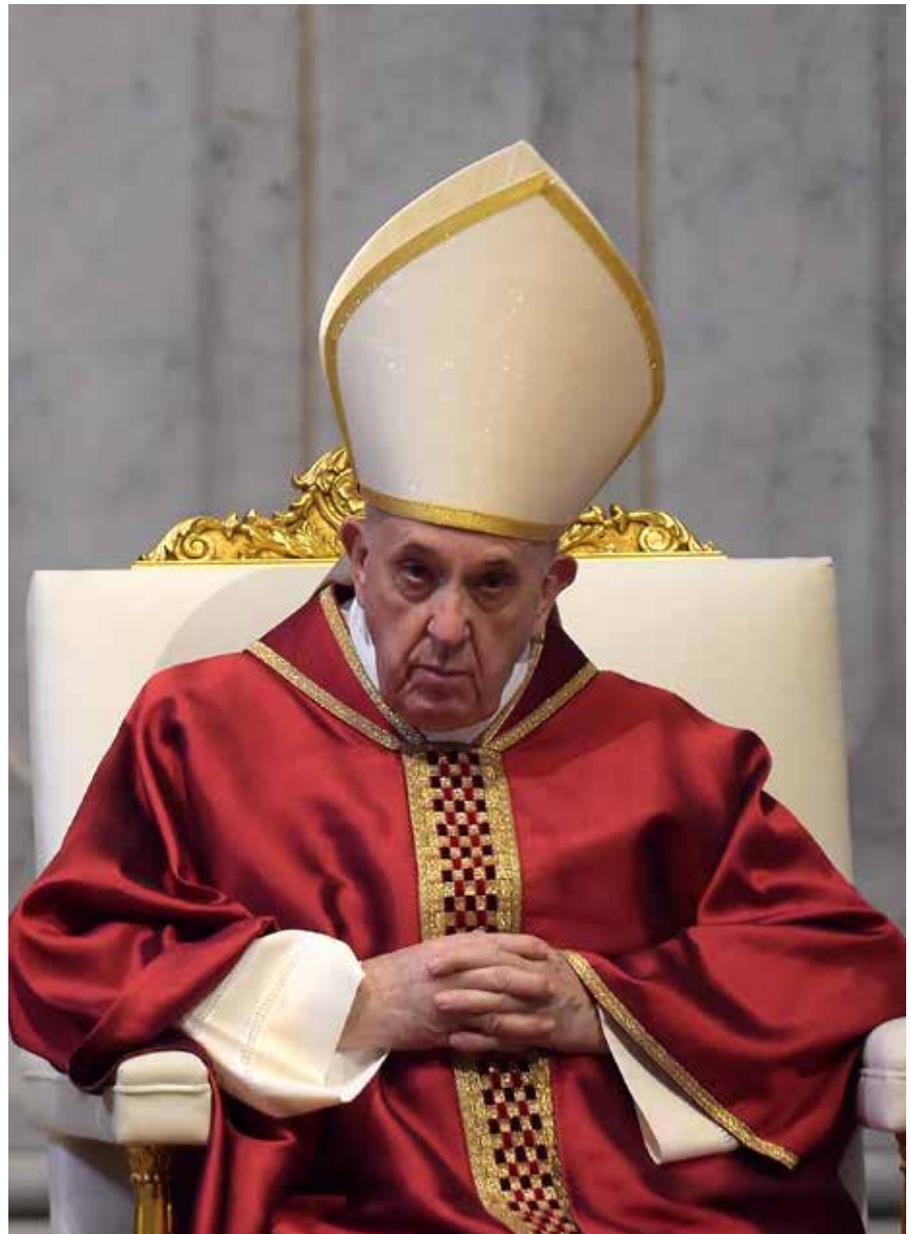
Every churchgoer owes it to themselves to stop and look at God’s Word. Then, they should take a long, hard look at the churches of today. Do these “houses of worship” and their leadership match up to what the Bible says?

Look at what Jesus Christ declared: “But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9). Mark 7:7 says the same thing.

A lot of the arguments among modern church leaders are over this: the commandments of men. These are ideas that have no biblical backing.

The celibate priesthood is one example. Notice what I Timothy 3:2 states:

Please see **POPE**, page 28



Pope Francis presides over the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord at St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City (April 10, 2020).

VATICAN POOL - CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

# Digestive Health: Are Supplements the Solution?



**Y**OUR BODY CONTAINS various major systems that must function well to experience good health. Of these, the digestive system is crucial. It is through this intricate system that nutrients from the foods you eat are transferred into your blood and to every cell throughout your body.

Think of each step in the digestive process as continually breaking down food to be used at the blood and cellular levels. Once vital nutrients are extracted, any remaining waste is eliminated.

As we age, our ability to break down foods and absorb nutrients begins to slow. Most people have come to accept the resulting effects of this: heartburn, bloating, constipation and irritation of the digestive tract.

Many look to ease discomfort through use of short-term over-the-

counter medications. Think of the “pink stuff” that coats your stomach, fizzy tablets dropped into water, and handfuls of chewable, rainbow-colored antacid tablets.

Americans in increasing numbers are resorting to supplements to manage their digestive health. In its 2021 Consumer Survey on Dietary Supplements, the Council for Responsible Nutrition found that 4 out of every 5 Americans use supplements for dietary purposes—a record high.

Are supplements all it takes to improve your digestive health?

## **Widespread Problem**

The problem of poor digestive health has reached staggering levels. Consider three of the most well-known issues: heartburn, constipation and gastroesophageal reflux disease.

The industry for products to treat heartburn symptoms is a substantial over-the-counter medicine category in the United States. According to the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, over \$2.1 billion worth of heartburn-related products were sold in 2021.

Constipation, which is infrequent or difficult bowel waste elimination, has also become a major issue in the U.S. The *American Journal of Gastroenterology* reported that 9 to 20 percent of adults in the U.S. experience chronic constipation. Pain, hemorrhoids and vomiting can result from extended periods of non-elimination.

People often confuse GERD with heartburn. Though they are related, GERD is a more severe form of reflux. While heartburn is a frequent symptom, other symptoms of GERD include:

- Regurgitation of food or sour-tasting liquid
- Coughing, wheezing and difficulty swallowing
- Severe chest pain while lying down

According to the National Institute of Health, GERD affects about 20 percent of Americans.

### How the System Works

To help prevent digestive problems, you need basic knowledge of how a normally functioning gastrointestinal tract works.

Think of the tract as a hollow tube running through the middle of your body. It is where the initial steps of digestion begin.

The process starts in the mouth: Food is mixed with saliva and systematically broken down by chewing it into smaller pieces. The semi-liquefied food is then swallowed and brought into the stomach. There it is further broken down by powerful stomach acids and enzymes.

Food then proceeds to the small intestine where probiotics (“friendly” bacteria lining the intestines) continue breaking it down so that it is small enough to be carried to every cell in the body.

When functioning properly, the system can handle almost all that passes through it.

Take for instance the digestive health of teenagers. They can eat rich, fatty foods or sugary, carbonated drinks without facing as many consequences as those in their 50s or 60s. That is because, as our bodies age, so do our digestive pipes. They can eventually lose the powerful stomach acids, healthy probiotic bacteria, and digestive enzymes that enhance the body’s ability to break down foods.

When this happens, negative symptoms appear—heartburn, upset stomach, constipation. These are all signs of malfunction in the body’s digestive process.

To illustrate the impact of a failure in the digestive process, consider what occurs in the stomach. Imagine squishing a meal of roasted chicken, vegetables, brown rice and salad inside a

large Ziploc bag and placing it outside on a slab of concrete on a hot sunny day. (This is analogous to food sitting for several hours in the near 100-degree environment of the stomach.)

In as little as 30 minutes, the plastic bag of food would start to bloat and swell as gases released by bacteria build up inside. Since there was no liquid inside the container, the food would take longer to break down and would eventually rot.

This pictures what takes place in the stomach when it lacks sufficient helpful digestive acids and enzymes to break down food.

### Practical Tips

To improve your digestive health, supplements can play a role. Probiotic supplements and digestive enzyme supplements are beneficial in some circumstances.

However, these are not to be treated as a cure-all for digestive ailments. According to *Everydayhealth.com*: “A report published in February 2019 in *The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology* stated that while 3.9 million people in the United States regularly take probiotic supplements, these supplements can vary in their effectiveness, since those sold as dietary supplements do not require approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Probiotic supplements can be quite different in their strains of bacteria and dosing, making them difficult to compare.”

If you choose to take supplements to help address digestive health issues, be sure to do your own research and, if necessary, speak with a health professional before deciding what or how much to take.

Carrie Daniel-MacDougall, a nutritional epidemiologist at MD Anderson who studies diet, stated on the research center’s website, “I think supplements are popular because we want a quick fix.” She added, “We’re hoping that a pill can fix everything. Unfortunately, that’s not the case.”

Supplements alone will not cure or prevent problems. No one would sug-

gest, for instance, that a person could eat the earlier-referenced teenage meal of pizza and soda every day and be fine if the right supplements were also ingested. You must also employ simple changes to your behavior that promote normal digestive function. Here are a few examples.

First, drink enough water. According to *WebMD*: “Dehydration is one of the most common causes of chronic constipation. The food you eat makes its way from your stomach to the large intestine, or colon. If you don’t have enough water in your body already, the large intestine soaks up water from your food waste. This makes you have hard stools that are difficult to pass.”

A good rule of thumb to ensure you are drinking enough is to divide your body weight (in pounds) by two. The result is the amount of water (in ounces) you should drink each day. Consider downloading a water reminder app on your smartphone to help you keep up. Meanwhile, avoid sugary, carbonated beverages, which can dehydrate the body.

The second simple change is to eat more unprocessed foods, including vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and anything that goes through minimal processing before it reaches your table. At the same time, reduce your consumption of foods that are highly processed.

Medical and nutrition experts are increasingly making the connection between the consumption of processed foods—which contain additives, preservatives and chemical ingredients—and poor health.

Also, be sure to chew your food thoroughly. Even healthy foods can cause digestive issues if not chewed properly.

By applying just these simple changes to your routine, you will notice improvements in your digestive health right away.

To learn much more about proper nutrition and other ways to attain vibrant health, read our free booklet *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* at [rcg.org/glohl](http://rcg.org/glohl). □



# Three Myths of the MODERN AGE

If you feel you are not getting enough out of life, you may be falling for one of three misconceptions that today's society believes.

**L**IFE AT the cutting-edge of technology. To many, that means having the seemingly limitless powers of the internet at our fingertips—and for our whims. We can tap into it whether we are seeking to bolster our careers or keep ourselves entertained.

But there is another picture hidden within this image that reveals something not so wonderful about life today. The daily grind that is modern society is

causing many to lose touch. Millions flit their eyes from screen to screen throughout the day. We sometimes barely even stop to look at the person next to us.

We think: *If only I could become more resourceful with my time. I could get more done. I could relax more.* We try to multitask more efficiently, but to no avail. More tasks pile up.

With this flood of information and work is a deluge of ideas that allowed

us to succumb to the rat race. Yet research shows they are nothing but hollow myths—false notions keeping us from what should be most important in our lives.

Here are three misconceptions that keep many people from making the most of their lives.

## **Myth 1: We Are All Busy**

Late nights. Early mornings. Hair-pulling stress. Cup of coffee after cup

of coffee. Tired and overworked, like a pinball bouncing between obstacles or a gerbil in a cage, spinning a wheel but never making any real progress.

Millions of Americans feel this way—completely overwhelmed, rushing from one activity to the next, one appointment to the next, one phone call to the next—with no breaks. Kids, school, work, meetings, lunch engagements, doctors, bills, exercise, groceries...it never ends.

You bump into a friend at the store and ask, “How are you doing?” They respond with, “Busy.” You nod and respond, “Same here. I’m slammed!” You both go your separate busy paths.

One writer summarized the situation this way (emphasis added): “The art of busyness is to convey *genuine alarm* at the pace of your life and a *helpless resignation*, as if someone else is setting the clock, and yet *simultaneously* make it clear that you are *completely on top of your game*” (Slate).

This balance of presenting yourself in control while also “swamped” is nearly impossible. Most find themselves falling into the “crazy busy” category. They like to think they are organized, but usually portray a frenzied picture to others.

The article continues: “These are not exactly humble brags. They are more like fretful brags, and they are increasingly becoming the idiom of our age. In her new book, *Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time*, *Washington Post* reporter Brigid Schulte calls this cultural epidemic the ‘overwhelm’...‘Always behind and always late, with one more thing and one more thing and one more thing to do before rushing out the door’...waking up in a 2 a.m. panic to run over the to-do list, and then summing up your life to your friends—in the two seconds you dedicate to seeing your friends—as ‘crazy all the time’ while they nod in agreement.”

We can all relate. But what we may not realize is that, in doing so, we breed in ourselves a sense of self-importance. A busy person is an important person. Those who do not have a lot going on must not be in demand. Having time

on our hands is often subconsciously looked down upon and seen as a sign that one is unsuccessful.

Many today are now even proud they are “busy” all the time. A researcher who Ms. Schulte tapped for her book examined the shift in words used in holiday cards over the decades. She found that people gradually began using words like “hectic,” “consumed,” “on the run,” “crazy” and “whirlwind” to portray their lives.

**“Experts recommend the first step is to stop saying you are busy all the time. This will slowly give you a feeling of control over your life.”**

The researcher “realized that busyness of a certain kind...became a mark of social status, that somewhere in the drudgery of checklists and the crumpled heaps one could detect a hint of glamour...‘People are competing about being busy,’ Burnett realized. ‘It’s about showing status. That if you’re busy, you’re important. You’re leading a full and worthy life.’”

When did the feeling of being overwhelmed by all that life throws at us turn into a badge of honor?

#### **More Leisure Time**

While we all *feel* busy, studies of Americans’ time show we have more free time available compared to previous generations.

A *CNN* article showed how much leisure time Americans truly enjoy: “It’s a common complaint: You feel like you’re working constantly, and there’s never enough time to enjoy life. But as a whole, Americans are working far less

now than they did a generation ago, and have more leisure time than ever. The average work week has gone from over 38 hours in 1964 to under 34 hours in 2013—a drop of nearly 12%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics...”

“And we’re working a *lot* less than our grandparents, great grandparents and earlier generations. The average work week for a manufacturing employee in the 1860s was 62 hours, according to a paper from Robert Whaples, an economist at Wake Forest University.”

The research also showed that Americans have more leisure time today than compared to 1965. Fifty years ago, people had around 35 hours of extra time. The number jumped to 42 hours in 2012. The American Time Use Survey for 2021 showed that the average American spent 2.9 hours *per day* watching television—and that accounted for more than half of all time spent on leisure activities.

So we are not nearly as busy as we think we are. But we still feel overwhelmed! What are we to do?

Experts recommend the first step is to stop saying you are busy all the time. This will slowly give you a feeling of control over your life. You will begin to feel that you are the captain of your own ship—that you can make choices about how you spend your time.

A *Washington Post* article offered this advice to the frantic masses: “Summing up your life as ‘busy’ doesn’t acknowledge all the good things you are doing. If you really feel like you need to sum your life up in one word, try using the words ‘active,’ ‘eventful,’ ‘involved’ or ‘lively.’ These words have a more positive [connotation] and many times it’s what you mean anyway. Before trying to figure out which responsibilities you should cut out of your life, try removing this one word [busy] from your daily conversations. It just may happen that life starts to seem a little less hectic.”

#### **Myth 2: Multitasking Is the Key to Productivity**

For decades, people have assumed that multitasking is the best way to get many things done. Hold a conversation with

someone on the phone while writing an email, sipping coffee, and looking over a new report that was just handed to you. In the modern office environment, multitasking has been the expectation for years.

Yet few stop to ask if they are *actually* getting more done by taking this approach. This is on top of asking if it is even *possible* to multitask.

The truth is our brains are unable to think about more than one thing at a time. Multitasking, therefore, is trying to do the impossible.

“I know it’s popular to think that you are multi-tasking, but the research is clear that people actually can’t multi-task,” *Psychology Today* reported.

“The research shows that people can attend to only one cognitive task at a time. You can only be thinking about one thing at a time. You can only be conducting one mental activity at a time. So you can be talking or you can be reading. You can be reading or you can be typing. You can be listening or you can be reading. One thing at a time.

“We fool ourselves—We are pretty good at switching back and forth quickly, so we **THINK** we are actually multi-tasking, but in reality we are not.”

Another article revealed this about how the brain works: “Since the 1990s, we’ve accepted multitasking without question. Virtually all of us spend part or most of our day either rapidly switching from one task to another or juggling two or more things at the same time.

“While multitasking may seem to be saving time, psychologists, neuroscientists and others are finding that it can put us under a great deal of stress and actually make us less efficient.

“Although doing many things at the same time...can be a way of making tasks more fun and energizing, ‘you have to keep in mind that you sacrifice focus when you do this,’ said Edward M. Hallowell, a psychiatrist and author of ‘CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap!’... ‘Multitasking is shifting focus from one task to another in rapid succession. It

gives the illusion that we’re simultaneously tasking, but we’re really not. It’s like playing tennis with three balls” (*The New York Times*).

Much time is lost when people endlessly switch between tasks. For example, it was discovered that people change tasks every 11 minutes, with it taking 25 minutes before they start working on their original project or task. Other research showed that multitasking causes a 40 percent drop in productivity!

The *New York Times* article concluded with the admonition to try learning the art of *singletasking*. Focus

## **“Technological advancements promise increased efficiency, more productivity, and peace of mind. Yet much has been written and debated about whether they have delivered.”**

on one thing at a time for maximum productivity and less stress.

Research proves multitasking is not possible. Those who try are fighting the way their brains were designed.

### **Myth 3: Technology Is Making Us Better**

Technological advancements promise increased efficiency, more productivity, and peace of mind. Yet much has been written and debated about whether they have delivered. While technology has certainly allowed mankind to accomplish amazing things—think of medical advancements, the wonders of the internet, vastly increased efficien-

cies—research reveals it comes with negative side effects.

For instance, it can make us more distracted and destroy our ability to focus. It also offloads our memory to devices, which dulls the mind’s powerful abilities to remember information.

While it supposedly makes us more connected to one another, many report they are more depressed and lonelier than ever through the use of social media.

An article in the British newspaper *The Daily Mail* revealed this stunning fact regarding smartphone use: “Researchers from the University of South Maine found that people were distracted by their mobile—even when it wasn’t in use. People who couldn’t see their phone scored 20 per cent higher in a test than those who could see it. Just the presence of a phone was found to severely limit reaction times. Lead author Professor [Bill Thornton, a social psychologist at the University of South Maine.] said such behaviour is typical of ‘behavioural addiction’ and ‘diminishes our ability to maintain attention.’”

The article strengthened the case that most are addicted to their phones and screens (emphasis added): “Students spend up to *ten hours* a day on their mobile phones, according to a study...Some even said they feel stressed if their phone is not in sight. A team at Baylor University in Texas found that female students spent an average of *ten hours* a day texting, emailing and on social media while their male counterparts spent *nearly eight*. Lead author James Roberts said the idea of becoming addicted to using a mobile phone was ‘an increasingly realistic possibility.’”

One study revealed that the average smartphone user checks it 150 times per day and cannot go 10 minutes without playing with the technological device.

### **Losing Empathy**

Extreme use of technology is also causing normal social graces to be abandoned faster than old software can be replaced with updates.

A *CNN* article showed that an overabundance of technology even hinders young people's ability to develop empathy: "8- to 18-year-olds on average spend 1½ hours a day using their technology. Their brains have become 'wired' to use their tech gadgets effectively in order to multi-task—staying connected with friends, texting and searching online endlessly, often exposing their brains to shocking and sensational images and videos. Many people are desensitizing their neural circuits to the horrors they see, while not getting much, if any, off-line training in empathic skills."

The article referenced a study that found adolescents struggled "identifying specific emotions expressed by another person's face."

"These young people were at an age when they are still developing the capacity for empathy, the ability to understand another person's emotional point of view. In many ways, the young teenage brain is non-empathic."

The piece went on to show the damaging role technology is playing in this trend.

#### More Negative Effects

A *Business Insider* article outlined more of the serious downsides to being continuously connected to devices: "We spend 13 hours a week on email and unlock our phones 110 times a day. What is that doing to our brains? The short answer is it's making them worse, according to the *Harvard Business Review* and other sources. Here's the science:

"It saps our time: Every time you get interrupted—like when your phone buzzes with a new email or your Gmail tab compels you toward the inbox—you lose 20 minutes. According to a University of California-Irvine study, that's how long it takes to reacquaint yourself with the details of what you left.

"It makes us dumber: A psychiatrist at King's College London University found that fussing with your email leads to a functional drop of 10 IQ points, more than smoking marijuana."

Studies also show that students in a classroom who handwrite their notes benefit much more than those who type on a laptop. A *Scientific American* article reported the conclusions of the latest research. Two groups of students were tested on memory, comprehension of concepts in what they were reviewing, and their ability to summarize and condense the knowledge. What researchers found was fascinating. The students who wrote notes by hand had "a stronger conceptual understanding and were more successful in applying and integrating the material than those who took notes with their laptops."

Even the late founder of Apple, Steve Jobs, put strict limits on his children's use of technology. He told *New York Times* journalist Nick Bilton, "They haven't used it [the iPad]. We limit how much technology our kids use at home."

The journalist observed that a number of other business leaders in technology took a similar approach: "Chris Anderson, the former editor of *Wired* and now chief executive of 3D Robotics, a drone maker, has instituted time limits and parental controls on every device in his home."

Mr. Anderson said, "...we have seen the dangers of technology firsthand. I've seen it in myself, I don't want to see that happen to my kids."

So what was family life like in Jobs' low-tech world? Every night at dinner they spent time talking to each other, telling stories, and discussing history or life lessons.

A growing number of studies reinforce the theory that smartphones are making people dumber. We no longer have to think for ourselves, which is causing us to lose the ability to do it. Instead, we are offloading mental thought processes to computers.

During the Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant faced a crucial decision about whether to continue pursuing Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Grant had just lost a tremendous number of troops in recent battles.

His options? Fight on or rest. He sat down and thought hard about what to do. Alone. In quiet moments. He did

not turn to the internet blogosphere to consult the pundits. He did not check his Twitter account. He did not survey the troops or take a poll. *He meditated*. Eventually, it was his decision to keep attacking General Lee that caused the South to later surrender and the war to be won.

Imagine the outcome if Grant had not made a regular habit of deeply contemplating his next move...

Myth three—that technology is making us better—has been debunked. Despite technology's many benefits, the latest research shows that overusing it has serious side effects.

With these three myths scrapped, we are now ready to examine the solution.

#### Way Out

Another figure of history thousands of years ago used his time alone with his own thoughts to contemplate the bigger questions of life. Israel's King David once looked up at a majestic sky filled with stars, planets and galaxies and observed: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" (Psa. 8:3-4).

Could David have deeply pondered his surroundings while simultaneously scrolling through a Facebook feed and texting a friend?

Of course not! God never meant for us to be frantic, uber-productive machines while trampling social graces and losing our ability to think. Even though technology has its place in our modern age, we must learn to use it in a balanced way while never forgetting the wisdom given to us by those of past generations.

In passages unknown to most, the Bible has much to say about how people should approach their daily routines, including their work lives. Notice this about the importance of maintaining a proper schedule, "It is *vain* for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He [God] gives His beloved sleep" (Psa. 127:2).

Even though people could think this does not apply to our society now, slaving away to achieve the maximum amount of output invariably causes one to “sit up late” and then “rise up early.”

Many try to cheat the system by scrimping on sleep. But God plainly states this “vain” pursuit leads to sorrows. The Hebrew word for “vain” brings greater meaning: “evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or morally (especially guile); figuratively idolatry (as false, subjectively), uselessness...vain, vanity” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

God emphasizes that He gave mankind sleep so it would be able to recuperate after a day of work. Numerous studies have discovered the devastating effects lack of sleep have on people’s mental and physical health.

In addition, Jesus asked His disciples, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9). This rhetorical question was to make a point about productivity. There are limits to what we can accomplish in one day.

We all have a certain amount of time to get things done and Jesus knew the value in managing priorities. But many

today ignore this important principle, causing needless anxiety. They stay up late and rise early, all to try to get ahead of the curve.

Christ also warned His disciples about stressful worrying in Matthew 6:34: “Take therefore no [anxious] thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Jesus understood the importance of living “in the moment” and not becoming caught up in the stresses of life.

The real casualty of the modern rat-race existence is the inability to think about the big things in life—the real purpose behind our existence. Instead, we have become too caught up in the day-to-day issues in our lives to devote time to ponder *why we are here*. So many have outsourced their thinking and memory to machines, external hard drives on computers or phones. Computers think for them. But we saw this comes with dangerous side effects.

In a *New York Times* opinion article titled “The ‘Busy’ Trap,” the

author emphasized the importance of having time to think. After going to a private place, he wrote: “Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence or a vice; it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets. The space and quiet that idleness provides is a necessary condition for standing back from life and seeing it whole, for making unexpected connections and waiting for the wild summer lightning strikes of inspiration—it is, paradoxically, necessary to getting any work done.”

Take back control of your life! Strive to lead a balanced life. Make a habit of giving yourself more time to think. Pull back from the daily grind that is modern society. Think about what really matters in life. Take time to spend with family and friends. Enjoy meals together without allowing technology to cause interruptions. Ponder the deeper questions.

To learn about the true purpose of your life, including your incredible potential, request our free booklet *Why Do You Exist?* at [rcg.org/wdye](http://rcg.org/wdye). □

## POPE

*Continued from page 21*

“A bishop then must be blameless, *the husband of one wife*, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”

For emphasis, read Titus 1:6, which also states ordained men must be “the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”

Do not overcomplicate this. While some ministers may be single, the apostle Paul—inspired by God—clearly stated they can marry and have children. This is further clarified in I Timothy 4, which states forbidding people to marry is a “doctrine of demons” (vs. 1-3).

Another example of “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” is taking days with pagan origins and

adopting them for “Christian” worship. Jeremiah 10 is clear: “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” (vs. 2).

The pagan roots of Christmas and Easter are well known. Ask: Would God allow these heathen days—even if they are repurposed—especially when the days He commands are swept aside?

Note that God commanded His weekly Sabbath day and annual Holy Days to be “a perpetual covenant” (Ex. 31:16; 12:20, 24).

Read what God says in Exodus 31: “It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed” (vs. 17).

While the leaders of modern Christianity squabble over the future

of their churches, you should focus instead on what your Creator wants. Ignore the political wrangling and petty arguments over tradition!

You need to prove to yourself the Bible is God’s Word. Make I Thessalonians 5:21 your guiding light: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

While society is well into an era of redefining what “church” is and its teachings, the Bible remains as relevant as ever: “But the word of the Lord endures forever” (I Pet. 1:25).

In addition, God declares “I change not” in Malachi 3:6, and Hebrews 13:8 states that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (NKJV).

Read *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* at [rcg.org/bacibp](http://rcg.org/bacibp) to begin to understand what God wants for your life. □

certainly not saved! Billions have died in this condition. Most have assumed that the only other option for them is that they were lost to salvation and that God long ago predestined this for the vast majority who have ever lived.

On the other hand, if the war to win souls is as most professing Christian ministers depict it, then the devil is far stronger—and far more effective—in his effort than God. Be honest and admit that this is the only other possibility, unless there is a third category containing the vast majority of people. But it must be a category that has not been recognized!

Is God a monster who would doom the great majority without offering them an opportunity for salvation? This is, however unwittingly believed, what most have concluded. They have assumed that only a relative few have been chosen to receive an opportunity to enter the Kingdom of God. (To learn more about this, read the booklet *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at [rcg.org/witkog](http://rcg.org/witkog).)

### God Is in Control

Few have understood the verses describing Christ's coming reign, which will begin at the time of His Return to Earth. And they know nothing of the fact that Satan is soon to be removed.

However, he has *not yet* been removed from power. When Christ qualified to replace him (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) as the "god of this world," having overcome sin, He assured that Satan will soon no longer be present to deceive and confuse mankind (Rev. 12:9; I Cor. 14:33). But, once again, we must understand that he has *not yet* been removed and he seeks to do everything, within the great power that he does possess, to thwart God's Plan. The devil has certainly deceived his ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15) into believing that God has failed terribly in His Plan to save the vast majority. But it is only by God's permission that

Satan holds sway over this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

God is not losing a wrestling match over which He clearly has full control. He knows exactly what He is doing, and the beauty of His Plan *can* be known. Be assured that no true God would ever choose to condemn the vast majority who have ever lived without giving them a full opportunity for salvation. Such a God would not be worth following—He would be an unjust monster whose primary business is condemnation.

**“God is not losing a wrestling match over which He clearly has full control. He knows exactly what He is doing, and the beauty of His Plan *can* be known.”**

Man (under the unseen direction of Satan) has been given approximately 6,000 years to try his own ways, governments, religions, philosophies, value systems, and forms of education. He has practiced sin—disobedience to God's commands—under the sway of Satan. Man has then tried to treat all of the ill *effects* instead of treating the *cause* of having broken God's laws.

God is allowing mankind to learn bitter lessons. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, are having to learn that their own ways do not work! (Read the booklet *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems* at [rcg.org/uun](http://rcg.org/uun).)

As mankind embarks on a path that would erase itself from Earth, God will intervene and save mankind from itself!

Notice II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise... but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance."

Did you notice that God wants to save *everyone*? Paul, when speaking of God (Christ), stated, "Who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). That is the plain truth of this verse. God is not, and never has been, in the "mass condemnation" business.

Satan has proliferated many forms of false religion all over the Earth. He counterfeits the truth in endless ways. He is a master deceiver and the fruit of his efforts lies all around us. However, there is coming a "Sabbath rest." Mankind will rest from sin and from the relentless deceit of the devil. His time will soon be up. He is angrier now than ever before.

It is vitally important to understand this tremendous truth.

### II Corinthians 6:2—Terribly Misunderstood!

One verse is often cited to prove that *now* is the only opportunity for all mankind to achieve salvation. Let's read this almost universally misunderstood verse: "He [God] says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).

It is critical to understand that the word "the" in the King James Version is not found in the original Greek or Hebrew text. Translators added it thinking that they amplified the meaning of the verse. Instead, they clouded and confused it.

The apostle Paul is actually quoting Isaiah 49:8: "Thus says the LORD, In *an* acceptable time have I heard you, and in *a* day of salvation have I helped you." Neither the Greek of II Corinthians 6:2 nor the Hebrew of Isaiah 49:8 contains the definite article "the."

The Knox Bible most accurately reflects the Greek meaning of the first part of II Corinthians 6:2: "I have answered your prayer, He says, in *a* [not *the* only one] time of pardon, I have brought you help in *a* [not *the*] day of salvation."

Those who misread this verse have not considered that if salvation was only open during the time of Paul, *then it is not open to anyone now—including you and me!* Just as Paul lived approximately 2,000 years before our time, do not forget that he also was quoting a verse that was recorded many centuries before his time. To which age should these two references to the verse be assigned?

It is certainly true that for all those who have been called, having their minds opened to God's truth—such people are having their opportunity for salvation *now!* Once people understand the truth (Jms. 4:17; Heb. 10:26), there is no turning back. If God is revealing His truth to you at this time—then you must now act on it! This is, then, “a” day of salvation for all those being called today. There will be no second opportunity for people who reject God's truth.

#### **The Gospel Preached as a Witness**

Nowhere in the Bible did Christ or anyone else say that the gospel of the Kingdom was to be preached by His servants for the purpose of converting the entire world now. Try to find such verses. You will see that there are none.

Notice Matthew 24:14: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” This was part of Christ's answer to a question in verse 3 of the same chapter. It is actually a prophecy of one of many great events that would precede His Return to begin His Kingdom. The reference to “and then shall the end come” means the end of the age of man's rule under the sway of the devil. But do not miss the phrase “for a witness” in Christ's words. He did not say the gospel would be preached “for the purpose of converting all mankind” or any similar thing. It is this Church—The Restored Church of God, the publisher of this magazine—that is preaching this gospel today.

Few will heed and respond to God's wonderful truth, made available to them in this age. You have been blessed

to read it now. Most will ignore the opportunity to qualify to rule with Christ over the nations (Rev. 5:10; Matt. 5:5; Luke 19:11-27). Reading the truth contained in this article will prove to be little more than “for a witness” for many because they will not grasp the tremendous significance of God's Plan and their potential role in it.

#### **Few Now Given Understanding**

As stated, very few are being given true understanding in this age. Because most have assumed that they understand God's purpose, they remain totally *blind* to the great truth of what it is!

**“Few will heed and respond to God's wonderful truth, made available to them in this age...Most will ignore the opportunity to qualify to rule with Christ over the nations.”**

I ask you a question. All who know anything about the Bible recognize that Christ spoke many principles, points and truths through the use of parables. Why do you suppose that He did this? Have you not been led to believe that He did it to *illustrate* His purpose? This is what I was taught—and, like most, I swallowed it hook, line and sinker! This theory is false. It is *not* what the Bible says—it is wrong! More important, the correct answer reveals a vital truth.

Christ's disciples asked Him this very question. Notice: “The disciples came, and said unto Him, *Why speak You unto them in parables?* He answered and said unto them, Because it is *given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, but to them it is *not* given. For whosoever has, to him shall be given,

and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matt. 13:10-13).

This is an amazing verse. The implications are stunning! Christ stated that He actually spoke in parables to *hide the meaning* of what He was saying. He explained that the “mysteries” of God's Kingdom were “given” to some and “not given” to others. This can only mean that some are called now and others remain blind. Yet God is perfect. In many verses, He describes His justice and fairness with all mankind, in every matter. And we have seen that He is “not willing that *any* should perish” and would “have *all* men to be saved.”

Consider Paul's instruction to the Corinthians: “But unto them *which are called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God...For you see *your calling*, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*” (I Cor. 1:24, 26).

Several times Paul speaks of a “calling.” There are those who are called and those who are not. He explains that those called now are generally not the “wise, mighty and noble.” Most of these people will not listen to what God tells them because they do not think they need Him. For now, God is willing to let them have their way and learn bitter lessons that will later help them grow and learn faster, when He *does* call them.

In John 6:44 and 65, Christ stated, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw him*: and I will raise him up at the last day... no man can come to Me, except it were *given unto him* of My Father.” Only through God's Spirit can one be drawn into and be given God's truth. Without this calling, “drawing” or giving of the truth to a person, “no man *can*” come to the truth. It is that simple.

To learn more, read my article *Are You Being Called?* at [rcg.org/articles/aybc](http://rcg.org/articles/aybc). □

## From Grain to Gasoline: A Brief World History of Rationing

**R**euters – European countries are looking at ways to curb gas demand as they brace for further cuts in Russian supplies, raising the prospect of rationing across the continent.

Through war, siege and social strife, rich and poor countries across the world have had a long and often painful history of rationing anything from food to fuel and water, sometimes with unintended consequences.

Here is a brief timeline of some of those episodes in the last century.

**1914-18:** Many combatant nations of World War I suffered food shortages as a result of the conflict, naval blockades and hoarding. German food controls were infamously accompanied by unappetizing substitute foods, such as “K-Brot,” a bread substitute made from ingredients such as dried potatoes and straw. Malnutrition was widespread as a result.

**1938:** As Japan waged war against China, it passed price caps and rationing schemes on goods from sugar, rice and clothes to charcoal. The government also propagated slogans such as “extravagance is our enemy” to curb consumer demand.

**1940:** Britain introduced a food ration system a year after entering World War II, with each man, woman and child allotted coupons for the purchase of basic foodstuffs including sugar, meat, fats, bacon and cheese. Fruit and vegetables were not rationed and people were encouraged to grow their own.

**1942:** Tires were the first product to be rationed in the United States, starting in January 1942, just weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Gasoline and food rationing began in May, starting with sugar, then coffee and then meats, fats, canned fish, cheese, and canned milk the year after.

**1945:** After the war, rationing behind the Communist-run Iron Curtain was widespread but varied greatly between countries. In Hungary, it largely affected non-essential items, including cars and telephone lines—with years-long waiting lists as a result. In Poland it was more severe, covering sugar, cigarettes, shoes, petrol, meat and basic food essentials and led to hunger demonstrations and the growth of the Solidarity movement by the early 1980s.

**1973:** The oil embargo by Arab exporting states plunged Europe into a deep energy crisis and forced a range of consumption-limiting measures. Denmark, Italy, West Germany and others banned driving on Sunday; France lowered speed limits and stopped TV broadcasting at 11 p.m. to encourage people to go to bed. In Sweden, rationing and public campaigns led to longer-term changes that meant the use of petroleum products had fallen by around 16 percent by 1980.

**2011:** After a March 11 earthquake and tsunami triggered the Fukushima nuclear accident and hit electricity supply to the Tokyo area, millions of Japanese were left to cope with rolling blackouts. Gas stations were shut and rationed purchases when they did open, while people were also left to queue for rationed distribution of drinking water.

**2014:** Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro introduced a “Secure Food Supply” card setting limits on purchases and intended to stop unscrupulous shoppers stocking up on subsidized groceries and reselling them.

**2020:** Cuba’s rationing system—introduced shortly after Fidel Castro’s 1959 leftist revolution but slated for elimination—made a comeback during the COVID-19 pandemic to try to prevent Cubans from exposing themselves to the virus on frantic shopping hunts. Basic items like laundry soap and washing-up liquid become subject to rationing because of widespread shortages. □



Drivers line up in their cars outside a Gulf gas station, which is selling regular gas at \$4.09 a gallon, in Lynnfield, Massachusetts (July 19, 2022).

JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Monarch Butterfly Moves a Step Closer to Extinction



Monarch butterflies land on branches at Monarch Grove Sanctuary in Pacific Grove, California (Nov. 10, 2021).

AP/NIC COURY

Washington (AP) – The monarch butterfly fluttered a step closer to extinction July 21, as scientists put the iconic orange-and-black insect on the endangered list because of its fast dwindling numbers.

“It’s just a devastating decline,” said Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University who was not involved in the new listing. “This is one of the most recognizable butterflies in the world.”

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature added the migrating monarch butterfly for the first time to its “red list” of threatened species and categorized it as “endangered”—two steps from extinct.

The group estimates that the population of monarch butterflies in North America has declined between 22 and 72 percent over 10 years, depending on the measurement method.

“What we’re worried about is the rate of decline,” said Nick Haddad, a conservation biologist at Michigan State University. “It’s very easy to imagine how very quickly this butterfly could become even more imperiled.”

Mr. Haddad, who was not directly involved in the listing, estimates that the population of monarch butterflies he studies in the eastern United States has declined between 85 and 95 percent since the 1990s.

In North America, millions of monarch butterflies undertake the longest migration of any insect species known to science.

After wintering in the mountains of central Mexico, the butterflies migrate to the north, breeding multiple generations along the way for thousands of miles. The offspring that reach south-

ern Canada then begin the trip back to Mexico at the end of summer.

“It’s a true spectacle and incites such awe,” said Anna Walker, a conservation biologist at New Mexico BioPark Society, who was involved in determining the new listing.

A smaller group spends winters in coastal California, then disperses in spring and summer across several states west of the Rocky Mountains. This population has seen an even more precipitous decline than the eastern monarchs, although there was a small bounce back last winter.

Emma Pelton of the nonprofit Xerces Society, which monitors the western butterflies, said the butterflies are imperiled by loss of habitat and increased use of herbicides and pesticides for agriculture.

“There are things people can do to help,” she said, including planting milkweed, a plant that the caterpillars depend upon.

Nonmigratory monarch butterflies in Central and South America were not designated as endangered.

The United States has not listed monarch butterflies under the Endangered Species Act, but several environmental groups believe it should be listed.

The international union also announced new estimates for the global population of tigers, which are 40 percent higher than the most recent estimates from 2015.

The new figures, of between 3,726 and 5,578 wild tigers worldwide, reflect better methods for counting tigers and, potentially, an increase in their overall numbers, said Dale Miquelle, coordinator for the nonprofit Wildlife Conservation Society’s tiger program.

In the past decade, tiger populations have increased in Nepal, northern China and perhaps in India, while tigers have disappeared entirely from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, said Mr. Miquelle. They remain designated as endangered. □

## Outbreaks from Animals in Africa Surge by 60 Percent in Last Decade

London (AP) – The number of outbreaks of diseases that jumped from animals to humans in Africa has surged by more than 60 percent in the last decade, the World Health Organization said, a worrying sign the planet could face increased animal-borne diseases like monkeypox, Ebola and coronavirus in the future.

There has been a 63 percent rise in the number of animal diseases breaching the species barrier from 2012 to 2022, as compared to the decade before, the UN health agency said in a statement on July 14.

There was a particular spike from 2019 to 2020, when diseases originating in animals that later infected humans, made up half of all significant public health events in Africa, said WHO. Diseases like Ebola and other hemorrhagic fevers were responsible for 70 percent of those outbreaks, in addition to illnesses like monkeypox, dengue, anthrax and plague.

“We must act now to contain zoonotic diseases before they can cause widespread infections and stop Africa from becoming a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases,” WHO’s Africa director, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti said in a statement.

While diseases in animals had infected people for centuries in Africa, recent developments like quicker travel across the continent have made it easier for viruses to cross borders, she said.

WHO also noted that Africa has the world’s fastest-growing population, which increases urbanization and reduces roaming areas for wild animals. Scientists also fear that outbreaks that may have once been contained to distant, rural areas can now spread more quickly to Africa’s large cities with international travel links, that

might then carry the diseases around the world.

During the West Africa Ebola outbreak that began in 2014, it was not until the disease arrived in capital cities that its spread became explosive, ultimately killing more than 10,000 people and arriving in several cities in Europe and the U.S.

Until May, monkeypox had not been known to cause significant outbreaks beyond central and West Africa, where it has sickened people for

decades. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are now more than 39,400 cases worldwide in 94 countries, the majority of which had not previously reported monkeypox.

WHO declared monkeypox as a public health emergency of international concern—the agency’s highest level of alert—on July 24. The declaration is made by the WHO director-general when three criteria are met: the situation is an “extraordinary event,” there is a potential for the disease to spread to other nations, and the situation could “potentially require a coordinated international response.” □



A medical worker sprays people being discharged from the Island Clinic Ebola treatment center in Monrovia, Liberia (Sept. 30, 2014).

AP/JEROME DELAY



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