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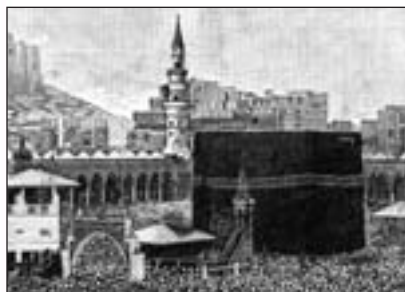


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# America's Growing Isolation

*America's commitment to the War on Terror is increasingly in conflict with European and Asian interests.*

by Melvin Rhodes

**T**he first major rift between the United States and its European allies over the War on Terror followed George W. Bush's State of the Union address, in which he described Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil." The speech has alarmed leaders throughout Asia as well as Europe while opening the president up to much criticism at home.

Mid-February saw the president visiting Japan, South Korea and China, all critical of the speech. South Koreans in particular were angry, thousands demonstrating in the streets, concerned that improving relations with their northern neighbor might be set back irreparably.

"EU officials warned of a rift opening up between Europe and the U.S. wider than at any time for half a century," wrote *The Guardian* newspaper Feb. 9. Chris Patten, the EU commissioner for international relations, told *The Guardian*, "It is time European governments spoke up and stopped Washington before it goes into 'unilateralist overdrive.'"

At the same time, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin warned the United States not to give in to "the strong temptation of unilateralism." He criticized the "axis of evil" speech as "unhelpful," saying that he found it hard to believe "that's a thought-through policy."

Closer to home, analysts could not understand why the president singled out these three nations as being the most evil. There are plenty of others

who also give their support to terrorists. At the same time, the speech may result in the three nations drawing closer together, particularly neighbors Iran and Iraq, traditional enemies who fought a long and bitter war in the 1980s. Iran's reformist government, until the speech struggling to build ties with the West, may now yield more to the religious leaders who came to power with Ayatollah Khomeini in an anti-American revolution that overthrew the shah of Iran 23 years ago.

It is clear that the word "axis" was the wrong word to use. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1968 Edition) defines an "axis" as, "an alliance of two or more nations to coordinate their foreign and military policies." Further, it gives as an example the Axis powers in World War II: "Germany, Italy and Japan, often with Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania." There is no alliance between Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Inevitably, Mr. Bush's use of the term "axis" will only lead to accusations that his administration does not know what it's doing if his advisers and speech writers know so little about fairly recent history.

It should also be pointed out that, while many see the speech as a continuation of the War on Terror that has dominated America's foreign policy since Sept. 11, the three countries threatened had no known direct link with the al Qaeda network. Ironically, two key U.S. allies did—notably

(See "ISOLATION," page 3)



## A Dangerous World

The world continues to be a very dangerous place. Bomb-laden Palestinians turn themselves into walking missiles that kill Israeli citizens. Hindus rage against Muslims in India as both sides argue over “holy ground.” And America pushes ahead in its War on Terror, trying to preempt the next big attack. Those who seethe with anger toward America will not cease and desist from their goal of complete destruction of the world’s most powerful nation. While some embrace a cult of death, those who cherish life seek to preserve liberty and freedom. Where will it end?

In this issue of *World News and Prophecy* we examine the question: “Is Islam a violent religion?” There is no question that Islam has had a violent past, just as most world religions have. American opinion overwhelmingly sees Islam as a religion that poses a threat to Western values. Polls show a deep divide between the Western and Islamic worlds over who is right and just in the present conflict.

But is one form of war and aggression any more just than another? Is the killing of Protestant Christians by Catholic Christians in Northern Ireland any more “just” than the killing of Christians by Muslims in Sudan? Statesmen and religious believers debate even these questions.

Another article looks closely at the effect of President Bush’s references to an “axis of evil” between Iraq, Iran and North Korea. There is no doubt those nations wish America harm. But as the article shows, even this single-minded focus of American policy causes concern among nations which face the same threat as America. Straight talk has a way of clarifying the issues.

*World News and Prophecy* seeks to lay the biblical perspective over the news and events of our world. To do so, you must rise above the partisan political debate, the emotional issues of religion and even the national interests that dominate the discussion. We seek to frame the issues in the context of the Bible, and show God’s point of view, which is always different from mankind’s. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). In the end, God’s view of the world is the only view that is important.

This is the season of the Passover when many faithful will remember the death of Christ for the forgiveness of all human sin. That death is the true source of reconciliation for a divided and fractured world. Christ’s death and resurrection is the basis of hope, the only hope man has for a peaceful future. As the Lamb slain before the foundation of this present evil world, His sacrificial life reminds us of the standard which we strive to copy.

This publication seeks to give understanding based on a biblical worldview. It represents no single national, political or ethnic interest. We represent the universal values of “He [who] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Doing so may not always please every reader and is a constant challenge for our multinational staff. We have no ax to grind, either of the left or the right. We look ultimately to the righteous reign of Jesus Christ and the saints in the Kingdom of God.

—Darris McNeely

Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available by May 8 on the Internet at:

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**“ISOLATION,”** (Continued from page 1)

Saudi Arabia, from whence came most of the terrorists responsible for Sept. 11, and Pakistan, which openly supported the Taliban. Many, perhaps even most, citizens of both countries openly express support for Osama bin Laden, who is now rumored to be moving back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Saudi government continues to give financial support to Islamic schools around the world, providing imams (religious teachers) from the extreme Wahhabi sect, and even backing schools that train young people to be suicide bombers.

### Contrasting political systems

American presidents start their terms of office with both a great advantage and a big disadvantage in relations with the rest of the world. The advantage is that the United States remains the world's greatest military power, which means that nations in the Western world are inclined to look to the U.S. president for leadership. This usually offsets the great disadvantage—a lack of experience in national and international affairs.

Americans have always been proud of the claim that “anybody can become president.” This has largely been true, although in recent times, only those with great amounts of money behind them can possibly run for office. But most of the men who have made it to the White House in recent decades were new to Washington. They had little or no experience in national or international politics. This is in stark contrast to European and Asian leaders who have had to work their way up through government until achieving the highest political office in their native lands, along the way earning the respect and support of their colleagues.

At the same time, European and Asian countries have stronger central governments, which means the executive has greater power within the nation than does the president of the United States. The U.S. president's role as “leader of the free world” is owed to America's military domination and the willingness of other leaders to

defer to him. The Western alliance has endured for over 50 years because it has been in the interests of all members to keep it going. It has already lasted longer than any other international alliance in history. It will only continue as long as members want it to do so.

The contrast between these different political systems means that foreign leaders will often look down upon an American president until he proves himself. Most presidents are largely ignorant of the rest of the world when they assume office. If they do not have good advisers around them, they can easily make mistakes.

The “axis of evil” speech seems to have been one such example. Obviously, something went wrong. There isn't any alliance—no axis—between the three nations mentioned, nor is there likely to be. Additionally, these nations and their citizens were not involved in the events of Sept. 11 when peoples from other countries clearly were. It is also true that other, more evil nations were not mentioned. But the biggest concern among America's allies will be that the United States is about to go it alone in attacking these countries, risking a widening conflict that could easily be detrimental to European and Asian nations.

The harsh reality is that America's commitment to the War on Terror is increasingly in conflict with European and Asian interests. Supportive of the United States during the immediate weeks and months after Sept. 11, U.S. allies clearly feel that it's time to move on. America has indeed “become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28:25), one of the consequences of turning away from God.

The War on Terror started out as a clear case of good vs. evil. Now it has become complicated by conflicting national and regional self-interests.

After Sept. 11 America became the first NATO country to invoke Clause 5, an action that inevitably led to a change in perceptions of the alliance on each side of the Atlantic. Clause 5 of the NATO charter was originally designed in the late 1940s to enable any nation under attack by a non-

NATO partner (expected to be the Soviet Union) to call on other nations for military help. The intent was to protect small European nations from the Soviet Union. No country ever had to ask for help until the United States requested aid following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. This was totally unexpected. Complicating matters even more, the enemy is not a nation, but rather a terrorist movement whose anti-Americanism is often linked to America's support of Israel. Here there is clearly a difference of opinion—while most Americans support Israel, many Europeans are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The European Union is a big financial backer of the Palestinian Authority and its leader, Yasser Arafat.

As time goes on and memories of Sept. 11 fade, everything seems to be getting more complicated. Television news coverage isn't helping either. The French described President Bush's speech as “simplistic.” Sadly, some television news programs in the United States are oversimplifying the complexities of the international situation, at the same time stirring up national sentiment to put pressure on President Bush to do something about the “axis of evil.”

Asian allies are also feeling threatened. Following the gruesome murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl and reports that Osama bin Laden is hiding in Pakistan, there has been much criticism of the Islamic nation's failures in these two areas. There seems to be little realization of the extremely difficult situation Pakistan's president is in—few people in his country support his allegiance with the United States. If he is pushed too far, his government could fall, leaving the United States devoid of a key ally bordering Afghanistan.

It is becoming apparent that the longer the War on Terror continues, the more likelihood there is of a serious rift between the allies. Conflicting national and regional interests will diverge. If the United States is not more careful in its diplomacy, this could result in America's increased isolation from the rest of the world. ❖

# Debate About Islam Continues: Is It a Religion of Peace?

*Muslim officials have declared their peaceful intentions through messages at their annual hajj. U.S. President Bush and British Prime Minister Blair have publicly praised Islam as a religion of peace. Others challenge that assertion, as the debate goes on.*

by Cecil E. Maranville

*Pat Robertson generalized, "The Koran makes it very clear, if you see an infidel, you are to kill him." A firestorm of protest erupted. Can we take an objective look at what the Koran really says?*

**M**uslims' annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which ended Feb. 24, provided Saudi Arabia with an opportunity to distance Islam from the black deeds of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda Islamic militants. King Fahd sought to strike the desired tone in his address to the pilgrims: "The Muslim in this universe has a positive role to play in endeavors to fulfill it. The objective of this role is to work for the good of mankind and protect the means of life and achieve stability" ("Defending Islam Was the Theme of Hajj" by Hamca Hendawi, AP, Feb. 24, 2002).

The pilgrimage is required of each able-bodied Muslim male at least once in his life; estimates indicate over 2 million visited Saudi Arabia in 2002's *hajj*. The world focused upon the words of a sermon given there by Sheik Abdul-Aziz bin Al al-Sheik, Saudi Arabia's top cleric. "How can terrorism fit in a religion that gives peace precedence over war?" asked the sheik. He continued, "How could terrorism fit in a faith that calls for the respective agreements, the offering of pacts?"

Hendawi described the collective messages as a mix of defensiveness and defiance, noting that the Saudi kingdom feels it is under a cloud of suspicion for a presumed guilt-by-association role in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. (Of the 19 airline hijackers, 15 were from Saudi Arabia, as is bin Laden himself.)

The *hajj* ended with a symbolic "stoning of the devil" in which hundreds of thousands of pilgrims threw pebbles at three stone pillars in the valley of Mina, outside Mecca.

## Harsh words against Islam

Coincidental with the *hajj*, a different type of "stoning the devil" was taking place in the

United States. Television evangelist Pat Robertson artlessly disputed the soothing comments of Muslims, along with those of Britain's and America's top politicians, about Islam being a religion of peace on his Feb. 22 Christian Broadcasting Network's *The 700 Club*.

Making no allowances for Muslims who do not share his interpretation of the Koran, Robertson generalized, "The Koran makes it very clear, if you see an infidel, you are to kill him."

Reporting on Robertson's biting analysis, Alan Cooperman of *The Washington Post* quotes Robertson's conclusion—that Islam "is not a peaceful religion that wants to coexist. They want to coexist until they can control, dominate and then if need be destroy" ("Robertson Calls Islam a Religion of Violence, Mayhem," Feb. 22, 2002).

A firestorm of protest erupted from the American Muslim community, as well as from numerous pundits. In addition to the perceived gracelessness of his current comments, Robertson is tainted by an off-the-cuff commentary he made last September on the same program with associated TV preacher, Jerry Falwell. Within days of the attacks suffered by New York City and Washington, D.C., the two offered opinions on why they believed God's protection had been removed from the United States, citing examples of sins and sinners. They came across as judgmental, callous and self-righteous to many.

Ellis Henican of *Newsday* rolled Robertson's most recent statements about Islam in with the inelegant remarks the two ministers made in mid-September. "These bizarre remarks were met with the expected

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eye rolling. And, eventually, Falwell and Robertson sort of apologized. But you don't think they learned anything from their brush with utter stupidity? I can promise you Robertson didn't. Because here he was again this past week, on the very same TV show, talking terror again. This time, he didn't limit his blame to the actual suicide hijackers or to the terror groups that backed them. Or even to the governments that trained and financed the terror groups. He took what we might call a broader approach. He blamed the whole Islamic world. He blamed Islam itself" ("Pat Robertson Is at It Again," Feb. 24, 2002).

CBN did not apologize this time. Instead, the network charged *The Washington Post* with inaccurate reporting, failing, for example, to spotlight "the bulk of Arab Muslim opinion that supports terrorist actions as an expression of their faith." CBN's defense included anecdotes from interviews conducted by an Arabic-speaking CBN reporter at the recent annual convention of American-Muslims.

The reporter related opinions from a Muslim-American attending the conference, an Egyptian Muslim and an Algerian Muslim—also presumably attending the conference, although CBN's statement was unclear on this point. The composite of the interviews is a defense of terrorism and sharp criticism of American foreign policy, but the identities of the speakers weren't given other than what is noted above. Because such anecdotal evidence can't be confirmed, it keeps the debate in the realm of arguing over opinions and hearsay.

### Anti-Semitic element to Muslim message

We should stick to the facts, and let them speak for themselves.

The Muslim faithful heard many other sermons during this year's *hajj*, besides the one quoted above. While clerics generally followed the orders of the royal family to stay away from politics, Sheik Osama Abdullah Khayyat preached to the faithful: "God give your glory but to Islam and Moslems. The Lord . . . defeat *those tyrant Jews*" ("No 'Sermon on the Mount' From



*The hajj ended with a symbolic "stoning of the devil" in which hundreds of thousands of pilgrims threw pebbles at three stone pillars in the valley of Mina, outside Mecca (Reuters/Bazuki Muhammad)*

Mecca" by Don Feder, *Creators Syndicate*, Feb. 25, 2002, emphasis added).

Words expressed by at least one Saudi official before the *hajj* weren't as carefully crafted for international consumption. An official of the Saudi ministry of Islamic affairs, Abdullah bin Matruk al-Haddal, called Jews "brothers of the apes and pigs." He declared that the World Trade Center attack was the product of a Jewish-Zionist conspiracy and advised the United States to "get rid of the Jews" (Feder, p. 1).

A recent Zogby poll of Muslim-Americans shows that the community doesn't support the current U.S. military action. Seven percent endorsed the use of military force in the war against terrorism, while 67 percent chose "changing America's Middle East policy" as the best way to do the job, in their opinion. Clearly, that means that they believe the United States should withdraw from supporting Israel.

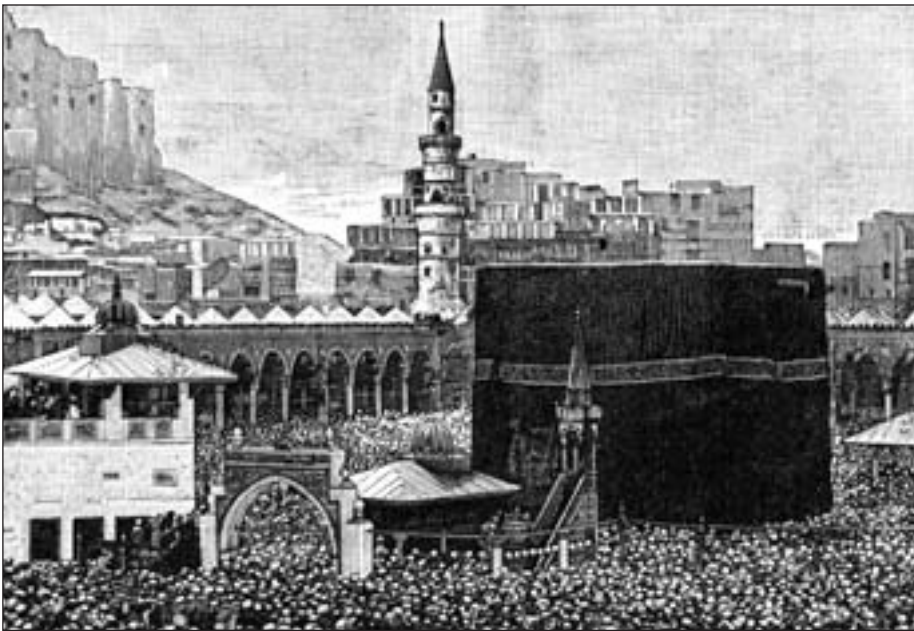
### What the Koran says

Are there statements in the Koran

that could be taken as incitements to violence? Let's take an objective look at the Koran, allowing it to speak for itself instead of debating personal opinions. The following are quotes from the Koran, as translated by Yusuf Ali (<http://db.islam.org:81/Quran/FMPro>, emphasis added).

"Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): 'I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instil [sic] terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: *smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them.*' Say to the Unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from Unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them) . . . And *fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether* and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do" ("Spoils of War," 12, 39).

"But when the forbidden months are past, then *fight and slay the Pagans*



An artist's conception of the hajj in Mecca

wherever ye find them, an[d] seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)" ("The Repentance," 5).

"Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority: their abode will be the Fire: And evil is the home of the wrong-doers!" ("The Family of Imran," 151.)

"When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers, for fear the Unbelievers May attack you: For the Unbelievers are unto you open enemies . . . For the Unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment" ("Women," 101-102).

These passages certainly have a violent tone and seem to direct the faithful to make war on, mutilate and kill unbelievers.

One might argue that it's like

### Correction

The last line of the article on page 6 of the February issue was inadvertently missing. It should have said: (2 Thessalonians 2:15-17). We regret the error.

Christians have taken selected verses out of the Bible to justify opinions that the Bible as a whole does not endorse. Again, to keep from merely debating over words, let's ask and answer this fair question: How are such passages generally interpreted by teachers of Islam?

### An Islamic journalist speaks out

Amir Taheri, an Iranian journalist and author, is the editor of the Paris-based *Politique Internationale (International Politics)*. He is also a Muslim, meaning his words cannot be dismissed as those of an ultraconservative Christian or Jew with political prejudices. He wrote a startlingly frank editorial for the Internet edition of the *Wall Street Journal* last Oct. 27. (An important word of qualification: More moderate Muslim leaders do not always interpret the Koran in the manner mentioned below.)

"Al Queda did not materialize out of thin air. Nor have they been operating in a vacuum. Bin Laden belongs to a prominent Yemeni-Saudi family that makes much of its Islamic credentials. He began his militant career in 1984 as a fund-raiser for Afghans fighting the communist regime in Kabul in the name of Islam. He had offices in a dozen Muslim countries, none of

which regarded his activities as un-Islamic . . .

"Anyone familiar with text books in most Muslim countries would know the twisted view of the world they propagate and the hatred they promote. Anyone who follows the media in the Muslim world would know that the verbal version of the Sept. 11 attacks is almost daily fare. Go to the Internet and check the editorials of virtually any Muslim paper on Sept. 10 and see what they were saying about the West in general and the U.S. in particular. Anyone listening to a sermon in virtually any mosque, including many in the West, would be shocked by the vehemence of the anti-Western, especially anti-American, sentiments expressed.

"It is both dishonest and dangerous for Muslims to remain in a state of denial. And yet a state of denial is what we have . . .

"The Muslim world today is full of bigotry, fanaticism, hypocrisy and plain ignorance—all of which create a breeding ground for criminals like bin Laden. The principal victims of these criminals are Muslims, who were prevented from developing a modern political culture without which they cannot reform their societies and rebuild their economies."

These are powerful and sobering words, coming from a Muslim about his own faith.

### Not the means to the desired end

The present mix of defensiveness, suspicions, accusations and political papering over real differences isn't going to result in the harmonious world that most claim they would like to see, regardless of their religious persuasion. World peace will come, neither by proselytizing nor by persecuting, but rather through the intervention of the Creator God. Not surprisingly, based upon the chaos we see in today's world, *neither Christian nor Muslim* has realized the plan He has in mind.

Few can appreciate how different the Church Jesus built is from the mosques, temples and churches that dot the present-day's landscape. Do you know? Read our booklet, *The Church Jesus Built*. ❖

# The Last Battle for the British Empire

*Great Britain is presently sustaining a massive assault on its Anglo-Saxon legacy of empire and culture. The current conflict is wide-ranging on several fronts and British tradition is gradually losing out.*

by John Ross Schroeder

**D**ateline: London, England. As the European Union (EU) outlaws the British right to market their goods in pounds and ounces, *The Daily Express* headline of Feb. 19 read: "Europe Smashes 1000 Years of British Culture." Overstated? Perhaps, but once again the United Kingdom felt the heavy hand of Europe when the EU ruled that metric measurements, and *not* pounds and ounces, have to be shown in UK shops.

Since many Britons still do their calculations in pounds and ounces (as do I, as an American expatriate married to a British citizen), it seems to make good sense to also display wares marked in traditional Anglo-Saxon measurements. But whenever there is a conflict, European Union laws now appear to reign supreme.

## The remnants of empire

However, the EU is not the only enemy of British tradition. We oppose ourselves as well. As *The Scotland on Sunday* (Feb. 17, 2002) reports: "Talk is growing in Whitehall of decolonising [British spelling throughout] the dwindling remains of the British Empire." As I write, in defiance of Gibraltar's own wishes and many who reside in the United Kingdom itself, the British government continues negotiations with Spain about joint rulership. (*World News and Prophecy* covered the essentials of the Gibraltar dilemma in the December 2001 issue.)

The official government line reflects a commitment to retain the status quo in all remaining colonies unless or until they themselves seek to end the imperial relationship. However, according to *The Scotland on Sunday* feature article, "In Whitehall, there are those who find the vestiges of colonial

rule distasteful to the 21st century and who talk of 'micro-decolonisation.'"

Questions are being asked like, if Gibraltar is subject to negotiation, why not



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*If Gibraltar is subject to negotiation, why not other colonies, maybe even the Falklands, which Great Britain fought Argentina to defend in 1982?*

the other colonies? What about Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Indian ocean territories, the British Virgin Islands, the Caymans, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, South Georgia (near Argentina), the Turks and Caicos Islands and maybe even the Falklands? However, since the recent giving over of Hong Kong to China, the number of people remaining under the U.K. colonial administration has dwindled to around 125,000. Inevitably, such a limited number brings to the fore the administrative costs of maintaining colonial rule.

Although these remnant small islands of imperial rule are at best only fleeting shadows of the old British Empire, those who understand the true origins of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples blanch at the very thought of losing them to strictly financial considerations, careless neglect or a cavalier attitude. Yet, according to *The Scotland on Sunday*

*Although these remnant small islands of imperial rule are at best only fleeting shadows of the old British Empire, those who understand the true origins of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples blanch at the very thought of losing them . . .*

feature, “If these relics would just go away of their own accord, the government would be quite happy with that.”

### Pride in Anglo-Saxon achievement

It should go without saying that racism is inherently wrong. The apostle Peter perceived that “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). His salvation is freely available to members of every race and color who work righteousness

As *Daily Mail* columnist Simon Heffer clearly states, “As Labour stifles more British history lessons . . . there has been more damage done to children by ‘educationists’ in the past 20 or 30 years than by any other malevolent force” (Feb. 5, 2002). In his feature article, Mr. Heffer extolled the past achievements of many Britons in many fields of endeavor, comparing them to the current scene by saying: “Now by contrast, we search in vain for great

Of course, this traditional legacy was very far from perfect and the current counter-cultural movement has not been slow to point out its major flaws. There is usually another side to every story, but even obvious faults should not blind us to the beneficial gifts that the Anglo-American way of life has contributed to mankind.

### The needed historical perspective

Without an understanding of the origins of our Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples and their God-given mission in this modern age, it is almost impossible to properly evaluate present national trends in Britain, America and the world in general. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the British Israel Federation sought to bring this basic message to these isles—informing as much of the U.K. populace as would listen about our biblical origins.

Also during much of the last century, this same basic message was conveyed to the Anglo-American and British Commonwealth nations through the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986). Though now out of print, his articles, booklets and books concerning the ancient national origins of our English-speaking peoples informed his generation. In their time, his works were read by millions.

Today the United Church of God has picked up the baton and published a comprehensive 80-page, full-color brochure explaining the startling significance of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples. The title is *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. The working manuscript was not published in haste, but many ministers and staff writers labored over the text for several years. Facts were checked and rechecked and the copy reedited many times before final publication.

You can have a copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* without charge. Lacking this essential background knowledge, one simply cannot comprehend the vital significance of current world news and trends, not to mention understanding the major prophecies of the Bible itself. Please request your free copy today. ❖



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*“At its territorial zenith, shortly after the end of the First World War, it [the British Empire] consisted of naval stations and military bases extending from Gibraltar to Hong Kong, the four great dominions of settlement [Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Union of South Africa], the Indian Empire that occupied an entire subcontinent, the crown colonies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and the League of Nations Mandates, especially in the Middle East” (David Cannadine, Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire, 2001, p. 3).*

(verse 35), are truly repentant and submit to being baptized into His family (Acts 2:37-39; Galatians 3:28-29).

However, there is nothing amiss in respecting the legacy that our common Anglo-Saxon-Celtic culture has given to the world. Regrettably, in recent years, a strong counter-cultural movement in Britain has become so pronounced that many people have bought into a distorted view of our history.

achievements in art and literature. Our culture, rooted in celebrity and superficiality, is now an empty vessel.”

He summed up the benign effects of our Anglo-Saxon culture and legacy by writing: “It taught us about a mindset and way of life, and it instilled basic values of decency and respect for service and sacrifice that are the basis of a civilized society. Yes, it made us tolerant too.”

# Generations in Crisis

*The watershed events of Sept. 11, 2001, changed our world. But what specific changes should we be noticing?*

by Doug Johnson

Offer the opinion that our world will never be the same after Sept. 11, 2001, and you won't find much disagreement. But it's one thing to note that nothing will ever be the same again, and quite another to delineate just how things have changed. And perhaps the hardest task of all would be to project the impact of these events forward into the months and years just ahead of us.

Christ told His disciples, "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" (Luke 21:36). The context of this familiar passage shows that it ties in directly to our individual spiritual condition—which becomes critically important in times of crisis. Where do we stand with God?

The Savior of all mankind said something else about noticing events, and He said it to a group of His greatest critics, the Pharisees and Sadducees. It's recorded in the first few verses of Matthew 16. They were apparently quite knowledgeable about local weather patterns, and could tell if a storm was brewing or if calm conditions were to be expected. But they were abysmally ignorant of some far more important signs. "Hypocrites!" He charged, "You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times" (verse 3).

That's where we come in. Are we able to discern the signs of the times in which we live? God shows the basic framework of the future by way of biblical prophecy, and as readers of this publication know very well, it leads up to the return of Jesus Christ. While we can't know the "day and hour" (Matthew 24:36) of that momentous event, we can certainly observe the changes in our world and strive to make sense of them by looking at the pattern God shows in His Word. And don't forget that all-important context of Luke 21—what's our spiritual condition?

## See the future through the past

One of the things we can do is look for patterns from the past. Solomon noted, "That which has been is what will be, that which is



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*The Japanese surrender on Sept. 2, 1945, marked a great turning point*

done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Earlier, he stated, "One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever" (verse 4). And then there are these ominous but oddly comforting words: "That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past" (3:15).

Among today's foremost scholars and authorities on generational trends are William Strauss and Neil Howe. They have authored numerous books and articles and have their own Web site that supplies up-to-date information related to their theories ([www.fourthturning.com](http://www.fourthturning.com)). They see recurring patterns in the history of the Anglo-American peoples—in fact, the passage from Ecclesiastes 3:15 is quoted on the dedication page of their 1997 book *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy* (Broadway Books, New York).

Strauss' and Howe's basic premise is that Anglo-American history shows four distinct generational types that have repeated, with one exception, for more than 500 years. They refer to these four types as Prophet, Nomad, Hero and Artist. They also posit that the same history shows a four-cycle repeating pattern, which they label the seasons of history—spring, sum-

*Strauss' and Howe's basic premise is that Anglo-American history shows four distinct generational types that have repeated, with one exception, for more than 500 years.*

mer, fall and winter. These same seasons can also be called turnings, each with its own historical “mood.”

### **“The seasons of history”**

The first turning, or spring, is a “High.” Life seems to be working. The nation is prospering, expanding. No serious threats appear to endanger the foreseeable future. The period from the end of World War II into the early 1960s comprises what Strauss and Howe call “The Great American High.”

The second turning (summer) is an “Awakening.” It’s a time of growing unease, with the sense that while the physical may be abundant, the spiritual is empty. People search—sometimes for they know not what. The so-called “Consciousness Revolution” from President Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963 through the early 1980s seems to qualify for this designation.

The third turning (fall) is an “Unraveling.” Society feels like it is coming apart at the seams, even while the economy booms. The “Culture Wars” period from the mid-1980s until . . . well, at least until Sept. 10, 2001, qualifies.

That’s the reason for this article. Former presidential advisor Bill Galston called Sept. 11 “the day the 90s truly ended” (“On Politics” by Gloria Berger, *U.S. News and World Report*, Sept. 24, 2001). That sounds scary! The pattern described earlier calls for another season of history to appear fairly soon—winter, the “fourth turning,” described as a “Crisis.” Is that where we are now? Is that the significance of Sept. 11? Is the public mood shifting again? Are we entering what Strauss and Howe call “the fourth turning”—a new crisis period of history? And of course, the inevitable question from students of the Bible—is it the crisis at the close, the one that will culminate in the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to rule all nations?

Clearly these are important questions to ask. Historically the pattern has been for some kind of “spark” or catalyst to propel the world into another mood, another time, another season. According to the Strauss and Howe model, the last “Fourth Turning” was the Great Depression and World War II. The

“spark” was the stock market crash in October 1929. The crisis then ensued, and lasted for 16 years, until Japan’s surrender on the deck of the USS *Missouri* on Sept. 2, 1945.

### **Terrorist attack could spark major shift**

Was the terrorist attack just such a “spark” or catalyst? In an article posted to their Web site on Sept. 13, 2001, William Strauss and Neil Howe wrote: “Was this terrorist attack a jarring ‘spark’ in history, of the sort we described [in their book, *The Fourth Turning*], substantial enough to catalyze a crisis mood? Of course. Will it? That still is open to question—but it could.”

So how do we know? Again, let’s look to the past as a guide. From past crises, certain patterns emerge. As the same two authors wrote in an article that appeared in *USA Today* on Oct. 29, 2001: “It’s not yet possible to say whether this mood shift is permanent or merely suggestive of what’s poised to come soon—in other words, whether we’re in the Fourth Turning or in the last throes of the third.” They then give a checklist to be watching in the next year or so:

“Are leaders describing the problem in larger rather than smaller terms, proposing grand solutions, and seeking to destroy (and not just contain) enemies?”

“Is there a shift away from individualism (and civil liberties) toward community purpose (and national survival)?”

“Are the old ‘culture wars’ arguments beginning to feel lame, ridiculous, even dangerous to national unity?”

“Is the celebrity culture feeling newly irrelevant? Is youth fare becoming less gross and less violent?”

“Is immigration reversing? Are mobility and openness declining? Is there more nativism in our culture and less ‘globalism’ in our commerce?”

“Is there a new willingness to pay a human price to achieve a national purpose? Will we harness technology only to reduce casualties and inconvenience, or also to achieve a total and lasting victory?”

“Is each generation entering its new phase of life with a new attitude?”

There are many more complexities of

this theory that could be explored. For example, in what stage of life does each generational type find itself? In past “fourth turnings,” a Prophet generation (like the current “Baby Boomers”) witnessed its oldest members reaching their mid-60s as the crisis developed. By Strauss’ and Howe’s theory (slightly different from traditional reckoning), the oldest Boomers will be turning 59 in 2002. A little too soon? Perhaps. Again, we will simply have to watch and see what direction world events take.

### **Some factors history cannot tell us about**

And then there’s one of the most important signs of all—one that William Strauss and Neil Howe do not write about. Christ said in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

How much more work does God have for His servants to accomplish? It would seem there is still much to do. And yet Paul, quoting Isaiah in Romans 9:28, speaks of God’s making a “short work” on the earth. Surely that will be what all His children will say . . . in about a million years! But getting from here to there is sometimes a puzzle for us.

The bottom line is what it has always been: “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” (Luke 21:36). In other words, while we should keep our eyes on what’s happening around us, our most pressing need is to pay attention to what’s happening inside us. Are we close to God? Do we talk to Him regularly, glean personal instruction from His Word? Do we long for His Kingdom, and are we preparing for our part in it?

It can be profitable and helpful to see what professional historians have to say, based on their studies of the past. They can help point out what past patterns have been and help us look for repetitions in today’s world. But God’s timetable is the one that will eventually supply the answer and ultimately lead us out of the coming Crisis into His Kingdom. And His servants of all generations must be ready—in any season. ❖

# Disastrous Weather— Acts of God?

*Permitting God into the weather picture isn't fashionable. Nor do weather forecasters admit a divine hand might be at work behind the scenes.*

by Graemme Marshall

Insurance companies happily take our money for reasonable risks. But when it comes to the unpredictable or extreme, they're uninsurable "acts of God." Few people actually think that God's hand is literally involved. You'll be told there's been worse in the past, one can't claim every event is from God, it's El Niño's fault, cyclical climate change, global warming, depletion of the ozone layer or worldwide pollution. Scientists say this, so it must be true!

In part it *is* true. There have been worse calamities and we shouldn't attribute every tragedy to God. Yet there have also been profound changes in the weather, and the trend is continuing.

## **Increasingly "worst ever on record" describes weather**

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy has estimated weather disasters cost the United States approximately \$1 billion per week. And a look at the last four years of Atlantic Ocean hurricane activity reveals a period *more severe* than any on record, with scientists predicting more in the near future (*Encarta Reference Library*, "Weather"). Weather chaos isn't a new phenomenon; better record keeping and reporting make us more aware of it. But weather problems are getting worse.

While freezing rain is not an uncommon Canadian experience, the 1998 ice storm that hit eastern Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick was exceptional. In fact, it was the *worst* to hit Canada in recent memory. It brutalized one of the largest populated urbanized areas of North America, leaving more than four million people freezing in the dark for days.

Without doubt the storm directly affected more people than any previous weather event in Canadian history! One million households were without power; and prolonged freezing brought down millions of trees, 120,000 kilometers (75,000 miles) of power lines and telephone cables, 130 transmission towers (each worth

\$100,000) and 30,000 wooden utility poles (costing \$3,000 each). *What took human beings a half century to construct took nature a matter of hours to knock down.* Many Quebec maple syrup producers, who account for 70 percent of the world's supply, were ruined and their trees permanently destroyed.

Was El Niño to blame for the ice storm? Will there be more? Environment Canada's science advisor says freezing temperatures are likely to occur even more frequently in southern Canada in the future—a disturbing thought to consider. Yet too much ice and snow is contrasted in other areas by drought and no rain.

## **Is it unthinkable that disastrous weather can be of God?**

There are a few opening lines from Banjo Paterson's "Song of the Artesian Water" that give something to consider about upset weather. They hint, too, at the stubborn denial of God's hand at work in our lives. Banjo Paterson was an Australian poet of the late 1880s known for his ballads "Waltzing Matilda" and "The Man From Snowy River." "Song of the Artesian Water" begins: "Now the stock have started dying, for the Lord has sent a drought; but we're sick of prayers and Providence, we're going to do without; if the Lord won't send us water, oh, we'll get it from the devil: yes, we'll get it from the devil deeper down."

We drill bores and dig wells to get water from artesian sources. Only what happens when the water table drops and wells go dry? Writing from the 1880s, Banjo proposed an interesting alternative for our lack of water—that God hasn't sent it! Now that's a different perspective. You don't hear that possibility presented by weather forecasters. Do you suppose there could actually be reasons other than upset climate or El Niño why we have ice storms, hurricanes, brushfires, drought or floods?

Scripture shows the Creator of weather sometimes uses weather to get our attention.

*Weather disasters cost the United States approximately \$1 billion per week. And a look at the last four years of Atlantic Ocean hurricane activity reveals a period more severe than any on record, with scientists predicting more in the near future.*

In a specific example, the prophet Haggai records that God did, in fact, send blight, mildew and hail so the people might turn from wrong living and repent spiritually (2:17). It shows that if a nation or individual pleases God, He'll bless with good weather. Now this isn't to wrongly imply that every weather condition is some fearful warning from God. But unseasonable or destructive weather has been an instrument used to get people's attention.

Of course, if we see only global warming, climate change or El Niño, we won't get any message, will we? Yet if we'd only acknowledge our Creator, how simple it might be. The prophet Zechariah says it all with: "Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone" (10:1). That asking could be part of the solution is food for thought.

### Divine weather forecasts

During Old Testament times people were more conscious of God's hand in the weather. "He [God] called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread" (Psalm 105:16). This prediction came true for Pharaoh of ancient Egypt. Joseph relates, "God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land . . . And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:28-32). A later verse shows this famine was in all countries, with only Egypt adequately prepared to survive it.

Consider some further examples. Through the prophet Elijah, God sent a three-year drought (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1). Earlier in the reign of King David was another famine, the result of a sin of former King Saul (2 Samuel 21:1). It was up to David to set the matter right before God.

During the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54), a prophet named Agabus predicted "a great famine throughout all the world" (Acts 11:27-28).

How can we escape catastrophes such as these? Should we not reflect if we are guilty of God's displeasure, whether nationally or personally? After a 2001

destructive tornado, a man interviewed on TV said, "Maybe someone up there isn't happy with us."

In specific Bible references, the divine withholding of good weather is revealed. When God is displeased with peoples' sinful ways, He gains their attention by holding back rain. "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He *shut up the heavens* so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you" (Deuteronomy 11:16-17).

The prophet Amos recorded God's weather prophecy: "'I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city . . . I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me,' says the LORD" (4:7-9). It all sounds so much like today. These scriptures reveal God as the real source of good things, including our weather. If we are not pleasing Him, why shouldn't He powerfully get our attention?

King Solomon clearly linked disastrous life events with disobedience to God. You can read this connection in his prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:35-39).

### Can future weather trends be known?

Future weather trends can be known. Consider this. A single nuclear submarine is said to have more destructive firepower than all the combined explosives unleashed by all sides during World War II, including the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. What would be the horrendous impact upon our weather by simultaneous detonations of several nuclear devices? The effect upon air currents, vegetation and temperature levels would be enormous.

In the years ahead, there will be climatic upheavals as a result of unfolding prophesied biblical events. Some startling verses indicate even the delicate balance of our oceans will be seriously disrupted. This ruination of the sea's marine life could be punishment upon humans who are prepared to unleash such horrific

weaponry upon earth's fragile environment (Revelation 8:8-9). Our booklet, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, is enlightening reading. This is the short-term bad news. It's also reason for us to pause and ask: Should we assume all weather catastrophes are just random, isolated events?

### Good news about weather

God said to ancient Israel, "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will *give you the rain* for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled" (Deuteronomy 11:13-15). Rain in season. Every time, predictable. Can you imagine this as normal year after year?

The prophet Ezekiel records God saying of the future: "I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you" (36:29). This comes after a "new heart and a new spirit" moves people to keep God's ways (verse 26).

The long-range forecast is good: We are heading for centuries of predictable seasonal climate. It will be a time when God's law and government are restored to earth. Weather forecasters will have an easy job. Good weather will be on time. Rain will come when due. And sunshine aplenty for harvest will be the norm. Year in year out, decade by decade, predictable, sure, guaranteed. That is, as long as humans remain obedient to God's way of *give* instead of today's way of *get*.

Notice, however, that nations who fail to respond to Christ's leadership "shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:17). God will use adverse weather to encourage a voluntary surrender to His sovereignty.

For the present, prepare your life to feel the impact of further unseasonable, catastrophic weather, caused both by man and by the hand of God.

But also reassure yourself with the knowledge that each day is one day closer to when favorable seasonal weather will be a normal event for all people on earth. ❖

# In Brief...

## World News Review

### Can We Shrug Off Japan's Economic Crisis?

The fact that Japan's 12-year slump has fallen into a full-scale crisis is beginning to be realized by the world. The downward slide of various indicators in the second most powerful economy resembles the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

It was once thought that Japan could buy its way out of financial trouble. Many believed the heavy debt from the nation's terrible banking system and the actuarial deceit of its postal- and insurer-based retirement systems was just Japan owing itself. However, Japan's economy isn't like Russia or Argentina or Thailand. By comparison, Japan's massive economy is 42 times that of Thailand.

Kenneth Courtis, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs in Asia, said Japan represents the "largest economic crisis since the 1930s." Royoji Musha, strategist for Deutsche Bank said the "... world is heading for a once in-a-century economic crisis."

The Japanese are dedicated to saving their money, and have as much as \$11 trillion socked away. Unfortunately, Goldman Sachs estimates debts from household, corporate and government sectors to be around \$30 trillion, which is six times Japan's gross national product (GNP). The U.S. ratio of debt to GNP is 2 to 1.

Japan's situation is being made worse each month by an annual deflation rate of 4 percent. Deflation in the 1930s worsened the U.S. Depression. Already Japan's economic tsunami is being felt here in America. Toyotas are putting pressure on Detroit's prices. If Japan opted to devalue the yen, more pressure would fall on the United States and Europe.

Japan's four largest troubled banks alone have total claimed assets worth nearly \$4 trillion. It has been predicted for over a decade that Japan could panic under its heavy debt, causing a run on the banks as depositors withdraw their savings. If this happened, its banks could be forced to call in overseas loans and create an economic contraction that would sweep around the world.

It hasn't happened yet, and some economists don't think it will. However, reflect on the fall of Hokkaido Takushoku, a medium-size Japanese bank with assets worth \$80 billion. Its collapse expanded Thailand's economic problems into a regional crisis. Within a few months of the bank's failure, Japanese financial institutions pulled \$118 billion out of the worldwide economy. The brunt of the impact was felt by South Korea, but other parts of Asia and eastern Europe were also affected. The crisis severely

crippled South Korea, the world's 10th-largest economy.

Is anyone out there alert to the potential problem? Most of the press is more concerned with Enron or the economic woes of Argentina. There are some voices sounding an alarm, including Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill. Former Federal Reserve Board head Paul Volcker says he can't recall in his career a touchier global economic situation.

Source: *Forbes*.

### The Intensification of Global Instability

This is a time of destabilization in the world. Colombia has fallen deeper into the ranks of the unstable with the outbreak of civil war. Iran appears to be moving toward internal crisis, Venezuela's political problems are deepening and conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is entering a new phase.

This troubling spread of instability is rooted in the current structure of the international system. As the world's only superpower, the United States' inevitable obsession with al Qaeda has contributed to this process of destabilization.

Consider these recent events, in no particular order:

- Venezuela, a major oil producer, is experiencing a major political crisis over its president, Hugo Chavez.
- In Afghanistan, the CIA has issued a report warning that internal chaos is looming.
- In the Middle East, Palestinians have shifted tactics toward waging guerrilla war, and Israel is contemplating a major shift in its own strategy.
- In Iran, a majority of the Majlis has signed a petition demanding an investigation of U.S. charges that elements in Iran have aided al Qaeda members in escaping Afghanistan. This action creates a massive internal confrontation between forces around the Ayatollah Ali Khameni and those around President Mohammad Khatami, with a very uncertain outcome.
- What has emerged from U.S. President George W. Bush's meeting with the Japanese prime minister is that Japan has no idea how to manage its intensifying financial crisis. One of the world's major economies appears to be inching toward meltdown.

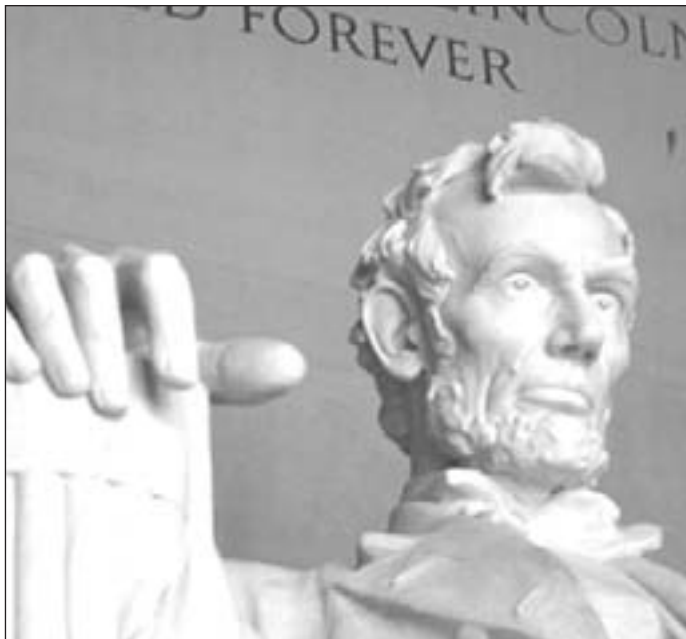
Add these to the U.S. war on al Qaeda, the India-Pakistan confrontation, the Iraqi crisis, the ongoing Balkans puzzle, the Argentine default and the rest. Clearly, the destabilization process is intensifying and spreading. The instability can be found on each continent and in all possible areas.

(See "NEWS," page 15)

**“FORGIVING,”** (Continued from page 16)

war rather than let it perish. And the war came.” Lincoln understood that men of ability had finally exhausted their imagination and in that moment of fatigue that besets nation builders, those baser passions rose to the surface.

But in an epic moment of full disclosure of what ailed all America, Lincoln was now willing to confront the ongoing enigma sewn into the fabric of the American experiment of liberty. It had been there from the beginning. It had been encapsulated in the American Constitution when a part of the nation’s populace was accorded only three-fifths status in being counted as human beings for state-by-state census counts.



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*Lincoln said, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds . . .”*

With all their genius expended, the early forefathers had chosen to postpone any thought of how to deal with the issue of slavery. They would mortgage their great-grandchildren’s peace for a temporary solution to procure tenuous union among 13 sovereign states. As Lincoln would say as he moved into his message, “These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war.”

He then reminded the nation that war never leaves a nation where it found it. He echoed the sentiments of his own foe Robert E. Lee who said, “It is well that war is so horrible lest we should grow fond of it.” Lincoln stated, “Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained . . . Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.” No one, simply no one, could have imagined the death and destruction which lay ahead. And slavery? To completely repeal slavery throughout the United States had not been the first thought, but simply to control its spread. Now came a new and daring reality—slaves becoming citizens of the United States.

## **“The judgments of the Lord are true”**

He then thoughtfully chided both sides by lamenting, “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other.” Further into the speech Lincoln reaches a startling conclusion, “The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully.”

The next lines clearly show us that religion was not marginal to Lincoln’s thoughts, but was the core of his understanding of the national dilemma. Please remember, he wrote this speech himself. Presidential speechwriters would not appear on the scene till after World War I. Therefore his next thoughts were not a prepared script, but the inner substance of the man.

In this remarkable message, he did not simply appeal to a heavenly deity for blessings, but explained the divine rationale by stating, “The Almighty has His own purposes.” Instead of trumpeting the North’s own righteousness, Lincoln applies the broad brush of God’s wrath on both sides by humbly admitting “that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came.”

And yet Lincoln recognized that perhaps there were more lessons to learn. No one loves correction, but Lincoln squarely places the American peoples on the altar of God’s judgment in proclaiming, “Yet, if God will that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’”

## **Throwing away the box**

To this point, Lincoln is a chronicler of the past and of where others’ actions have led or not led. Now comes the moment of breaking with the past and even the plight of the present, and he offers his vision of the future. It is this last paragraph in which he guides a nation towards the challenge of “let us” forgive the unforgivable and offer dignity to those in the throes of defeat. It is in these lines of biblical proportion that we see the courage of one man as he throws down the “gauntlet of peace” to a crumpled Confederacy.

In this moment in time, he is not simply thinking outside of the box, but he is throwing out the box to make a fresh start.

Lincoln said, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

At the time, the speech was not critically acclaimed or widely admired. But Lincoln liked it. He thought it was his best. Those around us do not always immediately recognize our best before God and man. But just 42 days later Lincoln would be dead.

## **Are you hysterical or historical?**

Forgiving others and being willing to work for a common peace are incredibly hard things to do. When nations, peoples, families or individuals allow themselves to become “prisoners of their past” they remain hostage to their emotions in the present, and any meaningful future is thrown out the door. Such circum-

stances remind me of the plight of a man who was complaining to his family marriage counselor that his wife was “historical, historical!” The counselor kindly interrupted, “You mean to say hysterical, don’t you?” The man came back immediately with, “No, I mean historical—she keeps bringing up the past.”

Why is it easier not to forgive than to forgive? Why is it we want to go on poking at people, “eye for an eye,” rather than looking them in the eye and seeking solutions?

Tim LeHaye in his book *Anger Is a Choice* quotes David Augsburg as stating, “The man who forgives pays a tremendous price—the price of the evil he forgives!” (pp. 111-112).

LeHaye then adds, “Forgiveness is very costly. It costs you, not the person being forgiven. Forgiveness means that justice will not always be fulfilled. Forgiveness does not rebuild the house that has been burned down by someone carelessly playing with matches.



*Robert E. Lee said, “It is well that war is so horrible lest we should grow fond of it.”*

Forgiveness does not always put a broken marriage back together. Forgiveness does not restore virginity to the rape victim. Forgiveness is letting go. It is the relaxation of your ‘death grip’ on the pain you feel.” LeHaye seals the thought by sharing Archibald Hart’s poignant conclusion to the matter, that “forgiveness is surren-

dering my right to hurt you back if you hurt me.”

### **Cutting down the oak trees of life**

Yes, easier said than done. And yet it has been done, and will need to be done again and again! Perhaps, even by you. If so, take the power of this story to heart. In his book *Lee: The Last Years*, Charles Bracelen Flood tells of a time after the Civil War when Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky woman who took him to the remains of a grand old oak tree in front of her home. There she complained bitterly that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Union artillery fire. She waited for Lee to condemn the North or at least sympathize with her loss. Lee paused, and then said, “Cut it down, my dear madam, and forget it.”

In today’s world many nations, families, individuals, Christians and, yes, perhaps even you, the reader, are nursing a whole forest of oak trees that we keep propped up by our unwillingness to forgive the unforgivable. Oh, how the headlines of our newspapers around the world would change if only we could look beyond the oak trees of life and see a bigger picture. Yes, a better picture! Imagine the impact on prophetic headlines and datelines if only people would take the time to see their own shortcomings and lacks as the man from Illinois did. Perhaps that’s why such a man truly does “belong to the ages.”

With Lincoln, his time-honored phrase, “with malice toward none, with charity for all,” was not from someone else’s script, but from his inner character. His was a character borne out in the understanding of a verse like Psalm 86:5 that declares, “For You Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.”

Someone once asked Lincoln what he would do when the South had been defeated and was forcibly returned to the Union. The questioner was naturally expecting a vengeful threat and was dumbfounded by the president’s response. It is, perhaps, that response that best echoes the millennial refrain, “this is the way walk you in it.” Lincoln simply came back in reply, “I will treat them as if they never went away.” ❖

“NEWS,” (Continued from page 13)

The world has always been a dangerous place. The 1990s represented an interregnum in which it appeared that the end of the Cold War had ushered in a new, more stable world. In a very few years, we have moved from a world in which it appeared that most crises were marginal and easily contained, to a situation where marginal crises cannot be contained and not all crises are marginal.

Meanwhile, other regions are falling into chaos. The United States is intruding in a wide range of countries on an unpredictable basis, built around al Qaeda’s behavior. This is creating unintended tensions and consequences. Countries and issues that are not directly tied to the war are receiving limited attention, regardless of potential consequences.

Throughout history the solution to instability has been the imposition of order by a great power in competition with other great powers. However, the United States today does not compete with any great power, but is at war with an international network. Unconstrained by other powers and driven by its war, the United States inevitably destabilizes some countries, lacks the interest or resources to stabilize other countries and creates opportunities for destabilization by other powers.

Source: Stratfor.

### **U.S. to Weigh Computer Chip Implant**

The Associated Press reports: “A Florida technology company is poised to ask the government for permission to market a first-ever computer ID chip that could be embedded beneath a person’s skin.”

It’s being touted as a solution for high-security facilities. But privacy advocates warn the chip could lead to encroachments on civil liberties.

A computer chip, about the size of a grain of rice, would be difficult to remove and tough to mimic. The technology could even be used to one day allow satellite tracking of an individual’s every movement.

Source: Associated Press.

Contributors: Ken Martin and Jim Tuck



# This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

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## Forgiving the Unforgivable

**T**oday our world is besieged with a seemingly never-ending cycle of violence. Unfortunately, this cycle of “pay-back time” appears alive and well wherever humans draw breath and are willing to use their last ounce of energy to exercise their own perceived right to exact revenge. Be it in the lanes of Belfast, the barrios of Bogotá, the streets of Jerusalem or the back alleys of Karachi—the threat is ever present.

And yes, sometimes all we have to do is look over the top of what we are reading this very minute and recognize it might be in our very own homes. The normal line of thought behind the plague of revenge goes something like this: “You poked me, so I am going to poke you back twice as hard. And, we’re going to keep up this routine till one person doesn’t return the counter strike.” In other words, I am going to exact my rightful pound of flesh from your hide, because the rules of survival dictate “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

But let’s consider for a moment the ultimate ramifications of this age-old adage. Carrying that thought to its logical conclusion would mean that our world would wind up both blind and toothless. But thankfully, occasionally the mold is broken; and when it is, we need to take a good hard look and understand a little more deeply the power of the moment.

Just over 137 years ago, one man offered a tremendous vision after an incredibly tense time in the affairs of his country. He willingly offered terms to a vanquished foe that were very different from those any victor had previously offered. Such thoughtful words were offered after four intense years of civil war between the states of an infant American republic.

It was a time of brother against brother, cousin against cousin and neighbor against neighbor. It was a war in which

the technology of weaponry had decimated the antiquated methodology of regimental troop movements. So many times, the slaughter was intense and immediate. In one such battle almost the entire male citizenry of one county lay dead within minutes.

Ultimately 600,000 people would die in this conflict. We can only imagine the desire for total revenge. As the war was painfully drawing to a sure conclusion, the big question was: How would the North behave towards the once proud South? What “pound of flesh” would the wartime president, Abraham Lincoln, exact from a now prostrate South?

Just months before the war’s end, Lincoln gave his second inaugural address to a spiritually and physically exhausted country. On March 4, 1865, the 703 simple words that he would offer would not sound the trumpet of victory over a crushed foe; nor would they outline a series of policies to bolster his own political standing. It simply spoke to the heart of a scattered national family that had problems. You see, there was something deeply embedded within the national body that had to be dealt with—a cancer of the national soul. Lincoln rightfully understood that we can’t really expect to deal with others until we have squarely faced ourselves in the mirror and dealt with ourselves.

### “And the war came”

He began by reminding his audience how four years earlier at his first inaugural address “all thoughts were directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept

(See “**FORGIVING**,” page 14)