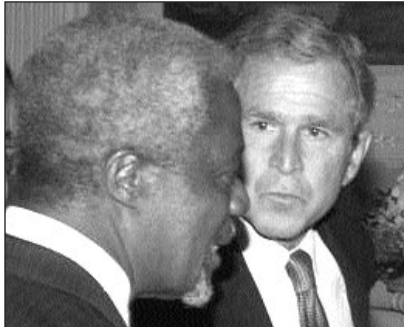


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# The G8 and the Elephant in the Living Room

*Any potential good that might have come from the recent summit of the world's economic giants was overshadowed by the death of two rioters among approximately 100,000 who gathered in Genoa to protest the talks. Widespread international poverty remains unresolved, and the United States grows increasingly unpopular.*

by Melvin Rhodes

It seemed like the '60s all over again! Rioting students demonstrating against global capitalism, rampant anti-Americanism, accusations of excessive use of police force, idealistic demands for reforms of the international economic system and beleaguered and bewildered politicians wondering what all the commotion was about.

In hindsight, residents of the medieval Italian city of Genoa, Italy, wish their city had never played host to the G8 Summit of world leaders over the weekend of July 20 to 22. It's going to take some time and lots of money to clean up now that the party's over. And there will be no further parties on this scale. A Canadian mountain resort has been chosen as the location for next year's summit, which world leaders have agreed will be considerably scaled down.

It's been almost 20 years since these annual meetings began. Progressively they have expanded, with each of the world leaders attending now taking along dozens of aides. This year's summit cost almost half a billion dollars. Other leaders were invited, with many African heads of state in attendance anxious to discuss the continent's serious economic and health problems with the leaders of the

seven richest countries in the world. (The eighth nation in attendance is Russia, still potentially powerful militarily, but weak economically.)

As the leaders of the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Italy gathered together, this year's choice of venue turned out to be a mistake, as the narrow cobbled streets of the ancient city made dealing with combative demonstrators more difficult for the police. It seemed throughout the weekend that the Italian police force was overwhelmed by an unexpectedly strong anti-G8 presence. Over 100,000 demonstrators faced 15,000 police. At the end of the summit, two demonstrators were dead and the future of G8 summits was left in doubt. Some felt there should never be another summit.

### What were the demonstrators fighting for?

There were a number of different groups demonstrating. Many were concerned about specific issues like the environment, but most anger was directed against globalization. Feeling that multinational corporations increasingly control peoples' lives and threaten individual freedom, they vented much of their anger on sym-

(See "G8," page 3)



# World News & Prophecy

WORLDWIDE PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

August 2001

Vol. 4, No. 7



# Restoration

ACTS 3:21

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Christ said that the poor would always be with you. Now, 2,000 years later, that prophecy still haunts mankind. Despite the best efforts of some highly intelligent people, no one has designed an economic system capable of eliminating poverty among nations. Last month leaders of the world's richest nations, "the G8," met in Genoa, Italy, for their annual summit to discuss world economic affairs. Melvin Rhodes analyzes the implications of these and similar meetings in this issue's lead article.

While protesters ransacked Genoa protesting the uneven distribution of the world's wealth, the heads of state resided on luxury ships in the harbor. Top chefs served lavish banquets at great expense. Such trappings contrast the vast gulf between rich and poor. Indeed, nothing changes to tangibly and permanently solve the plight of the poor.

The words of James are appropriate to consider, "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty" (James 5:1-4, New International Version).

## The path to globalization

Free trade between nations is the goal of all those who are building today's global economy. As nations with open markets prosper, it is felt that all peoples will be lifted by this rising tide of economic prosperity. Proponents of globalization teach that stable democratic societies will be created through these alignments, thus breaking the cycle of poverty and creating the conditions for prosperity and peace.

Another article in this issue describes the plans to create a free trade zone between the Americas. Such a large and powerful trading area linked with others in the world, such as the European Union, causes us to think of the powerful global economic system described in Revelation 18. This system will create unparalleled wealth for the world (verse 15), indicating that today's world economy will rise higher before collapsing under the weight of its sins at the coming of Christ (verse 19).

The world cries out for a just and equitable economic structure that will permanently break the cycle of poverty for all peoples. The blueprint for such a system exists in the biblical jubilee that God gave to Israel in Leviticus 25. This 50-year cycle of release from debt and land reform carries the seeds for a permanent restoration of social stability and equity. No more will wealth be gathered into the hands of a small percentage of people while great numbers live with less. No more shall whole nations be condemned to endless generational poverty. Oppression of all forms—economic, political and religious—will cease when all nations learn to respect and stand in awe of the way of God (Leviticus 25:17)

Protesters in Genoa last month demanded immediate debt relief for poor nations. Massive debt definitely cripples nations from joining the ranks of the developed world. But for debt relief to be permanently effective, changes are required on a scale many nations are not ready to tackle. No human economic system has yet proven effective for all nations to experience the peaceful fruits promised under God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom will have to be restored to this earth before that can happen. God's just government will create the conditions when "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid..." (Micah 4:4).

—Darris McNeely

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“G8,” (Continued from page 1)  
bols of international capitalism.

With economic indicators all showing a serious negative downturn in the world economy, fears are increasing among people in the affluent West that the good times are over.

For most of the world they never began. This growing gap between the haves and have-nots is the elephant in the G8 living room, the proverbial issue that everybody present would rather ignore.

### The dilemma of third world poverty

The gap between the wealthy western nations and the less developed countries of the world has been around for a long time. It's no secret that most of the world has missed out on the materialistic progress of the last four decades. How to help the poorer countries overcome their poverty has long been a dilemma.

Following the oil price hike of the early '70s, massive loans were made to Third World countries by western banks, intent on recycling the oil deposits left in their banks by oil-producing nations. Further loans have been made in the interim years, as banks naively assumed that countries don't default like homeowners and credit card holders do at home. It wasn't long before their bad judgment manifested itself in the fact that poor nations were unable to pay their debts.

G8 leaders have faced demands for some years to cancel the debt of the world's poorest nations. In theory, this sounds good and has the support of many people. Although the Bible permits the charging of usury (interest) from “strangers” (resident aliens), there is a clear instruction not to take usury from a brother who is down and out (Leviticus 25:35-36). One primary factor that holds people and nations back from climbing out of poverty is debt, made worse by the interest that it daily accrues. But G8 leaders realize that canceling debt may not solve the problem of Third World poverty. However, it would be politically unacceptable to plainly state the reason why.

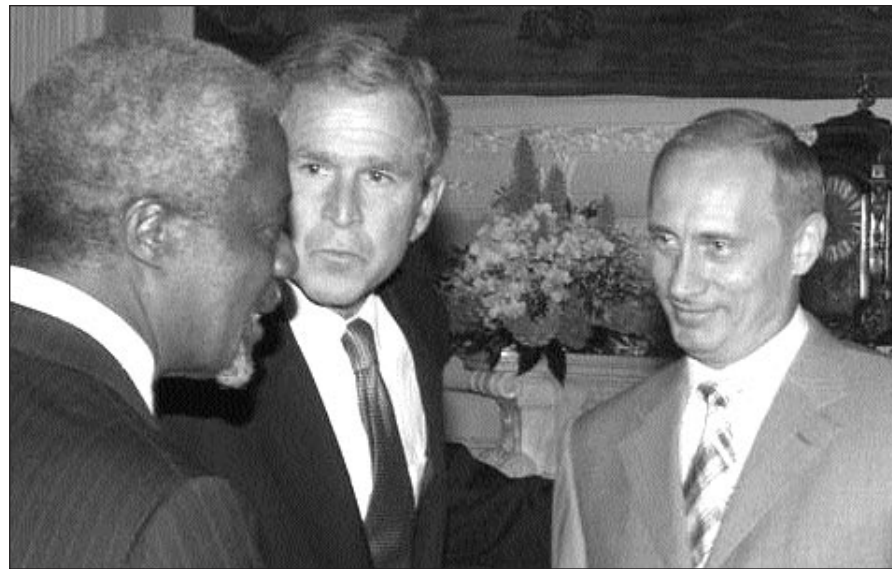
The fact is that the world's poorest nations share a major cultural prob-

lem. That problem is endemic corruption. While national leaders signed the initial loan papers that plunged their nations into debt, most of the borrowed money ended up in private foreign bank accounts, rather than being spent on projects that would have alleviated poverty.

Most of these leaders are now gone, or long since overthrown, but their successors are often just as corrupt—sometimes even more so. Even the type of government doesn't make much difference, as elected politicians can be just as corrupt as self-appointed ones. Indeed, one reason often cited for the military overthrow of

Poor Countries (HIPEC), with adequate supervision to ensure that future loans would be used for their intended purpose. However, such “supervision” smacks of colonialism. No nation likes to be dictated to by other nations. But the fact remains that many governments do not care about their own people. Hundreds of millions of people in these countries live in extreme poverty. Millions every year flee their own nations for the West, a massive movement of people that is causing friction in some of the richer countries.

There seems little the G8 countries can do to ensure an increase in the



At G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan talks to U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin. High on his agenda are the problems facing poorer nations.

civilian governments is corruption. In some countries, it seems as if everybody is corrupt, from the highest to the lowest official in the governmental hierarchy.

Canceling the debts of the poorest countries would send a clear signal to banks that it is now safe to lend again, with a reasonable assurance that western governments would bail out poor countries who default on their loans. It's virtually guaranteed that such loans would again find their way into private bank accounts with the poor receiving little benefit.

Realizing this, but without naming those governments that are at fault, last year's G8 Summit resolved to cancel the debts of the Highly Indebted

standard of living of Third World peoples. All proposed projects must be approved by the national governments and require the cooperation of local officials on the ground.

G8 leaders (minus Russia) contributed to a \$1 billion fund for African AIDS victims. Even here, it is questionable that many of those afflicted with the deadly disease will benefit from the fund. Much of the money will be used to set up another level of bureaucracy while donated medications are likely to disappear and find their way onto the black market where they will be sold at exorbitant prices.

One proposed solution to help the poorer nations is to remove all trade barriers to goods produced in the

HIPEC countries. Again, this is a seemingly sound idea but it is fraught with potential problems. Not the least of which is that most exports from poor countries are agricultural prod-

said “you have the poor with you always” (Matthew 26:11). It is true that whatever economic system man has tried there has always been resultant great poverty. Capitalism was

sions of fossil fuels, with the United States being the only country to vote against the measure. This has fueled anger toward the United States around the world. It’s largely an emotional issue—the BBC reported July 23 that the agreed treaty will likely result in only a 2 percent drop in global emissions and then only if all of the 178 nations stick to the agreed rules, hardly likely in the present world.

Further anti-Americanism was fueled by the Bush administration’s commitment to missile defense, but this was lessened somewhat by a commitment to future talks between Washington and Moscow on defense issues.

### Future summits?

It is generally thought that meetings of world leaders help defuse tension and encourage cooperation to the benefit of all. The G8 summits have been particularly beneficial in this regard,

encouraging the seven richest nations in the world to move forward together.

However, this year’s riots have left a dark cloud over these summits. Further riots and deaths at next year’s meeting could jeopardize future ones.

Even without the additional controversy, the meetings are so brief that little is achieved. One result of the Genoa meeting was clear: There are increasing divisions between the United States and its European allies.

Above all, the elephant in the living room is still there. The vast majority of people around the world still live on less than one U.S. dollar a day, and an increasing number of people in the rich countries are living in poverty. No real solutions were proposed to these problems. Next year’s summit in Canada could find that nothing has improved where world poverty is concerned, making more riots more than likely. Could greater political turmoil lie ahead? ❖



Reuters/Peter Andrews

*This year’s riots have left a dark cloud over these summits. Further riots and deaths at next year’s meeting could jeopardize future ones.*

ucts that are sorely needed by people at home, most of whom already do not get enough to eat.

### Poverty at home

Anger at Genoa also came from those fearful of poverty at home in G8 countries (except Russia, which is already poor). Rising unemployment and a slowdown in the economies of the richest nations do not bode well for the immediate future.

A recent book published in the United States, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, shows that for people to feed, clothe and house themselves, they need to earn at least \$8.89 per hour. Yet, 30 percent of Americans earn less than this amount, a percentage that is on the increase. The last 20 years has seen a growing gap between rich and poor at home, as well as internationally between the rich and poor nations. Other western nations are experiencing similar trends, although not as great as that in the United States.

Reflecting on poverty brings to mind the words of Jesus Christ who

once defined as “man’s exploitation of his fellow man” whereas socialism was just the opposite (with the same end result!).

### American isolationism

One disturbing aspect of the G8 Summit was the noticeable increased anti-Americanism. This was to be expected from the demonstrators, to whom America is still seen as the bastion of western capitalism, even though the seven richest countries present have all done well through the capitalist system and all are home to major international corporations.

But there is also increased anti-Americanism from some of the western leaders. U.S. opposition to the Kyoto Treaty on global warming has been an issue for some time. One day after the close of the G8 Summit, agreement was reached in Bonn on this issue. There, 178 countries agreed on measures to reduce global emis-

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# Free Trade Area of the Americas—What Will Happen to Latin America?

*The United States can no longer take its superiority in the economy of the western hemisphere for granted. The EU's economic reach grows ever longer and its influence ever stronger.*

by Fred Nance

**M**any people in the western hemisphere desire the “American dream.” The prosperity and economic boom of the 1990s in the United States has many nations longing for open markets, so they can begin to taste some of the good times. On the planning table is the “Free Trade Agreement of the Americas” (FTAA) that would create the largest free trade agreement the world has ever seen. It is hoped that by the year 2005, the FTAA will create a market of 800 million people in the Americas, from the Arctic to Antarctica.

This past April, 34 nations participated in the Summit of the Americas in Quebec. President Bush actively took part in that summit and has been asking the U.S. Congress for authority to negotiate this agreement. “I will look south, not as an afterthought, but as a fundamental commitment of my presidency. Those who ignore Latin America do not fully understand America itself,” said the president (*Latin Trade Magazine*, June 2001, p. 30). He has promised that the trade zone will not only create markets for the United States, but will fortify democracy in Latin America and spread the economic benefits equitably.

Can a partnership be forged between the United States and Latin America? What is the most likely scenario for these nations, according to Bible prophecy?

As pointed out in a recent *New York Times* article, the combination of democracy and free enterprise in Latin America does not guarantee higher living standards. Every nation in the western hemisphere except Cuba presently has an elected government, with increasingly open markets. Yet, 224 million Latin Americans (roughly 36 percent of the population) live in poverty. Many of these nations are experimenting with democratic capitalism for the first time. As a result of this

experimentation, economic benefits do not filter down to the masses, because the region's rigid social structure isn't equipped to equitably distribute wealth.

“Latin Americans get to choose their lead-



Photo © 1999-2001 www.arttoday.com

*In April, 34 nations discussed a free trade zone for the Americas at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.*

ers, but once they are in place, it's the old cliques that make the bottom-line decisions that are suitable to their own needs, not the needs of the people,” says Hernando De Soto, a Peruvian economist (“Latin America's Poor Survive It All,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2001).

## The source of divergence

Why are the United States and Canada so much more prosperous and more democratic than Latin America?

Ibero-America actually had a head start on the United States and Canada. The first permanent Spanish settlement was established in 1493 on Hispaniola in what is today the Dominican Republic. The first permanent British colony was established more than a

*Can a partnership be forged between the United States and Latin America? What is the most likely scenario for these nations, according to Bible prophecy?*

century later, in 1607 at Jamestown in what was to become Virginia.

Venezuelan writer Carlos Rangel wrote: "As late as 1700, the Spanish American empire still gave the impression of being incomparably richer, much more powerful and more likely to succeed than the British colonies of North America" (Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Pan-American Dream*, 1997, p. 18). Latin America had an earlier start, yet British America surpassed it in power and influence.

Lawrence Harrison writes: "As we approach the end of the 20th Century, Latin America is roughly fifty years behind the United States and Canada in terms of the prosperity of its citizens and the solidity of its democratic institutions" (ibid, p. 18). What explains this flip-flop in history?

We can turn to Bible prophecy for the answer. God made known through Jacob that Joseph's descendants would receive the birthright promises "in the last days" (Genesis 49:1, 22-26). It is because of the tremendous physical blessings promised to the descendants of Joseph that the United States has prospered so much more and become more powerful. The United States was molded from British, Anglo-Protestant traditions, whereas Latin America traces its roots to Ibero-Catholic culture. These are the fundamental differences that explain the divergence between the nations of the Americas at the beginning of the 21st century.

Where will it go from here? Can a partnership be forged among all the nations of America?

### Leadership needed

There are many who believe that without leadership, the United States might lose out in the competition for Latin American markets. Jenny Bates, an international economist at the Progressive Policy Institute, writes: "There is an emerging risk of the United States being slowly shut out of Latin American markets, while our competitors, particularly the European Union, gain ground. In the future, if Latin American countries face lower barriers on imports from the EU than from the

United States, they will purchase goods and services, including highly lucrative capital goods, from our competitors. This potential outcome is not lost on the Europeans" (*Blueprint Series, Ideas for a New Century*, 2001, p. 5).

Despite President Bush's desire to negotiate a free trade pact, many forces are



*Latin America's desire to embrace globalization and free markets could lead it to make an economic pact with a coming world economic system that is unveiled in the 18th chapter of Revelation.*

at work to prevent it. Powerful U.S. interest groups, especially labor unions and environmentalists, oppose free trade. The U.S. Congress itself might be against it, as President Clinton found out when he failed to obtain the renewal of "fast track" negotiating authority that he needed to forge a similar accord.

Whether free trade is reached throughout the western hemisphere, one can be sure that Europe is watching these developments closely. Europe has a strong historical, cultural and demographic relationship with many countries of Latin America. European multinational corporations have established a major presence there. Corporations from Spain are especially dominating in acquisitions of banking, energy and telecommunications to the point that they will soon hold pan-

regional power in Latin America. A trade agreement between Mexico and the European Union was recently signed, which was Europe's response to NAFTA. Some economists believe that agreement set the pattern for possible future trade agreements between Europe and Latin America.

### From "dollarization" to "euroization?"

"Dollarization," the abandoning of a country's local currency to adopt the dollar, has been occurring in some Latin American nations. Last year, Ecuador officially adopted the dollar. El Salvador began using it as legal currency on January 1, 2001. Guatemala joined the race to dollarize in May, and it is also being discussed in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Argentina has pegged its peso one-to-one with the dollar for a decade.

Now Argentina has announced it will also link its peso to the euro. The value of the peso will be fixed at one euro, as soon as the euro rises to parity with the dollar. When the euro rises or falls against the dollar, the peso will be set at the mid value between the two currencies.

Cuba has also debated switching to the euro, although no action has been taken at this time. Might this become a trend, if poor Latin American countries see a more powerful Europe rising and the leadership of the United States declining, as Bible prophecy foretells?

### Economic system foretold

Latin America's desire to embrace globalization and free markets could lead it to make an economic pact with a coming world economic system that is unveiled in the 18th chapter of Revelation. There it describes the merchants of the earth becoming rich by her (verse 3) and states they will mourn because Babylon, the greatest customer for their goods, will be gone after she is destroyed (verse 11).

The increasing presence of European multinational corporations, along with the historical and cultural ties between Europe and Latin America make the possibility of future trade alliances and monetary movements worth watching. ❖

# Dancing With Indecency

*Are you aware of the latest dance craze? Freak dancing is sweeping the western world, thanks to the promotion MTV has given it over the past several years. Kids and school administrators clash over whether it's acceptable. Parents seem uncertain how to deal with the situation.*

by Cecil E. Maranville

School dances are a mainstay on the social calendar for public and most private schools alike. Theoretically, they afford an opportunity for young men and young women to get to know each other, as well as to develop needed social skills that will help prepare them for life.

A new style of dancing has become increasingly popular in the past few years that is about as far from the ideal as possible! And any "skill" that it teaches is one that decent people hope young people will forget.

The style is called "freaking" or "freak dancing." It's difficult to find suitable, but tasteful, words to describe the dance in this high-standard publication, so we'll lead into the description by listing some alternative names for the dance: "dirty dancing," "the grind," "booty dancing," "the nasty" and "the wax." The last name communicates the style better than the others; it's meant to convey the bending over position a person might assume to wax the floor by hand.

If you're familiar with freaking, you're saying, "OK, what's your point?" If you're not, we need to tell you more—with apologies for the distastefulness of it. Let Meredith May of *The San Francisco Chronicle* tell you what she saw at Richmond High School in California earlier this year: "The disc jockey spins a record, 'Get Ur Freak On,' luring freshman Fenesha Hill to the dance floor. Mario Hernandez grabs her waist from behind, she bends forward and they thrust their hips in unison to the beat" ("Newest Teen Dance Is Freaking Out School Administrators Nationwide," June 3, 2001, on-line edition).

## **Freak dancing is as bad as it sounds**

*USA Today* reports: "Boys thrust their pelvises into girls' behinds to the throbbing bass of the hip-hop anthem 'Big Pimpin.' One halter-topped girl stoops so far over the floor that she looks like a center primed to snap a football—except she's also gyrating wildly across a boy's groin" (Kathleen Parker, "Freaking: Dance Craze Is Out of Step With Decency," June 7, 2001, Tribune Media Services).

Catherine Gewertz wrote in *Education Week*: "A girl might be on all fours, with one boy's pelvis

pressed into her face and another's pressed into her bottom. They see boys on their backs with girls spread-eagled over them; girls bent forward with boys' hips thrust in their backsides.... Articles of clothing sometimes come off" ("Freak Dancing' Craze Generates Friction, Fears," on-line edition, February 28, 2001).

One more depiction, written by a high school newspaper reporter: "Freaking could entail a girl in front and a guy behind, a guy and girl face-to-face, two girls in the aforementioned positions, girl-guy-girl, girl-girl-guy or a whole train of hap-

*Bear in mind, this isn't so-called "adult entertainment" at a dance club that we're talking about—it's a high school dance.*

py grinders" ("You Wanna Get Freaky With Me?" by Julia Kay, March 15, 2001, edition of *Silver Chips*, student newspaper for Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland).

The last configuration is what the kids call "freak trains."

Why write about this? (1) We want to bring this to the attention of parents who might not be aware of the latest type of dancing that peer pressure is imposing on their children. (2) Our readers want to be kept abreast of social trends that indicate the direction our society is taking.

It's instructive to hear how teens, school administrators and parents are reacting to it. It's wildly popular among teens, while most school officials and parents seem against it. But not all teens are for it, and not all adults are opposed to it.

## **Dirty dancing dismissed as simply different**

The adult advocates, including some teachers, school administrators and parents, argue: "It's just the latest version of dancing, a new craze. Because it's different, most adults are simply not used to or comfortable with it." They recite the fact that the waltz, the Charleston, swing, the twist and rock 'n' roll each in its time was considered risqué.

“Leave the kids alone; let them have their fun like adults had their fun when they were young,” is their mantra. “The kids don’t see anything wrong with it, so don’t project your dirty imagination onto something that’s innocent to them,” they contend. Parents and school officials who criticize or forbid freak dancing are characterized as inflexible, old-fashioned or unable to admit their own adolescent frolics.

One certainly can find teens who assert that this is all true, that they are having innocent fun. A 14-year-old girl says, “It’s just a way to express ourselves and have fun.” Someone needs to ask her what it is that freaking expresses.

An 18-year-old female who is a high school senior agrees with that girl’s sentiment: “Dancing is just a form of expression, like the way you dress. It doesn’t have anything to do with sex.” We hope that she doesn’t express herself in dress style the way she does by freak dancing, or she is liable to be arrested.

A 16-year-old male sophomore adds this protest: “I think that what is mostly a simple little thing is being blown out of proportion. Just because we’re young doesn’t mean everything we do is obscene.” Another 16-year-old male declares: “It’s gone too far when one of the parties involved feels violated. But if no one feels violated, then there’s no problem.”

That’s a telling point: Kids reason that what’s decent depends on how they feel about it. Is that true? If so, then we might as well throw aside all standards of behavior and encourage young people to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong.

An 18-year-old girl defends her participation in freaking: “I personally don’t have a problem with grinding because I don’t see grinding as suggestive to anything, and it’s a good way to get to know people. I don’t think just because you grind with someone it means something.”

It’s a good way to get to know people? That young lady has a creative, albeit misshapen imagination!

Where did kids learn about freak dancing? Where did they get the idea

that it’s within the bounds of acceptable behavior? The consistent and repeated answer is from MTV and music videos. MTV has contributed greatly to a revolutionary change in social behavior in its 20 years of broadcasting. What are your children watching?

### Some adults think like kids

School administrators are divided on whether freaking is unacceptable or just different. The assistant principal at Richmond High School says “the freaky” doesn’t bother her, because her parents used to object to a pelvis-to-pelvis type of dance that she used to do, called, “the Four Corners.” Excuse me? Because parents objected to an activity, does it automatically mean that their objections were wrong? If an adult objects to teen dancing styles today, does it *automatically* mean that adult is just not flexible enough to allow for generational differences?

They seem to find it inconceivable that kids’ opinions and feelings are wrong on this issue.

This same school official said that she walks over and says, “Sorry,” to a freak dancing couple “if it gets out of control.” One can only guess what constitutes being out of control in her estimation.

Another school official at the same dance told the reporter that he didn’t like to see teens “freak,” but he wouldn’t stop them either. Why not? In his opinion, they’ve already been taught “to be personally responsible for their sexuality” (op. cit., Meredith May).

Attempting to follow his reasoning, we assume that he means *his* responsibility for educating them doesn’t extend beyond the classroom. That kind of approach is not a credit to the teaching profession.

Leslie Butz is the principal at George Marshall High School in Falls Church, Virginia. In her opinion, schools need to provide a safe and controlled environment “in which to experiment.” She doesn’t believe there should be rules against freak dancing, arguing that with each new decade comes some type of dancing that offends adults. She implies that we should allow kids’

feelings to override parental judgment.

### Wide gamut of responses to freak dancing

The approaches of U.S. school officials range from allowing any freak dancing that students want to do on the one hand, to an absolute ban on the other, with an assortment of varying approaches in between.

In Guam, National Honor Society members can be suspended for inappropriate behavior on the dance floor. In Wisconsin, a high school has thrown students out of dances, sent letters to their parents and threatened students with suspension.

Some school officials deal with freaking teens as if they were 5-year-olds who had pulled the cat’s tail—they send them to a “time out room.” A Tacoma, Washington, school attempted to define decency vs. indecency with mathematics: dancers are banned from “bending over past a 45-degree angle.” Presumably, any lesser degree bend, along with the accompanying freak dancing motions, is decent.

If students want to attend a dance at Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati, they and their parents must sign a pledge that the students will not dress provocatively or engage in lewd dancing. The pledge reads: “Grinding, bumping, fondling, humping, licking, kicking, mashing, shoving, wallowing, disrobing, sexual kissing, freaking, jacking, and whatever a chaperone deems improper and/or indecent will not be permitted” (“How Schools Are Cracking Down,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 28, 2001). The officials put teeth into enforcement: violators are not only removed from the dance, they are also given detention one day a week for the remainder of the school year.

How sad that these activities need to be spelled out. Bear in mind, this isn’t so-called “adult entertainment” at a dance club that we’re talking about—it’s a high school dance.

### More chaperones not the answer

Should schools simply staff dances with more chaperones? Having chap-

erones watch for and stop freak dancing isn't easy from several perspectives. It puts the chaperone in the position of a sort of club bouncer, enforcing a policy that's unpopular with the teens, rather than merely lending a mature presence to the activity. Parents don't want to be "the bad guys" at their child's dance. Although they don't agree with freak dancing, many parents are unwilling to take on yet another battle with their kids.

Additionally, a dance crowd of any size would require that many chaperones be present, and they are hard to find. Further complicating the task is the fact that teens form a wall of bodies in a circle around "freakers" when chaperones approach, making it difficult for the adults to see what's going on inside the circle.

All over the United States, rather than deal with the hassle of hammering out policies that administrators and parents agree on, not to mention the hassle of attempting to enforce the policies, schools have simply canceled dances entirely.

### **Kids need their parents to give them direction**

One Ohio high school principal understands why freaking is popular: "It's something that looks new and looks exciting" (Cindy Krantz, "Adults Freak Over Teens' Dancing," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 29, 2001). He also understands that kids need direction, adding, "You do it until someone tells you not to."

Who should do that? Teaching and encouraging their children to do what is appropriate is a *parental responsibility*. Parents expect too much if they want teachers and school administrators to set and enforce standards of decency.

Certainly, parents have to be reasonable, flexible and eager for their children to have fun. Additionally, parents have to be sensitive to the fact that kids will take criticism of their participation in freak dancing personally. They may well react defensively, accusing their parents of not allowing the kids to have "their own" culture. Commonly, many kids protect whatever is in vogue as if they had given birth to it.

But the fact that freaking is debated

as even a *possibly* acceptable activity is a decidedly sad commentary on our present world.

Is freak dancing sexual? Of course it is. Yet teens and some adults argue that it isn't, "because it doesn't lead to sex."

Deborah Roffman is a sex educator in the Baltimore area who has recently written *Sex and Sensibility: The Thinking Parent's Guide to Talking Sense about Sex*. She tries to convey to kids and parents that freak dancing is sexual behavior stripped of any emotional value, which makes it even more damaging.

"Sex should be private; freak dancing is public. Sex should be meaningful; freak dancing is recreational. Sex should be mutual, without pressure from either side. Freak dancing often involves subtle pressure. Sex should be part of a close, caring relationship;

*"Sex should be private; freak dancing is public. Sex should be meaningful; freak dancing is recreational. Sex should be mutual, without pressure from either side. Freak dancing often involves subtle pressure"—Deborah Roffman, sex educator.*

freak dancing is anonymous" ("Just Freakin' the Night Away," by Laura Sessions Stepp, *The Washington Post*, January 18, 2001, p. C04).

In her education classes, Ms. Roffman teaches students "that human sexuality is not a single act, but a continuum of feelings and experiences, that these experiences are only appropriate at certain ages and under certain conditions" ("There's No Dancing Around This Responsibility," by Susan Reimer, *The Baltimore Sun*, January 29, 2000, on-line edition).

That's true, but it doesn't go far enough. The only appropriate "condition" for all sexual experiences is the condition of matrimony. The only

appropriate "caring relationship" is that between a husband and wife.

### **Straight talk about sexuality**

The essence of the concept of adultery is that it is with someone other than your marriage partner, and of fornication, that it is sexual involvement between unmarried people. Ms. Roffman has said it well that this is more than a single act, that it is a continuum of feelings and experiences. Put her advice with what God reveals, and you have a full understanding of appropriate conduct, as well as an adequate guide for deciding whether freak dancing is indecent.

Advising young men on their behavior, the apostle Paul wrote: "Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right" (2 Timothy 2:22, *The Living Bible Paraphrase*). The New Jerusalem Bible adds additional perspective: "Turn away from the passions of youth, concentrate on uprightness, faith, love and peace, in union with all those who call on the Lord with a pure heart."

And to all, girls and boys, women and men alike, God's Word says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5, NIV).

Do we remember what idolatry is? It's allowing or causing anyone or anything to take the place of God. Since God made sexuality and provided clear regulations for human conduct, anyone who argues otherwise or buys a contrary argument is in double violation of the eternal law of human conduct. He commits idolatry, as well as sexual sin.

Too often parents and preachers emphasize the "don'ts" and may be guilty of conveying to youths the idea that God's way might be summarized as the Ten Don'ts. Actually, it's, "don't do this *so that you will be able to enjoy the full benefit of that.*" Or, in terms of freak dancing and the like, God says, "Don't engage in activities that are overtly sexual with someone who's not your marriage partner, so that you will be able to enjoy the full benefit of sexuality the way I designed it for you." ❖

# Are We Living in the Time of the End?

*A Newsweek report states that there has been more scholarship devoted to the study of end-time biblical prophecies in the past 30 years than there had been in the last 300 years. A series of novels based on these prophecies have sold over nine million copies. Are we nearing the end?*

A Good News radio broadcast by Gary Petty

A recent resurgence of fascination with biblical prophecy has spawned religious debate over interpretations of the visions of Daniel, Christ's Olivet Prophecy and the mysterious images that Christ told the apostle John to write in the book of Revelation. People want to know about the future. We are living in turbulent times. Many are concerned about the state of the world and some discerning souls are turning to the Bible for solace and insight—the prophetic passages in particular.

A *Newsweek* article titled "The Way the World Ends" states: "Of all the books of the Bible, none has fired the imagination of the West more than the last, the mysterious Apocalypse. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse, the Whore of Babylon, the deceitful Antichrist—these are just a few of the powerful and troubling images that Revelation injected into Western art and consciousness. Its prophecies have been of even greater consequence: the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth, the Battle of Armageddon and the promise of a new heaven and earth have justified numerous wars and revolutions and inspired utopias and religious sects of every sort."

How can we understand biblical prophecy? Are there rules to the strange images and predictions? Where do we even start?

## A pivotal passage

Let's begin our discussion by looking at divine predictions given to the prophet Daniel in the sixth century before Christ.

Daniel was a young Jewish man

who had been taken captive by the Babylonians. The Babylonian ruler, King Nebuchadnezzar, had a disturbing dream and decided that it must possess a hidden message. He called his astrologers and sorcerers together and commanded that they tell him the meaning. Of course, by their own human power, they couldn't.

God revealed to His servant Daniel the dream and its meaning. The Creator looks out upon the expanse of time, understands what humanity will do and determines how He will intervene in human history to bring about His ultimate plan for mankind.

Daniel appears before the king and proceeds to proclaim that Nebuchadnezzar's dream involved an image of a man. We pick up the story in Daniel 2:32. Daniel tells the king: "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Daniel continues with the interpretation: "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory...you are this head of gold.

"But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another,

a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

"Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

"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.... The great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

The image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream would seem unfathomable, except that God, through Daniel, reveals the meaning. This simple prophecy supplies a major framework for many prophecies throughout Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar's image concerns four great empires beginning with Babylon. From our historical vantage point today the elements of the prophecy become clear.

The Babylonian Empire was followed by three other empires. First

came the Persian Empire that destroyed Babylon's rule. The Persians were in turn conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. The Greek Empire eventually was gobbled up into the Roman Empire.

Fulfilled prophecy proves the divine inspiration of the Bible! But all of the prophecies of Daniel 2 aren't just in the past. He predicts that the fourth empire will exist at a time when the Messiah comes to rule the earth.

Let's go back and reread verse 44: "And in the days of these kings [the 10 kings mentioned in the verses before] 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."

Here is a vital key to understanding end-time biblical prophecy. Before the Messiah comes to rule over God's Kingdom on the earth, there must be a revived fourth, or Roman Empire, that involves 10 rulers.

### When will the Messiah return?

Did you know that approximately one fourth to one third of the Bible is prophetic in nature? Much of that is concerned with the "end times."

It seems that many generations have thought that they were living in the time just before the return of Christ. The *Newsweek* article mentioned earlier states: "In the 12th century, for example, the Crusaders saw the recapture of Jerusalem from the Muslims as a defeat of the Antichrist. Christopher Columbus set sail thinking his voyage to India would hasten the return of Christ to earth.... In Puritan New England, America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, studied John's Apocalypse and calculated that the millennium of Christ's kingdom on earth would begin in the year 2000."

Jesus said in Matthew 24:22 that unless He returns, all humanity would be destroyed. This horror is precariously possible with modern nuclear warheads and biological weapons. The

Messiah won't return until many prophetic events happen first—like world wars, disease epidemics on a global scale and a rise in earthquakes.

No one knows the exact time of Christ's return. Jesus Himself said, "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32).

Jesus also commanded His followers to be aware of events and how they relate to prophecy. Just after saying that no one knows the day or hour of His return, He told His disciples:

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.... And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:33-37).

Christ's instructions to watch mean more than just being aware of events. His followers are to be prepared for His return. In Luke 21:34-35, Jesus says:

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

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# In Brief...

## World News Review

### Fallout of the GE-Honeywell Deal-That-Wasn't: Further Evidence of U.S.-EU Rift?

The European Commission's recent unanimous rejection of a proposed merger between two American companies threatens to widen the rift between Europe and the United States. On July 3, the 20-member Commission, which is the executive body of the 15-nation European Union, voted to prohibit a proposed \$45 billion merger between General Electric and Honeywell, International, both headquartered in the United States. It was the first time in the Commission's history that it had killed a business merger (already approved by the U.S. Department of Justice) involving two U.S. companies.

The fact that a European regulatory body could prohibit a merger of two U.S. companies came as a surprise to many Americans. The news of the deal being killed, reported ironically on July 4, American Independence Day, makes U.S. sovereignty seem somehow less absolute than before.

"Welcome to globalization," explained *Time* magazine (July 8). "Multinational companies are required to follow the laws of all the countries in which they operate. Because global companies affect markets far beyond their headquarters, both EU and U.S. antitrust authorities review the mergers of foreign companies with substantial activities within their jurisdiction." The European Commission has exercised jurisdiction since 1990 over all mergers between firms with combined annual revenues of \$4.2 billion, of which \$212 million must be within Europe. The proposed merger of GE and Honeywell far exceeded those thresholds. GE alone had \$25 billion in European revenue last year, and employs 85,000 people in Europe.

The Bush administration and some members of Congress reacted angrily to the decision. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill described the Commission's decision as "off the wall." He criticized the process and results of the EU intervention. "The European process is in my judgment flawed in the sense that the people who are making the judgments are not elected by anyone and their judgments are not subject to a judicial review or any kind of relief."

"And it seems to me that there is a need to make some correction," he said, "especially in those cases where they are making judgments about business combinations of companies that are completely located outside their jurisdiction... What the EU's commission is doing is a far reach from looking at questions that are directly of interest to the European

Union and reaching into the affairs of other countries."

Mario Monti, the European competition commissioner, had suggested killing the deal out of concern that it would hurt competition, chiefly European companies, in the aircraft engine industry. The U.S. Justice Department had approved the proposed merger because of the benefits to customers in the global aerospace market. This highlights a fundamental difference between European regulators' apparent primary concern of protecting European competitors, and U.S. regulators' emphasis on providing benefits to customers.

England's *Telegraph* notes that "the dispute risks setting off a further downward spiral in relations [between the U.S. and EU] coming so soon after clashes over the U.S. withdrawal from the Kyoto climate agreement, the death penalty in America and EU attempts to upstage U.S. foreign policy in North Korea and the Middle East" (July 5). Other prominent differences that have emerged in recent times involve corporate taxes and missile defense. *The Chicago Tribune* observes that "the last thing this marriage needs is more hot rhetoric or threats" (July 10).

Bible prophecy indicates an end-time struggle between an economic superpower in Europe and the United States, part of the modern-day descendants of Israel. The differences between these two economic powers will lead to an appalling clash that will only be healed by the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings, to usher in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 17; Jeremiah 30).

Sources: *Time*, *The Telegraph*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*.

### Hands-On Parents—Key to Curbing Teen Alcohol Abuse

One of the greatest dangers to today's teens is alcohol abuse. Alcohol was a factor in 2,273 U.S. traffic fatalities among those ages 15 to 20 in 1999 (the most recent statistics available). The average age at which U.S. teens start drinking is 16—down from 18 in the 1960s. Early drinkers are more likely to develop a dependency on alcohol.

The rate of harmful alcohol use is disturbing. Some 30 percent of high school seniors, 26 percent of 10th graders and 14 percent of eighth graders reported having at least five drinks in a row—binge drinking—in the two weeks before they responded to a recent U.S. government survey. Alcohol-centered partying continues into college or university, where students face strong peer pressure to drink.

Some have suggested that Americans need to introduce

alcohol to their children at a younger age to “demystify” its use and, hopefully, curb the destructive trend. A U.S. Justice Department report that compared European and U.S. data on youth drinking challenges that idea. The analysis, which was released in July, revealed that a higher percentage of European youths reported having five or more drinks in a row. Additionally, the intoxication rate among youth is higher in about half of the European countries than it is among youth in the United States.

What can be done? Hands-on parents make a dramatic difference in keeping children from abusing alcohol, according to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). CASA conducted a study on youth drug abuse, alcohol and tobacco use. It found that there was a clear distinction between the rate of problems in children of hands-on parents and those of hands-off parents.

Hands-on parents did 10 or more of the following actions. Hands-off parents did five or less.

- Monitor what their teens watch on TV.
- Monitor teen Internet use.
- Restrict the CDs that teens buy.
- Know where teens are after school and on weekends.
- Get the truth about teens’ whereabouts.
- Be “very aware” of academic performance.
- Impose curfews.
- Make it clear that they would be “extremely upset” if their teens used marijuana.
- Eat dinner together six to seven nights per week.
- Turn off the TV during dinner.
- Assign regular chores.
- Have an adult present when the teen returns home from school.

Sources: AP; *The Boston Globe*; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Better Living Standard Doesn't Equal Better Living

Good news—poverty is down in the United States and the number of children growing up in high-income homes doubled in the last 20 years. So says *America's Children 2001* report, a federal government document. (High-income is defined as having at least \$68,116 annually for a family of four.)

But, a better average living standard doesn't translate into better living for all. More children live in single-parent homes—a staggering 26 percent of the total, most of which are single-mother families. And 42 percent of the children in those single-mother families live in poverty.

Even among those children who live in wealthy homes, the news isn't all good. The same report showed that more parents are working, which means that children enjoy their supervision less. Less parental supervision means more social problems.

Some of the problems with which U.S. children are dealing are indicated by the following statistics:

- Births to unmarried teenage girls are up from 62 percent of all teenage births in 1980 to 88 percent in 1999 (the last year statistics were available).
  - Tobacco use remains high—21 percent of high school seniors smoked *daily* in the 30 days previous to the survey.
- Source: Kathleen Parker, Tribune Media Services.

## Why Has China Pressed So Hard for the Olympics?

The International Olympic Committee bucked political correctness and gave the 2008 Olympics to a country that has been saddled with an appalling human rights record. Beijing won out over strong contenders Paris and Toronto.

It seems everyone in China made an effort to win the Olympics for 2008. When the Olympic Committee inspectors arrived in February, thousands of migrants scrubbed fences and planted fake flowers along the delegation's route to impress them. Cab drivers were required to have clean cars or have their licenses suspended. The usually filthy public restroom facilities were cleaned up, and music was played to entertain users.

China was determined to show it had changed since its bid to host the 2000 Olympics eight years ago, when stray dogs were beaten to death and the mentally challenged were detained by authorities to “clean up” Beijing. Of course it is now history that the Olympics went to Australia chiefly because of China's human rights record.

Desperate to show a different face to win the Olympics, China has said it will stage beach volleyball on Tiananmen Square if it wins the bid. For now, though, the square is bustling with plain-clothes cops.

Why has China pressed so hard to garner the Olympics for 2008? Perhaps the sleeping giant has a strategy for the future. One cannot help but remember Hitler's 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Though most Americans are educated to think the Games blew up in Hitler's face with the spectacular performance of black American track champion Jesse Owens, this is not quite the case. Scholars of that period acknowledge that hosting the Olympics was of great importance to Germany for the furtherance of Hitler's regime. As Duff Hart-Davis, author of *Hitler's Games*, relates, the Nazis ensured that Berlin was nicely and benignly turned out, creating the mirage that the Fuhrer's Germany was “a perfectly normal place, in which life went on as pleasantly as in any other European country.” Hart-Davis further writes, “That the success of the eleventh Olympiad gave Hitler an enormous boost, both moral and political, nobody could deny.”

What will be the state of the world in 2008, and where will China fit into that new world order economically and, most of all, militarily? The great red dragon is only now flexing its muscles, and most of its foreign policy with other nations is in opposition to that of the United States and Britain. Russia and China have formed an alliance with each other, and the words spoken are often weighed against U.S. interests.

(See “IN BRIEF,” page 15)

“FISHIN’;” (Continued from page 16)

through an interview published last fall in *The Boston Globe*.” In an interview related to the promotion of his book, *Founding Brothers*, the professor mentioned that he had been a civil rights worker in Mississippi in 1964, a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division and a platoon leader in Vietnam in 1965, as well as an anti-war activist later on. He also had commonly told these tales in his classroom lectures, adding stories of his personal exploits in Vietnam.

There was only one problem, and a big one at that. He never served in Vietnam. *The Globe*’s widespread reading audience began to place a finer focus on Ellis’ prior activities than ever before. Some of the readership began putting two and two together. There is truth to the old adage, “You may fool all of the people some of the time. You can even fool some of the people all of the time, but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.”

It came to light that Ellis’ on-the-ground Vietnam exploits never occurred. They were false. His actual service during this tumultuous time in U.S. history was spent teaching history at a U.S. military academy. Cicero is not alone in offering maxims to ponder. Ellis had offered his own maxim once when stating “the teaching side of my life and the writing side of my life are part of the same collective whole.” Ellis himself had suggested the measurements by which he would be judged.

### **“The older a man gets, the faster he ran as a boy”**

To say the least this has set off a firestorm in the world of academia. Initially, the administrators of Holyoke implied that the fiction regarding his own life did not diminish his scholarship. But Balzar, the columnist, weighs in, “No! It diminishes all scholarship. If the historian himself is a man of deception as well as achievement, what are we to think of his subjects?” Ellis’ sad example throws grains of salt on what he sought to illuminate—the exceptional character of those who by luck and wisdom and timing altered the course of events.

Balzar goes on to say, “Perhaps we’re wiser for this reminder that humans are, well, human. But, it’s a short step from there to cynicism. Ellis’ double standard for the truth, depreciates truth itself. If students can’t believe in their professors, why believe in anyone? If book buyers cannot trust the endorsement of the Pulitzer Prize, why trust anything? It’s just plain jarring—creepy—when a man who seeks to reconcile us with the purpose of our past, cannot square himself with his own life history.”

Robinson, *The Globe* reporter who had written about Ellis’ exploits, said, “Students who had held Ellis in high esteem were deeply shaken and his deception to *The Globe* seemed insignificant in comparison.”

Since these revelations were made known, Ellis has officially apologized in a written statement: “Even in the best of lives, mistakes are made.” He is no longer teaching the course on Vietnam. But the jury is still out! Some fellow historians, academicians and Vietnam veterans refuse to let him off the hook.

Others are willing to let it lapse, like his editor, Ashbel Green of Knopf Publishing, who gave Ellis a pass by stating, “We intend to keep publishing him, as a new book is under discussion, and it is safely in the 18th century. I don’t know of anyone who hasn’t exaggerated his past in some fashion, not perhaps as much as he did. It seems to be a part of human nature that ‘the older a man gets, the faster he ran as a boy.’”

But again, this editor leaves out a vital thought regarding the older man. Did he ever run as a boy?

Why is sticking with the facts, and “nothing but the truth,” so essential today, be it at home, in the church or at school? Perhaps reporters Rutten and Smith’s interview with author Jim Sleeper, who teaches at Yale, puts it all in earnest perspective to today’s needs for truth. “More than mere conveyors of facts, college professors are mentors teaching students how to behave in the real world. Today’s students have come of age in an era of relativism. They watch President Clinton grow more popular after his own public deceptions and learn history through fictional films such as *Pearl Harbor* and *JFK*. Precisely at times such as these,” he said, “students need good teachers to help them sort fact from fiction.”

### **What have you done to us?**

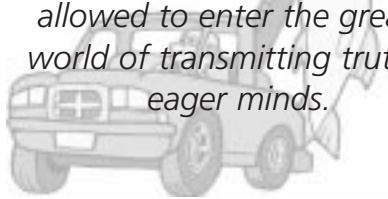
Even some of the noblest characters have succumbed to the temptation to “color the truth.” Long ago and far away Abraham told “a whopper” to Abimelech, the king of Gerar. It seems that the king’s eye had fallen on Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and he thought of taking her into his harem. We find Abraham, being scared of personal harm, altering the facts by stating, “She is my sister” (Genesis 20:2). Students of the Bible will know this was a partial truth as Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister. As a matter of fact, he had this lie “down pat,” as he had used it once before in a similar situation in Egypt.

But God Himself stepped in to shape human history. He came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” But Abimelech came back with, “Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?” Abimelech assured God that he and Sarah had not been intimate. Nonetheless, God warned the king, “If you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.” When the king came to himself, he confronted Abraham head on: “What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.” The tables were turned, as the man who should have been the teacher had to be reminded by the student what really is important in life’s ABCs.

If the “father of the faithful” could fall prey to this mistake, shouldn’t we all be on our guard?

Perhaps Leroy Brownlow, in his book *Today Is Mine*, describes the ultimate futility of falsehoods under his entry for July 20 titled, “A Dressed Up Lie.” He writes, “Dressing up a lie just makes a bigger lie. The ornaments add to the wrong, and make it more attractive but more hurtful, for it’s more deceptive. Then, why do men lie? Why do they clothe falsehood

*The distortions of fact—the fish stories—need to be left at the dock, and never allowed to enter the greater world of transmitting truth to eager minds.*



with more fabrications? They blindly think perversion will do more for them than truth. It is their crafty manner of acquisition. Their cunning form of equalization. Their supposed help in time of trouble. But a lie can never be whitened by simply clothing it in white. A lie is a lie, dress it or undress it as you will."

Let's face it, we've all had our hands in the cookie jar at one time or another. "What are you doing in there?" "Oh, I lost something." Let's admit that all of us can learn a lesson from Ellis' error before sharing the next story of our lives which is polished with subtle or not so subtle embellishments.

The fact stands that Ellis got caught—got stuck—and the chocolate chips melted all over him. From his example, we need to realize that even when the truth may cost us, lying is much more expensive. It can morally bankrupt us, as well as cause possible harm to others whose lives rely on us. Trust lost is trust twice as hard to regain and three times as long in the making. It makes for a long life—for you and others. The best thing about honesty is that when you tell the truth you don't have to remember what you said. The story comes out the same every time.

### Without wax

Long ago in Roman times, statues would be transported over the Roman roads by carts drawn by oxen. As good as those famous roads were for their time, those statues would take more than a few bumps. In fact, often they would crack, and the fissures and holes would later be sealed with wax. Every so often, a statue would come through an arduous journey totally intact without one patch of wax. The statue was labeled as being *sincere*, which is Latin for "without wax."

Words and events are like statues. Often, they have to be carried long distances over the path of time. While the Romans had to measure their steps, we have to measure our hearts to make sure there are no holes in our stories that need patching up. Rightful attention to the true facts, and nothing but the facts, the first time around, is always more effective than the most sincere apology after the fact.

Isaiah 30:20-21 describes a future society under the direct rule of Jesus Christ, right here on earth, which will be an incredible learning environment. The whole world is going to go back to school to learn about God and His ways. It tells us, "But your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'"

God is basically telling us we will be able to trust our teachers, see them for what they are and trust their teachings. But we don't have to wait till that millennial time to read from one of their lesson plans. It's already here and found in Proverbs 12:17-19. "He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health. The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment."

Allow me to share a parting thought to consider, as I bring us full cycle with my opening line about the big fish that got away. So, how big was that fish? Only you can answer that, but there is one thing I can tell you for sure—there is none of that other kind of fishin' allowed in this school. ❖

"IN BRIEF" (Continued from page 13)

Justin Yu, a Chinese journalist working in New York, points out that the regime uses sports to puff itself up before its own people, much as the Eastern-bloc countries used to do. The Olympics, according to Yu, are strictly "a tool for Beijing to use." History may be repeating itself, and perhaps we could find the world in very great turmoil in the last half of this decade with a China viewed far differently than it is now.

Sources: USNews.com; *National Review*.

## Fear of Global Recession Strengthened by New Report

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan recently gave his unusually gloomy testimony before the House Financial Services Committee concerning the U.S. economy. His prescription to reverse the downturn in the American economy with cuts in the interest rates has failed to stimulate a recovery. It is his hope that further reductions in interest rates, tax cuts and falling prices in the energy sector will arrest the downward trend by the end of this year or the next.

As the United States deals with its own financial woes, new reports of economic trouble from Singapore to Germany cause some analysts to question whether the growing gloom could push the fragile global economy into a full-blown recession. Recently, Singapore became the first Southeast Asian country to officially slip into recession. Economic experts suspect that other Southeast Asian nations will echo that trend when they release their second-quarter data. Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines already have reported that their economies shrank in the first quarter.

Dismal economic conditions now reach into most corners of the globe. The U.S. slump has spread to Europe. Japan is teetering on the brink of recession, emerging economies such as Argentina and Turkey are at risk and a bear market in equities is showing little sign of rapid recovery.

The latest batch of wearisome figures comes as financial trouble is rippling through several emerging nations and raising the possibility of a worldwide economic epidemic. Currencies in Central Europe and the South African rand have suffered in recent days from crises in Argentina and Turkey. Events in Argentina have also taken a heavy toll on neighboring Brazil.

As the eight heads of the world's rich nations gathered in Genoa, Italy, for their annual summit meeting, economists and bankers feared that a global leadership vacuum threatens to delay any swift recovery for an international economy already tilting toward recession. "I think the world economy and world markets are crying out for leadership, but until now the only leadership has been provided by Alan Greenspan, and he is running out of ammunition," said Avinash Persaud, senior economist at State Street.

Sources: *International Herald Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*.

Contributors: Tom Kirkpatrick, Cecil E. Maranville and L. Jim Tuck



# This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21  
by Robin Webber

## No Fishin' Allowed in School

All of us have been confronted with the tall tale of “the big fish that got away.” Our usual response is, “How big did you say he was?” The teller of the tale stretches out his arms as far as they can go. “C’mon, nothing in this lake is that big,” retorts the questioner. The storyteller grudgingly admits, “Well, now that you mention it, maybe it was about this big,” as his outstretched arms shrink to a more believable length. We can all laugh, because we have all been there, perhaps on both sides of the story. But to take the thought a step further, the questioner is assuming that the teller of the tale actually went fishing.

Yes, a lot of leeway with measurements is offered when it comes to fishing. The yarns and tales of the “almost” are part and parcel of “falling for it hook, line and sinker.” But such distortions of fact need to be left at the dock, and never be allowed to enter the greater world of transmitting truth to new and eager minds.

Recently, a Pulitzer Prize winner named Joseph J. Ellis was called into question regarding the tall tales he spun while teaching a course on Vietnam at Mount Holyoke College, where he is the Ford Foundation professor of history. His story is a painful one, but it needs retelling. It reminds each of us, be we parents, teachers, ministers or writers, who project knowledge and understanding to an eager audience, that we must get the story right the first time.

Simply put, unlike the comical scenario of the “shrinking fish,” we may not be given another opportunity to get the size of the story right. Mixing history with lies can mess up people’s minds. This story is about telling the truth the first time around.

It’s a lesson brought out through two pieces that appeared

in *The Los Angeles Times* on June 22, 2001. One was an article titled, “For Historian’s Students, a Hard Lesson on Lying” by *Times* staff writers Lynn Smith and Tim Rutten. The other was an op-ed piece penned by John Balzar titled, “A Lie of the Mind,” that appeared in the Opinion section. How important is telling the truth? Let’s find out.

### “Then he was unmasked”

Joseph E. Ellis is not just anybody. He is a “somebody.” As Smith and Rutten point out, Ellis was a popular professor at Mount Holyoke College who won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in history for his book *Founding Brothers*. As Balzar brings out in his piece, Ellis, who also won the National Book Award for his earlier book *American Sphinx*, was a pathfinder among a contrary group of historians. With the skills of a scholar, the compression ability of a journalist, the story telling power of an entertainer, he broadened our vision by returning our attention “to the greatest generation of political talent in American history. He reminded us of the noble calling of democracy.”

Seemingly, Ellis had the ability and the credentials to refocus history to the very basics of reasonable interpretation of major historical patterns rather than be swept aside by the current fascinations over minute details of secondary movements or the personal intrigues of historical characters.

As Balzar puts it, “then he was unmasked.” He broke a basic premise set forth by the Roman philosopher Cicero: “The first law of a historian is that he shall never dare utter an untruth.” This was done in a class that Ellis was teaching on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

As Smith and Rutten point out, “Ellis set his own trap  
(See “FISHING,” page 14)