



In This Issue:

July 2001 | Vol. 4, No. 6

Reflections From the Rotunda



Monica Kieffer

by Paul Kieffer. 1

Restoration

by Darris McNeely 2

Monarchs in the News

by Melvin Rhodes 5

Excerpts From *Good News Radio: The Future of Jerusalem*

by Gary Petty 8

SMBC and Disposable Fathers

by Cecil E. Maranville. 10

In Brief... World News Review

by William Eddington, Cecil E. Maranville and L. Jim Tuck 12

This Is the Way... Standing on a Chair

by Robin Webber. 16

Reflections From the Rotunda

Conversations with German citizens show the diversity of feelings attached to the newly reconstructed German capital—a diversity that reflects different age groups, as well as an East vs. West mentality within the unified German state.

by Paul Kieffer

No matter how you see it, the Reichstag building in the center of Berlin's new government district is no longer a shadow of its former self. Built from 1884-94 during the time of Germany's Kaisers Wilhelm I and II, the Reichstag was heavily damaged during the fighting to capture Berlin in the final weeks of World War II. Soviet soldiers, precariously perched on its pock-marked roof, hoisted the red flag in early May 1945 to celebrate their victory over Nazi Germany. For some 15 years, the building remained a scarred shell.

In the early 1960s, a drive was launched to raise money to restore the Reichstag. Along with other donors, thousands of schoolchildren willingly contributed pennies to help fund the effort. The restoration began in earnest at a time when the Reichstag's location made it a symbol of sorts in the free city of Berlin during the Cold War period.

On August 13, 1961, East German "people's police" began cordoning off all streets, canals, real estate and anything else that bordered on West Berlin. Within days, the hastily rolled out barbed wire barrier was being replaced by prefab concrete slabs. Located just a few feet to the west of this demarcation line between the three allied zones that became West Berlin and the Soviet zone that became the capital city of Communist East Germany, the Reichstag and its restoration presented a stark contrast to the other side of the wall. There a veritable no-man's-land was cre-

ated, with buildings near the border either torn down or made completely windowless on their western facades.

The artificial division of Berlin lasted 28 years and 90 days. On November 9, 1989, East German border police, acting in response to a directive issued earlier in the day by their country's politburo, opened the Berlin Wall at selected locations. The rest is history, including the historic unification of the two German states in 1990 and the accompanying treaty officially ending World War II. (Prior to the so-called "four plus two" treaty signed in 1990, the state of war between Germany and the three Western allies and the Soviet Union had never been formally declared over.)

The decision is made

The opening of the wall and the unification of Germany prompted Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, to vote to relocate the center of national government to Berlin. The Bundestag's decision meant that the Reichstag would again be used for its original purpose: as a house of parliament. During the 1970s, the center of the building had remained a large unused area, reserved for a future freely-elected parliament of a unified Germany. A permanent exhibition on German history was housed in the wings of the Reichstag, and on occasion parliamentary committees from the Bundestag in Bonn conducted meetings in its conference rooms.

(See "ROTUNDA," page 3)



World News & Prophecy

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

July 2001

Vol. 4, No. 6



Restoration

ACTS 3:21

World News and Prophecy is published monthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, publisher of *The Good News* magazine, 5405 Dupont Circle, Suite A, Milford, OH 45150. © 2001 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide our membership and interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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Scriptural references are from the New King James Version © 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Subscriptions: *World News and Prophecy* is sent free to the members of the United Church of God, and all who request it. There is no subscription price. To request a subscription, write to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, telephone (513) 576-9796 or download it from our Web site at <http://www.ucg.org>

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With this issue we begin a new column for *World News and Prophecy*. "Restoration" will take its place here on page 2 as a front piece guiding you into each issue. The title comes from Acts 3:21 where Peter, in speaking of the role of Jesus Christ, said, "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

Our goal with this column is to point our readers to the positive hope which Bible prophecy shows for mankind. It is easy to form a negative impression of not only biblical prophecy, but also of today's world conditions and man's efforts to chart his way through the challenges of life. Prophecy is more than an attempt to predict the coming of Christ or the rise of an end-time superpower. Prophecy is also a means of stabilizing life and avoiding many of its problems. And when life throws us the unexpected curve ball, prophecy can be a source of promise to help us through a difficult time.

This follows the pattern that God has always taken with His people. In Leviticus 26 we see how God showed Israel His way of life and how it would produce the blessings of life: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit" (verses 3-4). He also showed the curses for disobedience. This is a prophecy showing what will happen based upon a pattern of behavior. In verse 14 God begins, "But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments," and then follows with a list of the curses that would befall the nation if they turned from God.

These blessings and curses are familiar to students of prophecy. But it is easy to overlook how God completes this prophetic section. In spite of sin and rebellion, He offers them the hope of restoration. If they confess their sin and humble their heart, God promises to restore. "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God" (verse 44).

God's judgment is sure, but so is His mercy and purpose. God will restore His way of life, His government and law to this earth. The words of Isaiah 9:7 will come to pass: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

In this issue, we have several articles that show man's efforts to bring about solutions to long-standing problems. An election in Bulgaria last month highlights efforts to resolve issues left over from the former Communist rule. On a recent trip to Berlin, Germany, our contributor, Paul Kieffer, talked with people about their perceptions of the consolidation of the German government in the historic capital. It has been 40 years since the Berlin Wall went up. Now the city and the nation are united and moving on to a new chapter. We also offer an article about the growing trend toward "single mothers by choice" and its impact on the American family.

Enjoy this issue of *World News and Prophecy*. Our goal is to help you place today's world events within the context of God's promise of the ultimate restoration of all things. We look forward to sharing this vision of hope with you.

—Darris McNeely

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<http://www.ucg.org/articles/wnp/>

“ROTUNDA,” (Continued from page 1)

All that changed with the Bundestag’s relocation to Berlin. The history exhibition was moved to a museum in Bonn, and the Reichstag’s interior was redone to accommodate the parliamentary plenary hall. The building’s central domed roof, destroyed at the end of World War II and not rebuilt during the ’60s restoration, was redesigned by British architect Sir Norman Foster. Vast expanses of glass in the spectacular dome flood the interior of the building with light. The new dome-like construction in the roof was included on the insistence of the German parliament and acts as an illuminating device for the Bundestag’s debating chamber.

Accessible daily for viewing, the Reichstag’s glass dome provides a remarkable view of central Berlin, especially of the government district. Moving in a circular direction, one sees the Victory Column (Siegessäule) in the middle of the Tiergarten, the Brandenburg Gate and on its far side, the location for the new American embassy and the Holocaust memorial (which will be built practically on the former grounds of Hitler’s seat of office, the Reichskanzlei), Alexander Square (a former showcase of East Berlin, East Germany’s capital) and then the Bundeskanzleramt (Germany’s new “White House”) just a short distance away.

What Germans think of the change

What is the current state of the unified Germany 40 years after the Berlin Wall was erected? On a recent visit to the Reichstag’s rotunda, I asked several German couples to reflect on their personal impressions as they enjoyed the view. I asked them, “What do you feel here when you visit the Reichstag? Are you proud of what you see from here as a symbol of the unified Germany?”

A couple in advanced middle age, from the state of Rheinland-Pfalz in western Germany, smiled and admitted to being somewhat proud, but quickly added, “Without America’s help Germany would not be what it is today.” The smartly dressed husband and wife live near Ramstein, the site of a large American airbase. Their comments reflect a sentiment often shared by older

Germans in western Germany like former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who frequently mentioned his personal memories of the immediate post-war period and the support West Germany received from the United States. It is obvious that those who lived at that time on the eastern side of the dividing line between the free world and Communism do not have such memories.

Similarly, younger Germans in general do not have personal memories of America’s help during the post-war period. On a positive note, the anti-American sentiment evident among students during the Vietnam War period and beyond has given way to the pragmatism of the Boris Becker generation, a widespread acceptance of

Monica Kieffer



Reichstag and Victory Column (Siegessäule) in Berlin

American pop culture and the realities of the global economy. Making money appears to be more important than moralizing these days.

A young couple from Bremen, visiting Berlin for the first time, responded to my question by asking another question: “Did it have to cost so much?” Many Germans in western Germany ask the same question. The expense of moving Germany’s capital to Berlin, originally estimated to cost US\$9 billion, has long since exceeded the original figure and is, in reality, open-ended. Moving costs are not limited to construction of new buildings in Berlin and a one-time relocation of federal ministries to their new offices. With the retention of several key ministries in Bonn, which supposedly is to retain an equal footing with Berlin as a

“federal city,” government officials commute continually between the two cities via train and air. Oddly enough, the air-line that won the contract to provide commuter service was British Airways’ German subsidiary, Deutsche BA.

The unpopular cost of unification

German taxpayers are not only footing the bill for the new capital in Berlin. For 10 years, they have also contributed every payday via a “solidarity surcharge” to the development of eastern Germany’s infrastructure: new roads, bridges, railways, etc. The surcharge is currently set

at 5.5 percent of taxpayers’ annual federal income tax liability. Originally intended to last only for an interim period, the surcharge will probably continue indefinitely. Progress in the eastern part of the country is readily visible, but just as obvious is the gap that remains in the attempt to catch up to western

Germany’s standard of living.

The curious result is dissatisfaction in both parts of Germany. “Ossis” (slang for “Easterners”) remember Chancellor Kohl’s popular 1990 campaign promise that there would soon be “flourishing landscapes” in the East. In reality, the dismantling of East Germany’s outdated economic structure meant the loss of a job for many in the new eastern states, where unemployment currently runs as high as 20 percent. “Wessis” (slang for “Westerners”) are disappointed over the additional tax burden they have shouldered for years to rebuild the East and over the perceived lack of patience they believe exists among some of their new fellow citizens regarding achieving economic parity with the western part of Germany.

A middle-aged couple from Düsseldorf responded with obvious pride to my question. However, their satisfaction with Germany’s new capital city was tempered by concerns about the difficulties the two German societies have experienced since unification in growing



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together into one. Separated nearly 45 years by the Iron Curtain and influenced by two opposing systems, communism and capitalism, post-war Germans in the East and West grew up with different value systems, expectations and even with slightly different vocabularies, since the German language in the East was not influenced nearly as much by the English language as contemporary German speech was in the West.

West vs. East mentality

After unification, the differences quickly led to stereotypes, as *Wessis* viewed *Ossis* as being demanding, unmotivated and unable to compete in a free-market economy. *Ossis* in turn accused their western counterparts of having glib tongues in business negotiations, being pushy and exhibiting an air of superiority. Although it is difficult to

Forty years after Berlin's infamous wall was built and nearly 12 years after it was torn down, Germany remains in some ways a divided country. Could a fast-breaking, unforeseen external crisis or challenge to the EU provide the impetus for Germans to close ranks?

make generalizations, the reservations of *Ossis* and *Wessis* about each other do persist among those Germans who were already of adult age when unification took place. Some observers conclude that the melding of Germans from East and West into a more homogeneous single society may only be fully achieved by the younger generation now growing up without personal memories of Germany's post-war division.

The Düsseldorf couple also expressed concern over the influence of radical right-wing groups in eastern Germany. Communism's education promoted a value system generally devoid of Christian tenets. In eastern Germany God and church are no longer "on the horizon of thought," according to a report by the weekly newsmagazine *FOCUS* at the end of last year (52/2000). "We don't need the church, we get along without it and it doesn't interest us," remarked the chairman of the Mardi Gras Club in Stadtroda. According to him, that is what was taught in eastern Germany's schools, and one can survive well with this teaching (ibid.).

This underlying valueless attitude, coupled with post-unification high unemployment and right-wing influence from western Germany provided a suitable breeding ground for cliché-laden, anti-foreigner extremist ideas. German Interior Minister Otto Schily's annual report on right-wing criminal acts, released earlier this year, documented a 40 percent increase in violent xenophobic acts during 2000.

"That half [of the violent acts] are committed in the East, where only a fifth of the population lives, must cause one to sit and take notice. Especially since the number of foreigners living here is imperceptibly small" (*Thüringer Allgemeine*, February 8, 2001). Commenting on the same report, the *Flensburger Tageblatt* urged caution in accepting Mr. Schily's conclusion that eastern Germany is a stronghold for neo-Nazi activities:

"Experts give warnings on this simple thesis, which leads to calm primarily in the West but upon closer examination is false. Instead it is correct that the heads of crude Nazi ideology are sitting in the West and find their hollow clientele most readily on the streets of the new [German federal] states...where those romp about who feel disadvantaged by 'those at the top,' unification and the world in general" (February 8, 2001).

"It isn't good for us to be on top"

A middle-aged couple living near Stuttgart in Baden-Württemberg admitted to being impressed by Germany's restored center of government in Berlin, but with mixed feelings. "When a unified Germany was ruled from Berlin, there was war," my conversation partner commented, referring primarily to the two world wars fought in the last century. "It

isn't good for us to be on top," he added somewhat uncomfortably.

Most observers view such fears as totally unfounded. The European Union has resulted in greatly diminished influence for individual national states among its member countries, and within 10 years, nearly all of Europe will be part of the EU. All major political parties in Germany are firmly committed to progress and further integration within the EU. Germany is the European Union's most populous country with its largest domestic economy.

However, Germany's economy as the motor of European economic development sputters along, still restricted to some extent by its post-unification economic and social trauma. "As goes Germany, so goes the EU" is a comment one hears occasionally. It would seem logical that domestic budgetary demands resulting from unification will need to slow considerably for Germany to make a bigger contribution to the EU's economic development as the trading powerhouse of the future, as indicated in Revelation 18.

Forty years after Berlin's infamous wall was built and nearly 12 years after it was torn down,

Germany remains in some ways a divided country. Could a fast-breaking, unforeseen external crisis or challenge to the EU provide the impetus for Germans to close ranks on a personal level and experience the unity that its political system achieved 11 years ago? That might seem far-fetched now, but by the same token, many Germans themselves never expected that political unification of the two German states would be achieved and certainly not so quickly as in 1990 when Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, seized what they called a four-month "window of opportunity" to negotiate a deal with the still-intact Soviet government.

The history of the Berlin Wall and Germany's unification show that things that may appear to be unchangeable sometimes do change. And very quickly. ❖

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Monarchs in the News

A tragedy in Nepal and an election in Bulgaria brought attention to the world's remaining monarchies—and the possible restoration of former monarchies in Europe.

by Melvin Rhodes

Kathmandu and Sofia may not have much in common. They are capitals of two nations that are rarely in the news, Nepal and Bulgaria, two countries on two different continents that have not been major players on the world stage. But June was a month when both nations made the headlines. To be more precise, their monarchs—or rather, their former monarchs—made the news.

The first day of June was a major calamity for the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, the only country where the Hindu religion is the official state faith. This peaceful nation that managed to keep its independence from British-controlled India and the independent Indian Republic that replaced it saw its 250-year-old dynasty suffer a setback that may turn out to be irreparable.

Nepal's royal family is revered by the people. King Birendra paved the way for democracy in 1990, ending his own autocratic rule. He remained as a constitutional monarch similar to Britain's Queen Elizabeth, a unifying symbol for the nation's people. In just one decade the people became disillusioned with the corruption of the politicians, leading the people to feel an even greater attachment to their royal family. Maoist guerrillas have taken advantage of some of the grievances and have taken control of six provinces in the small kingdom. The king was seen as vital in discouraging more communist insurgency.

So the events of Friday night, June 1, were particularly devastating for the Nepalese. Nine members of the immediate royal family all suffered violent deaths as they sat down to dinner in the royal palace. Apparently, Crown Prince Dipendra shot his parents, the king and queen, along with other close relatives, before turning the gun on himself. The crown prince was reportedly drunk and very angry at his parents' refusal to allow him to marry the girl he wanted.

Dipendra lay in a coma for three days, reportedly brain dead. A greatly loved prince, he was proclaimed king on the death of his

father, a stunned populace refusing to believe the official account of the deaths. When Dipendra died, his unpopular uncle was crowned king. Even the Hindu religious purification rites went wrong when an elephant, intended to represent the deceased monarch, went berserk and refused to go where intended, which was perceived as a bad omen for the future of the monarchy.

In Nepal, monarchical instability can



Source: <http://www.indianembassy.org>

Nepal's slain King Birendra shown on a visit to India in 1999. What will the tragedy mean for the future of the 250-year-old dynasty?

only lead to greater instability in the nation as a whole. Politicians are already seen as corrupt. Corruption is likely to worsen without the restraining influence of King Birendra. This will only benefit the communists trying to gain further territory in the country. This in turn could lead to outside intervention. India would not want a Maoist victory in Nepal, giving China influence in the mountainous kingdom. India is not averse to interfering in Himalayan kingdoms—Bhutan lost most of its independence to India 20 years ago.

Whatever the eventual outcome, this quiet Himalayan kingdom, a favorite tourist attraction and location of Mt. Everest,

In June both Nepal and Bulgaria made the headlines. To be more precise, their monarchs—or rather, their former monarchs—made the news.



Bulgaria's former king, Simeon II, led his party to political victory in the June 17 election

would rather not have made the headlines so dramatically.

Former czar returns to power

Corrupt politicians also played a major role in Sofia. Bulgaria's latest attempt at democracy is about as old as Nepal's. The fall of communism in 1989 led to the establishment of an imperfect democracy that seemed to benefit only the politicians. Corruption became a major issue.

Enter Bulgaria's former king, actual title *czar* (derived from the Roman "Caesar"), Simeon II, who was removed from his throne in 1946 when communists seized control under Stalin's orders. Only 6 years old when his father died in 1943, Simeon's family fled into exile. It was to be a full 50 years before he was allowed a visit home. Thousands of enthusiastic supporters turned out to welcome him.

The politicians, mostly former communists who only changed colors to stay in power, refused to restore the monarchy, claiming that popular support for a restoration was only at 25 percent. Simeon was also forbidden to run for president on the grounds that he had not been resident in the country long enough, a situation not his own fault. But a loophole in the law enabled him to start a political party, the Simeon II National Movement, fighting on an anticorruption platform. Within a few weeks Simeon led his party to victory in the June 17 general election, with 43 percent of the popu-

lar vote. An expected alliance with a small center-right party will enable Simeon's party to dominate parliament and effectively run the country. This would mean that Simeon would be prime minister or could nominate someone for that position in his stead.

If he succeeds in cleaning up the nation's politics, increased support for a restoration of the monarchy is likely. This would, in

While these 10 kings could symbolically be 10 leaders from any background, they could also be actual monarchs. Certainly, as Europe unites, the royal families of Europe could be instrumental in easing the transitional steps to total unity.

turn, have repercussions beyond Bulgaria. Neighboring Romania's politics have been just as corrupt since the fall of communism and its former king Michael has expressed a desire to return to his throne. Michael and other members of his family have visited the country whenever possible and have helped organize outside financial and material support for Romania.

Other Balkan royals wait in the wings

Consider Crown Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic of Yugoslavia, born in London in 1945 while his family was in exile. He has never lived in Yugoslavia but has become a focus of loyalty for monarchists in the country. During the rule of Slobodan Milosevic,

many opponents of the regime would visit the exiled crown prince, seeking to work together to restore the monarchy and some form of constitutional order. Now that a more democratic government is in power in Belgrade, support for the restoration of the monarchy is likely to dwindle—but the new administration may be short-lived if corruption cannot be brought under control.

Interestingly, even the heir to the throne of Montenegro has reemerged. This mountainous kingdom that ceased to exist after World War I is now a part of Serbia (formerly Yugoslavia). Unhappy with Milosevic's rule, many Montenegrins looked back nostalgically to the time when their country was an independent kingdom. Separation from Serbia is still a possibility, raising the prospect of yet another Balkan war.

Also in the Balkans, Albania's claimant is a South African businessman, the son of former King Zog who fled the Italian fascists in 1939, promising "I'll be back." He never returned, but his son, Leka Zogu, would like to sit on his father's throne. He claims the referendum on restoring the monarchy was rigged. Official support was only 35 percent, while Leka himself claims twice that figure.

Thrones to be restored?

Will the monarchies of Eastern Europe be restored? Will these claimants to royal thrones ever actually sit on them? The book of Revelation talks of a time prior to Christ's return when "ten kings who have not yet received royal power...receive authority as kings for one hour," a short period (Revelation 17:12, RSV). These 10 kings then go on to "give over their power and authority to the beast" (verse 13) before making "war on the Lamb" (verse 14).

While these 10 kings could symbolically be 10 leaders from any background, they could also be actual monarchs. Certainly, as Europe unites, the royal families of Europe could be instrumental in easing the transitional steps to total unity. One reason for this is that most of the royal families are interrelated. Simeon II is of the House of Saxe-Coburg, the same German

royal house that produced Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, often called “the Grand Mama of Europe” as most European royal families were related to her and her German consort. Victoria herself was a descendant of the German House of Hanover.

Another attraction of monarchy as Europe unites is that having a sovereign preserves some degree of sovereignty in a federal Europe. Loss of sovereignty has been a primary concern of many as the European Union (EU) moves toward a more federal system. A satisfactory resolution of the sovereignty issue would likely boost support for the EU. Interestingly, all monarchical claimants support full membership in the EU and NATO for their countries.

A third attraction of monarchy is the primary reason that Simeon II has been elected to power in Bulgaria. It was Britain’s Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, who said some years ago, at a time when the ruling House of Windsor was under attack for repeated scandals and divorces, that “at least nobody can ever accuse us of corruption.”

Monarchs have a position for life. In Europe they are usually succeeded by the eldest son (Asian and Middle Eastern monarchies often operate differently). The exception is Sweden where the eldest child will succeed regardless of gender. Politicians are temporary and are often found to have their hands in the till, trying to accumulate as much wealth as possible before being removed from office. Ecclesiastes 10:16-17 illustrates this startling contrast: “Woe to you, O land, when your king [leader] is a child [without experience of government], and your princes feast in the morning! Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of free men [KJV, nobles], and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!” (RSV).

Disillusionment with politicians serves only to strengthen monarchist sentiments on the part of the people.

At the same time, it is clear that the constitutional monarchies of Europe have been the most stable democracies on the continent, generally avoiding

political upheaval and dictatorship. A neutral crowned monarch remains above the politicians and limits the possibility of any politician becoming too powerful or even becoming a dictator.

However, in a democratic age, monarchy is perceived by many as an anachronism, a relic from a bygone age that also happens to be expensive. Many remember that World War I was in many ways a family squabble, a war between related monarchs that killed millions of innocent victims.

For monarchy to become popular again, politicians will likely have to become less popular. This could happen gradually, but there is also a way in which it could happen suddenly, almost overnight. This would certainly tie in with the scripture noted above.

What if there were to be an economic collapse in Europe comparable

Bible prophecy clearly indicates that beyond human design there is the hope of a monarch who will bring a successful rule to the earth. His administration will not be marred by scandal or events beyond its control.

to the Great Depression of the 1930s? Elected politicians would then be blamed and would be extremely unpopular, particularly as they are generally seen even now as corrupt and self-serving. A subsequent breakdown of authority could add to demands for a king, an authority figure who could restore order.

This means that something dramatic would have to take place, not just in one country but throughout many countries in Europe, on a scale similar to the upheavals of 1848 and 1989, two years that saw multiple revolutions on the continent.

Alternatively, a successful administration on the part of Simeon II could have a ripple effect. If he really can

succeed in ending corruption and bringing economic progress to his country while preserving democracy, Simeon could help restore his own throne, as well as other thrones in the region.

A recent article published in *The British Guardian* a few days before Bulgaria’s election said that the king’s “timing is impeccable” (“Bulgaria’s Old King Tipped for Job as PM,” by Mark Milner, June 14, 2001). The article quoted Dora Beltcheva, now aged 80, who was formerly a minister under Communist rule. Reflecting on Bulgarian politics since the fall of communism, she said, “We have survived the disappointment of... Socialist rule, the second disappointment of the [right-wing] Union of Democratic Forces. The king has sniffed the wind of change and has chosen the right time to come back.” Pessimistically, she predicted, “He will be the third disappointment.”

The article continues: “Nasia Atanasova, 31, a political novice who is helping to run Simeon’s campaign in the Black Sea resort of Varna, says she became involved because ‘we don’t have time to make any more mistakes. We don’t have any more chances.’” For Bulgaria a great deal may rest on the shoulders of former Czar Simeon II.

Bible prophecy clearly indicates that beyond human design, there is the hope of a monarch who will bring a successful rule to the earth. His administration will not be marred by scandal or events beyond its control. Daniel 2:44 gives us a picture of a kingdom to be established which will never be destroyed. Its king will be Jesus Christ. This world monarchy will last forever, unlike the temporary and sometimes fragile kingdoms of today.

Whereas human history is a story of dynasties and kingdoms rising and falling, this kingdom will give mankind stability and hope once and for all.

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). ❖

The Future of Jerusalem

Continually on our television sets we see violence from the city of peace. Where is the voice of reason, the voice of fairness, that can bring peace to the violent streets of Jerusalem?

A Good News radio broadcast by Gary Petty

Jerusalem—a city of contradictions. It is in Jerusalem that three of the world's greatest religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all claim holy sites. It is in this strife-torn region that Christians believe the Prince of Peace came to bring His message of hope. Yet, daily on our television sets we watch Palestinians and Israelis fighting each other...rocks and bullets...an endless battle with no equitable solutions. What is the future for Jerusalem? These are the headlines...but in this program we're going to look at the important news behind these headlines.

Where is the wisdom of Solomon in all this? Where is the voice of reason, the voice of fairness, that can bring peace to the violent streets of Jerusalem?

For Jews, Jerusalem is the City of David, the capital of a glorious past where Solomon's temple stood as the great house built to honor the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For Christians, it is near the birthplace of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of humanity. It was here that Jesus was crucified by the Romans and rose from the dead three days and three nights later, just as He had predicted. To Muslims it is the site of the holy Dome of the Rock.

When Abraham, the father of both the Jews and the Arabs, traveled the land of Canaan as a wandering nomad, this city already straddled the valleys that would become known as Kidron and Hinnom. Caravans from the civilizations that sprang up along the

Tigris and Euphrates wound their way to the great cities of the Nile along the route overseen by Jerusalem.

The God of the Hebrew Scriptures promised Abraham and Sarah a son, but as the years wore on and the couple remained barren, it seemed that God would not fulfill His promise. Struggling with the possibility of never having a child, they devised a plan to produce the promised heir through a surrogate mother.

Sarah gave Abraham her servant girl, Hagar, and from that union Ishmael, the father of many Arab nations, was born.

God had other plans

But God had other plans, and eventually Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. Ishmael was driven into the wilderness and the seeds of future strife between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael were sown. Later another family feud, this time between the two sons of Isaac, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) and Esau, would create further bad blood in Abraham's family tree.

The descendants of Jacob, the Israelites, ended up spending centuries in Egyptian slavery before being led to Canaan by Moses and Joshua. And it was the great military leader Joshua who defeated the Jebusite king of Jerusalem and his allies. Years later, the renowned King David ruled Israel from Jerusalem. David's son Solomon, known for his great wisdom, as well as a few



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great follies, reigned there for 40 years during Israel's golden age around 1000 B.C.

After Solomon's death, Israel was torn by civil strife and divided into two nations with Jerusalem serving as the capital of the southern kingdom known as Judah. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed the City of David, and the task fell to a future generation of Jews to rebuild it under the direction of men like Ezra and Nehemiah.

Jewish independence flourished under the Maccabees, and the splendid temple to God was reconstructed by Herod the Great. Roman legions brought Roman domination and endless conflict between the freedom-loving Jews and Romans, eventually leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

But the city never completely disappeared. Occupied by Arabs, it was the focal point of the Crusades in the Middle Ages as Europeans tried to bring the stones Jesus trod under Christian control.

In the 20th century, it was the

United Nations that attempted to mediate a peaceful solution to the city always at the crossroads of strife. In 1948, with the world trying to dig itself out of the rubble of World War II, the United Nations created a Jewish homeland in Palestine for the tens of thousands of survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. Immediately, there was open warfare between Jew and Arab, with Jerusalem at the center of the conflict.

An Israeli victory brought a reprieve, but no real peace. War exploded again in 1956, 1967 and 1973 as the children of Abraham wreaked havoc upon each other. The Israelis have maintained a tenuous hold on Jerusalem since 1967 in spite of attempts by many, including the Vatican, to make it an international city.

Jerusalem's future

Jerusalem, which means "city of peace," plays a very important role in both biblical history and in the fulfillment of future biblical prophecy.

Jesus told His disciples that He would visibly return. In what has become known as the Olivet Prophecy He explained that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29-30).

Where exactly will Jesus return? The Old Testament prophet Zechariah was inspired to write: "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to bat-

tle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south" (Zechariah 14:1-4).

It is one of the great paradoxes of history that in order for the Prince of Peace to bring an end to violence and strife, He has to fight a war. Mankind will mistake Jesus Christ, not as the Savior, but as an invader. It is in the area around Jerusalem that this cataclysmic battle will take place. And it is Jerusalem that will become the capital city of one world government, not organized by the United Nations or any similar organization, but established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Where do you fit into the overall picture of prophecy? Why were you born? More important than the future of the world's great cities and nations is your own future. There is a big difference between grasping your future, and simply going on the way you have been. The choice is up to you.

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SMBC and Disposable Fathers

Family structure is constantly changing. We cannot afford to assume that different is better. Tampering with God's design will bring catastrophic results.

by Cecil E. Maranville

US Airways, a major air carrier, ran a contest this year inviting children to write an essay about their father or their “father figure.” Such is the time in which we live. “Father figures” who replace the real McCoy are within the boundaries of “normal” life.

“SMBC” is another reality that would have been considered an oddity not long ago. Do you know what it represents? It stands for four words that define a current trend in Western society—“Single Mother By Choice.” This defiant moniker stands in stark contrast to the idea of a Father’s Day, a day set aside to honor dads.

Among today’s trendsetters are several promi-

Among today’s trendsetters are several prominent female entertainers who have chosen to have children without the presence of a father... Can occasional contact with any male actually replace what a father gives to his son or daughter? Are fathers so disposable?

nent female entertainers who have chosen to have children without the presence of a father. One of these, actress Camryn Manheim, explained in a recent interview that she plans to provide everything her child needs, including “male stimulus” from family members and friends. She much preferred that arrangement, she said, to having to “seek the approval” of a spouse for such typically shared decisions as naming the children.

Can occasional contact with any male actually replace what a father gives to his son or daughter? Are fathers so disposable?

“How on earth will Ms. Manheim teach her son to be a good father when she has made such a mockery of the concept?” asked columnist Michelle Malkin. ““Go ask your male stimulant’ seems a criminally inadequate response.” The title of Malkin’s stinging editorial was “Male Stimulant’s Day?” (Creators Syndicate, Inc., June 13, 2001). It’s worth your time to read it.

Ms. Malkin makes a good point—children learn to parent best through the example of their parents. Take the normal father out of the picture, as has happened much in this generation, and the future generation of males is doomed to struggle

with its identity and role. (We have to add “normal,” because the character and behavior of some fathers makes them a terrible example and influence on their children.)

Another actress, Calista Flockhart of *Ally McBeal* fame, adopted a baby recently. She doesn’t mind the idea of having a husband, she told *The New York Post*, but “meanwhile, the baby is all I really want.”

Of course, there are many more reasons that fathers are absent from their families than the SMBC ilk; but for the purpose of this article, we’ll look at those homes where fathers would be found, if wanted. Whatever the reasons, currently more than one third of children in the United States live apart from their biological fathers. Of those children, 40 percent have not seen their fathers in at least a year.

Aren’t the children better off with just a mother, who after all is a better nurturer? Don’t be too sure.

A surprising study

A California psychologist has just released a book that shows how effective a father is at nurturing his children on his own. Wayne Farrell’s research revealed that both sons and daughters would fare *better* under the care of a single father than they would under the care of a single mother.

Better? How so?

In *Father and Child Reunion: How to Bring the Dads We Need to the Children We Love*, Farrell reported that single fathers make better disciplinarians and exercise self-control more effectively than single mothers. Single mothers more commonly “lose it” and strike their children in uncontrolled anger. Farrell says that single moms are 24 times as likely to kill their children as are single fathers—a gruesome topic and statistic.

Further, children of single dads do better in every academic discipline, with math and science at the top of the list. They miss fewer days of school due to sickness and are also socially healthier than their counterparts who live only with mom.

Does this mean that men are better nurturers than women? It is more likely that the statistics reflect the type of men who seek primary custody of their children. However, the research disproves a too-widely accepted modern myth, that children are “better off without dad” in their lives.

Columnist Maggie Gallagher featured Becky Peck in a recent article on single mothers. Ms. Peck was considered avant-garde for her time by having a baby through anonymous sperm donation in the early '80s. She is the consummate SMBC. In spite of all the love and material provisions Ms. Peck gave her child, a fatherless household wasn't enough. By the mid-teen years, the child wanted—needed—to know its father. Just carrying his DNA wasn't enough.

The debate will probably continue, and statistical cannons will be rolled out to shoot figures back and forth. But it isn't a petty battle over who could do a better job rearing the children, mother or father. SFBC—Single Father By Choice—isn't an improvement over SMBC.

Dr. Farrell's book shows the need for two-parent homes. He ranks family structures according to how they best serve the interest of the children. Out of four rankings, a home with primarily the mother present—including the silly and selfish SMBC—is dead last.

A home with a father as the primary parent is only slightly better.

There's a difference between a home in which a father excludes the mother from her children and the family structure Farrell calls shared parent-time, which he ranks as healthier. In this structure, the primary parent invites and encourages the other parent to be involved with his or her children, in spite of divorce.

And single fathers are more likely to include their children's mother in their lives than single mothers are, according to Farrell.

But the healthiest home, the best environment for rearing children, is what he calls "the intact family," a home in which children live with their father and mother.

All the "modern" reasoning aside, what's best for the children is the way the Creator structured a home from the beginning. Children are the losers when mothers or fathers try to compete with the other by becoming a SPBC—Single Parent By Choice.

Bringing up children not a competitive sport

Rearing children is not a competitive sport, a field of contest in which one par-



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The best environment for rearing children is an intact family

ent is proven superior to another. President George W. Bush appropriately observed: "A child's greatest source of security today is not only knowing, 'my mom loves me' and 'my dad loves me,' but also that Mom and Dad love each other. If we're serious about renewing fatherhood, we must be serious about renewing marriage" ("Fatherlessness a Problem for Kids, Not Mothers," by Maggie Gallagher, June 12, 2001, Universal Press Syndicate).

Does the SMBC crowd stop to consider the wording of the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother"? The apostle Paul noted further that it was "the first commandment with promise," and quoted, "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3).

The Fifth Commandment promises well-being to more than just a child who honors his or her parents. We are so used to thinking in terms of the individual that we may fail to perceive that this special commandment looks beyond the individual to the entire human family. Revealed within this promise is a formula of success for generations to come. The pledge isn't necessarily of long life for every child who heeds and applies the law. Rather, it guarantees that mankind itself would be preserved.

Addressed to more than children, the law calls on men and women to create and rear families in the context of marriage.

More at stake than most could imagine

God's law says children need their fathers. Women who choose to have a family without a father have their own interests at heart, not their children's. Worse, they sacrifice the best interest of the entire human family—not just that of their offspring.

Malachi was inspired with an appeal from God similar to what was later recorded in Ephesians: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:4-6, NIV).

In the present context of those who are SMBC, the wording of this prophecy is strikingly appropriate—"turn...the hearts of the children to their fathers." The intent of the Hebrew, however, is to imply that *parents* turn their hearts to their children and vice versa. Several translations of the Bible have the word *parents*. Both the SMBC and the SFBC are selfish.

More must be said about Malachi's prophecy, for the English word *curse* inaccurately tempers the actual meaning. The Hebrew word from which it's translated conveys a much broader and

(See "SMBC," page 15)

In Brief...

World News Review

Ordination of Gay Priests Defining Issue for Anglicans in Australia

The recruitment of homosexuals to the priesthood will be a big issue for debate at the Anglican Church of Australia's General Synod later this year. An avalanche of sexual abuse allegations against clergy and church workers in recent years has led to increasing scrutiny of applicants to the Anglican priesthood. As a result of such scrutiny, churches face a dilemma of increasing intensity.

Dishonesty about sexual orientation has no doubt occurred among those who wish to worship in church or serve in the ministerial ranks. In any case, a number of Australian Anglican dioceses have parishes with gay priests, some living in monogamous relationships. Attempts to accept such situations have encountered vehement opposition from those who take Bible teaching at face value and who resist any smudging of the marriage vows to include anything other than monogamous, heterosexual contracts.

The recent election of Peter Jensen as archbishop of the conservative Sydney diocese becomes particularly important as he will be seen as the acknowledged defender of biblical truth, representing a complete rejection of any softening of church teaching about homosexuality. Homosexuality has become a defining issue, with the ordination of homosexuals and the treatment of homosexually orientated church members the ultimate dilemma. Jensen's hardline views are already known and the pronounced theological differences between the Anglican primate of Australia, Peter Carnley, and the Sydney conservative view, as represented by Peter Jensen, will dominate debates.

The primate, Carnley, rejects same-sex marriages but believes lifelong gay relationships and commitments are better understood as friendships that could receive church blessings. Jensen, a forensic biblical scholar, insists that Bible teaching rejects all homosexual practice, even if within an apparently lifelong commitment. He also thinks that holding to this absolute position—no sex outside marriage—is what postmodern culture needs from the church.

For him, "*postmodern culture is sexually obsessed in physically, emotionally and spiritually unhealthy ways.*" He argues that any move to recognize same-sex marriages, even deeply affective relationships, confuses the church's important witness to the proper value of sex within the conventional bonds of marriage. It also "*devalues the quiet but heroic commitment of the many Christians who, for the sake of Christ and in the midst of overwhelming temptation, have remained celibate.*"

The ordination of known homosexuals within the

Anglican Church, as long as they are celibate, is theoretically accepted by the conservatives. In practice, however, homosexual honesty would probably preclude ordination. The conservative Sydney line argues it is possible to defeat and even change the homosexual disposition. Unmarried candidates are unlikely to find encouragement.

The debates at the synod to be held in Brisbane later this year will be watched with interest, and perhaps apprehension, by many in the Australian Anglican community.

Source: *The Weekend Australian*, June 2-3, 2001.

Court's Jurisdiction Challenges National Sovereignty

The arm of the law is growing more potent, and an age without political borders is dawning upon the world. National leaders accused of human atrocities no longer necessarily have a secure place to hide.

The case of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic who was handed over to an international tribunal recently, "demonstrates that even the highest government officials are vulnerable to international prosecution for human rights crimes," said Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch.

In 1989 Manuel Noriega, the dictator of Panama, was seized and convicted of drug trafficking by the United States. The former leader of Chad was under arrest in Senegal until a new government turned him loose last year, but his fate remains in question. Then more recently, Augusto Pinochet, the former Chilean strongman, spent considerable time in British custody on a Spanish warrant before being allowed to return home. The trend is that the long arm of the law is growing in strength and challenging national sovereignties.

That trend is quite evident in a landmark decision by the International Court of Justice, the UN's highest judicial tribunal, when it ruled for the first time on June 27, 2001, that its provisional orders were binding on countries and that the United States should have acted to postpone the execution of a German national until his case was considered by the court.

Venturing into dual emotional issues—the death penalty in America and the extent of the United States' willingness to bow to international bodies—the 15-member "World Court" effectively sought to stake a claim of influence over the American legal system. The decision, which came in a 14-to-1 vote in The Hague, will please opponents of capital punishment in Europe and infuriate American opponents of international organizations and treaties that appear to intrude

on U.S. sovereignty. President George W. Bush's first official tour of Europe was dominated by disagreements over capital punishment due to the recent execution of Timothy McVeigh, convicted bomber of a federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that killed 168 people.

European politicians have expressed widespread disgust concerning capital punishment in the United States and the deep American suspicion about international authority. The countries of the European Union appear to have more of a willingness to accept the growing trend of more powerful international law, even if it challenges a nation's capacity to maintain its own right of sovereignty.

Sources: *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*.

Sedentary Death Syndrome

Why is the U.S. surgeon general giving top priority to the problem of obesity? A professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia estimates that there are as many as 250,000 deaths in the United States annually that are caused by what he calls "inactivity-related diseases." That translates into a more serious crisis than lifetime smoking or problem drinking, for obese people have far more health problems than daily smokers or heavy drinkers have.

According to a recently released RAND report, three of every five adult Americans are either overweight (36 percent) or obese (23 percent). Researchers used the body mass index (BMI), which is a ratio of height to weight, to define "overweight" and "obesity."

Are you in danger? Multiply your weight in pounds by the number 703 and divide that result by the square of your height in inches. People of normal weight have a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9; those considered overweight score between 25 and 29.9; obese people are between 30 and 34.9. Very obese people score over 35.

Considering that our bodies are called the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19), we should be diligent to address any weight problem that we have. Nothing is more effective than diet and exercise. Because there are so many fad diets and unsafe over-the-counter remedies for overweight and obesity, everyone with this problem would be wise to seek the counsel of a qualified professional.

Sources: RAND News Release, June 7, 2001; AP; "Government Knows Best," by Linda Bowles, June 12, 2001, Creators Syndicate, Inc.

Internet Use by Children Needs Supervision

Separate reports released June 20 should cause parents to heighten their supervision of Internet use by their children. An astounding ratio of nearly one in every five children who go on-line regularly has been approached by strangers for sex at least once in the past year. One of the reports was produced by the University of New Hampshire and published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Risk of exposure increases with the amount of time spent on-line and using chatrooms or instant messaging programs. Girls are at greater risk than boys. Older teenagers are more likely to receive such messages than younger ones are. Troubled youths of both sexes and all ages are susceptible. It's a shame that we have to be concerned with such evils, but parents must discuss this unsavory topic with their children. Whether one has access to the Internet at home, it's available at public libraries and many schools.

How appropriate is the warning of the proverb that says, "A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth; he winks with his eyes, he shuffles with his feet, he points with his fingers; perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord" (Proverbs 6:12-14).

In other words, such a shifty character presents himself in such a way that it would be difficult for a child to perceive him as dangerous. Children need the presence and involvement of their parents. Hopefully, parents aren't using the Internet as a baby-sitter.

Source: "One U.S. Child in Five Is Hunted by a Sexual Predator on the Net," by John Schwartz, *New York Times* service, June 21, 2001.

Children Used as Soldiers

Currently 41 nations use children as soldiers and 120,000 children are fighting in African wars. The country of Myanmar (also known as Burma) holds the "distinction" of having the highest number of child soldiers, 50,000.

Children are being used as front-line fighters, minesweepers, spies and porters—even as sex slaves. A London-based coalition of several human rights groups announced in mid-June that more than 300,000 children are fighting as soldiers. By UN definition, anyone under the age of 18 is a child. Most child soldiers are 15 to 17 years of age, but there are documented cases of some as young as 7.

The coalition's report presented details of children being given drugs to make them fearless. A 14-year-old "soldier" in Sierra Leone testified that children who refused the drugs were killed outright.

An Ethiopian youth told of being recruited when he was 15. Speaking of his 1999 battle, he said: "It was very bad. They put all the 15- and 16-year-olds in the front line while the army retreated. I was with 40 other kids. I was fighting for 24 hours. When I saw that only three of my friends were alive, I ran back."

How tragic it is that children are not allowed to be children. God speed the day when He will "judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Micah 4:3).

Source: "41 Nations Using Child Soldiers," by Susannah Loof, AP, June 12, 2001.

Contributors: *William Eddington*, *Cecil E. Maranville* and *L. Jim Tuck*

“CHAIR,” (Continued from page 16)

ple-to-people programs, if we are serious about peace.”

The program was already feeling the pain of fracturing in October when one of its graduates, Assil Asleh, a Palestinian, was shot dead by Israeli riot police during an anti-government riot. Of all things, he was wearing a Seeds of Peace T-shirt when he was killed. This personalized trauma has deepened the rift between the various participants. Chat lines and phone conversations between the various Seed of Peace participants have echoed with angry recriminations of exactly who is to blame.

“We’re in the wrong jungle”

On the surface, there are very good reasons to bring the Seeds of Peace to a grinding halt.

Seemingly, any responsible party would. Wouldn’t you? Curtius quotes Hadara Rosenblum, director of the Student Council and Youth Unit, as citing three distinct reasons why the program cannot move forward at this time. “The first was the security situation and security warnings connected to the sensitive composition and subject of the delegation. The second was the Palestinian decision against sending a delegation, and the third was the great tension in Israeli society in general, among youths in particular.”

Why is it always so much easier to hate than to reach out to one another, even thousands of miles away from the turmoil? It reminds me of the old story of the one man who was daring enough to climb the highest palm tree in the jungle. An amazing perspective opened up to him as he looked all around. He shouted down to his fellow caravan members as they drudgily hacked through the underbrush down below, “We’re in the wrong jungle!” But they beckoned him to come down and join them, because they stated, “At least we’re making progress.” But for how long? And to what end?

In paging through Scripture, we discover that God has often called His servants to places where they can gain a fresh perspective. You might say God offered them the opportunity to stand on a chair, or better still, to climb to the highest point to determine whether their struggle was worthy of their life’s devotion. Was it the right time but the wrong jungle, or the right jungle but the wrong time?

Moses was summoned up Mt. Sinai, Christ launched off in a boat away from the masses and Paul was at times pulled out of society and placed into a prison setting, so that alone he could come to crystallize what truly was important in life. But each of these individuals had to

come down off that “chair” with perspective in hand and face the problems of the day.

Different times, same turf

Again, when one pages through the Bible, he or she readily comes to see that turf wars between families, tribes and peoples in this heated neighborhood of the globe are not reserved for our generation alone. Such was the case nearly 3,700 years ago when Jacob and his brother Esau came face-to-face after many years of animosity had separated them. If ever there was chicanery visited upon an entire family, it was the family of Esau. Jacob had 1) grabbed Esau’s heel during their birth, 2) lured him out of his birthright and 3) ultimately stolen their father’s blessing.

The last event was perhaps the most devastating, in that Jacob literally fleeced Esau from what was rightfully his by disguising himself with the skin of goats to imitate his brother’s rugged hands. Yes, Jacob may have pulled the wool over his father Isaac’s eyes, but ultimately he had a rendezvous with destiny. He had to come to terms with his brother, face-to-face, and talk.

When you read Genesis 33:1, you can only sense Jacob’s plight at these words, “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.” There were probably at least three good reasons, just like Hadara Rosenblum enumerated, not to go forward in his moment of planting seeds of peace with his family. But the cure to fear is on the other side of the panic we feel. It is there that the answers are to be found. Both in Jacob’s day and ours! It says in verse 3, “Then he [Jacob] crossed

over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.” Verse 4 offers a portrait of one-time foes locked in familial embrace. “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”

Later on in the conversation, Jacob says something startling. “Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough” (verse 11). It was the first time that Jacob had offered Esau anything on the up-and-up without any strings attached. Esau then sums up their positive encounter by stating in verse 12, “Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.”

The enemy mentality molded over many years of mutual distrust melted in the dust of a road in ancient Palestine. But it never would have happened if Jacob had not “come near.” It is the first step that is always the most difficult, but also the most important.

This powerful saga of the Middle East of antiquity

In paging through Scripture, we discover that God has often called His servants to places where they can gain a fresh perspective. You might say God offered them the opportunity to stand on a chair, or better still, to climb to the highest point to determine whether their struggle was worthy of their life’s devotion.

reminds all that will heed the lesson of Jacob and Esau that “the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.”

Involvement versus commitment

Today there is a campground in Maine that invites those with the courage of Jacob and Esau to “come near” and hear one another out, even when the truth hurts. By the way, this camp is not only for Jews and Palestinians. Some of the campers are from the Balkans, India and Pakistan. Any young person who comes to that camp in Maine must be truly committed.

That reminds me of the story of the cow asking the chicken, “What shall we have for breakfast?” The chicken gleefully retorted, “Let’s have steak and eggs.” The cow said, “Oh no, not steak!” The chicken replied, “Why not? I’ll furnish the eggs and you supply the steak.” The cow then soberly replied, “For you, it’s involvement, but for me it’s total commitment.”

There’s a point to this cute little story, which is best summed up by a quote attributed to Art Turock: “There’s a difference between interest and commitment. When you’re interested in doing something, you do it only when circumstances permit. When you’re committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.”

Right now, there are some empty chairs and desks at a camp in Maine waiting for some young people to come and have the courage not only to sit on them, but also to stand on them and gain that new perspective that comes on the other side of daring.

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote a plea to those who would listen in his day. He has been referred to as “the Prophet with the New Mind,” one who had been lifted up by God to see matters in a new light, from a completely different perspective. A man who would not accept the norm that this is how it has to be, because it has always been this way.

It’s amazing how people become secure in their insecurities. Not Isaiah. He cried out on behalf of God in Isaiah 1:16-17, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Then comes verse 18, “Come now, and let us reason together.”

“Come now, and let us reason together”

Today in Israel, there is one man who is willing to take up the call of “the new mind.” John Wallach, the Seeds of Peace coordinator, has found such a vision in the person of Amram Mitzna, mayor of the coastal town of Haifa. Even as national delegations have crumbled, this mayor had no difficulty in assembling 21 young Israelis of Jewish and Arab heritage to journey to Maine.

He candidly laments, “For so many decades, we said there was nobody to talk to, but still we sent delegates to everywhere, hoping to find someone from the other side. So, now, we are going to say no?” He adamantly concludes, “The day that I will be afraid that talking will accelerate tension will be a very bad day!”

It is the bold, clear and committed voice of Amram Mitzna that echoes the millennial refrain of Isaiah 30:21, “this is the way, walk you in it.” It is the voice that echoes the godly plea of “come let us reason together.” It is the voice that one day will echo beyond the forests of Maine and right up the slopes of Jerusalem as people happily cry out, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths...” (Isaiah 2:3).

By the way, is there anyone from whom you feel distanced? Someone you’re not talking with at all? Got a chair? You know what to do. Afterwards, when you come down, plant a seed of peace. ❖

“SMBC,” (Continued from page 11)

more serious warning. The word and the root from which it’s taken imply utter destruction.

What would be destroyed? Written to the remnant of Israel that still occupied the Promised Land, their homeland is the immediate focus of the warning. However, the prophecy is clearly about an end-time setting, a time in which God concerns Himself with the entire earth, not just a limited territory in the Middle East.

The full impact of the warning is that God would be forced to scrap His plans and hopes for mankind if it abandons the family structure. Some people attempt to spiritualize the prophecy, ascribing the sense that people (children of God) must return to their (heavenly) Father. Clearly, though, the Father doesn’t need to be admonished to turn His heart to His children! So, the warning is to physical parents about physical families.

We assume that most readers of *World News and Prophecy* are dedicated to the biblical ideal. Nonetheless, we realize that we are all influenced by the society in which we live, that fathers are discouraged by the growing whim that families are better off without them and that women are encouraged to choose a family structure that will only hurt all concerned.

The United States took a census in 2000. The previous census showed that 55 percent of the population lived in married couple households. Last year’s count showed the figure has dropped to only a little over half, 51 percent. At the same time, single-parent households have jumped to 7.5 million, a 25 percent increase.

How are American children faring in the evolving family structure, as their parents indulge their selfish whims? Today 30 percent of U.S. children do not live with two parents—even stepparents, much less their mother and father.

The United Church of God is dedicated to the spirit of Elijah, seeking to have our fathers’ and children’s hearts turned toward each other. It’s also our desire to bring this urgent, double-edged message of warning and promise to all who have ears to hear. ❖



This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

Standing on a Chair

Some years ago, a movie titled *Dead Poets Society* made a lasting impression on me. The film's star was Robin Williams, who played the part of a newly arrived professor at an established New England prep school. It was the kind of school in which generations of families were taught by the same old professors offering a predictable style of teaching, which guaranteed a formulated outcome. The only problem was that no one was ever challenged by the system towards any new and creative thinking. We might say, "same old, same old."

Then Robin Williams' character arrives. He asks the students to get out of their chairs and stand on top of them. Why? He wanted the students to view the world from a completely different vantage point.

You can imagine what occurred when an administration member opened the door and saw a classroom of male students all standing on their chairs, as Robin Williams carried on with his lecture. Yes, you guessed it. Williams' character didn't last too long. People who engage in thinking beyond the moment and out of their comfortable self-made boxes often exit quickly as the normality of life drags people back towards the predictable.

Recently Mary Curtius, a *Times* staff writer, wrote an article appearing in the June 16, 2001, edition of *The Los Angeles Times*, titled "Mideast Woes Spill Over to Summer Camp." It is the story of a remarkable program called "Seeds of Peace" whose purpose is to promote discussion and understanding between Israeli and Palestinian youth. Of all places, it is set in the woods of New England far from the turmoil of the Middle East.

Unfortunately, with the recent upsurge of violence between these two peoples, this program, much like the character in *Dead Poets Society*, is falling victim to the predictable norms.

Promoting dialogue

Reporter Curtius informs us that Seeds of Peace was formed shortly after the Oslo peace accords were signed in 1993. It was founded by journalist John Wallach, who desired to establish an atmosphere in the woods of Maine where young people from both sides of this explosive equation could learn up-close about one another. He wanted to promote dialogue between members of this upcoming generation as they discussed, face-to-face, the incendiary issues that divide them.

Imagine these young people being "far from the madding crowd" of their homeland and being given a clean breath of fresh air. Being away from Gaza, Jerusalem or a settlement in the West Bank, is almost as if Robin Williams' character in *Dead Poets Society* had offered them an opportunity to stand on a chair and gaze at their world from a new and fresh angle.

But this year, neither the Israeli government nor the Palestinian Authority is willing to send official delegations to this summer camp. Palestinian local government leader Saeb Erekat, whose daughter is a "Seeds" graduate, summed up the situation by stating, "Right now the two societies mirror each other in their anger and frustration. But I would say that one of the things that should be revived immediately if the cease-fire holds is the peo-

(See "CHAIR," page 14)