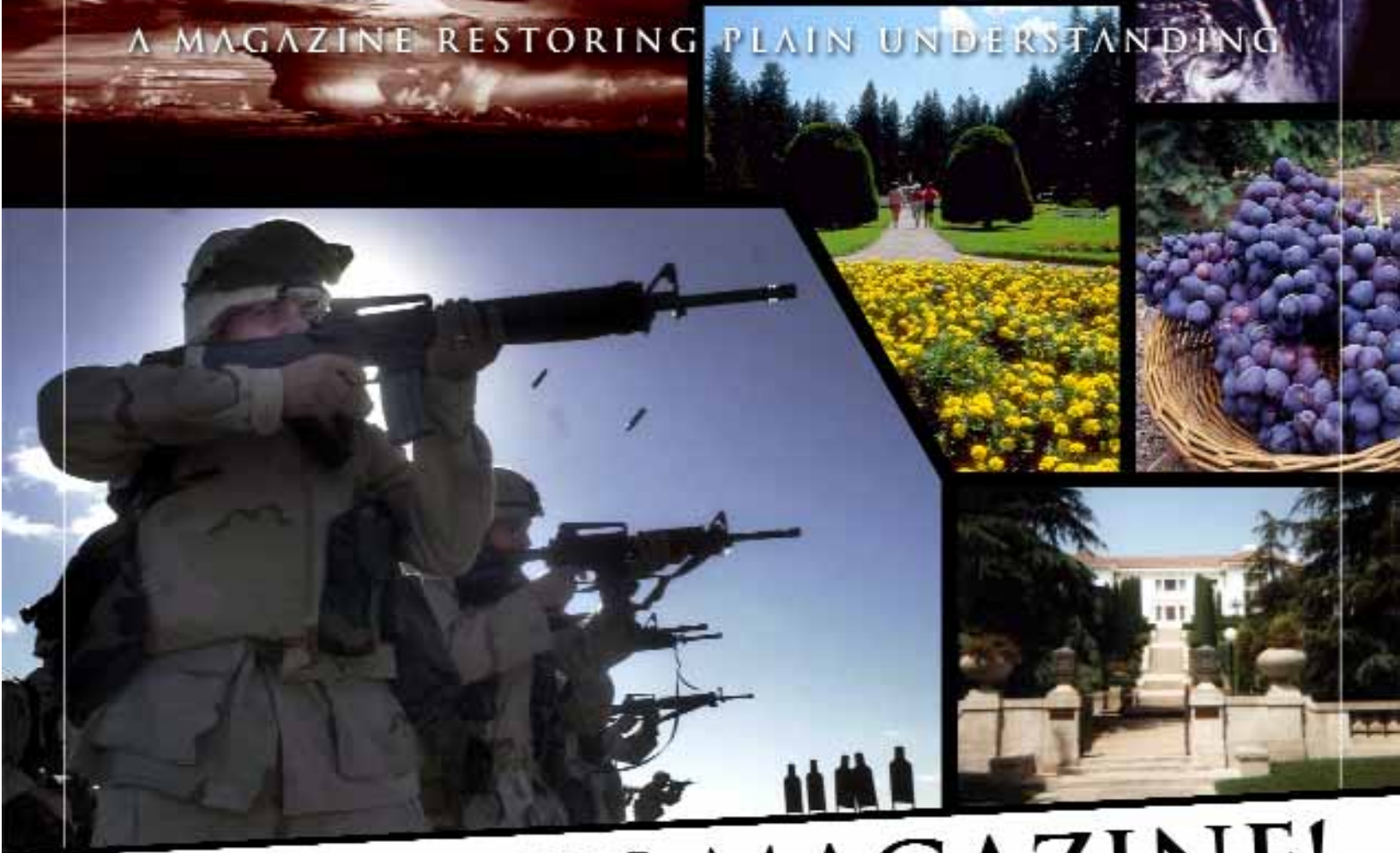


FEBRUARY 2003

THE

REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



WHY THIS MAGAZINE!



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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. I | NO. 1 | FEBRUARY 2003

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Why the Debt Crisis?

More and more people are being swept away in a sea of high-interest credit card bills. Personal debt and bankruptcies are at an all-time high. Families are spending more than they actually earn. Here is what you can do to turn the tide of debt and find TRUE economic success!

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The Immorality Explosion!

Old-style morality is *under assault* like never before. Many have come to wonder what is right and what is wrong—what morality really is. Is it a strict intolerant attitude? Would morality problems be resolved if everyone tolerated and learned to “understand” all the actions of others? A new perverse subculture has crept into nearly every home and every society. Here is the PLAIN TRUTH about immorality—and where it is going!

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Witches, Wiccans and Pagans—The Growing Danger of Spiritism

In today's society, spiritism is spreading like wildfire. Through books, magazines, television and movies, the occult reaches into virtually every facet of life. Increasingly, people are turning to spiritism for answers to their problems. What are the implications of this trend? Where is it headed? Will it include you?

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ABOUT OUR COVER

The world trembles in fear of wars, civil conflicts, terrorism and strife. *The REAL TRUTH* magazine addresses these and other insoluble problems now overwhelming mankind, and also points to the soon-coming lasting peace of the world to come. Our first cover symbolizes the purpose of this magazine!

READ *The REAL TRUTH* ONLINE EDITION!

Published 1-2 weeks before the hardcopy edition is mailed, the Online Edition of *The REAL TRUTH* provides extra articles and News Desk updates, broadcasts *The WORLD TO COME* program by David C. Pack, and offers an archive of all past issues. It also features more photos, informational graphics, maps, interactive timelines, slideshows and more!

www.RealTruthMag.org

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

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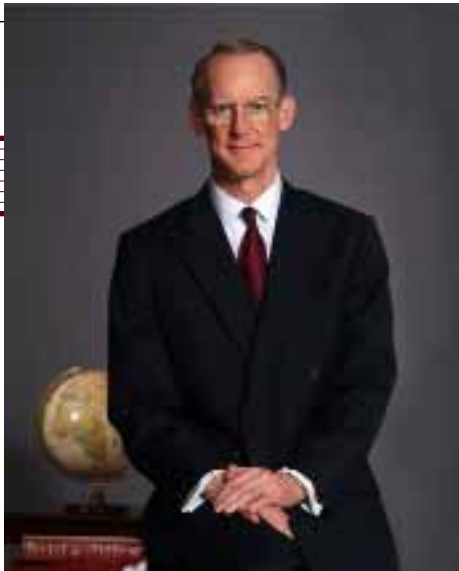
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PHOTO CREDITS: Front cover (counterclockwise, top)—Atomic blast, *Images of American Political History*; soldiers, *U.S. Navy*; protesters, *inertia stock.xchng 003*; pool, staff photo; steps, staff photo; berries, *USDA*; garden, *FreeStockPhotos*; Earth, *FreeStockPhotos*. Page 3 and inside cover—top photo, Ariel C./*inertia stock.xchng 003*. Page 5—Aaron Cirilo/*inertia stock.xchng 003*. Page 7—Philippe Ramakers/*inertia stock.xchng 003*. Page 10 and inside cover—middle photo, *Intuitivmedia.net*. Page 15 and inside cover—bottom photo, Jennifer N./*inertia stock.xchng 003*. Page 19—Carlos Villela/*inertia stock.xchng 003*.



PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack

WE WELCOME YOU as a reader to the most important magazine you will ever read!

The REAL TRUTH is a truly unique publication. You will never read another like it. It answers the BIG questions in life, those that few others seem willing to address. It will soon fill a vacuum—a dimension missing from today's world.

Actually, this magazine is the revival of *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine, started by then Editor-in-Chief, Herbert W. Armstrong, in 1934. Over the next 52 years, until his death in 1986, the circulation of *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine slowly grew to 8.2 million monthly subscribers, with an estimated 25 million readers worldwide!

How was this possible? Let me tell you the story—because it is really the story behind *The REAL TRUTH* magazine.

God called Mr. Armstrong in the spring of 1926. He was forced to disprove evolution, while at the same time prove absolutely the existence of God. This took him a period of six months of intensive study. Over the next several years, God revealed to Mr. Armstrong truly unique understanding. He slowly began to see, from the Bible, that God was working out a great purpose on earth. He learned that God's Plan had been foretold long ago on the pages of a book that most people own, but rarely or *never* read. As a result, the world was in complete ignorance of that Plan.

The idea of a fledgling magazine was born in Mr. Armstrong's mind. He understood that a hard-hitting monthly magazine, coupled with *The World Tomorrow* radio broadcast, was necessary to reveal the plain truth—the *real truth*—behind what the media reported.

Why This Magazine!

Newspapers, radio and, later, television, only reported WHAT is happening without explaining WHY. He recognized that mankind does not know the solutions to civilization's greatest problems, troubles, evils

and ills—and that those solutions were found in the Bible. He also understood that modern religion had utterly failed in explaining the *real* purpose of life.

Technology has come a long way since then. Today, even desktop publishing capability is dazzling. This was not the case in 1934. Mr. Armstrong began the first issue of *The PLAIN TRUTH*, in February of that year, by using a hand-cranked mimeograph machine to print 350 copies for the first tiny subscription list. From the outset, the magazine explained the real meaning of world news and events. It addressed the biggest, most perplexing problems facing mankind—HEAD-ON!

Subscribers saw this, and the readership steadily grew, month after month, and then year after year. By the time of Mr. Armstrong's death, *The PLAIN TRUTH* was read in seven languages—in *all* countries of the world. It was the single largest, multi-language religious publication—by far—in the world. Its circulation may have only been exceeded by *Reader's Digest*.

The REAL TRUTH magazine is also starting small—but not nearly as small or primitive as were the early issues of *The PLAIN TRUTH*. Because Mr. Armstrong paved the way with that truly extraordinary magazine, the editors, writers, researchers, artists, technicians and others producing *this* magazine have an enormous advantage. Of course, technology also assists us greatly. Nevertheless, our subscription list is not 8.2 million at the start. But we expect to grow like the proverbial grain of mustard seed. We are

already advertising the magazine on the streets of many major cities around the world.

So grow we shall!

We have one other important advantage, available to all those of the 21st century. This magazine will be accessible to all countries on earth—instantly! (Our other website, already the largest biblically-based website in the world, is reaching over 150 nations.) The modern marvel of the Internet makes both *The REAL TRUTH* and our broadcast—*The WORLD TO COME*—available around the world.

Mr. Armstrong understood Christ's instruction, "Freely you have received, freely give," so he understood that he must offer the magazine *free of charge*. He also determined to never accept advertising so that the powerful impact of its content was neither diminished in size nor diluted in purpose and impact. In the early years of its production, there was not always enough income to produce each regular monthly issue. Sometimes it had to be tabled until sufficient funds from donors and co-workers made it possible to purchase the necessary postage to send it freely. The Internet ensures that hundreds of thousands—indeed, *millions*—can always read this magazine (or hear our broadcast) immediately and on time—or at any time of their choosing, wherever they are in the world!

Mr. Armstrong also understood the vital need to produce a truly high-quality magazine. He knew that articles had to reflect in-depth analysis and explanation in a way that no other publication on earth would—or *could*—do. He demanded high standards of quality—real EXCELLENCE—in every aspect of the magazine, and so shall we.

The PLAIN TRUTH was never a political magazine—and never a typical *religious* magazine. Neither is *The REAL TRUTH*. *The PLAIN TRUTH* spoke out at a level above politics—unlike the endless columnists, commentators, reporters and political analysts of this world who look to humanly-devised solutions. It dared to speak with boldness and clarity about the ONLY SOLUTIONS to what are now *insoluble* problems plaguing humanity, and explained that those solutions WILL COME.

So will *The REAL TRUTH*.

Man's governments and political solutions, like mainstream religion, have also utterly failed to do anything but make humanity's problems worse. Invariably, *man's* solutions seem to eventually generate more and greater problems.

The REAL TRUTH magazine will not offer opinions, suppositions or assumptions. It will bring facts, evidence and *proof* of those issues about which it speaks. We speak from a position of AUTHORITY, and never apologize for it.

Of course, some people do not want the facts. They actually prefer cherished suppositions in place of correct understanding. *The REAL TRUTH* will offer you *correct* understanding—explanations you have never seen before. It will bring you confident assurance that you are looking

at social trends, world conditions, current events and burning issues from the only RIGHT perspective.

The tradition of the high standard of excellence, which *The PLAIN TRUTH* achieved, brought it before presidents, prime ministers and kings. Brilliant professors, accomplished scientists, skilled musicians, great athletes, captains of industry and other leaders in every walk of life, read it. But, it was read and appreciated in far more cases by the *common man*—teachers, bricklayers, salesmen, secretaries, housewives, clerks, farmers, factory workers, truck drivers, construction workers, and many others.

It changed lives. It brought hope. It explained the BIGGER VIEW in a world where most are completely blind to the causes behind all the bad effects billions of people witness every day.

The REAL TRUTH will also bring hope and a vision of the big picture. While you may not yet recognize this, you will come to see that this magazine is truly different, in almost every way.

It has become distressingly evident that this world is in terrible trouble. Time is running out for mankind to stop war, terrorism, famine, disease, pollution, poverty, ignorance, religious confusion, rampant immorality, breakdown of the family and other growing problems that threaten civilization.

Almost none are willing to speak up—or OUT—about these problems. They will not cry aloud, pulling no punches about everyday problems that normal human beings face.

The writers of *The REAL TRUTH* and I, as the voice of *The WORLD TO COME*, will do this! We will not hold back the ANSWERS you need in order to find the way to peace, happiness, abundance and true security, amidst the short-term gloom that lies ahead for this world!

We will have articles explaining the cause of war, what's wrong with the weather, can science eradicate pollution, the meaning of events in Europe, why earthquakes are increasing, the complete failure of science to bring the utopian world that all long for, how racial bigotry will eventually disappear, what lies ahead for America and Britain, where the world economy is going, the value of right ethics—and the definition of true character, the real cause of the moral crisis in the West, what's wrong with modern education, why so many seek escape and pleasure, why there is abortion, cloning and alternative lifestyles, and the definition of true success.

We will explain the world's lack of great leaders—and what will replace them, and how peace will come in our time, how to build strong families—rearing happy productive children, how to end your financial worries, why new diseases are appearing and older ones are re-appearing—stronger than before, and whether the United Nations is really mankind's ultimate answer.

We are also not afraid to speak out about what is wrong

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 8



Why the Debt Crisis?

More and more people are being swept away in a sea of high-interest credit card bills. Personal debt and bankruptcies are at an all-time high. Families are spending more than they actually earn. Here is what you can do to turn the tide of debt and find TRUE economic success!

THE ENTIRE WORLD is in debt. Governments and nations routinely overspend. States, towns and municipalities are also plagued by increasing deficits. Just looking at the state of California's fiscal *mess*—a budget shortfall estimated at \$35 billion—reveals the wide scope of this problem.

To please their constituents, many government leaders take the stance of “pork barrel spending”—catering to special interest groups who demand

programs that benefit their own agendas. Such leaders are compelled to overspend.

This pattern is also being demonstrated in people's personal lives!

Of course, instead of modifying their spending, governments simply *raise taxes* when they overspend. However, people cannot increase *their* income.

Millions are being robbed of their financial security. Their families' stability is crumbling away, and with it the future of their children. This is mainly

caused by one thing: Debt. The toll it has now taken on society can only be described as a CRISIS!

Why? What is it that consumes so many with the urge to charge purchases?

Why do so many live beyond their means—requiring loans and credit cards to survive—thus fueling the credit industry?

Consider the following:

- 50 million credit cards are issued each year.

- Up to 25 million people in America are “two paychecks from the street,” with nearly 15 million just “one paycheck from the street.”

- The average American carries a cumulative credit card balance of \$8,562.

- The average family has 10 credit cards.

- 78% of Americans are considered “credit worthy” by the lending industry.

- In 2001, Americans paid over \$50 billion in finance charges to creditors.

- Currently, the total consumer debt for Americans is a record \$735 billion.

- An average minimal payment is 90% interest and 10% principle.

- There were 1.354 million bankruptcies in 1999 alone.

- In 2001, 1.5 million credit card holders declared bankruptcy—higher than any point in history.

- Almost half of all American households find it difficult to make their monthly payments, and consider bankruptcy a safe option.

- *BusinessWeek* reports that total household debt—car loans, mortgage, school loans, etc.—passed 100% of the household’s total annual income.

- In the United Kingdom, the average debt per household is £10,700 (GBP)—over \$17,000 (USD).

- A *Datamonitor’s Consumer Review 2002* study shows that now, more than ever, people are more willing to buy prestigious gifts that they cannot afford, simply because they can slowly pay for them.

How many of these statistics include *you*? Have you found yourself making the minimal payments month after month? Have you paid off a car note or mortgage payment with credit cards? Have you found yourself making purchases you *knew* you could not afford, but just *had* to make? If you are an average American, the answer is *yes*. And, unless drastic action is taken, bankruptcy may one day seem like a healthy alternative for you.

Now for the REAL question: How can one get out of this dilemma?

Campaign for Debt

One of the most common phrases used throughout the holiday season is

“Charge it!” Many millions of shoppers uttered these same two words as they paraded through crowded malls and stores in search of holiday bargains. With increasing prices, and an ever-expanding list of family and friends for which to buy, more and more are being herded toward credit card bills and interest charges—all wrapped under the convenient “bow” of “buy-now-pay-later” merchandising. One month *after* the festivities and merry-making has ceased, buyers must contend with how and when to pay for their purchases.

With so many already in debt, the lending industry is turning more of its attention on younger customers.

On university and college campuses, creditors are commonly found swarming students with credit offers. For a free t-shirt or CD case, thousands sign up for credit, and begin their path down the dangerous slope of debt.

A Georgetown University study showed that 78% of undergraduates had acquired at least one credit card, with 32% having four or more. The average debt for these students was close to \$3,000, with 10% owing over \$7,000. Appealing to youths’ desire to have the latest clothes, music and cell phones, lenders practically guarantee that young cardholders become lifelong debtors.

The lending industry’s strategy is better described as marketing *bombardment*, and is a key reason that their profits have soared by nearly 50% in just two years—and are at a five-year peak! With each credit company jockeying to be the biggest, continually vying for more cardholders, their target audience seems to be just about any adult with a pen in hand.

This marketing is best portrayed through the media. Commercials, television programs, music and movies depict people on the peak of trends—enjoying the best of the best—as being happy, content and fulfilled. (Of course, to the average American, it would practically take an additional full-time job to stay on top of this.)

While one should always seek to have the best he can *afford*, this subtle merchandising has helped spawn an entire generation conditioned—trained—to SHOP! It is no wonder that

93% of American teenage girls reported that shopping is their favorite *activity*. The “buy-now-pay-later” mentality provides many with the justification to support this “hobby”!

This is dangerous thinking. Little does society in general realize the hazards of unchecked credit spending. Most will spend *years* trying to pay off mountains of debt that only took *moments* to make. In reality, the “buy-now-pay-later” mentality is better described as “buy-now-*agonize*-later”!

Aside from selective age-based advertising, creditors are also taking a bold step with their merchandising. Think about it. How many times have you received a solicitation in the mail for “pre-approved” credit? How many of these offered “special introductory rates,” “low monthly APR,” “free application gifts,” “everyone gets approved,” “no payments for three months,” “an extra 10% off your purchase,” etc.?

Studies show that the average American receives seven or *more* offers from credit card companies a year! And this is only the beginning. These ads are more commonly sent to families (those who would naturally have more people to shop for) and those with a bad credit history (those who have already established that they have problems controlling credit spending).

Credit solicited by mail comprises nearly three-quarters of all accounts opened. These campaigns have been so successful, that they have more than doubled since 1993—when 1.52 billion solicitations were sent to Americans. In 2002, 3.3 billion were mailed. Many are often fooled into believing they have a good credit rating, simply because they receive them. It is logical to think that if lenders are offering you credit, it is because they trust that you can and will pay for it.

But this is far from the truth.

While offers *are* sent to those with good *and* bad credit, they are more often sent to those with bad credit—in hopes of further proliferation of debt. The reasoning behind this is that if the applicant has already fallen into the pattern of making unwise charges, meanwhile paying high interest, he will continue to do so. In addition, any who have recent-

ly declared bankruptcy cannot do so again for at least seven more years!

In a move to better “checkmate” their clientele, aside from increased marketing, the lending industry has also been vigorously pushing at Congress to pass tougher restrictions through bankruptcy legislation. Travis Plunkett, the legislative director of the Consumer Federation of America, stated, “Credit card issuers are brazenly lobbying for new bankruptcy restrictions at the same time their *aggressive* marketing and lending practices are pushing many families closer to the FINANCIAL BRINK. While the issuers urge Congress to deny families access to bankruptcy...their *profits are soaring*” (emphasis ours).

The creditors’ dual attack—to protect *and* ensure their increasing profits—shows the cunning subtlety behind this billion-dollar industry!

Now, instead of asking, “What’s in your wallet?” as a major creditor asks in its advertising campaigns, one should ask, “How much of what’s in my wallet is *actually mine*?” After examining the facts, it becomes more apparent how consumed—and entrenched—in debt society has become!

Debt on the World Scene

The world, in many ways, is tightly woven together. Although competition, disagreements, disputes and wars commonly occur between nations, each nation is like a strand interwoven into a giant *economic* fabric.

Try to think of one entirely self-contained nation. For the most part, each nation on earth is *dependent* on another—even multiple nations—for survival. The actions of each directly or indirectly affect *all* the strands. An example of this was *U.S.* oil prices forging to fresh two-year highs because *Venezuelan* oil workers pledged to a 25-day strike, for the removal of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

In the world of finance, borders and territories are not as defined as they are on maps!

What about national debt around the world? How have countries dealt with debt management and repayment? Surely, governments and officials, with all their resources and means, have

found a way to lower unnecessary spending, thus curtailing debt—right? The answers are surprising.

Space does not permit the inclusion of the debt of all nations. However, notice some general national statistics:

Asia and South Pacific Islands: With \$139 billion (USD) in foreign debt and a crippling economic crisis, Indonesia is described as “a ship that has almost sunk.” Other issues, such as three decades of mismanaged funds, environmental concerns and social problems, add to Indonesia’s woes. Japan, with the second largest economy in the world, has a national debt of \$5.3 trillion—140% of its gross domestic product (GDP – the final value of all goods and services produced in an economy in a given year). Although U.S. debt is greater, this percentage makes Japan the worst industrialized debtor nation.

Europe: In Italy, the national debt is over \$1.4 trillion, and it is rising 7% a year. Although the EU only accepts countries whose budget deficit is less than 3% of its GDP, Italy—who has a deficit of over 100%—was made an exception. In the U.K., the national debt is at \$461.3 billion—with its citizens owing \$33.6 billion in credit card bills.

North America: The U.S. national debt is at \$6.3 trillion, requiring annual interest payments in the hundreds of billions! With an established limit of \$6.4 trillion, the Treasury approached Congress in December 2002, asking for approval on increasing this limit. Because the national debt has increased \$1.15 billion per day since September 11, this set limit would be surpassed by February 2003. With the U.S. population estimated at 290 million, each citizen’s average share of this debt is over \$20K! In Canada, the national debt is \$600 billion—the second largest debt behind Italy, in comparison to the size of its economy.

Countries in Africa, South and Central America and the Caribbean are also reeling from debt problems, and often cut back in health services or other vital areas of government funding simply to make their payments!

These figures, along with the ever-increasing threats of terrorism, war,

geopolitical struggles, lowered trade, crashing investments, poverty—such as the astounding 1.2 billion people worldwide living in absolute poverty (on less than \$1 a day)—and other factors directly affect national debt.

After examining debt on the world scene, it is evident that the global economic “fabric” is riddled with DEBT! No one knows just how to keep the global economy from sinking into a sea of credit woes.

On both the consumer and national levels, man has once again proven his inability to stem the snowballing burden of debt.

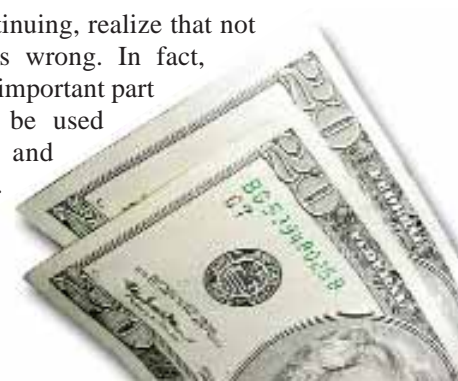
Consumer Debt: Did You Know?

Consider some additional debt facts:

- Industry watchers estimate that by 2006, about 30% of all consumer spending will be on credit cards.
- The average credit line is \$3,500. A decade ago, it was \$1,800.
- If you make the minimum monthly payment on a balance of \$4,000, with an 18% annual rate, it would take you 42 years to pay it off.
- Identity theft and fraud have reached epidemic levels—even finding their way *inside families*! It is becoming more common to hear cases of teens, upon applying for credit, discovering that their parents have used their identity to have multiple lines of credit!
- Only 32% of parents regularly talk to their children about financial matters (“2001 High School Financial Literacy,” *National Foundation for Credit Counseling News*).
- In 1973, U.S. households saved 8.6% of their income to a savings account. In 1990, the typical U.S. household saved 7.8% of its income. In 1993, it dropped to 4.2%. Today, the average household spends 0.1% *more* than it actually earns!

Identifying the *True Source* of the PROBLEM

Before continuing, realize that not all credit is wrong. In fact, credit is an important part of life, to be used cautiously and sensibly. Through



loans and developing good credit, people can buy their first car, home or apartment, or put themselves through college.

Credit is not the problem. A *lack of self-control* drives many into irreparable debt—even bankruptcy. The reckless, impulsive mentality behind most consumers' borrowing has turned the loan industry into a thriving business. Credit is often used to purchase luxuries, leaving little to show for it except the bills. As a finance reporter for *BBC News* stated, "The temptation to borrow too much is greater than ever before."

Obsession with material goods further fuels the ever-growing debt crisis. In order to have more, people today spend more than they actually make. They are accustomed to increasingly luxurious lifestyles, feeling the need to spend more—to have the best clothes, newest gadgets and fanciest cars—the "keeping up with the Joneses" mentality. They are further driven by the rationale, "Everyone else is doing it!"

Many have the tendency to shop when feeling unhappy or discouraged in order to feel "better." Ironically, much of their initial unhappiness and worry stem from debt. So the cycle continues.

WHY? As governments and their citizens slip into bankruptcy, why has man not found a way to curb his appetite for material gain?

Author John Steinbeck wrote, "If I wanted to destroy a nation, I would give it too much and I would have it on its knees, miserable, greedy and sick... We can stand anything... save only plenty." These sobering words should serve as a warning to any nation currently in this condition. The U.S.—*seemingly* the richest nation in the world—is far from rich in character and personal responsibility for its affairs. As Alfred Hackbarth, of the *National Foundation for Consumer Credit*, explained, "There is a **BREAKDOWN** in personal responsibility."

This is true of society today. Most are so busy living for the sole purpose of pleasure, comfort, gain and entertainment, that personal *responsibility* and *character-building* are not as important as they once were. This pres-

ent generation is by far much different from a few generations ago.

News headlines of credit fraud, identity theft, corrupt and failing governments, corporate and consumer bankruptcies and others are telltale signs of the miserable, greedy and sick state of this debt-ridden society.

What Does the Bible Say About Debt?

Many differing opinions on *why* the debt crisis—and how to end it—fill newspapers, magazines, radio shows and books. Prominent financial counselors offer endless advice that, while extremely helpful, does not analyze the *crux* of this subject.

If *so many* "experts" have *so many* theories (most often contrary to what the other "experts" say), how does one know which advice to follow? Where can people find real solutions to their real problems?

The answer is the Bible—God's Instruction Manual! Just as there are manuals for how to operate certain complicated machines and devices, the Creator God included an Instruction Manual for the most complicated, delicate and complex creation ever made—man. Only by carefully following the guidelines—*laws*—listed in this Manual, can humanity properly live and achieve success.

Think of the following. God has created laws to govern every aspect of His creation. His laws govern *everything*. Just as the laws of gravity and inertia govern certain portions of His creation, God has financial laws that govern *all* aspects of money issues. By following these laws, people can ensure their financial security.

Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15 record laws regarding creditors and debtors. These laws explain that the needy could borrow to pay for his needs—not his desires. Loans were to be repaid and if, at the end of six years, they were not paid in full, the lender *for-gave* the borrower of the debt—giving him a clean slate! (Deut. 15:1-11).

Although unknown to most, this was the basis for U.S. bankruptcy law. It is based on God's Year of Release, which was a way of providing debt relief.

In addition, aside from borrowed

funds, the *Jubilee Year* included the return of any land or farm that may have been mismanaged and confiscated. This was God's way of ensuring that poverty did not plague a family for generation after generation.

These are just a few of God's laws that would prevent most of the financial problems today. Every seven years, debt would be *eliminated*. Interest payments would not consume income. Credit would not be available for "pleasure-spending," and would only be available for genuine need. A clean slate would be provided for all, and allow people a chance to learn from past mistakes.

In modern times, the Seventh Year of Release, as God established it, is not used. Only through bankruptcy or paying off debt can one be released from debt.

If possible, a person should pay off all his debts. Doing so through hard work, diligence, self-control, saving money and cutting back on unneeded expenses helps build character, learn valuable lessons and take charge of one's finances. One should NEVER willingly go into debt, or willingly not pay bills, with the intention to file for bankruptcy.

God describes this as evil: "The *wicked* borrows, and pays *not* again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives" (Psa. 37:21). Bankruptcy should not be viewed as a healthy way of escaping debt. This is simply a way to deal with the *effects*, but does not address the *causes* driving the debt crisis. It is comparable to taking an aspirin to alleviate cancer—it does not *fix* the PROBLEM!

However, if a person finds himself unable to pay off his debt, it might be wise to contact a credit counseling service, or possibly even a lawyer, to learn about one's financial options.

Note that God does not consider money evil. Many scriptures speak about the correct and incorrect usage of money and material possessions. As we have already seen, the Bible has many important financial rules, overlooked by most, explaining the importance of proper financial management and ways to deal with money.

The Bible warns that, if financial matters are not kept in proper focus, the



EASY CREDIT, FAST DEBT: The convenience and ready availability of credit cards has resulted in a world driven by the “buy now, pay later” mentality.

over-emphasis on the pursuit of money—or the love of it—becomes “the root of *all* evil” (I Tim. 6:10). *This*—in conjunction with disobeying God’s financial laws—is what has caused so many of the financial worries plaguing the world. As with most things in life, maintaining proper balance is a key to not being consumed by this evil.

The apostle Paul wrote, “But they that will [are willing to] be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some *coveted* after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:9-10). Paul clearly explains that those seeking to have riches are pulled into a snare of sin! The Tenth Commandment clearly states, “You shall not covet” (Ex. 20:17). This lust—coveting—for riches and material gain is what drives so many to sign up for credit cards, and charge thousands of dollars worth of merchandise.

Proverbs 22:7 states, “The borrower is servant to the lender.” When people borrow, they place themselves under financial “slavery” to their lenders. They become obligated to them, over their obligation to God.

This leads to another law concerning

financial issues, which has also been ignored—even dismissed—by society.

The Ultimate Business Partner

While consumer, corporate and national debt is monumental in size, magnitude and scope, another far greater DEBT has been overlooked and ignored! This debt is toward God—and mankind has been stealing from Him for 6,000 years.

Notice what God says: “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine” (Hag. 2:8). The Bible further states, “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (I Cor. 10:26). “*All that is in the heaven and in the earth is Yours...*” (I Chron. 29:11). “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...For the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof” (Psa. 50:10-12). God owns everything—so says your Bible!

God created all things (Gen. 1:1). He worked for six days, perfecting every detail of His creation. He designed, made, maintained and nourished everything. This includes not only all the materials and riches in the world, but also all mankind and animals. This sets the stage for important knowledge.

Everything that you take for granted as being yours, is not really yours—it is God’s! But, through His mercy, He has allowed man to use *His* planet and its resources. All God asks for in return is

that one not steal from Him. Yet many continue to do so. How?

Notice: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? *In tithes and offerings*. You are cursed...for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove Me now...if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:8-10).

God only asks for a tithe—10% of what one makes—and lets you keep the remaining 90%, although that still belongs to Him! God challenges skeptics to “prove” His promise of blessing the tithepayer.

Some may argue, “But I can’t afford to tithe.” But God says otherwise. You cannot afford NOT to tithe!

God blesses generous givers (Prov. 11:25; 22:9; II Cor. 9:7), and no one else has the power to bless, as God does. While many seek ways to stretch their income, the most unlikely way is the *only* method to do so. By simply *giving back* to God a small portion of what is actually His, God agrees to bless you more than you can ever hope. (To learn how to properly do this, read our booklet *End All Your FINANCIAL WORRIES*.)

Let God’s promise work for you today! Do not wait until financial ruin hits you to obey God!

Finding True Prosperity

The average person is more intrigued with money than practically anything else. Wealth and prosperity are equated to success, and have become the main goal for many. They assume that true happiness will flow from it. This reasoning is a main contributor to the countless monetary problems permeating their lives.

However, the definition of true happiness and *prosperity* is in the Bible—in God’s very words.

The Proverbs explain, “Labor not to be rich: cease from your own wisdom. Will you set your eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (23:4-5), and “Happy is

the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets *understanding*. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold” (3:13-14).

Understanding and wisdom are more important in life than wealth, which will one day disappear and leave nothing to show for it. This is most evident in today’s debt-burdened world. The Hebrew word for “understanding” is *tabun*, meaning intelligence, discretion, reason, skillfulness, understanding and wisdom. In no way does it refer to wealth or material possessions.

This should be the prosperity you seek, not man’s false definition of prosperity. *True* wealth—wisdom, understanding and obedience to God—should be what you seek to have, not a new DVD player, digital camera or flat-screen television. All these things are *physical* and, while pleasant to have, are unneeded luxuries, not to be confused with life’s necessities. (To learn more, read our article “*You Can Live the ABUNDANT LIFE!*”)

It is better to lack comfort and be wise and happy, than to have all the lat-

est gadgets, and be miserable with concern and worries—a slave to debt and creditors. Apply these steps in life to turn the tide on creditors.

Always remember Christ’s warning, “Beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consists *not* in the abundance of the things which he possess” (Luke 12:15). Paul wrote, “Be content with such things as you have: For [God] has said, I will *never* leave you, nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

One day, the corruption, lies, increasing debt, poverty, material obsession and fraud that consume so many will no longer exist. With the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth will come the enforcement of His laws—including those that govern finances, loans and debt.

In the millennium, the Year of Release will come every seventh year, ensuring that every child will have a home, and every family will live without financial worries. Humanity will be happy, helping each other, and showing mercy and brotherly love toward fellowman. All debt will be gone. All will pay God His tithes, and in turn, have all

their needs provided for them. People will then wonder why so many did not keep His laws before. They will come to realize that the only luxury—necessity—worth *anything* is that of true happiness and abundant living as God has always had in store for mankind.

But, *you* can begin practicing these laws in your life now! By keeping God’s active—living—laws, you can begin to experience the joy God meant for mankind—but is lacking in society because man has broken those laws.

By obeying God’s financial laws, you will slowly begin loosening the chains of financial bondage. As promised, if you faithfully apply *all* His laws, God will, in return, provide for your *every* need. This is the promise of God—and carries more weight than all the platinum cards in the world and all the gold in Fort Knox!

You now have the knowledge of God’s monetary laws. By acting upon this understanding, you will truly begin to take control of your finances.

The path to financial freedom—yet undiscovered by so many—now lies ahead of you! □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

with modern religion. We will explain why there are thousands of differing—and *disagreeing*—forms of Christianity, the real origin of man’s supposed “Christian” holidays, why religion cannot explain or solve a single one of the world’s great problems, how to understand real faith, how to identify the real Christ of the Bible, the way of “give” vs. “get,” the origin of human nature, principles of healthful living, how to identify God’s true Church, and many, many other related subjects.

These articles and other regular features will not just describe the EFFECTS of today’s problems. There is already too much of that, and it leaves people uncertain, confused, fearful and depressed, because they see NO WAY OUT! They will identify the causes—WHY things happen as they do, revealing the true purpose for this life.

Be sure to read every article carefully. Search out the facts of what we say. I also urge you to follow up on the links within articles on *The REAL TRUTH* website. They lead to the vast amount of *other* literature and materials that we offer—which are rapidly expanding. (It will take you some time to appreciate the sheer vastness of what you can now access.) After doing this, only be willing to

believe us if you see *proof*. We offer you plain, clear TRUTH, made understandable to any with an open mind.

You cannot afford to miss a single issue. And be sure to check the website regularly for other news and updates to be posted when events dictate that we do so. We will keep you abreast, on the CUTTING EDGE, of what is happening in a world where huge, cataclysmic changes lie just over the horizon! But, unlike Mr. Armstrong, we no longer have 52 years to make clear what must be said. Strive to keep up with what is being offered to you.

On a final note: After Mr. Armstrong’s death, his successors began to alter and dismantle *The PLAIN TRUTH*, eventually *selling* subscriptions to a mere few thousand people who still wanted it in its new form.

This meant that someone had to restart—*restore*—*The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine. Decades of experience trained me for the task that lies ahead. From the time I married Mr. Armstrong’s secretary in 1971, circumstances allowed me to grow close to him and to learn from him personally for a period of almost 15 years. This prepared me to carry on in his absence, and to RESTORE the plain understanding of that wonderful magazine.

While we cannot bring back the original *PLAIN TRUTH* magazine, you are reading its replacement, its only *true* extension (after a 17-year gap), identical in style, impact—and MESSAGE! □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q What does the Bible say about “mercy killing”?

A “Euthanasia” and “doctor-assisted suicide” are two other terms by which mercy killing is known today. It is the act or practice of ending (by lethal injection or suspension of medical treatment) the life of a person suffering from a terminal illness or an incurable condition.

This subject has received more attention in recent years. Certain organizations and groups are fighting for individual rights to end one’s life—given certain circumstances.

God has always intended for humans to live fulfilling lives, with the final goal to have eternal life in His kingdom. “Beloved, I wish above all things that you may *prosper* and be *in health*, even as your soul prospers” (III John 2).

God is the giver of life! “For with You is the foundation of life” (Psa. 36:9). Thus, God alone has the right to authorize the taking of a life. He does allow this world’s governments (Rom. 13) to put to death those who commit heinous crimes, but He does not grant the right to put someone to death because of disease, sickness or old age. In fact, God’s Word tells us to care for the weak among us! “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, *support the weak*, be patient toward all men (I Thes. 5:14).

There are also times in which *prolonging* a person’s life goes contrary to the Bible example. Modern medicine is able to keep an individual alive almost indefinitely. However, this is not life—it is prolonging death! Examples from the Bible show that when the righteous knew they were going to die, they would gather their families and say goodbye. *Asking God* to end the life of one who is suffering—death being imminent—is certainly not wrong!

Q Please explain Mark 4:11-12. Why did Christ speak in parables?

A Most churches today teach that Christ came to save the world from its sins now. This is why major churches today have major

IN THIS SECTION, we answer some of our readers’ most commonly asked questions. If you have a question, or would like to comment on the material presented in this magazine, please write to us at:

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Or email: info@RealTruthMag.org

We welcome your questions and comments.

Space does not permit us to print all monthly questions and answers in the magazine. However, the Online Edition of *The REAL TRUTH* magazine (www.RealTruthMag.org) includes a more extensive Questions & Answers section.

campaigns to “save souls” or to “turn hearts to Jesus.” It is also claimed by these same groups that Jesus spoke in parables in order for the majority of people to *better* understand what He was saying.

But Jesus’ own words refute this claim: “And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable” (vs. 10). Christ was talking to His disciples and a few others around Him. The multitudes mentioned in verse 1 were already away from Jesus. Then He said, “Unto you [His disciples] it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [those unconverted, those He was not calling to understand], all these things are done in parables” (vs. 11).

Jesus used parables to conceal, to hide, His true meaning so those He was not working with would not understand. Continue in verse 12: “That seeing they may see, and *not perceive*; and hearing they may hear, and *not understand*; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” He used parables to make it *more difficult* to understand—not easier!

Christ preached the gospel to the masses *as a witness* (Matt. 24:14), not to convert them. It is this same commission that the Church has today: “Go you therefore, and *teach* all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: *Teaching them* to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded* you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (28:19-20).

God does the calling: “No man can come to Me [Christ], except the Father which has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day... And He [Christ] said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:44, 65). It is obvious today that the majority of humanity is not being called. Even among professing Christians, very few walk as Christ walked.

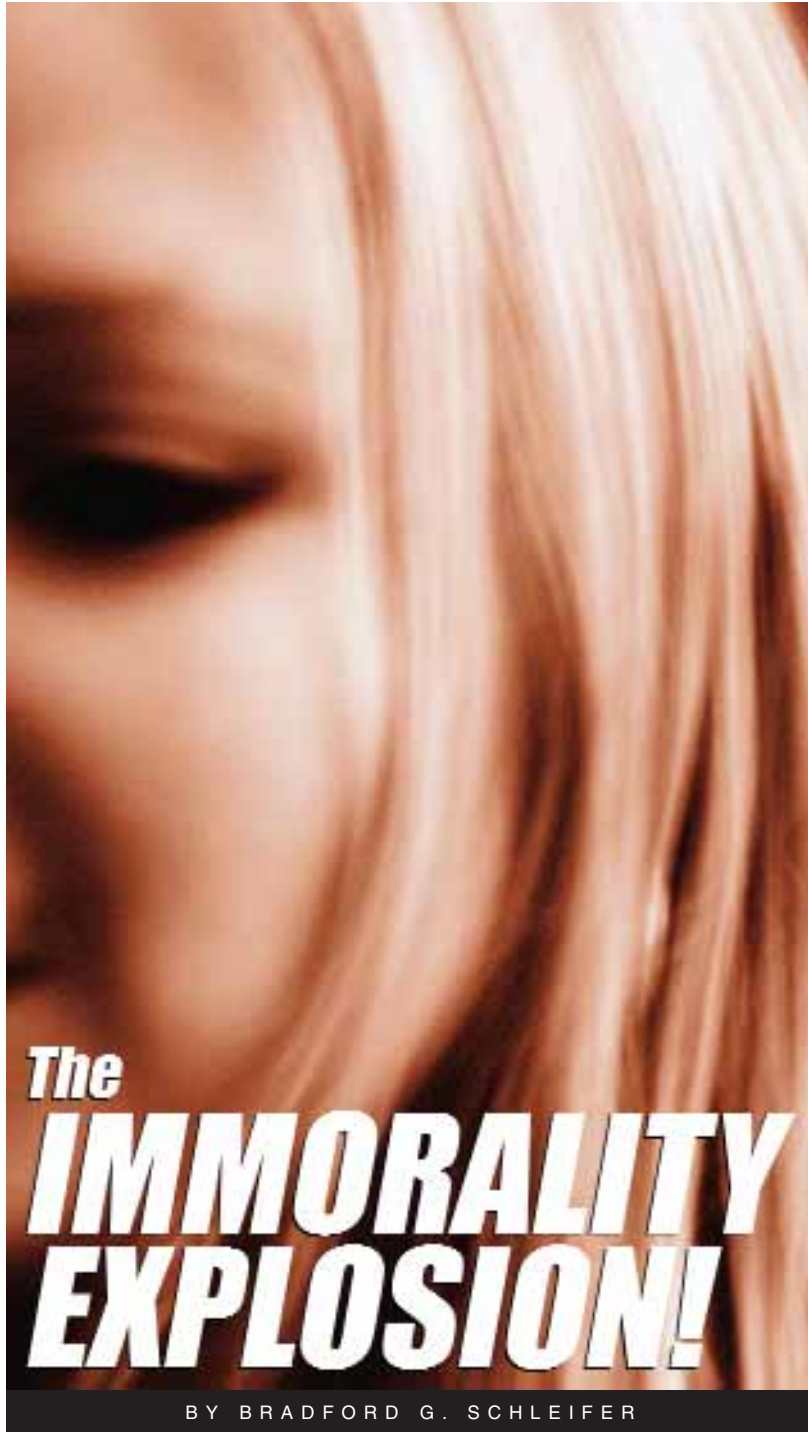
God is calling very few in this age. But before His Plan is finished, all will be given the opportunity for salvation. You may wish to read our free booklet *Does the Bible Teach PREDESTINATION?*

Q What is the meaning of the “spirit of the Law,” vs. the “letter of the Law”?

A In Matthew 5:20-44, Christ showed that obeying the “letter of the Law” is a matter of *physical action*, whereas obeying the “spirit of the Law” requires more than just outward actions—it also involves an *attitude of the mind*—referred to by the apostle Paul as “circumcision of the heart” (Rom. 2:28-29).

For example, Christ showed that to merely refrain from adultery is obedience to the “letter of the Law,” but to obey both the spirit *and* letter of the Law, one must also exercise *self-control* (“temperance”—Gal. 5:23), and not even *lust* after someone (committing “adultery in his heart”).

Another example (not mentioned by Christ in Matt. 5) is in the keeping of the Sabbath Day. To merely “remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8), “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25), is in obedience to the letter of the Law. But to also *rejoice* in the Sabbath and call it a “delight” (Isa. 58:13) is keeping the spirit of the Law, as God intends. This principle applies to all of God’s laws. □



The **IMMORALITY EXPLOSION!**

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

Old-style morality is *under assault* like never before. Many have come to wonder what is right and what is wrong—what morality really is. Is it a strict intolerant attitude? Would morality problems be resolved if everyone tolerated and learned to “understand” all the actions of others? A new perverse subculture has crept into nearly every home and every society. Here is the **PLAIN TRUTH** about immorality—and where it is going!

TO SOME, the world exists in a state that *appears* to be improving. Great achievements in science, technology, medicine and economics have led to advancements of every kind imaginable. As problems arise, we *seem* unlimited in our ability to solve them. But are we *really* solving them? Are the inevitable wounds of advancement being healed by technology?

It has been said that the total fund of human knowledge doubles *annually*. Does all this information improve society? Does it allow us to make better choices? Are we, as “informed” people, better off than the “ignorant and uneducated” masses of previous centuries?

One area in which knowledge has flourished is that of sex. A plethora of information—and *instruction*—is now available. But has it allowed us to make better choices?

No doubt *you* can see the depth to which sex permeates society. One can no longer turn on the television without finding a program that has sexual undertones. Magazines are filled with stories, photos and features that would shock those of past generations. There is now also the Internet, offering a veritable buffet of perversions.

But are these things really having an effect on society? Is this public fascination with sex actually changing how we act, think and live? What about children? Does the explosion of sex-related material taught in schools and presented by the media have positive or negative effects on them?

Psychologists have suggested that children need the “seeds of tolerance” planted in them at an early age, to allow them to blossom into well-rounded, tolerant adults. In this vein, many school curriculums have been altered to allow alternative lifestyles and viewpoints to be expressed, oftentimes without the parents’ knowledge.

Will such seeds of knowledge sprout into a better, more tolerant society? Or is there a price to be paid for the “re-education” of our children?

Society has embraced the concept of political correctness. It allows all people to live their lives however they choose as long as “it doesn’t hurt anyone else.” The “PC” attitude has spawned an era of tolerance that, before our time, was unknown. Everyone and everything is now tolerated—or is it?

Pleasure and betterment are the main goals and hopes of many. Some would argue that, if they are doing something to themselves, they should have the right to experiment and enjoy whatever they please. After all, they would theoretically hurt no one but themselves. But is self-pleasure actually leading toward betterment?

The world is filled with many avenues of recreation—escape—especially in the western world. Television, movies, dance clubs, bars and the Internet allow people to escape their daily lives or meet others who share similar interests. The most enabling of these is the Internet. Never has it been so easy for so many to reach those who share similar interests—no matter how extreme.

The Internet literally has “something for everyone.” For instance, if you are interested in rock climbing and have recently moved to a new city, the Internet would allow you to find others who share this interest.

But, with the click of a mouse, one can just as easily find people who are interested in pedophilia!

The Internet is the ultimate form of full-information access. But how the Internet is used, and how sex has dominated this medium, will shock you.

Never before could someone who was “curious” about same-sex relationships find a partner to explore that curiosity in such an open and encouraged forum.

And in the same way, children are now exposed—often without their parents’ knowledge—to predators of every kind.

These types of windows into society exist. But where does society itself now stand? Collectively, what does *it* believe?

The State of Affairs

A statistical picture reveals the sexual state of the world. Although it will not supply you with answers, it will show you the dire straits in which we live.

In today’s world, it is common to lose one’s virginity by age 16. However, this is tame in comparison to the problems across middle schools in America. Instead of learning math and english, reports regularly appear about students caught having oral sex in the classroom. This is now generally considered to be at epidemic levels.

Fifth grade graduation parties feature scores of children “freak” dancing—a form of dancing in which they simulate the sex act while keeping their clothes on.

Thinking about being “sexy” starts *even* younger. The popular “Barbie” doll has recently introduced a version called “Lingerie Barbie.” Although Mattel stated that this Barbie is for ages 14 and up, the average market for Barbie is ages 8 to 12. The product description shows how children are forced to confront sexuality issues: “Barbie exudes a *flirtatious* attitude in her heavenly merry widow bustier ensemble accented with intricate lace and matching *peekaboo* peignoir.”

Children are supposed to be child-like—innocent—throughout childhood! Sexuality should never even enter their thinking. Yet they are constantly bombarded with—force-fed—images and products that push them to be sexy.

One market that seems to have no concept of childhood is that of fashion. It seems that, if you want sex to sell, you must start with the very young, as this quote from *ABC News* shows: “A fake lizard miniskirt...boots and fishnet stockings...If you think it’s the wardrobe of a 20-something, think again!” It goes on to explain that this is the closet of a five-year old!

The sexualization of children has spawned a generation of adults who have delved into every perversion under the sun. Relationships have also become twisted and perverted. This has devastated marriages, which are now more likely to end in divorce than not.

And the Internet has also had a hand in this. An *American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers* survey recently showed that in the last 12 months, Internet-related issues caused 62% of all divorce cases. From meeting partners for affairs, to delving into perversions once suppressed or addiction to pornography, families are being destroyed by the immoral fiber that has become pervasive in our society.

Studies show that over 80% of marriages in the U.S. have an unfaithful partner. Children learn by example. What example is being set? Children who are abused tend to become abusers. By extension, might children of openly promiscuous parents take on these qualities as well?

But there are even more extreme forms of behavior happening in the

home. Just as addiction to soft drugs leads to heavier drug use, experimenting with pornography leads to other perversions. Many couples are delving into alternative lifestyles. Becoming popular across the western world is the concept known as “swinging.” Couples meet other couples and each will then trade partners!

Imagine the confusion a child would experience if exposed to such blatant immorality!

Examples could continue for pages. The different lifestyles, interests, habits and choices are just a small window into the bowels of society. Can we turn back the clock? Or have *Ozzie and Harriet* (the beloved TV family of the 1950s) been transformed into *The Osbournes*?

In an effort to provide information to help make the “correct” sexual choices, better judgment has been left behind. Imagine giving detailed instructions to a terrorist on how, when and where to plant a nuclear weapon. Then imagine that, after such a weapon is detonated, we deduce that the solution is to give such terrorists more information—with even MORE detail. No one would suggest such a ridiculous idea!

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

Will there be any towers of morality left when—or if—this tide is stemmed?

Perversion of the Family

A two-parent family is the best and most productive environment in which to raise children who will one day grow into sound, well-rounded adults.

It is ideal when the mother is able to care for her children, while the father provides an income for the family. This helps children to grow up in a happy and stable environment. Children with this foundation have sound male *and* female role models.

Sadly, this has all but disappeared. There is such a wide array of “families,” the new “normal” family structure is nearly impossible to define.

For instance, one out of every three children in the U.S. is born to an unwed mother. And this number is skyrocketing. Many believe that the odds of a marriage surviving are so low that they

should forgo marriage altogether. This results in cohabitation becoming the precursor to marriage—not the other way around.

It was very different even a few generations ago. Couples would date and get to know each other. Sexual relations would not have been an option until marriage. The idea of living together would have been completely foreign.

Today, we see a complete reversal of this. Often, couples live together for years, appearing as married without making the firm *commitment* of marriage. Often, marriage comes because of either a surprise pregnancy or a pressure inside the relationship. This creates the commitment for all the wrong reasons.

Is it any wonder that the “divorced” status is the largest growing classification in North America?

But cohabitation is the simplest of these new “families.” Single-parent families lack balanced gender role models. A boy raised by his mother may never learn how to be a proper father. The same principle applies to a girl brought up by a single father. What father would understand the problems an adolescent girl experiences?

What about the concept of two parents of the same gender? How would a child learn to understand the differences between genders and know their roles in society? Or what about “swinging” parents? Imagine going back just 50 years and trying to explain such things.

In our society, the nuclear family is the last bastion of morality, and its defenses are being breached. As stated above, over 80% of marriages will suffer some form of adultery and, ultimately, many end in divorce.

It should come as no surprise, since society places so much “value” on sex. Before marriage, the average person has had up to five sexual partners. Sex is no longer a mysterious and exciting aspect of marriage. What should be one of the most powerful expressions of love has been reduced to something as “special” as sharing a bank account or buying a car. Therefore, it is no surprise that something so under-valued is so easily marred.

This framework and its examples have created what has been called the

most sexually active generation of children the world has ever seen.

Children and Sex

As mentioned, children have been bombarded with an array of mediums pushing sex at them. But the problem runs even deeper.

The media has created an unrealistic image. If you are a girl, that image is scantily-clad runway models and movie stars with bodies almost impossible to achieve. They *all* try to look “sexy” because *sex sells*. Young girls see such images and, partly because they lack role models at home, aspire to be like them.

Sex is popular. Many television shows represent sex as fun and exciting without any repercussions. Recently, one star of a popular television program became pregnant. The character made having a child, as a single woman, seem as simple as buying a new dress. The young and impressionable mind sees this and reacts.

The fashion industry also responds and drives these desires. Little girls are now able to purchase clothing that many adults would avoid. One major fashion chain sold child-sized thong underwear with sexually suggestive phrases on them. Should a ten-year-old have underwear with phrases such as “eye candy,” “kiss me” or “wink wink” on the front?

It has reached the point that it is nearly impossible for a young girl to find shirts or blouses that cover her midriff, or pants that are not shockingly revealing. But this is not limited to teenagers. Children try to be “sexy” before they are even capable of understanding what sexy means.

But it is not just limited to girls. Boys also try to aspire to “ideal” body types. They are taught that it is cool to have as much sex with as many girls as possible. A boy’s ability to “conquer” is often directly related to how much of a man he feels he will become. This has created a generation of young boys aspiring to be like what they see on television.

The result?

Researchers in Washington, D.C., wanted to start a program to prevent

sexual activity in youth. After initially offering the program to seventh-graders, they found it ineffective because *too many seventh-graders were already having sex!*

The program was then re-worked and offered to fifth-graders. (Keep in mind, we are talking about 10- and 11-year olds.) The study followed these students from 1995 to 1999, and the results were nothing short of eye-popping. While it said that most simply talk about sex, 20% of the students had sex before they were 15 years old—one in five! A notable fact was the change in girls. The 1999 results showed that 19% of girls reported having sex. This was a 42% increase from 1988.

According to a teen quoted in a *USA Today* article, it was estimated that almost 50% of seventh- and eighth-graders engaged in some kind of sex act. Part of the problem is that children have a very different view of sex than do adults.

A recent U.S. president added to this confusion. In the course of denying his act of adultery with an employee, he declared that oral sex is “not sex.” This mentality has solidified itself in the minds of many youths. Adults often define sex as *any* sort of arousing activity between two people. Young people believe that only intercourse is sex. Oral sex, petting or touching is not, to them, defined as sex.

This explains three stories below. The explicit nature and graphic wording of the articles are far too detailed to be quoted directly. Keep in mind the ages of the children involved in these incidents.

(1) A *14-year-old* reported to *USA Today* that two students were caught in a washroom in the midst of a sex act. Reports such as this are becoming all too common!

(2) A *13-year-old* told *ABC News* that a female student had sexual relations with nearly a third of their school’s football team.

(3) Another recent story involves two *12-year-olds* in Baltimore, Maryland. While a movie was being shown to the class, these *children* were in the back of the room committing a sex act!

There is simply not enough space to mention all the increasing news reports of *children* caught in the act of sex. It should then be no wonder that a recent *New York Times* article stated that “some studies indicate three-fourths of all girls have had sex during their teenage years and 15% have had four or more partners.”

But wasn't sex education supposed to help this? Are teenagers not taught that abstaining from sex will save them from the problems that such unwise choices create?

Sex Education

If one has sex without thinking through the consequences, many problems—pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.—can result. Knowledge should give one the power to make well-informed and wise choices—right?

You would assume that teaching children about sex allows them to make right choices. But are children able to see past their teen years and understand the consequences of their decisions? Based on what we have already seen, the answer is a resounding NO!

But should we re-think what we are teaching children? Termed “Comprehensive Sexual Education,” it was once considered the answer to help teens *abstain* from sex. However, it has turned into instructions on how to *have* sex.

The reasons for avoiding premarital sex have been minimized or removed. Many believe that telling children not to have sex is naïve and that we must provide any and all information to prepare them for WHEN—not if—they have sex.

Such illogic! The world is drowning in a sea of confusion and misunderstanding. Education seems to have completely lost its way. But there is a reason for such confusion and there is a hope for this misguided world. Nearly 6,000 years ago, the first man, Adam, rejected true knowledge—including proper understanding of sex. Since that time, man has created his *own* system of education instead of turning to God and His Word for such understanding. Modern society—with its improper

approach to sexual education—shows the “fruits” (Matt. 7:16, 20) of a system that gropes blindly for the solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems. Mankind has trusted in its *own* wisdom instead of God's. And the Bible has a warning for such men: “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes!” (Isa. 5:21).

But there is a system—a hope—that will solve all these problems *and* introduce proper and true sex education. Very soon, Jesus Christ will return to this earth and set up a new government and education system. *That* system will remove all confusion and misunderstanding about what is moral and immoral, what is pure and what is perverse. The teachings of the Bible show that any form of sexual relationships outside of marriage will result in an endless array of problems. But because so few follow those teachings, many do not understand—or even know of—this way of life that brings peace, happiness and joy. Soon, the government of God will teach this way of life throughout the entire world.

But until that time, a stubborn mankind will continue to build upon a brittle and cracking foundation.

Flawed Foundation

The problem with sex education is the foundation on which it is built. Its basis is that all people are sexual—that from the moment we are born, we are fully sexual creatures. Proponents have even compared the hugging of a grandparent to a sexual act. Most sex educators refuse to believe documented evidence that children—unless molested—have no sexual impulses until approximately age 12.

They also assert that children are being misinformed and misdirected by their parents, who, they feel, cloud the issues and often drive kids to make wrong choices. When summarizing the view of sex educators, Kerby Anderson stated, in *The Teen Sexual Revolution*, “Parents, in [the educators'] view, have simply not done their job, so we need ‘professionals’ to do it right. Parents in trying to protect their children, fail to affirm their sexuality, and even discuss sexuality in a context of moralizing.”

The answer?

Turn what was to be simple information into full-blown sexual instruction for youth! An example of such a program is called “Learning About Family Life.” This heavily studied program is used by the state of New Jersey. It covers, in detail, sexual desire, AIDS, divorce, condoms, masturbation and much more. Yet it nearly excludes any mention of abstinence, marriage, self-control and virginity. They are actually *promoting* sex to children.

In a 1994 article “The Failure of Sex Education,” Barbara Dafoe Whitehead clearly demonstrated that popular sex education failed in accomplishing its original directives: Dropping the number of pregnancies and cases of STDs.

While conducting her study, she found that a popular form of “prevention” was “outercourse.” This involves sexual touching, petting or kissing in the hopes that it would keep teenagers from going further. Any reasonable person knows where such things would lead with *adults*. Would any believe that teenagers would have *more* self-control?

Her study also showed that the number of unwed mothers rose over 20% from 1980 to 1991, proving that the proliferation of sex information does not prevent problems.

Another flaw in sex education's foundation is the concept of “safe sex.” Countless studies have shown that no form of premarital sex is safe—especially among adolescents. But regardless of the evidence, teaching children to practice “safe sex” is the core of sex education.

But *how* dangerous is “safe sex”? Proper condom use prevents the spreading of STDs and instances of pregnancy—right? The answer would be “no” if you asked the 31% who reported condom failure.

Studies in a 1993 issue of *Social Science Medicine* showed that condoms were only 87% effective in preventing pregnancy and 69% effective in preventing the spread of HIV.

But proponents for condom use often quote a study by the Ninth International Conference on AIDS. However, only part of the study is quot-

ed. They excerpt data showing that when couples are properly *trained* and *educated* in using protection, it does prevent the spread of diseases such as AIDS.

While this is true, it unfortunately falls short of *all* the information the study provides. More than a third of the couples involved were unable to learn how to properly use protection. Of this third, 12 became HIV positive and, without doubt, this number increased over time.

In a study to show the effectiveness of condom use, couples could not be taught to use condoms well enough to prevent infections. How much more would *teens* in reckless sexual encounters put themselves in danger?

Sex education has been broken since its inception and—like many things in our culture—we blindly follow it, never asking any questions. But sexual instruction is one part in a system that turns an innocent young mind into a lustful sexual being.

Sexualization of the Innocent

Sex now grips an entire generation. And with each generation, the target becomes younger. Why have youth become so preoccupied with sex? The real reason is not teenage sex, unwed mothers or the rampant spread of STDs. The real reason is the systematic sexualization of youth. Children, as young as five, are beginning to think of themselves as “sexual” beings. They want to be as sexy as those they idolize on television.

No young teen, and certainly no five-year-old, should be wondering if they are sexy. Why has society created an atmosphere that pushes children to meet expectations that were once only placed on adults?

We have read about the sale of sexually suggestive clothing for little girls, and statistics of various sex acts by children and teenagers. Also, that schools seem to teach children to be sexual, basically instructing them about sex before they are able to understand the repercussions. The list of such things is practically endless.

It seems that our entire society is organized in such a way as to sexualize

young people. But why would a society—a culture—want to do this?

Children of varying ages are taught to be tolerant of *all* forms of sexual expression. Many Hollywood movies show minors in sexual situations and, at times, sexual acts with adults. And in high school, they are taught what it means to experiment in the context of “learning who they are.”

The seeds of tolerance and mass information have created the aforementioned moral terrorists. But weren’t these forms of education designed to help children make better—healthier—choices about their lives and futures? Weren’t such systems established to *improve* society and create stable, happy families?

While this may have been the original goal, the system has been hijacked and the goals perverted. Society as a whole has been focused on “more important” problems, and an entire generation is paying the price.

But in educators’ attempts to teach children how to grow into well-rounded adults, they could not have known that such a system would turn into something so wrong. They could not have known that teaching—and instructing—children about sex would create the problems we now see. Or could they?

The Bible records many several-thousand-year-old prophecies that were written about today’s world. The conditions of pollution, crime, and disease are all described—and so is sexual immorality. God’s Word foretold the state we see in our modern time:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...*disobedient to parents, unthankful...without natural affection...despisers of those that are good...heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures* more than lovers of God...led away with DIVERSE LUSTS, ever learning, and *never* able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (II Tim. 3:1-7).

How true of our modern society!

And, just as surely as these prophecies about our times have come true, there are other prophecies yet unfulfilled that *will* come to pass. They speak

of a world very different from our own. A time of hope and stability. A time when the Ten Commandments will be taught throughout the world, and, with them, a proper understanding of sex. No longer will children be forced to learn about immoral sex—premarital, extramarital or homosexual. Children will be taught the powerful bond that sex within marriage creates. And they will come to understand the blessings that flow from keeping the laws of God and practicing the morality He created.

The Answer Revealed!

Though man ignored the prophecies showing that his systems would fail, he must certainly see the results. Why does he keep using a system that is so obviously flawed at its very foundation? Why are abstinence and virginity not shown to be the wise choices that they are? Why are perversions pushed to extremely young children as normal and viable options? Not only are educators embracing the concept of giving more information to our teenagers, they are giving them information that most *adults* do not even know or comprehend.

Worse yet, teens and even small children are being exposed to alternative lifestyles without even parental knowledge. Under the banner of *tolerance*, parents have been removed from teaching their children and establishing proper morals.

This is the darker side of the modern sexual society. It is the system that sexualizes children and makes them more sexually aware at ever younger and younger ages. Why would *anyone* want to sexualize children, making them sexually aware and active at increasingly younger ages? What happens when young people are exposed to this? Why is tolerance taught in schools when many schools are not tolerant of a *parent’s* morals? What kind of adults has this society, rooted in tolerance, produced?

We will answer these questions, expose the hidden side of sexual education, and show how far off the world’s moral compass has become, next month in “The Immorality Explosion! – Part II.” □



THE GROWING DANGER OF SPIRITISM

In today's society, spiritism is spreading like wildfire. Through books, magazines, television and movies, the occult reaches into virtually every facet of life. Increasingly, people are turning to spiritism for answers to their problems. What are the implications of this trend? Where is it headed? Will it include you?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

THROUGH A BARRAGE of media influences, the supernatural is spoon-fed to young minds virtually every night on television. Its presence can reach into every home that is plugged into the Internet.

Is society's fascination with the spirit world just innocent curiosity? Or is it dangerous? Is there a dark side to this trend?

This is the first in a series of articles addressing the growing influence of spiritism around the world.

The Modern Face of Paganism

Meet Sue. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, with her husband and two sons, ages 5 and 10. She is a computer programmer for a nationally-known bank. Like many people, Sue's

life is filled with many roles—wife, mother, employee...Wiccan. Sue is an elder and high priestess in a Wiccan coven.

Last Easter, she joined about 200 marchers in the Bay Area's first-held Pagan Pride Parade. Since the parade's official theme was "Return of the Snakes," Sue brought along her pet, a 10 1/2-foot, 50-pound Colombian boa constrictor named Dora.

According to an estimate by the parade's leader, there may be as many as 50,000 pagans, witches and Wiccans living in the Bay Area alone. And their beliefs are as varying as denominations of mainstream Christianity. Some pagans view themselves as "ceremonial magicians" or "eclectic pagans." Some belong to the Covenant of the Goddess;

others worship Oshun, a Yoruba goddess.

The Pagan Pride Parade is only one of many attempts to normalize ancient, pagan religions and belief systems into the mainstream.

So far, the plan seems to be working.

Harry Potter—Blessing or Curse?

Study the world around you. The tentacles of paganism, spiritism and the occult are touching almost everything you can imagine.

Take *Harry Potter*, for example. Every book in this series about a boy wizard is in the top 20 of *Publisher's Weekly's* list of the all-time bestselling children's books. Thus far, hardcover and paperback sales for *Harry Potter* have skyrocketed to almost \$37 million.

Add that to *Harry Potter* movie ticket sales and you can see why so many writers, publishers and filmmakers are scrambling to come up with their own kid wizards.

Yet, despite its success, the series has come under fire. Many concerned parents and religionists argue that letting children read *Harry Potter* is akin to teaching them the inner workings of witchcraft and black magic. On the other side of the fence are those who say that any literature that gets children to read—even if it is about wizards, witches and sorcery—is a blessing.

Which side is right?

Some parents work hard to keep their children from being exposed to any form of spiritism and witchcraft—including Halloween and *Harry Potter*. Yet, many times, their efforts are undermined by others.

For example, in an attempt to replace Halloween, teachers at McNear Elementary in Petaluma City, California, exposed fourth-graders to the Mexican holiday “El Día de los Muertos”—the Day of the Dead. The children were encouraged to observe the ancient pagan ritual of honoring the deceased with altars (or tables) surrounded with flowers, food and pictures.

The objections of parents fell on deaf ears.

Other Media Outlets

Now consider the “Hollywood-ization” of the occult: *The Exorcist*, *Carrie*, *Devil’s Advocate*, *The Craft*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*. These and countless other films tantalize, please and ultimately desensitize the senses to demonism, witchcraft and magic, many times with blood and gore.

Now consider television. The minds of young and old alike are entertained by the exploits of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Dark Angel*, *Charmed*, *The X-files*, *The Dead Zone*, *Millennium* and *Witchblade*. Such shows, featuring witches, vampires, voodoo and black magic, have spawned millions of dedicated viewers.

For those who want reality-based shows dealing with spiritism, there is

the highly popular TV talk show *Crossing Over with John Edward*. Its host is a self-ascribed psychic medium who claims to predict future events and communicate with the dead—those who have supposedly crossed over to the “other side.”

As you can see, filmmakers and television producers have learned to market the occult into a highly profitable franchise.

And then there are computer and video games. Virtually every role-playing game sold requires players to get involved with witchcraft, sorcery, casting spells and conjuring up spirits. Many argue that this is nothing more than harmless fun.

But is it?

Spiritism 101

Picture this: Johnny spends his entire childhood weaned on the occult, via children’s books, television and movies. Should it be a surprise that, upon going away to college, Johnny seeks out even more of the same?

It would help to explain why paganism is alive and well on college campuses across the U.S. An ever-growing number of teens and twenty-somethings are studying more than just English Lit—they are wholeheartedly delving into ancient pagan rituals. Many parents are unaware that they have sent their teens off to colleges (such as Syracuse University) that offer courses in witchcraft.

Wicca, which has been described as a “contemporary neo-pagan religion,” is becoming popular among U.S. college students, especially among young women. Wicca’s goddess-oriented belief system is popular among feminist mindsets. For example, Swarthmore College—an Ivy League school—offers the following course, entitled *Women and Religion*:

“This course will examine the variety of women’s religious experiences in the United States. Topics will include the construction of gender and religion, religious experiences of women of color, spiritual autobiographies and narratives by women, Wicca and witchcraft in the United States, and feminist and womanist theology.”

Student chapters for Wicca and other practices of paganism have spread nationwide: The University of Arizona, Auburn University, Clemson, Georgia Tech, Penn State, Purdue...the list goes on.

Not to be outdone, universities and schools *wholly* devoted to the study of mysticism and witchcraft are being established in Europe.

Sanitized, Normalized and Accepted

Curiosity in the occult is increasing even in places as remote as northwestern Arkansas. Recently, *The Morning News/NWAonline.net* published a news report (“Library Board Plans for Future”) about a library announcing plans for future expansion.

According to the article, the Rogers Library Board, in order to meet the growing demands of new readers in the region, planned to spend thousands of dollars on purchasing audio books and electronic books (or e-books). In the middle of the article was a passing, matter-of-fact quote from the library director: “Car-repair manuals and books on witchcraft are books that constantly walk out of the library, and we have to keep buying new copies.”

Spiritism is now as common as giving your car an oil change.

But what is spiritism? How did Wicca originate?

Trickery and fraud among so-called psychics, spiritualists and fortunetellers are nothing new. The renowned magician Houdini regularly exposed such people for what they truly were—scam artists.

The book *Psychic Mafia*, by M. Lamar Keene, a former “psychic,” revealed the extensive tricks and scams that so-called psychics used to fraud the gullible.

But is there anything genuine to spiritism, witchcraft and the occult? Or is it all “smoke and mirrors”?

The Modern-day Origin of Spiritism and Wicca

Founded in 1954 by Gerald Gardner, Wicca is a modern version of pagan beliefs, practices and rituals handed down from pre-Christian times. Over the centuries, much information was

lost, so it has been recreated and restructured. Wicca is a nature-worshipping, goddess-oriented, polytheistic religion.

But not all Wiccans are the same. Just as there are different forms of professing Christianity (Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.), there are different “branches” within the Wiccan religion. These branches are called “traditions.” Within each tradition, there can be variations from coven to coven.

When a coven gathers together at night, its members form a circle and hold hands as they chant and walk around an altar. They welcome the north, south, east and west. They welcome forces with mythological names. Sometimes they cast spells to cast away any “bad energy.”

Wiccan is largely based on symbols, and seasonal days to celebrate and worship ancient deities. Wiccans claim to be in tune with the earth; they use many herbs and roots to concoct spells and potions. Their biggest holiday of the year is Halloween, which they call Samhain (pronounced so-wane).

Modern spiritism began in early 1848, in Hydesville, New York. A farmer, John Fox, along with his wife Margaret and their two daughters, Kate and Margaretta, moved into a house that was said to be haunted. (The prior tenant had moved out due to several unexplainable instances of raps, taps, footsteps and other noises.)

The Fox family soon began to be disturbed by strange sounds and activities, such as spontaneous movement of furniture by “unseen hands.” Believing their home was haunted by some “restless spirit,” Kate Fox cried out to the mysterious unseen power and challenged it to copy her in snapping her fingers. Her sister Margaretta did the same, challenging the spirit to copy her in clapping her hands.

Then Mrs. Fox made a challenge: “I then thought I could put a test that no one in the place could answer. I asked the noise to rap my different children’s ages, successively. Instantly, each one of my children’s ages was given correctly, pausing between them sufficiently long to individualize them until the seventh, at which a longer pause was made, and then three more emphatic raps were

given, corresponding to the age of the little one that died, which was my youngest child” (*The Ayer Institute*).

After asking the spirit several more questions, the Fox family soon invited all their neighbors to come and communicate with the unseen spirit:

“All heard the same questions and answers. Many remained in the house all night. I and my children left the house...On the next Saturday the house was filled to overflowing. There were no sounds heard during the day, but they commenced again in the evening. It was said that there were over three hundred persons present at the time. On Sunday morning the noises were heard throughout the day by all who came to the house.”

The spirit claimed to be Charles B. Rosna, a peddler who had stayed at the house five years previously. Many years later, *The Boston Journal* reported that the skeletal remains of a man had been discovered at the Fox house, “clear[ing] them [the Fox family] from the only shadow of doubt held concerning their sincerity in the discovery of spirit communication.”

As adults, the Fox sisters, acting as mediums for the spirit world, entertained hundreds of people. This was the beginning of modern-day séances. As their fame grew, the sisters eventually charged fees for their services. Even famous personalities from history sought them out: Horace Greeley, P.T. Barnum, James Fenimore Cooper and many others.

Yet, despite their fame, the lives of Kate and Margaretta Fox were filled with betrayal, accusations, poverty and heavy drinking. Both sisters died prematurely from complications due to alcoholism. They were buried in paupers’ graves.

Why the Appeal?

Why are people turning their backs on professing Christianity and seeking spiritual answers through the occult?

Many have felt let down—in some cases, betrayed—by mainstream Christianity. They point to widespread church scandals, such as the recent revelation of child abuse cases among the Catholic priesthood, and then ask, “If

so-called Christian leaders can preach from the pulpit one minute and sexually abuse helpless little children the next, then what’s so bad about paganism?”

Man has always been curious to know if there is more to this life than just the physical, material world. Desperately wanting to believe that life is more than simply birth-existence-death, a growing number of people are willing to be open-minded to *any* religion that appears to fill the spiritual void in their lives.

For many, mainstream Christianity no longer does this. The fruits of Christian religionists, leaders and groups—child abuse and sex scandals, inappropriate use of funds, questionable stances on hot-button political and social issues, active involvement in civil governments—are turning off and driving away believers and non-believers alike.

The voice of a new generation says, “The truth is out there...somewhere.” Spiritism, paganism and the occult are becoming a popular alternative.

In addition, some say that they are tired of rules that restrict their moral behavior. They want to set their own rules, their own standards of right and wrong. This is another reason why paganism is so appealing to so many.

Most witches, Wiccans and pagans embrace the Witches’ Creed: “Do as ye will and ye harm none.” Wrapping themselves around this moral code, they proudly proclaim that not *all* witches are bad. They claim that, just as there are good and bad Christians, there are good and bad witches.

How Does this Compare to the Bible?

On the surface, the Witches’ Creed does appear to advocate a simple form of morality (“Harm none”). But when compared to the spiritual excellence found in the laws and teachings in the Bible, the Witches’ Creed falls short.

“Do as ye will and ye harm none” is solely based on individual opinions of what seems to harm others.

In the Bible, the book of Judges records that, after God had delivered the Israelites into the Promised Land, the

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WORLD NEWS DESK



EUROPE

“Kaiser-like” President Leading Europe?

The United Kingdom continues to express concern over Germany’s proposal and insistence that there be a stronger, “Kaiser-like” president for the European Union. German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer is pushing for one president for both the European Commission and the European Council, which would essentially make him a very powerful president of Europe. The UK strongly opposes such a plan, to the point where their Europe Minister, Denis MacShane, recently reminded German President Gerhard Schröder that the British decapitated such a figure (i.e. Charles I) 350 years ago.

Public utterance of such strong language may indicate a sense of insecurity on the part of the British. As a nation, they are economically desperate to maintain strong connections with the EU, even at the expense of their British pound. The Blair administration is also politically desperate to maintain its stronghold, allaying public fears by downplaying the recent renewal of the Franco-German motor, while at the same time expressing legitimate concerns as stated above, regarding the direction of Europe.

Interestingly, MacShane had this to say as he headed out to sell Europe to the UK population: “To understand what

is happening in Europe, whether it’s the Common Agricultural Policy or the slowness of economic reform, you’ve got to understand the position of the churches, the Conservative party in Germany, and what it’s like to have a tradition of small, rural, peasant economies where men’s output hasn’t changed much since Zola wrote about them.” □

Trans-Atlantic Rift is Driven by Religion

Europe’s foreign policy chief, Javier Solana claims that the ever-widening rift between Europe and the U.S. is currently being driven by one thing: Religion. He claims the U.S. is viewing the world in a religious context, and basing their foreign policy accordingly—in black and white—wrong vs. right. He points to the type of language that the White House has used since September 11th: “With us or against us,” “rogue states,” “axis of evil,” “right and wrong,” “good and bad.”

Europe, he says, finds this difficult to handle due to their largely modern, secular cultures. The “moral clarity” of America is therefore nearly impossible to duplicate in Europe. Solana believes that a religious society perceives wrong in terms of moral choice and free will, whereas a secular society looks for the causes of wrong in political or psychological terminology.

In the end, Solana remains optimistic and interestingly concludes, “Let me tell you, I do not despair. Some of us profoundly disagree with Bush. But it may push the European Union to become

much more of an actor in the world. We have an obligation to do so.” More than an obligation, this has been prophesied in the Holy Bible to occur.

This American “morality” may indeed be due to the fact that their society (i.e., the fundamentals of their Constitution) was to some degree, based on the principles of God’s Law—the Ten Commandments. It may therefore be, to this day, their collective mindset to view the world in black and white—right vs. wrong. Unfortunately, they have long ago forgotten the Author of these laws and decided for themselves what is right and what is wrong. In doing so, they have developed a rebellious, decadent lifestyle. They have forgotten the source of their national blessings. They have long relied on their own strength and intelligence to attempt to solve their problems. □

Other Developments

■ France and Germany are expected to release a declaration later this month on the 40th anniversary of the Franco-German alliance, calling for even stronger cooperation between the two nations. This will include the formation of a “top official” in charge of the alliance, and might even involve the unprecedented “sharing” of ministers in each government’s cabinet meetings.

■ It has been reported that German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer may have his eyes set on becoming president of the European Commission in 2004, which would fulfill, according to a political scientist at Mainz University, a “lifelong aim.”

■ The Vatican has been assured the European Constitution will pay homage to the Catholic Church. In addition, the Pope has received a formal invitation to address the European Parliament to “shake consciences.”

THE MID-EAST

Hussein: UN Inspectors Spying for U.S.

In a speech marking Army Day, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein accused the UN inspectors of being nothing more than spies for the United States. This is a significant development (although not entirely unexpected), considering that such public statements have typically been the precursor for the eventual denial of access and/or even the expulsion of inspectors. This, of course, would be a blatant “material breach” of the recent UN resolution, and would essentially guarantee a U.S.-led attack on Iraq in the next month or so. □

Russian and Iraqi Cooperation

Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough of *The Washington Times* reported that U.S. intelligence had recently uncovered evidence of closer-than-expected ties between Russian and Iraqi spy agencies. This puts the U.S. in another bind as the world and the United Nations press them for information in regards to proving that Iraq is in breach of resolution with evidence of possession or intended production of weapons of mass destruction. Although these intelligence ties may be remnants of the Cold War, Russia has continued to be one of Iraq’s closest allies, and has remained largely opposed to any war in Iraq.

Unfortunately for Iraq, they are in debt to Russia somewhere between 7 and 12 billion dollars, which has largely remained unpaid due to the previous Gulf War and to economic sanctions, pressed for by the United States, and imposed by the United Nations. □

Pope “Deeply Worried” About Iraq Situation

Pope John Paul II is now “deeply worried” about the coming war in Iraq, and has reiterated the Vatican’s anti-U.S. position. Archbishop Renato Martino, prefect for the Council for Justice and Peace, stated, “Unilateralism is not acceptable,” and that “We cannot think that there is a universal policeman to take a stick to those who behave badly.” □

WORLD RELIGION

Mysticism and the Catholic Church

A recent interview with Father Jesús Castellano Cervera, Vice Rector of Rome’s Teresianum Pontifical School of Theology and a Consultor of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reveals much about the Roman Catholic Church. The following are excerpts from this interview:

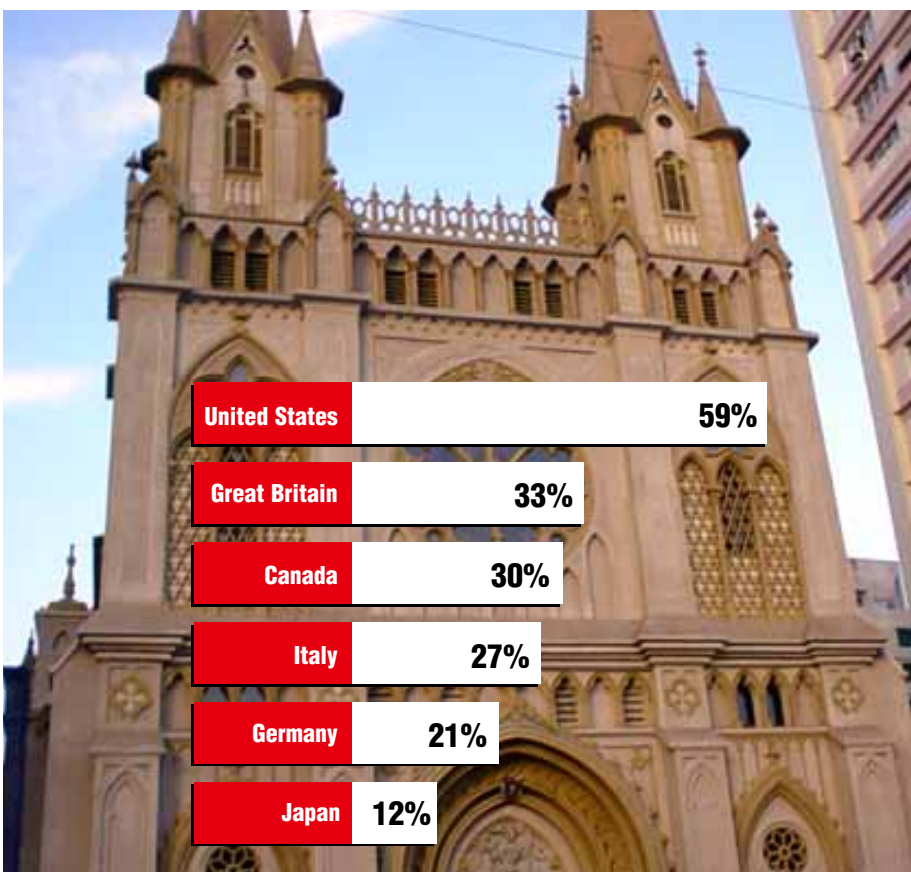
Regarding mysticism today: “Today there are many people who speak in the name of God, of the Virgin, and of the saints, who present messages. Today mysticism abounds on the Internet, where there are many sites with revelations and messages. However, without the positive judgment of the Church, which always moves with lead feet, it is very difficult to classify these people as mystics. The Church is investigating many of these visionaries, and looks for absolute certainties. Those who act as mystics in the Church or in society are not always the most worthy of belief. A mystical experience must be backed by the Church—its concrete and clear approval. I believe there are more gen-

uine mystics than one thinks. I know several people who have a genuine supernatural experience of God, but I prefer not to give their names. God will reveal them in the opportune moment.”

Regarding mysticism, the Church, and politics: “The mystic wishes to be the presence that translates into words and deeds, in suggestions for the Church, the will of God, the carrying out of his will. If by politics is understood ‘God’s doing,’ the translation into apostolic works of truth and love, justice and fraternity of what is God’s plan, I see no opposition between mysticism and politics. There are mystics who have this prophetic function in the Church and the world: to affirm forcefully the rights of God and his holy will against the abuses of the powerful.” □

COMPARING ATTITUDES TOWARD RELIGION

Percentage of citizens of wealthy nations who say that religion is very important:



SOURCE: USA Today; *The Pew Global Attitudes* survey of more than 38,000 people in 44 countries, July through October.

HEALTH WATCH

AIDS Yet to Peak

In a rather chilling, yet telling, article in *The Washington Post*, Richard G.A. Feachem seems to indicate that the modern medical world is losing the battle against HIV/AIDS (as well as tuberculosis and malaria). They may even be beginning to admit that their current solution model is not working. Mr. Feachem states that most of the world has developed a very dangerous attitude in regard to this pandemic—that it is “distasteful, lethal and a cause for genuine concern, but ultimately remote, difficult to solve and something you learn to live with.”

He believes the situation will get

more dire before it gets any better, and will not even peak for another 40 to 50 years. Carefully read and consider this ominous warning: “It cannot be contained; our armoury is ineffective. In country after country, it will devastate populations, especially the urbanized skilled and educated classes, much as the Khmer Rouge did in Cambodia. However, whereas the killing in Cambodia stopped after several years, the killing from HIV/AIDS will go on and on, racking nations with the ferocity of half a century of Khmer Rouge rule.” □

AIDS ARTICLE DEBUNKS THE FOLLOWING MYTHS

MALARIA

Myth: Malaria might happen to travelers but is easily treated.

Fact: Malaria, a threat to anyone visiting, working or living in tropical areas, is often drug-resistant and can be hard to treat.

TUBERCULOSIS

Myth: Though we are hearing more about the resurgence of TB, the Centers for Disease Control can get a grip on it.

Fact: TB is spreading rapidly in the United States and Europe, due partly to importation from Latin America and Eastern Europe respectively, and drug-resistant TB is both difficult and expensive to treat.

HIV/AIDS

Myth: It appears to be under control in the United States.

Fact: The domestic epidemics in the wealthy countries continue to grow and increasingly afflict poor, heterosexual women. We do hear that HIV/AIDS is causing numerous deaths in Africa, but Africans have always died in large numbers from infections.

Myth : If Africans would only get a grip on their political and economic systems, they could sort this out as we have.

Fact: Even a well-governed African country would be unable, if unassisted, to mount the scale of response necessary. Even the U.S. has been unable to do this.

And the pandemic is quickly spreading. The highly populated countries of India and China are just *beginning* to address the problem. The article states that the CIA believes and predicts that HIV in India will kill more people than would an all-out war with Pakistan.

U.S. Health Care Reaches \$1.4 Trillion

The U.S. increased spending on health care to \$1.4 trillion in 2001, the largest *percentage* increase in 10 years. Medicaid expanded to \$224.3 billion in 2001, posting double-digit increases in rates for all services except nursing homes. In addition, private health insurance was more expensive for the fourth

year in a row, rising 10.5%, to \$496.1 billion. Spending on medical services rose by 8.6%, to \$314 billion. Prescription drugs accounted for \$140.6 billion of total health costs. □

SPIRITISM

Continued from page 17

people soon rebelled. Time after time, they turned their backs on God and His Law—the Ten Commandments, and numerous statutes, precepts and judgments. Collectively, God’s Law taught the Israelites how to live. This Law was founded on two overarching principles:

(1) “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5).

(2) “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).

The first four of the Ten Commandments show *how* to love and serve God. The remaining six show *how* to properly love and serve other people. When obeyed, they produce peace and harmony. But when disobeyed, strife and chaos reign. Just one read of any reputable newspaper or news magazine will prove this.

Though God had personally given them the only real way to produce peace and happiness, the Israelites repeatedly relied upon themselves and “did their own thing.” They fell into a miserable and deadly cycle: (1) They rejected God and broke His laws. (2) No longer under God’s rule and protection, the Israelites were invaded and oppressed by enemy nations. (3) They cried out to God for deliverance. (4) Hearing their cries, God intervened and delivered them from oppression. (5) The Israelites obeyed God for a generation or two. But soon they would reject Him and break His laws. So went the cycle.

Throughout Judges, even to its final verse, God summed up this cycle: “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” This attitude has always yielded bloody results.

The Bible plainly shows that the Witches’ Creed of “Do as ye will and ye harm none” is an oxymoron. It is the same misguided idea of “Do what feels good, as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone”—the problem is that one man’s pleasure is another man’s pain. People cannot agree as to what “hurt none” means.

This is because “The way of man is *not in himself*: It is not in man that walks to direct his steps,” and “There is a way which *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of *death*” (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12).

Ironically, the vast majority who *profess* to be Christian—who *claim* to love “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”—ignore the above verses and follow their *own* rules and ideas. For example, many professing Christians preach against homosexuality, while quietly giving a nod and a wink to adultery and fornication. Yet the Bible, which they claim to love, condemns *all* sex outside the holy institution of marriage.

Witches, Wiccans and pagans are not fooled by the hypocrisy. They embrace the Witches’ Creed, which gives them the green light for virtually any sexual relationship, under the guise of moral freedom.

But are they *really* free? Or has such thinking actually enslaved them to an “unseen power” darker and more dangerous than they can imagine?

More Common Than You Think

Remember Sue, the Wiccan high priestess from the Bay Area? She is not alone in choosing witchcraft as a way of life. There are many more like her. In fact, it would not be a stretch to say that paganism and the occult is firmly entrenched in mainstream modern society.

Take the daily newspaper. At least three-quarters of U. S. newspapers carry daily horoscope columns. According to one report, perhaps about 25% of people worldwide believe in astrology to some extent. About 48% of Americans believe that astrology is valid, and up to 30% believe it to the point of using their astrological sign to mold their self-image. And up to 90% of Americans say they are “open minded” to the authenticity and value of astrology. Every year, some 20 million books on astrology are sold in the U.S. alone.

This is not merely “harmless fun,” as some claim. Astrology has been used to guide the decisions of the most powerful government office on the planet: The Presidency of the United States of

America. When he was in office, former President Ronald Reagan *regularly* consulted astrologers.

Consider the proliferation of advertisements for psychics and other fortunetellers. This marketing of such “services” has greatly increased since the 80s, when it made its debut.

Take the booming market of books offering readers the inside scoop on witchcraft, tarot cards, divination, communicating with the dead, casting spells. These books are not hidden in the back corners of musty used bookstores—they are displayed in plain view in the top bookstore chains nationwide. Even in the children’s section.

Now consider the Internet. Like a contemporary “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” the World Wide Web offers anything and everything to titillate the senses. There are easy to find websites featuring documents such as the “History of Spiritualism.” One such site displays a network of student chapters of paganism at college campuses nationwide. Just one popular search engine lists the following:

“**The Art of Casting Spells:** To cast a spell is to project energy through a symbol. The most powerful spells are often improvised from materials that feel right or that simply happen to come to hand.

“**Candle Magick:** How to perform candle magick, including preparation, choosing your candle, colors and properties, and creating candle magick.

“**Chants, Prayers and Invocation:** A selection of incantations you can use daily to invoke spiritual deities.

“**Curses:** Here’s [an] article on the history of curses throughout the world, and the current uses of curses and hexes...

“**How to Cast a Spell:** A simple, easy guide to creating magic for beginners. Magic should not be performed for fun or to fulfill wishes, this article says. It should be performed to improve your life and the lives of those you love by solving needs.

“**An Introduction to Voodoo:** [This] provides a brief history of voodoo, its beliefs, its rituals and more.

“**Love Spells:** Five love spells are provided here. You might want to read

the lengthy introduction first, however, so you know what you’re getting into.

“**Pagan/Wiccan Religion:** [This site] features everything you need or want to know about the subject, including insightful articles.

“**How to Find the Right Psychic:** Expert tips, articles and advice on how to find the best psychics and clairvoyants on the net. Excellent list of recommended psychics, clairvoyants and mediums for advice, love and destiny.”

Children today can learn every minute detail about the occult without ever leaving their bedrooms. No wonder so many are “coming out of the broom closet” upon reaching adulthood. They have been secretly weaned on the milk of paganism—and they want *more*.

The booming market for paganism and the occult is not limited to just the United States. Citizens in Canada, Britain, Australia and other modern, westernized nations are leaving the “broom closet” too, openly embracing pagan rituals and traditions.

And here is something you may not know: When professing Christians preach against the dark beliefs and rituals of Wiccans and pagans, witches knowingly smile. Why? Because they understand that the holidays embraced by mainstream Christianity—Easter, Christmas, New Year’s and others—originated from ancient pagan beliefs and traditions thousands of years before Jesus Christ was even born! Involving child sacrifices and temple prostitution, these were the same pagan rituals and customs that God had warned ancient Israel to avoid (Deut. 7:1-5, 16).

Amazing, but true!

Questions

Not only is paganism alive and well, but it is also thriving.

But are spiritism, witchcraft and practicing rituals from the occult right? Do they truly have the answers to life’s unanswerable questions?

Is there really a spirit world—if so, should you communicate with it?

Is there one source that has the authority to put paganism and the occult into their proper perspective?

These and many more questions will be answered in Part II next month. □

WANT MORE ARTICLES? *More* World News Desk updates? *Extra* Questions & Answers? *Additional* photos, illustrations and graphics? Read *The REAL TRUTH* Online Edition, published 1-2 weeks in advance of the printing of this magazine!

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The screenshot shows the website for 'THE REAL TRUTH ONLINE EDITION'. The browser title is 'The Real Truth Magazine - Microsoft Internet Explorer'. The address bar shows 'http://www.RealTruthMag.org'. The page header includes 'VOL. I | NO. 1' and a search bar. The main content area is titled 'ARTICLES FOR FEBRUARY 2003'. On the left, there is a sidebar with links for 'HOME', 'WHO ARE WE?', 'ARCHIVES', 'ABOUT', 'Q & A', 'EMAIL UPDATES', and 'NEWS (JAN 28)'. The main article section features several articles with images and titles: 'Why This Magazine!' (Personal from David C. Pack), 'Why the Debt Crisis?' (More and more people are being swept away in a sea of high-interest credit card bills...), 'The Immorality Explosion!' (Old-style morality is under assault like never before...), 'Witches, Wiccans and Pagans—The Growing Danger of Spiritism' (In today's society, spiritism is spreading like wildfire...), and 'The True Meaning of Lent' (What is Lent? Why is it so widely practiced by "Christians" of this world?). At the bottom, there is a 'WORLD NEWS DESK' section with the article 'Kaiser-like" President Leading Europe?' (The United Kingdom continues to express concern over Germany's proposal...).

ARTICLES FOR NEXT MONTH:

“Europe Reborn”

“The Immorality Explosion! (Part II)”

“Witches, Wiccans and Pagans—The Growing Danger of Spiritism (Part II)”

“The True Origin of Easter” (Online Edition only)

And much more!