

Christians Urge Facebook to Remove 'Virgin Mary Should've Aborted' Page

A group of concerned Christians is calling on Facebook to remove a page that promotes the notion that the Virgin Mary of the Bible should have received an abortion. Titled "Virgin Mary Should've Aborted," the administrator of the page claims to "explain what really happened in the biblical times, since the bible is full of lies."

With just over 5,000 "likes," Celene Schartner of Australia says the page not only demeans what Christians believe but is slanderous and hateful. It diminishes the right to life of every unborn infant in its mother's womb by its very title and statement.

"Many Christians worldwide are so distressed at the attempts to diminish Christian values and the slanderous attacks on the Bible," Schartner says. "If people don't believe, that's their choice, but they need to learn respect for the choices of others."

Schartner encourages others to join the protest by signing a petition that encourages the popular social media site to ban the page. As of the time of this release, more than 15,000 concerned Christians have signed the petition.

"I would never demean another Christian's faith or presume I have the right to do so, regardless of what they believe," Schartner says.

As U.S. spokesman for "Catholics & Protestants Against FB Religious Discrimination," Cary Bogue denounces the Virgin Mary page as "beyond offensive."

“No Christian anywhere can consider this just ‘free speech.’ This has deliberately been set up to offend and attack,” Bogue says.

Bogue maintains the page clearly is in violation of Facebook’s own policy, which states, “While we encourage you to challenge ideas, institutions, events and practices, we do not permit individuals or groups to attack others based on their religion.”

Bogue believes Facebook has created an automated response to complaints about the page, claiming it does not consider it an attack on a religion.

“That is just absurd. All we are asking is Facebook adhere to its own guidelines,” Bogue says.

The protesting group has created its own Facebook page requesting “Virgin Mary Should’ve Aborted” be removed. [Click here](#) to join “Catholics & Protestants Against FB Religious Discrimination.”

5 Pitfalls in John Kerry’s Middle East Peace Plan

While there most likely are more, here are at least five flaws in U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s Middle East peace plan:

1. No Palestinian reciprocity at the outset. Israel agreed to release 104 convicted terrorists just to get the Palestinians to talk peace. Would the U.S. agree to release 104 Guantanamo prisoners for talks with anyone?

Israel will undoubtedly be blamed if negotiations fail, so it's unlikely that fair judgment by the international community motivated the release. Perhaps it was the price Israel had to pay for a U.S. promise to prevent Iranian nukes and/or support Israel's efforts to stop them. If so, is the U.S. good for its word (despite Obama's repeated demonstrations that his Mideast "red lines" are meaningless)?

Whatever the explanation for Israel's good-faith opening, there were plenty of ways for the Palestinians to reciprocate: removing anti-Israel incitement from their textbooks and/or official media, recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, promising to "freeze" their anti-Israel diplomatic offensives, to name a few. But Secretary of State John Kerry preferred to establish that Palestinian reciprocity is optional: If Israel isn't volunteering what the Palestinians demand, they need only threaten to leave the talks and Kerry will compel the Israelis to comply.

2. No Palestinian good faith. The Palestinians will be represented by Saeb Erekat and Mohammad Shtayyeh. Shtayyeh's Facebook page displays a map of Israel's internationally recognized borders, plus the West Bank and Gaza—all emblazoned with the Arabic letters for "Palestine." So the person entrusted with negotiating a two-state solution openly admits that his Mideast map has room for only a Palestinian state.

Just as alarming, during a recent sermon attended by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and broadcast on Palestinian television, Religious Endowments Minister Mahmoud al-Habbash compared the PA's decision to negotiate with Israel to the Prophet Muhammad's Treaty of Hudaibiya (in the year 628): "In less than two years, based on this treaty, the Prophet returned and conquered Mecca. This is the example. It is the model."

3. No religious freedom in a future Palestinian state. Palestinians insist (ironically) that "peaceful

coexistence” means no Jewish settlers in their state. But, on principle, why should Jews be banned from living in a future Palestinian state—particularly when Muslims constitute over 17 percent of Israel’s population? Will the future Palestinian state be as hostile to religious minorities as other Muslim majority states are?

Unfortunately, recent history gives little reason to hope otherwise. Khaled Abu Toameh, an award-winning Arab journalist, reported the following about a year ago:

“According to the Greek Orthodox Church in the Gaza Strip, at least five Christians have been kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam in recent weeks ... church leaders ... accused a prominent Hamas man of being behind the kidnapping and forced conversion of a Christian woman, Huda Abu Daoud, and her three daughters. Radical Islam, and not checkpoints or a security fence, remains the main threat to defenseless Christians not only in the Palestinians territories, but in the entire Middle East as well.”

While Gaza is ruled by Islamists, the PA has also shown its hostility to Christians. On March 12, 2012, Algemeiner reported:

“A week after Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told an [international] audience of Evangelical Protestants ... that his government respected the rights of its Christian minorities, [PA] officials ... informed Bethlehem pastor Rev. Naim Khoury that his church lacked the authority to function as a religious institution under the PA ... There is a sense among Christians in Bethlehem that anti-Christian animus has gotten worse in the city ... Khoury said.”

A few weeks ago, Palestinians vandalized the Cave of the Patriarchs, Judaism’s second holiest site. How safe will non-Muslim holy sites be if there is no more Israeli presence in the West Bank? Will a future peace agreement specifically

guarantee protection of and Israeli access to Jewish holy sites?

If Israel's presence in the West Bank has helped moderate Muslim rule there, will Israel's complete departure mean West Bank Christians can expect their persecution to worsen to Gazan levels (with abductions and forced conversions)? Palestinian insistence that their future West Bank state be "*Judenrein*" doesn't bode well for the indigenous Christians there (or for religious freedom).

4. No Palestinian mandate to negotiate peace. There are about 2.1 million Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and 1.7 million in the Gaza Strip. But Hamas-ruled Gaza vehemently opposes peace negotiations and denies Israel's right to exist. Islamic Jihad and Hamas recently lambasted PA leaders for meeting with Israelis to talk peace. The last time the PA announced direct talks with Israel, Hamas announced plans to launch terrorist attacks at Israel in coordination with 12 other Gaza terrorist organizations.

And it's not even clear that West Bank Palestinians favor these talks. Last Sunday, they rallied against peace until PA police violently suppressed the protest. Human Rights Watch has urged the Palestinian government to investigate the police beatings.

At best, the PA can deliver only half of any peace it promises, which lets Palestinians have their cake and eat it too—the PA can extract painful territorial concessions from Israel at the negotiating table while Hamas can continue terrorist attacks to achieve the one-state solution embraced on Facebook by PA "peace negotiator" Mohammad Shtayyeh.

5. Transferring the West Bank could be Israel's geostrategic undoing. Jordan could collapse any day from a flood of about 500,000 Syrian refugees (which grows daily); severe poverty; popular discontent over corruption, inequality, and lack of

freedom; acute water shortages; and/or Muslim Brotherhood action to overthrow King Abdullah's monarchy. These factors make the Abdullah regime's survival increasingly uncertain.

After Israel militarily withdraws from the West Bank, will Hamas topple the PA there as it did in Gaza two years after Israel's 2005 Gaza withdrawal? What if the Hamas-allied Muslim Brotherhood then takes over Jordan? If Jordanian-Palestinians—the largest ethnic group in Jordan—create a Palestinian state there (as advocated by this Jordanian-Palestinian writer), would Palestinians effectively have two states? The range and severity of threats to Israel from the combination of a post-Abdullah Jordan and a Palestinian West Bank state are considerable. Is it even possible to address these Israeli security concerns in a way that leaves Palestinian negotiators satisfied enough to sign a peace treaty?

With so many inherent defects in the current peace talks, why would the U.S. push its most reliable Mideast ally—and the only Middle East democracy—into such perilous waters or inevitable blame? One explanation is the increasingly fashionable idea (promoted by Arab governments) that settlements are blocking a peace deal that would produce Mideast stability. But inconvenient facts completely contradict this idea: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen would remain the same conflict-torn mess they are now after any Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Noah Beck is the author of *The Last Israelis*, an apocalyptic novel about Iranian nukes and other geopolitical issues in the Middle East.

School Scraps 'Explicit' Sex-Ed DVD After Parent Outrage

A primary school in Sussex has scrapped a sex-education DVD after parents complained about its explicit content.

Governors at Turners Hill Primary School ruled that the video was not in keeping with their ethos following concerns about sexually graphic scenes.

As of September, the video, which has been used for a year, will be replaced with a new discussion-based PowerPoint presentation.

Parents will be invited to see the new material before the students see it and may withdraw their children from the lessons if they wish.

Head teacher of the Church of England school, Oliver Burcombe, supports the governors' decision. He says policies had been reviewed, and it was decided all materials "should be changed and based more around Christian principles."

Parents spoken to by a local newspaper welcomed the move, including Lynda Reeves, 45, who said, "I think it was the right decision to make, and I trust the school's judgment."

But one school governor says parents created a "hoo-ha" by raising concerns and felt the video was acceptable in the classroom.

A primary school in Croydon recently postponed showing a controversial sex-education DVD after parents complained about explicit content.

One parent said the material, which is part of Channel 4's Living and Growing series, could be classed as pornography.

And in Dunblane, children aged 6 were shown the *Living and Growing* DVD, which featured full sexual intercourse during a sex-education lesson.

The school claims it was an honest mistake, but one annoyed mother says the apology was “not good enough.”

40 Percent of US Workers Make Less Than 1968 Full-Time Minimum-Wagers

Are American workers paid enough? That is a topic that is endlessly debated all across this great land of ours. Unfortunately, what pretty much everyone can agree on is that American workers are not making as much as they used to after you account for inflation.

Back in 1968, the minimum wage in the United States was \$ an hour. That sounds very small, but after you account for inflation, a very different picture emerges.

Using the inflation calculator the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides, \$ in 1968 is equivalent to \$ today. And of course the official government inflation numbers have been heavily manipulated to make inflation look much lower than it actually is, so the number for today should actually be substantially higher than \$. But for the purposes of this article, we will use \$.

If you were to work a full-time job at \$ an hour for a full year (with two weeks off for vacation), you would make about \$21,480 for the year. That isn't a lot of money, but according

to the Social Security Administration, percent of all workers make less than \$20,000 a year in America today. So that means more than 40 percent of all U.S. workers actually make less than what a full-time minimum wage worker made back in 1968. That is how far we have fallen.

The other day I wrote an article that discussed the transition we are witnessing in our economy right now. Good-paying full-time jobs are disappearing, and they are being replaced by low-paying part-time jobs. So far this year, 76.7 percent of the jobs that have been "created" in the U.S. economy have been part-time jobs.

That would be depressing enough, but what makes it worse is that wages for many of these low-paying jobs have actually been declining over the past decade, even as the cost of living keeps going up. The following is from a recent *USA Today* article: "In the years between 2002 and 2012, real median wages dropped by at least 5% in five of the top 10 low-wage jobs, including food preparers and housekeepers."

So, where have the good jobs gone?

Well, there are three long-term trends that are absolutely crushing American workers right now.

First of all, thanks to our very foolish politicians, American workers have been merged into a global labor pool, where they must directly compete for jobs with workers on the other side of the planet that live in countries where it is legal to pay slave labor wages. This has resulted in millions upon millions of good jobs leaving this country. Big corporations can pad their profits by taking a job from an American worker making \$15 an hour with benefits and giving it to a worker on the other side of the globe who is willing to work for less than a dollar an hour with no benefits.

Our politicians could do something about this, but they refuse to do so. Most of them are absolutely married to the idea of a

one-world economic system that will unite the globe. Unfortunately, the U.S. economy is going to continue to lose tens of thousands of businesses and millions upon millions of jobs to this one-world economic system.

Secondly, big corporations are replacing as many expensive workers with machines, computers and robots as they possibly can. As technology continues to advance at a blistering pace, the need for workers (especially low-skilled workers) will continue to decrease. Unfortunately, the jobs that are being lost to technology are not coming back anytime soon.

Thirdly, the overall U.S. economy has been steadily declining for more than a decade. If you doubt this, just read this article. As our economy continues to get weaker, the lack of jobs is going to become a bigger and bigger problem.

And as our economy systematically loses good jobs, more Americans are forced to become dependent on the government.

Back in 1979, there was about one American on food stamps for every manufacturing job. Today, there are about four Americans on food stamps for every manufacturing job.

When I first found that statistic, I was absolutely stunned. How in the world can anyone out there deny the U.S. economy is collapsing?

But as I mentioned above, it isn't just that the number of jobs is not what it should be. The quality of our jobs is declining as well. For example, one study found that between 1969 and 2009, the wages earned by American men between the ages of 30 and 50 declined by 27 percent after you account for inflation.

That is a pretty stunning decline. And it has only accelerated in recent years. Median household income (adjusted for inflation) has fallen by 7.8 percent since the year 2000, and the ratio of wages and salaries to GDP in the United States

is near an all-time record low.

Most Americans are finding that their bills just keep going up but their paychecks do not. This is causing the middle class to wither away, and most families are just trying to survive from month to month at this point. In fact, according to one recent survey, 76 percent of all Americans are living paycheck to paycheck.

So, where do we go from here?

To some people, the answer is simple. They say that we should substantially raise the minimum wage. And yes, that would definitely make life a bit better for lots of low-paid workers out there. But it would also have some very negative side effects. A substantially higher minimum wage would mean higher prices at retail stores and restaurants, and it would also greatly increase the incentive that corporations have to replace American workers with foreign workers or with technology. We already have rampant unemployment in this country, and right now there are more than 100 million working-age Americans who do not have jobs. We certainly don't want to make that worse.

So, raising the minimum wage would not solve our problems. It would just redistribute our problems.

What we really need to do is to return to the principles that once made this country great. In early America, we protected our markets with high tariffs. Access to the U.S. market was a privilege. Foreign domination was kept out, and our economy thrived.

It is definitely not "conservative," and it should not be "liberal" to stand by and watch millions upon millions of our good jobs get shipped over to communist China. We need more "economic patriots" in America today, but unfortunately they appear to be a minority at this point.

And once upon a time, the U.S. economy was actually a free-market system where rules, regulations and red tape were kept to a minimum. Our nation blossomed under such a system.

Sadly, today we have become a nation that literally has millions of laws, rules and regulations. The control freaks seem to run everything. In fact, the Obama administration recently forced one small-time magician in Missouri to submit a 32-page disaster plan for the little rabbit he uses in his magic shows for kids. That is a very humorous example, but it is a perfect illustration of how absurd our system has become.

Another thing we could do to turn this around would be to get rid of the Internal Revenue Service and the income tax. Did you know the greatest period of economic growth in U.S. history was during a time when there was absolutely no income tax? If you doubt this, just read this article.

And, of course, probably the most important thing we could do for our economy would be to get rid of the Federal Reserve. The Fed is a massive Ponzi scheme, and it has played a primary role in creating almost every single financial bubble in the post-World War II era.

Right now we are living in the greatest bond bubble in the history of the planet, and when that Fed-created bubble bursts, the pain is going to be absolutely excruciating. In addition, the value of our currency has declined by over 96 percent, and the size of the U.S. national debt has gotten more than 5,000 times larger since the Fed was created. The Federal Reserve is at the very heart of our economic problems, and we desperately need to shut it down.

Unfortunately, our politicians are not even willing to consider these solutions, and most Americans are way too busy watching *Toddlers & Tiaras*, *Honey Boo Boo* and other mindless television programs to be bothered with the real problems our country is facing.

So, needless to say, the great economic storm that is coming is not going to be averted. Most of the country is still asleep, and most people are going to get absolutely blindsided by the economic nightmare that is rapidly approaching.

Michael T. Snyder is a former Washington, D.C., attorney and author of The Beginning of the End.

Why Do So Many Churchgoers Have Abortions?

Several months ago, one of my co-workers was speaking with a Christian university campus minister about the issue of abortion, and he dismissed the topic with a wave.

“Abortion isn’t prevalent at our school,” he said. “Contraception is widely available, but our students also take sexual purity to heart.”

I was a bit suspicious of his answer, so I spoke with a recent graduate of the same university about her thoughts.

“I suspect one in three women on campus have had an abortion,” she said matter-of-factly. “It may be higher. Christian kids don’t want to deal with the shame a pregnancy brings. So they abort instead of tell their parents.”

According to a study by the Guttmacher Institute, “Almost three-quarters of women obtaining abortions in 2008 reported a religious affiliation. The largest proportion were Protestant (37 percent), and most of the rest said that they were Catholic (28 percent) or that they had no religious affiliation (27 percent). One in five abortion patients

identified themselves as born-again, evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist; 75 percent of these were Protestant.”

Though the study suggests that attending religious services regularly indicates a lower-than-average rate of abortion, the fact remains: Professing Christians abort their children in large numbers. We estimate one in three adults in America today is the parent of an aborted child, and that rate is likely the same both inside and outside the church.

More times than I can count, I’ve heard this remorseful comment from a post-abortive parent: “I knew it was wrong to abort my child. I was brought up in the church and was pro-life. But I did it anyway.”

Why do Christians, many of whom profess to honor the sanctity of life, still abort their children? Why do they promote a pro-life worldview publicly but, when facing an unplanned pregnancy themselves, lose their conviction and take the life of their child?

As many Christian apologists have stated, we act according to what we believe. Christians abort their children because they do not really believe God is the author of life, that every life is sacred and of infinite value, and that there is no such thing as an unplanned pregnancy to the sovereign God.

Instead, the perceived or real shame of an unplanned pregnancy, the financial impact of a child, the relationship strain or just the sheer “inconvenience” of a baby trump the Bible and God. We fear man more than we fear God.

Abortion is, at its core, a spiritual issue. Thus, the reason Christians abort their children is their lack of understanding and acceptance of the gospel of the kingdom.

Modern evangelicalism in America focuses on praying a prayer for salvation, “committing your life to Jesus” or accepting Him as Lord and Savior. We believe that sharing the good news

that Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and desires a relationship with us completes our obligation to spread the gospel.

And while these facts about Christ are completely true, central to the Christian message and necessary for our salvation, it is not the fullness of the gospel. It is the core but not the entirety.

Colossians 1:18-20 says, "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (NIV).

In *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, they remark, "In this passage Jesus Christ is described as the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of everything. Yes, Jesus died for our souls, but He also died to reconcile—that is, to put into right relationship—all that He created. ... The curse is cosmic in scope, bringing decay, brokenness, and death to every speck of the universe. But as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus is making all things new! This is the good news of the gospel."

The curse of sin breaks four relationships: our relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation. Christ came to reconcile all four relationships. It starts with our relationship with God, but He also redeems the other three. Christ not only preached salvation (our relationship with God), He also healed people physically and emotionally (relationship with self), taught us how to live in marriage and community (relationship with others) and taught us how to manage ourselves and the rest of the created order (relationship with creation).

Abortion is the ultimate tragic and deadly consequence of the fall. It is the sin of unjustly taking the life of an image-bearer of God (relationship with God), is a dire consequence of personal sin and depravity (relationship with self), is caused by and results in broken and strained marriages, friendships and commitments (relationship with others), and destroys another created human being (relationship with creation).

I can think of no worse consequence of the fall than willfully killing a voiceless, defenseless child in the womb.

Yet the gospel, in its fullness, is the remedy to abortion. We must therefore affirm and live out the gospel in its fullness.

Praying the prayer of salvation is a wonderful, monumental moment. It is not generally the cure for abortion.

Discipleship is.

The Great Commission does not command us to go into the world and make converts. It commands us to make disciples. By its very definition, discipleship requires time, energy, commitment, knowledge, patience and skill. It requires love, compassion, kindness and candor.

And we must confront what the gospel truly means—the redemption of every part and parcel of creation. Helping a pregnant mother with drug and alcohol addiction is the gospel. Exhorting the father of an unborn baby to protect and defend his child is the gospel. Providing material needs for a struggling, pregnant couple is the gospel. Coming alongside a couple after birth and helping them with parenting, education and job skills so they can get on their feet is the gospel.

The Great Commission is far more than telling someone the Good News about Jesus. It is engaging them, loving them, walking with them, ministering to them, helping them, encouraging them, teaching them and exhorting them. We need to preach the

gospel to ourselves every day. And we need others to lovingly provide teaching and instruction on how that gospel impacts sexuality, marriage, pregnancy and the infinite value of every human being.

Why are Christians aborting their children? They don't fully understand and accept the gospel. And they aren't being disciplined. They know Jesus and accept Him as Savior but do not know or understand His lordship. They do not know the radical, transformative, awe-inspiring impact of being disciplined.

Abortion can and should be eradicated from Christian churches. It shouldn't be because we pray the prayer of salvation. It should be because we are so completely and utterly committed to loving and caring for others, providing redemption through Christ to all broken areas, that abortion becomes unthinkable.

***Brian Fisher** is the author of **Abortion: The Ultimate Exploitation of Women** and the co-founder and president of **Online for Life**, a nonprofit that uses new and emerging strategies to save the lives of innocent, unborn babies. He has recently published articles on both and .*

Are Prescription Medications Worth the Risk?

When was the last time you took a medication? Did you take a painkiller or an antibiotic?

Are you aware that medications have unpleasant effects, some of which are so serious they can result in death? Many years ago, there was a brilliant young college student that needed money so she signed up to be a "guinea pig" for the Lilly

Pharmaceutical Company. She was on a medication that they were testing for cross marketing; it was designed for bladder issues, but was also relieving some ladies who had depression.

From what I understand, the young student became a part of the study, had a reaction to the medication, and actually took her own life while being a part of the experiment. Do you ever think of yourself as a “guinea pig” when you take a medication?

Medications of all type—over-the-counter and those recommended by your concerned health care provider—have effects. Drugs work by managing your symptoms; they do not get to the cause of your problem. Statin drugs work by tricking the liver into altering the physiology and processing of cholesterol that is supposed to be used for pain and sex hormone precursors. One of the side effects of a statin is the inability to arrive at an erection!

Do you know that if you are taking statin drugs to lower your cholesterol, you are supposed to have your liver enzymes tested? The liver is busy at work trying to save your life! I would suggest you might want to look at my *“Trans Fat Survival Guide”* and learn what you can do to lower your cholesterol without any medications.

A very common OTC medication, as you are likely aware of, is aspirin. Aspirin appears to be quite simple and very helpful. Do you know that you can have an ulcer, lower GI distress, and impaired fracture healing because of aspirins? Do you know it’s quite possible that the “aspirin a day” protocol may be causing your osteoporosis?

Aspirin works by tricking the normal fat metabolism of a “fat-like” hormone substance in the body called PG2. We have a product called Bio-Allay from Biotics Research that is a pain reliever and does not have the negative effects aspirin does. I also suggest that you take Biomega-3 Liquid; it’s great for

relieving and preventing pain. I take two teaspoons everyday.

One of the worst drug families to get involved with are medications that alter digestion and “relieve” the pain of digestive distress. Do you know that most digestive distress is related to a lack of enzymes that are critically needed for proper digestion?

If you are on any type of digestive drug, you would do best to start taking one Hydro-Zyme in the middle of your meal to support your digestive juices. The drugs used to “sop” up the acids in your stomach literally paralyze the cells that normally make the digestive acids. You will never get off those drugs unless you are really serious and coached by a sharp consultant.

If you are contemplating taking any type of medication, you should first change what you are doing every day. Are you eating sweets that paralyze your immune system, causing you to need an antibiotic? Are you eating too many french fries that will raise your cholesterol? Are you drinking enough water? Water alone helps to lower your blood pressure and will help with colon function.

Are you depressed? The depressed patients that I see tend to have sub par or low thyroid function. We help the thyroid get back on track with iodine and a few other nutrients determined by blood tests. An area that concerns me regarding antidepressants is the fact that 50 million Americans are currently taking antidepressants.

Make sure you are taking a good quality fish oil, such as Biomega-3. Taking the right oils will assist your body function optimally.

Dr. Robert DeMaria is a catalyst for health and well-being. As owner of the Drugless Doctor brands, Dr. Bob's techniques have restored optimal health to thousands of patients without the need for prescription medication. His research and daily

experiences can be seen throughout his seven books, including the best-seller Dr. Bob's Drugless Guide to Balancing Female Hormones. Dr. Bob has consulted for FedEx, VitaMix and other national brands and has appeared on multiple media portals, including ABC Family, TBN, Fox 8 Cleveland, and WFAN NYC.

For the original article, visit .

Is 'Preachers of LA' Reality Show a Setback for the Church?

Here's the promo reel for the new show on the Oxygen Network *Preachers of L.A.* I don't have anything to do with it, but I'd be curious about your thoughts.

Is this going to help the cause of engaging the culture? Will this be a move forward or a setback for the church? One big question is: Why did they pick these guys? Let me know what you think.

Christians Leaving Birthplace of Christianity En Mass

This much seems certain: Christians are leaving the birthplace of Christianity in large numbers.

Just how large those numbers are, however, is a matter of educated conjecture, according to a new report on Christian migration from the Middle East.

A precise accounting is impossible, but report author Markus Tozman says seeking accuracy is important because the fate of the Christian population in the Middle East affects human rights in the region, as well as power structures across the Arab world.

“The real number of Christians in the Middle East is highly contested and part of an ongoing debate. It fluctuates depending on the group presenting the numbers and therefore on the intentions of the respective group,” the report says.

Tozman is a graduate student of the Middle East at Johns Hopkins University, and former assistant to Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, a member of The Netherlands parliament whose portfolio at the Council of Europe includes minority protection in the Middle East. Tozman is a contributing author to a 2012 book documenting the gradual disappearance of Syriac Orthodox Christians from their native Turkey.

The report is published by the World Watch List, a research group that issues an annual ranking of the 50 countries where Christians are under the most pressure for their faith. The World Watch List is a unit of Open Doors International, a global non-profit organisation that provides support to pressured Christians.

Tallying the absence of people is tricky enough. The task is made more difficult by census counts across the region that, when conducted at all, tend to be irregular and their documents kept from public view, Tozman writes.

News accounts regularly report that the Coptic Christian population of Egypt is about 10 per cent, or 8 million, of the country's 82 million people. The late Coptic Pope Shenouda II put the number at 12 million, though Tozman points out that

several of Shenouda's own bishops later acknowledged they didn't have any hard numbers for their own regions. The report puts more faith in a study by Arab West Report, which estimates the true number to be about 4 million.

Another widely circulated number, the 100,000 Copts who reportedly have left Egypt since the 2011 revolution, has its own weakness. The number, Tozman says, originates with Najib Jabrail, a Coptic human rights lawyer.

"However," Tozman writes, "he was never able to explain where he received his numbers from."

Across the five countries covered in the report – Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey – the story is much the same.

"Mere estimates and analyses of primary and secondary sources are in many cases not enough to gain a completely accurate picture," Tozman writes. Only one of the sources Tozman contacted directly, and no source on the Internet, cited the origin of their numbers, he said.

Nor do other countries offer much of a clue, the report notes. While anecdotal evidence suggests Christians in the Middle East have stepped up their flight to countries in Europe, the Americas and Australia, none of those countries keep track of the religion of newcomers.

Head counts of Christians, the report states, are often shaded up or down for political reasons – inflated by minority Christians to retain representation in government; deflated by majority Muslims to undermine Christian claims for benefits. In the absence of accuracy, Tozman reports, the very arithmetic of population becomes politicised.

Clouding the issue even more are the civil war in Syria and the political upheaval in Egypt, the report claims.

"All their implications for their neighbouring countries

completely change the situation and dynamics for the Christians in the whole region,” Tozman says. “This is particularly worrying since Egypt and Syria (together with Lebanon) were home to the majority of Christians in the Middle East. If these countries fall deeper into chaos, the consequences will be disastrous. It would be a fatal blow to the last remnants of a vivid Christian community in the heartland of Christianity. In the light of the currently deteriorating situation, no one can predict how the numbers of Christians in the Middle East will develop in the course of the next years, but a further decline is highly likely.”

This theme was touched upon in a recent parliamentary debate in London, during which Rev. Andrew White, the pastor of an Anglican church in Baghdad, said Iraq’s Christian population had shrunk from 1.5 million to just 200,000 within the last decade. He said this trend could be witnessed across the Middle East.

Hard-Core Teens Encounter Jesus at ‘The Refuge’

Some kids seem so wild and hopeless that even the Church can rarely reach them. But a 26-year-old Altoona youth pastor has found spectacular success connecting with these tough teens.

Pastor Micah Marshall goes right after the very kids who scare some churches.

“Jesus hung ‘with the least of these.’ They were all the ones at the bottom of the barrel,” the Pennsylvania pastor told CBN News.

“So, many times, my wife and me, that’s where we like to do our ministry,” he said. “We love the unlovable and love to touch the untouchable, and just be around those who need Jesus.”

Teen’s Radical Transformation

One of those “untouchables” is Sinclair Rodgers, who gained some national notoriety after a video of her viciously beating a girl went viral.

“She ended up with a minor concussion, some teeth were missing, black eyes and a broken nose,” Rodgers said of her victim.

Back then, she was a ball of rage. But that anger seeped away as she began attending Pastor Micah’s Tuesday gathering called The Refuge. There she found God and His transforming power.

“Now I’m always smiling and everyone’s like, ‘Why are you always so happy?’ And I’m like, ‘I don’t know. I just love Jesus,’” Rodgers said.

The old Rodgers partied hard. Now the new Rodgers prefers wild worship.

“We have our own parties,” she explained. “But it’s not like SIN parties.”

One reason The Refuge has become a big hit is because it centers on love and acceptance, not judgment of even hard-core cases.

“We open it up to pretty much anybody of any lifestyle,” Marshall said. “We have a lot of homosexuals, a lot of crack addicts or drug addicts, a lot of kids who smoke a lot of weed, young moms. We kind of targeted kids who don’t fit in anywhere else.”

‘Letting the Spirit Do the Rest’

The purpose isn't to approve of their wayward lifestyles or choices, but to give God plenty of room to minister.

"When I first came here, I just really prayed, 'God, what do you want me to do?'" Marshall remembered asking. "And He said, 'You go out and get them and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.'"

He rounded up members of his church to drive buses into Altoona's toughest areas and seek out the lost.

What began as a couple of dozen teens coming to his church blossomed into around 200.

"God named this place The Refuge for a reason," Marshall said. "It's so they could come here and feel safe and secure, and know that God loves them and people love them."

Teens Witness 'Miracle'

This youthful wild bunch has witnessed faith in action, like when Rj Ott – born with one side of his heart shriveled up – faced emergency surgery because of a chest infection that could have ravaged his heart and killed him.

Everyone at The Refuge, including the non-believers, prayed over Ott for healing. Then when he went in for his surgery the next day, the doctors were amazed to find no infection.

"They went in to see if there was an infection there before they started the procedure, and nothing was there," Marshall said, grinning.

"When my doctor went in to clear everything out, he couldn't find anything," Ott stated. "Makes me believe more that all things are possible through God."

"Even the doctors said that this was a miracle that had happened," Marshall said.

While the worship may be loud and wild at The Refuge, Marshall also throws in large doses of Bible teaching. It's led to tremendous results.

Embracing Forgiveness

One example: the embracing of forgiveness. Jesse and Matt McElhinney watched as drug overdoses took both their mom and dad.

Then the day after Christmas Jesse's best friend, Sean Kyle, was goofing around with a gun and accidentally shot Jesse to death.

"I didn't check to see if it was loaded because I was just positive it was unloaded," Kyle admitted. "And I was just putting it to his head and trying to get him to wake up, and just fired and that was it."

Kyle ran down the stairs from Jesse's room to find Matt.

"He kept saying, 'I shot him. I accidentally shot Jesse. I'm so sorry,'" Matt recalled.

Already fatherless and motherless, Matt was now brotherless, too. He said if he didn't know God, this tragedy might have killed him, too.

"I'd probably have taken my own life," he said.

Kyle said he couldn't forgive himself, much less expect it from Matt.

"If the shoes were on the other feet, I don't know how I would react," he said, looking over at Matt.

Matt called those days after Jesse's death his darkest. But he finally made a crucial decision, saying "I'm going to put all my full-hearted faith into God."

That gave him the love and power to totally forgive his own

brother's killer.

"Forgiveness is the absolute key," Matt said, then hugged Kyle. "And that's why I'm still best friends and best buds with this guy."

A Powerful Witness

That's the kind of witness that drew Abi Taylor. She was a depressed suicidal teen.

"There were a few times that I came within inches of ending it," she admitted.

But each time, Taylor said she heard a voice saying, "Don't do that. You're meant for so much more."

"It scared me at first," Taylor said, "because I'm like 'I'm hearing things. I must be going crazy.'"

She finally confessed to her parents what was going on. They assured her the voice was God and helped her plug into The Refuge.

There she's come to know both the Lord and much love.

"It gives me a lot of hope that it doesn't matter if I screw up because these people are never going to turn on me," Taylor said. "That even if I were to get all hopped up on drugs or whatever, they're not going to be like, 'Ooh, you're dirty. Get away.' They'll be like, 'Dude, come on: let's get you clean. Let's get you back to it.'"

With its atmosphere of open-armed acceptance, The Refuge's success suggests if you'll just let kids be who they are, they're going to end up being who God wants them to be.

5 Pitfalls in John Kerry's Middle East Peace Plan

While there most likely are more, here are at least five flaws in U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's Middle East peace plan:

1. No Palestinian reciprocity at the outset. Israel agreed to release 104 convicted terrorists just to get the Palestinians to talk peace. Would the U.S. agree to release 104 Guantanamo prisoners for talks with anyone?

Israel will undoubtedly be blamed if negotiations fail, so it's unlikely that fair judgment by the international community motivated the release. Perhaps it was the price Israel had to pay for a U.S. promise to prevent Iranian nukes and/or support Israel's efforts to stop them. If so, is the U.S. good for its word (despite Obama's repeated demonstrations that his Mideast "red lines" are meaningless)?

Whatever the explanation for Israel's good-faith opening, there were plenty of ways for the Palestinians to reciprocate: removing anti-Israel incitement from their textbooks and/or official media, recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, promising to "freeze" their anti-Israel diplomatic offensives, to name a few. But Secretary of State John Kerry preferred to establish that Palestinian reciprocity is optional: If Israel isn't volunteering what the Palestinians demand, they need only threaten to leave the talks and Kerry will compel the Israelis to comply.

2. No Palestinian good faith. The Palestinians will be represented by Saeb Erekat and Mohammad Shtayyeh. Shtayyeh's Facebook page displays a map of Israel's internationally recognized borders, plus the West Bank and Gaza—all emblazoned with the Arabic letters for "Palestine." So the person

entrusted with negotiating a two-state solution openly admits that his Mideast map has room for only a Palestinian state.

Just as alarming, during a recent sermon attended by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and broadcast on Palestinian television, Religious Endowments Minister Mahmoud al-Habbash compared the PA's decision to negotiate with Israel to the Prophet Muhammad's Treaty of Hudaibiya (in the year 628): "In less than two years, based on this treaty, the Prophet returned and conquered Mecca. This is the example. It is the model."

3. No religious freedom in a future Palestinian state. Palestinians insist (ironically) that "peaceful coexistence" means no Jewish settlers in their state. But, on principle, why should Jews be banned from living in a future Palestinian state—particularly when Muslims constitute over 17 percent of Israel's population? Will the future Palestinian state be as hostile to religious minorities as other Muslim majority states are?

Unfortunately, recent history gives little reason to hope otherwise. Khaled Abu Toameh, an award-winning Arab journalist, reported the following about a year ago:

"According to the Greek Orthodox Church in the Gaza Strip, at least five Christians have been kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam in recent weeks ... church leaders ... accused a prominent Hamas man of being behind the kidnapping and forced conversion of a Christian woman, Huda Abu Daoud, and her three daughters. Radical Islam, and not checkpoints or a security fence, remains the main threat to defenseless Christians not only in the Palestinians territories, but in the entire Middle East as well."

While Gaza is ruled by Islamists, the PA has also shown its hostility to Christians. On March 12, 2012, Algemeiner reported:

“A week after Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told an [international] audience of Evangelical Protestants ... that his government respected the rights of its Christian minorities, [PA] officials ... informed Bethlehem pastor Rev. Naim Khoury that his church lacked the authority to function as a religious institution under the PA ... There is a sense among Christians in Bethlehem that anti-Christian animus has gotten worse in the city ... Khoury said.”

A few weeks ago, Palestinians vandalized the Cave of the Patriarchs, Judaism’s second holiest site. How safe will non-Muslim holy sites be if there is no more Israeli presence in the West Bank? Will a future peace agreement specifically guarantee protection of and Israeli access to Jewish holy sites?

If Israel’s presence in the West Bank has helped moderate Muslim rule there, will Israel’s complete departure mean West Bank Christians can expect their persecution to worsen to Gazan levels (with abductions and forced conversions)? Palestinian insistence that their future West Bank state be “*Judenrein*” doesn’t bode well for the indigenous Christians there (or for religious freedom).

4. No Palestinian mandate to negotiate peace. There are about 2.1 million Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and 1.7 million in the Gaza Strip. But Hamas-ruled Gaza vehemently opposes peace negotiations and denies Israel’s right to exist. Islamic Jihad and Hamas recently lambasted PA leaders for meeting with Israelis to talk peace. The last time the PA announced direct talks with Israel, Hamas announced plans to launch terrorist attacks at Israel in coordination with 12 other Gaza terrorist organizations.

And it’s not even clear that West Bank Palestinians favor these talks. Last Sunday, they rallied against peace until PA police violently suppressed the protest. Human Rights Watch has urged the Palestinian government to investigate the police

beatings.

At best, the PA can deliver only half of any peace it promises, which lets Palestinians have their cake and eat it too—the PA can extract painful territorial concessions from Israel at the negotiating table while Hamas can continue terrorist attacks to achieve the one-state solution embraced on Facebook by PA “peace negotiator” Mohammad Shtayyeh.

5. Transferring the West Bank could be Israel’s geostrategic undoing. Jordan could collapse any day from a flood of about 500,000 Syrian refugees (which grows daily); severe poverty; popular discontent over corruption, inequality, and lack of freedom; acute water shortages; and/or Muslim Brotherhood action to overthrow King Abdullah’s monarchy. These factors make the Abdullah regime’s survival increasingly uncertain.

After Israel militarily withdraws from the West Bank, will Hamas topple the PA there as it did in Gaza two years after Israel’s 2005 Gaza withdrawal? What if the Hamas-allied Muslim Brotherhood then takes over Jordan? If Jordanian-Palestinians—the largest ethnic group in Jordan—create a Palestinian state there (as advocated by this Jordanian-Palestinian writer), would Palestinians effectively have two states? The range and severity of threats to Israel from the combination of a post-Abdullah Jordan and a Palestinian West Bank state are considerable. Is it even possible to address these Israeli security concerns in a way that leaves Palestinian negotiators satisfied enough to sign a peace treaty?

With so many inherent defects in the current peace talks, why would the U.S. push its most reliable Mideast ally—and the only Middle East democracy—into such perilous waters or inevitable blame? One explanation is the increasingly fashionable idea (promoted by Arab governments) that settlements are blocking a peace deal that would produce Mideast stability. But inconvenient facts completely

contradict this idea: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen would remain the same conflict-torn mess they are now after any Israeli-Palestinian peace.

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