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## Is Mars the Next Frontier?

*Americans are by nature a restless, inquisitive, pioneering-type people. Little wonder that their president would articulate their ambitions in space with his vision of a manned mission to Mars. But what is the biblical verdict on space exploration? And what is its connection with mankind's true destiny?*

by John Ross Schroeder

**W**hen the Space Age started with all of its initial successes, the sky was the limit. Would we not simply hop from the lunar landscape to Mars and on beyond?

Yet oddly enough, following the challenges of the famous Apollo program, the U.S. government began to curtail NASA's funding sharply, jobs in the space industry disappeared, planned programs declined and the urge to explore outer space somehow seemed to retreat to the back burner.

Subsequently, several unmanned flights, including the spectacular triumphs of Hubble, were very successful. But the poignant tragedies of manned excursions caused many Americans to wonder whether or not it was worth the price in precious human lives.

It is now just over a year since the *Columbia* shuttle broke into pieces over Texas with the loss of seven crew members. Most left courageous families who mourn them still. Yet despite these tragic losses, the space program continues.

Then *Spirit* and *Opportunity* recently transmitted the clearest, most-well-defined space shots of Mars' surface ever seen by the human eye—with the almost sure promise of much more to come.

**Will man reach Mars?**

Clearly the risks remain enormous, the costs astronomical and the required technology not quite yet fully existent.



A photo from Mars Exploration Rover Spirit Jan. 21 (NASA/JPL/Cornell)

The space journey one-way would take at least six months. Just the same, it would be foolhardy to say human beings simply cannot travel to Mars.

The Bible tells us that men and women were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Though formed from the dust of the earth, man potentially would possess incredible intellectual powers of imagination about and understanding of the very nature of the universe, along with the capacity to harness and implement those powers.

Viewing the building of the Tower of Babel, God (Elohim) had said: "If as one people speaking the same language they

(See "MARS," page 3)



# World News & Prophecy

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## “Without Blood on My Hands”

I am very glad I will not have to meet God with blood on my hands. Last month the *New York Times* carried a story from Erez, in the Gaza Strip. It tells the tragic story of a Palestinian mother who blew herself up at an Israeli inspection site, killing four security personnel and wounding seven others. She left behind two infant children. The article did not say how many children her victims leave. In a videotape made before her death she said, “It was always my wish to turn my body into deadly shrapnel against the Zionists and to knock on the doors of heaven with the skulls of Zionists.”

Using women as homicide bombers is a major departure for Palestinian terrorist organizations. The woman, Reem al-Reyashi, aged 22, feigned an injury to gain access inside the checkpoint where she lured a guard to inspect her before detonating the bomb. She said she was seeking medical treatment inside Israel.

Her husband knew nothing of the planned attack. “God gave me the ability to be a mother of two children who I love so,” she said. “But my wish to meet God in paradise is greater, so I decided to be a martyr for the sake of my children.”

Those are scary thoughts, which speak of the anger, frustration and failed hope of a generation of Arabs who are manipulated into feeling this is the only action that can make a difference. To blow up yourself and others is seen as the road to salvation. But such actions actually lead from bad to worse on the road to perdition, intensifying a continuing crisis leading on to a larger disaster.

By contrast, God has given His people understanding of a far nobler and divine purpose for life. We are to live a godly life today in preparation for eternity in the Kingdom, or family, of God. We are to treat people with love and respect. We learn this at our level as part of our training for the role God is preparing for us (John 14:2). We must live with the vision that we are preparing for a far larger role than the one we now have.

Sometimes we think that life may have passed us by and we have not really accomplished much. We compare ourselves to men and women of great accomplishment by today's standards. But consider those standards for a moment. Politicians struggle for high office and then work to stay in power. Others climb the ladder of success, often sacrificing principles and values. Recently a former top corporate executive confessed to fraud and bargained with prosecutors for a plea arrangement. His admission of fraud and his testimony will be used to indict the top two former executives in his corporation.

Christ commented on this type of “success” when He said you could gain the world but lose your soul. In the end, if we don't know why God places us on this earth, then we don't have true success.

Corporate fraud and terrorist bombers are two symptoms of a world adrift from the foundational cornerstone of Jesus Christ. We wait for Him to restore the paths of justice that will solve the cause of such extreme actions. We are called to live today by the laws of the coming Kingdom of God. When we live our lives and treat each other by those eternal principles, we will meet Christ without any guilt or shame. We will meet our Maker without any blood on our hands.

—Darris McNeely

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“MARS,” (Continued from page 1)

have begun to do this, then nothing they plan [imagine, KJV] to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6, New International Version throughout). God understands and appreciates mankind’s amazing technological potential far better than we do. He created human beings.

Author Alister McGrath declared: “The fact that so much of the deep structure of the universe can be represented mathematically points to something remarkable about both the universe itself and to the ability of the human mind to understand it. It is almost as if the human mind had been designed to grasp the patterns and structures of the cosmos” (*Glimpsing the Face of God*, 2002, p. 19).

King Solomon once assessed man’s natural intellectual proclivities. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings. As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable” (Proverbs 25:2-3).

Historically, when God sees man threatening His own purposes, He has intervened (massively on one or two occasions) to restrain man from speeding to the brink of self-destruction well in advance of the divine timetable.

First, because of their sin against God, Adam and Eve were exiled from the user-friendly, conducive-to-life environment of the Garden of Eden. I envision it with lots of leisure as well as stimulating, pleasurable work time. They were suddenly plunged into an ecology that sternly demanded hard labor to survive and to earn their living from a stubborn Mideastern soil.

Then after Noah’s Flood, God radically shortened man’s lifespan to 70 or 80 years—roughly a mere tenth of what it had been. Add to these obviously restraining

effects the severely limiting factor brought on by the sudden manifestation of so many languages at Babel.

But in due time, according to His divine plan, purpose and timeline, God would allow these conditions of restraint to be overcome.

### Overcoming the restraints on man

The book of Daniel reveals several important keys to understanding world conditions during the end time. One is found in Daniel 12:4. “But you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. *Many will go here and there to increase knowledge*” (emphasis added throughout article).

The NIV translation of this ancient biblical passage proves an intriguing commentary on today’s pronouncements about space travel. According to a feature article in *The Sunday Times* (London), “NASA insists that whatever the outcome of [President] Bush’s announcements this week, a manned mission is inevitable *because of man’s insatiable desire for new knowledge* and to answer the questions about the universe and the origins of mankind” (Jan. 11, 2004).

Frederick Gregory, deputy administrator of NASA, said: “We will go anywhere we can in the solar system to get these questions answered.”

But in yet another sense certain relevant questions remain: Will we find the answers we seek by means of traveling to planets like Mars? Or are we looking in the wrong place? Are the answers already here on earth—buried to most in an ancient book whose contents many now reject as myth in this increasingly secular age of man?

We wonder if anything is out there. We muse about the possibility of intelligent

life in the cosmos. Back in 1950 a group of eminent nuclear scientists, including Edward Teller, had a lunch meeting in Los Alamos, New Mexico. The discussion soon turned to the possibility of extraterrestrial life in the universe. This august gathering agreed that the cosmos was so ancient, with so many stars, that life must exist somewhere out there.

### “Where is everybody?”

But then one of their number, physicist Enrico Fermi, asked: “Where is everybody?”

As a *Times* (London) column observed: “[This] question cuts to the heart of humanity’s place in the universe. At stake is an understanding of where life on earth came from, whether it is unique, and how it might ultimately be explained—matters that trouble theologians as greatly as scientists” (Jan. 3, 2004).

Some have even been propelled into a speculative frenzy. For instance, one feature article asked: “Did life, as many now think, first come to Earth from Mars?” (*Sunday Times Magazine*, Dec. 14, 2003). Do many really think this? Unbelievable! It’s an absurd proposition when we really grasp the truth.

In fact the questions posed in that *Times* column are already answered in God’s Word to man—the Bible.

### Gaining true meaning from the creation itself

The apostle Paul revealed the significance of the creation in a long epistle to the Roman Christians. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature [Godhead, KJV]—have been clearly seen, *being understood from what has been made*, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

## Space—a False Utopia?

Occupying space while still in the human flesh will ultimately prove to be a false utopia. Author Maria Benjamin summarized the thoughts of Gerald O’Neill, a Princeton physicist: “O’Neill argued that space flight would eventually ease the population crisis, solve the energy problem, end international conflict and usher in a period of perpetual plenty” (*Rocket Dreams*, pp. 22-23).

This is a description of what the coming of the Kingdom of

God will accomplish, not what mankind will be able to do. If God allowed it, men would only spread the downside of their human nature—with its hostility to the Creator and its inclination toward vanity, greed and self-centeredness—throughout the universe.

With His help, God intends for us to learn to master these negative qualities first. That is why the Bible says: “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S; but the earth He has given to the children of men” (Psalm 115:16, NKJV).

King David of Israel, who said, “The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2), enlarges on Paul’s insightful proclamation. David said, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4).

This ancient Hebrew king had a regular habit of asking the right questions. He well understood that God is the Creator of all that we can see and know—and that the whole creation is alive with purpose for men and women if they could but grasp it.

In another psalm he exclaimed: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3). The message of God is ultimately intended for all men and women regardless of language, ethnic group, color, gender or nationality. But for the present, only a small number, the biblical firstfruits, truly comprehend the real purpose of human life during this age of man—and the magnificent glories to follow on beyond.

After commenting on the one star in the solar system, our sun (verses 5-6), David suddenly switches the subject from the divinely-ordained movements that govern the stars, earth and suns to God’s great spiritual law. “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving [converting, KJV] the soul” (verse 7). Yet the connection between the two topics is obvious. The stars and planets obey divinely given laws (like gravity) in interacting with one another, and human beings have to learn

to conform to God’s created patterns.

Truly, the star-studded heavens should give us an understanding of our God—urging us to get in harmony with His plan and purpose.

### When a man from space visited earth

We need not look for life on other planets, simply because the cosmos already teems with supra-intelligent beings invisible to the human eye—not composed of physical matter, but made of spirit. The Bible calls them angels.

But God is the most intelligent Being in the whole universe. He has the answers to all of our human problems and He has revealed Himself to men and women in the Bible. He sent His Son to earth as a first step in dealing with our difficulties.

*Truly, earth has already been visited from space.* Nearly 2,000 years ago this Being was sent by the Father to die for our transgressions of God’s law (Galatians 4:4), and to proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:1, 14). During His ministry, Jesus Christ spoke often of this Kingdom and the required conduct for fail-safe entry.

He also described what it would be like for transformed human beings to occupy a privileged place in that Kingdom as the children of God. They would be like the angels in heaven in the sense that they could not die anymore (Luke 20:36). Their faces would shine like the stars. “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43).

The human body is not now naturally or biologically equipped for space travel. But we will be when we enter the glorious Kingdom of God. True Christians will rise

in the air to meet the returning Jesus Christ when He visits this earth a second time. Our intrinsic composition will then be transformed from these vulnerable fleshly bodies into impervious spiritual bodies like Christ’s glorious body (Philippians 3:21)—bodies capable of infinite travels throughout space.

American astronaut Wally Schirra gave us a stirring insight into what occupying space feels like to a human being. “Feeling weightless . . . it’s so many things together. A feeling of pride, of healthy solitude, of dignified freedom from everything that’s dirty, sticky. You feel exquisitely comfortable . . . and you feel you have so much energy, such an urge to do things. And you work well, yes, you think well, without sweat, without difficulty as if the biblical curse *in the sweat of thy face and sorrow* no longer exists. As if you’ve been born again” (Maria Benjamin, *Rocket Dreams*, 2003, p. 22, emphasis author’s).

Although far from a perfect description of being in the Kingdom of God, the account nonetheless excites our human imaginations.

### The next frontier

Is Mars the next frontier? Maybe yes, in a very restricted, limited sense in this present age of man. But our entry into the Kingdom of God pales it into insignificance. Only then will the family of God liberate mankind from its megaproblems and megasufferings.

The apostle Paul aptly described this future liberation. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons [and daughters, 2 Corinthians 6:18] of God to be revealed . . . The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit [true Christians], groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, *the redemption of our bodies*” (Romans 8:19, 21-23).

In the long run, the Kingdom of God is the only frontier that really matters! ❖

## Facts About Mars

- The distance from earth to Mars is slightly over 50 percent more than from the earth to the sun.
- Dust storms can cover the whole surface of Mars.
- Mars has two polar ice caps.
- A Martian day lasts 24 hours and 37 minutes.
- Temperatures on the surface of Mars average -63 degrees Celsius (81 degrees below zero Fahrenheit).

Source: *The Sunday Times* (London)

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# The Rest of the Story?

*Do we have the complete story of Jesus Christ's life and death? For centuries alternative ideas have circulated as to whether Christ was who the Gospels say He was. Did the early Church suppress more than 80 alternative gospel accounts of Christ's life? Now a best-selling book popularizes one of these stories. What is the truth? Can we be sure we have the rest of the story?*

by Darris McNeely

**F**or a Christian, there is no more central tenet of faith than the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. On that point hangs the hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God through the resurrection from the dead. That He would rise from the dead, thus signifying that He was the Son of God, was the one sign He gave to a skeptical generation. The four Gospels testify with convincing evidence that He did rise from the dead and that He was the divine Son of God, the Messiah promised through the prophets.

Almost from the beginning of the Church, this central fact was attacked as a falsehood. The Church carefully gathered eyewitness accounts. The apostles wrote of what they saw. Paul went into considerable detail on the matter when he wrote to the Corinthian church about the resurrection and its vital importance to the Christian faith.

And yet the attacks continued. For some, Christ was no more than a good moral teacher, a rabbi who broke out of the pack. They believe His frustrated followers did nothing more than fabricate a fantastic tale of an empty tomb and new faith.

The attempt to deny Christ's resurrection continues into modern times. The 1967 book *The Passover Plot* offered purported "rational" and "logical" alternative explanations to the biblical account. The book's title sums up a view that many still hold—that the story told in the New Testament is at best incomplete and at worst a complete fraud.

## Plotted into a Code

The latest popular theory is told in a book that has been on the best-seller list for the better part of a year and will appear in 2005 as a Hollywood motion picture. *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown is a work of fiction that uses actual events, characters and places to draw readers into off-beat speculations about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Brown spins fact and fiction together in a

way that makes for a fast-paced, intriguing story, long on action and excitement, but short on actual truth.

In a nutshell, *The Da Vinci Code* puts forth the idea that Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene, leaving her pregnant with His child when He died. The mother and child were secreted off to southern France and the lineage of that union exists to this day. The male-dominated church supposedly suppressed this "knowledge" and saw to it that any writing containing this information was purged from the official record.

According to Brown's plot, those who knew the "truth" managed to keep it alive and pass it on down through the ages. Leonardo da Vinci was supposedly one such keeper of the secret, and his famous painting *The Last Supper* purportedly shows Mary Magdalene to the right of Jesus. Of course this contradicts the biblical account, which tells us it was the disciple John who sat at the Lord's right on His final evening.

Brown's book inspired an examination by the ABC news program *Primetime*. Interviewed on the program, Brown said, "I began as a skeptic. As I started researching *The Da Vinci Code*, I really thought I would disprove a lot of this theory about Mary Magdalene and holy blood and all of that. [Instead] I became a believer."

The program's hostess, Elizabeth Vargas, sent a mixed message to viewers with this conclusion: "What we found is that some of the claims the book makes are simply not credible and some of the claims have been made before. But there are some surprising truths behind the story of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Leonardo da Vinci" (*Primetime*, airdate Nov. 3, 2003).

What "truths?" What exactly does the book claim is the true story of Christ and the Church? Here are some excerpts:

- "At this gathering [Council of Nicea in A.D. 325] many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon—the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus . . .

*The latest popular theory attacking the accuracy of the Gospels is told in a book that has been on the best-seller list for the better part of a year and will appear in 2005 as a Hollywood motion picture: The Da Vinci Code.*

until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet . . . Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea . . . A relatively close vote at that" (p. 233).

- "From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history. Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The other gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned" (p. 234).

- "Behold, the greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but also He was a father. My dear, Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage, and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang forth" (p. 249).

- "Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion . . . With the help of Jesus' trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea [she] secretly traveled to France, then known as Gaul. There she found safe refuge in the Jewish community. It was here in France that she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah" (p. 255).

There are many other wild ideas floated by Brown in the book, but these few passages show his principal storyline. He suggests that secret documents were interred with Mary Magdalene's remains, documents whose contents would wreck Christianity as we know it. These documents reputedly contain the "true" gospel—one whose foundation is in goddess worship. If revealed to the world, these recovered "truths" would pave the way for us to return to a more enlightened spirituality centered on this feminine deity.

What is most troubling from this book, and one could say the movie to come from it, is that so much fiction and misinformation is passed off as truth. Anyone reading it without an adequate background in the basics of the Bible, much less history, could read it

and come away with a lot of doubt and many questions. That borders on blasphemy.

Christ spoke to this when He said of any who would cause offense and stumbling, "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

### What is the biblical evidence?

First of all, Jesus was not married. There is no reference of any sort in the Gospels suggesting the possibility that He was. It just isn't there. There have been past attempts by scholars suggesting that the scene in John 2 of a wedding in Cana where Christ turned the water into wine was actually Christ's own wedding. But the Bible says nothing of the sort.

There isn't any biblical evidence that Christ was married to Mary Magdalene or anyone else. The idea reflects Gnostic teaching extolling the feminine side of spirit beings and was popular in the second century after Christ.

Neither is there anything in the Bible to support the oft-floated idea that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute who followed Christ and His disciples around.

Another part of the misconception about Christ is the idea that there were other legitimate gospel accounts, which were either lost or purged from the accepted record and labeled as heretical. This raises doubts as to whether we have the whole story about Christ and the early Church. It is true that other letters and accounts circulated during and after the first century, claiming to be authentic accounts of Christ's life. Spurious letters pretending to be from Paul also circulated (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

The story of how the books of the New Testament came together in an authorized form that members could accept as reliable is longer than can be told in this article. Scriptural evidence points to the fact that Peter and Paul were involved in preserving texts and letters that bore true record of the events of Christ's life and the gospel of salvation in the Kingdom of God. A proper

understanding of these scriptures and how the Bible is put together precludes any possibility that other so-called "lost gospels" were considered valid for understanding true doctrine and teaching.

### Mary a proof of the Gospels' accuracy

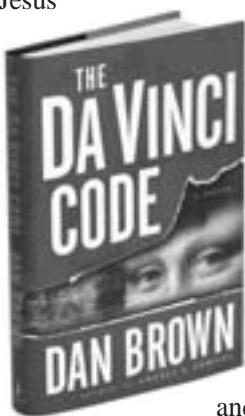
Let's make one point demonstrating the reliability of the Gospel accounts we have. Mary Magdalene's presence as a follower of Christ and a messenger of the news of His resurrection actually works as a proof of the authenticity of the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Women did not have such honored status in the world at that time. Luke and John tell of women serving and participating in ways that would have been quite radical by the then conventional standards.

Among the Greeks, women held a near slave status. Wives were not allowed to eat with their husbands' guests nor to leave their house unescorted. Infanticide for baby girls was seen as justified. Women were looked upon as inferior and impure compared to men. In Rome, a man had complete authority over his wife. Adultery could be punished by death. Going without a veil could lead to divorce. It reminds one of today's strict Islamic codes for women.

The point is, if the Gospels had been a total fabrication, the authors would have written accounts that reflected the existing cultural norms. What they did was tell a true story of the coming of the Messiah and His life. They told it accurately, as it happened, and they told it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). We can be sure that God left mankind with the essential aspects of His gospel of salvation.

People in the Western world have a desire to understand the spiritual side of life. Periodically a major weekly news-magazine in America will run an article about the Bible, Christianity or a major Christian teaching such as heaven or hell. *Time* magazine recently ran a story



on “The Lost Gospels” (Dec. 22, 2003). Publishers and editors know people have a fascination with the Bible even if they don’t really know much about it. Publications like *Time* are responding to ideas in the current American culture that offer alternative views of traditional Christian teachings.

The ideas and spiritual yearnings run the gamut from theology to pop culture. A recent issue of *Time* ran a story about the popular movie trilogy *The Matrix*. This science-fiction story pivots on the idea that the world we see is not the ultimate reality. One of its characters, Morpheus, tells another, Neo, “The Matrix is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you to the truth.”

The good guys in the movie are a band of enlightened ones staying one step ahead of those from the “matrix,” who seek to seal this leak and bring everyone under control. The ideas of the movie can be found in ancient ideas that predate Christianity and later found expression in Gnostic thought.

For decades the traditional ideas of religion have been challenged and questioned by liberal theologians. Along with a growing skepticism of virtually all institutions, this has led people to seek in other areas for spiritual fulfillment. The article in *Time* also dealt with the fascination for what is called “New Age” religious ritual. These “suppressed” gospels are providing people with ideas for modern rituals from ancient belief systems.

Even today’s theological intelligentsia give credence to alternative gospel accounts of the early Church. Princeton theologian Elaine Pagels has written of her acceptance of the Gospel of Thomas, one of the many ancient texts discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945.

Pagels’ study of the Nag Hammadi texts has shaped her view that the biblical texts don’t tell the full story. She cannot accept “Christianity with a single, authorized set of beliefs . . .” To her and other scholars, the Nag Hammadi texts are “like newly discovered pieces of a complex puzzle, next to what we have long known from tradition, we find that these remarkable texts, only now becoming widely known, are transforming what we know as

Christianity” (*Beyond Belief*, 2003, p. 29).

### Why the interest in these myths?

People are looking for a spiritual life to give meaning to daily existence. This is the normal age-long human impulse. And because Westerners live in a Judeo-Christian culture, that is, based on both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, many people who have grown up in this culture think of themselves as “Christian,” in spite of the fact that they do not practice the way of life the New Testament Church of God followed.

These practices and the ancient texts seem to answer basic questions of life for young and old alike. People think they explain the reason for evil and suffering in the world, the relationship of body and soul and the reality and closeness of a personal God. In reality, these are the very truths the Holy Bible teaches. But unless guided by the Holy Spirit, people cannot understand or readily grasp their meaning.

That people turn to a hodgepodge of ideas—whether called Gnostic, New Age or popularized by a movie or a book—to answer these major questions of life shows the confusion that continues to reign in modern religion. The wilderness of religious confusion has not provided satisfying answers for our modern world.

In a comment on his own time and a prophecy for the ages, Paul said to his fellow minister Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Today, just as when Christ came among men, there is a need to look at what Christ said and to decide whether we will follow His plain teachings. It is simpler to believe in what the Bible says about Christ than to believe the myths that have been perpetuated over the years. Yet each generation renews ideas that deconstruct the story of salvation through the Lamb of God.

The true story of Christ has been inverted through lawless, godless tales that have turned the truth inside out. This

has been true with every part of the message of the gospel. What we see with these recent stories is the same as any other lie about Christ and His message, just taken to another extreme.

The idea that Christ married and fathered a child makes Him into just another man, like the lyrics of the song “He’s Just a Man.” Such teaching devalues and inverts the truth that God is building a spiritual family, and that by His timetable everyone who has ever lived will have opportunity to join that family (Ephesians 3:14). Such teaching says that God is not a Father and therefore we are not His children. If God cannot conceive a Son, then He cannot conceive a family. If true, it would mean that the plan of God revealed in the Scriptures is a fraud.

But the apostle Paul rebutted this heretical idea in his letter to the Corinthians. Some there denied Christ’s resurrection and His divinity. They found it hard to believe such an event could happen; and it fell to Paul to set them straight, leaving us with one of the most powerful chapters of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15.

Jesus Christ—the Son of God—was also the greatest of the prophets God sent to Israel (Deuteronomy 18:18). His life and death were a fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies. His message was a prophecy of the coming Kingdom of God to this earth, a dramatic fulfillment of Daniel 2:44-45.

The apostle Peter was an eyewitness of Christ’s glory and resurrection. Years afterward, Peter wrote that he and his fellow apostles knew with certainty that Christ was the Son of God. Responding to the same charges that we see today, Peter wrote, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

After His resurrection, the glorified Christ said to Peter, “Follow Me” (John 21:19). There was no doubt in Peter’s mind that he was following the Son of God, the coming King of Kings.

The same call goes out today, “Follow Me.” Can we evade the doubt and move toward the real Christ of the Gospels and follow Him to the Kingdom of God? The choice is ours. ❖

# Radical Islam—a Threat to Freedom of Speech?

*Prominent media personalities on both sides of the Atlantic are in trouble for recent comments made about Islamic countries. Is freedom of speech threatened?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**R**obert Kilroy-Silk is Britain's answer to Oprah Winfrey. Or perhaps I should say was, as Mr. Kilroy-Silk has fallen victim to "political correctness" (PC).

His often controversial daytime talk show weathered every storm until the one that broke in early January with the publication of an article Mr. Kilroy-Silk wrote for the British *Sunday Express*. In it, he made some blunt statements about human rights in Arab countries.

Nothing he said was untrue—but that's not the point. PC says otherwise and PC rules.

The BBC quickly suspended Mr. Kilroy-Silk's television program. Shortly afterwards he resigned. He should have no problem writing columns for the foreseeable future as many people agree with him, although the noose around freedom of expression is ever tightening.

Sir Bernard Ingham, a former press secretary at Number 10 Downing Street, the official residence of British prime ministers, wrote an article for the same *Sunday Express* one week later with the title, "How Political Correctness Has Robbed Us of Our Nation." Among other things, Sir Bernard points out that the same BBC that is so sensitive to criticism of Islam and Islamic countries does not allow correspondents to mention the sexual orientation and practices of British Cabinet members, even when these may be of relevance to voters.

The words of the prophet Isaiah come to mind: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20). What used to be considered good is now described as evil and vice versa.

Robert Kilroy-Silk is a household name in Great Britain, just as Paul Harvey is in the United States. But now Mr. Harvey, too, has fallen victim to PC—at the age of 84, and essentially over the same issue.

On Dec. 4 Mr. Harvey described the vicious nature of cockfighting in Iraq, adding the words: "Add to the [Iraqi] thirst for blood, a religion which encourages killing, and it is entirely understandable if Americans came to the bloody party unpre-

pared," a reference to the recent war and subsequent difficulties maintaining the peace.

The following day the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) demanded "an on-air apology."

The following is taken from Daniel Pipes' Web site [www.danielpipes.org](http://www.danielpipes.org). Mr. Pipes is a noted expert on Islam and recently published the book *Militant Islam Reaches America*.

Writes Mr. Pipes: "I have been documenting since 1999 CAIR's use of such censorious tactics against anyone who dares criticize Islam, militant Islam or Muslims. This reflects the militant Islamic ambition to privilege Islam, which implies in part a prohibition on discussion about it."

Continuing: "CAIR upped the ante on December 8th by calling on its minions to contact a different sponsor of Harvey's each day to press it to drop its advertising on his program 'until Harvey responds to Muslim concerns.'"

Mr. Pipes adds the comment: "CAIR here rejects the American principle of free speech and the belief that differences in opinion should be dealt with through reasoned discourse; it wants to close down debate. I can think of no U.S. organizations except the militant Islamic ones that deploy comparable tactics."

Sadly, "Harvey immediately capitulated to CAIR, announcing on Dec. 9 (through an on-air substitute) that he received letters from 'dear friends' who 'reminded all of us that Islam is a religion of peace, that terrorists do not represent Islam.'" CAIR offered Harvey the opportunity "to further his re-education by meeting with American Muslim leaders to begin a dialogue on issues related to Islam."

Here Mr. Pipes adds the comment: "Calling for Harvey to meet for 'dialogue' points to CAIR's intent not to move on but to exploit each opportunity to promote its agenda."

CAIR did not relent—a few days later General Electric suspended its sponsorship of Paul Harvey while it looks "into the matter further."

One final comment from Mr. Pipes: "This effort to crush an opponent—get his apology and

*One source estimates that 80 percent of the imams in American mosques "are under control of radical extremist Muslims who teach violent jihad," a fact that bodes ill for the next generation of Americans.*

then deprive him of his livelihood—typifies CAIR’s illiberal approach.”

### 9/11 highlighted Islam for Americans

Most Americans were blissfully unaware of radical Islam prior to Sept. 11, 2001. Mr. Pipes was not one of them. He has been warning Americans of what was coming for a decade. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 brought Islam to everybody’s attention, but the official reaction at the highest levels of government in the United States and Britain was to keep repeating that Islam is a religion of peace. The media has helped reinforce this.

PBS carried a three-hour documentary a year or so ago on Christianity, followed by one soon afterwards on Islam. The first documentary tore Christianity apart, questioning everything in the biblical account; the second portrayed as fact everything written in the Koran and claimed by Muslims. None of this is new—the liberal elite that dominates our media has been making fun of Jesus Christ and His followers for decades. But the same liberal academics are not about to risk their lives by questioning Islam.

The Anglo-American response to this pressure from Islam is in contrast to the French approach, which has been highlighted in the same time period, December to January.

The Americans, the British and the French have three different approaches to immigration.

Americans believe that all immigrants who come to America are eventually assimilated. And that usually happens by the second generation. The British don’t care too much about assimilation—their only requirement for citizenship has been a pledge of loyalty to the queen (though there is talk of changing this). The French have still a different approach—they believe that everybody must become French.

The French are in the process of banning religious symbols in public schools. This is intended to stop Islamic girls from wearing the traditional headscarf, though the new law will also halt the wearing of crucifixes and the Star of David. Parochial (religious) schools can still do whatever they want. There has been a great outcry against this decision, which attempts to force Muslims to assimilate.

While each country differs in its

approach to immigration, all three are wrong. This is because they overlook an essential question that needs to be faced up to, one which PC makes it impossible to address. This does not mean it will never be addressed—it just postpones the problem, passing it on to the next generation, which will pay a heavy price for the negligence of this one.

The big question for Western countries is: Can Islamic values coexist peacefully alongside Western values? Or, as Michael S. Rose put it in a recent issue of *The American Conservative*: “The big question with respect to Muslim immigration to Europe and America is whether a tolerant society (as characterized by the West) can survive the presence of an intolerant minority (as characterized by Islam).” Mr. Rose was reviewing *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* by Robert Spencer. In reviewing the book, Mr. Rose writes: “The most absorbing point, if not the main point, of *Onward Muslim Soldiers* is that most Western countries, and especially France, are serving the twin gods of multiculturalism and tolerance to their own demise” (“Christendom, Awake,” Dec. 15, 2003).

No doubt this realization led to the recent French government decision on headscarves—if Muslims are not assimilating, then apparently legislation is required to help them move in that direction.

In neighboring Spain, a Muslim cleric recently caused controversy when he published a book advising Islamic men on how to beat their wives and avoid prosecution—a classic example of how multiculturalism and tolerance are being taken advantage of.

Meanwhile, 80 percent of the imams in American mosques “are under control of radical extremist Muslims who teach violent jihad” (ibid.), a fact that bodes ill for the next generation of Americans.

The same is true for France, for “. . . all of France’s 1,200 mosques are funded by foreign governments, and out of the country’s 230 major imams, none is French” (ibid.).

*The American Conservative* published a review of another book on militant Islam in its Jan. 19, 2004, issue. The reviewer was Richard Cummings, who lectures on the Middle East at Princeton, the U.S. Naval Academy and the Center for International Relations of Boston

University. The book he reviewed was *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* by Jason Burke. The title of his review: “A New Vision of Terrorism.”

In summation, Mr. Cummings wrote: “The only way to defeat this militancy and the concomitant terrorism of an amorphous al-Qaeda is not only to foster a dynamic and moderate Islam, but also to engage in a deep introspection. Is it just ‘our freedoms’ they hate, or something else? Perhaps it is our own lack of a sense of the sacred and our failure to appreciate that our avarice has engendered deprivations elsewhere that engender such rage. As Burke [the book’s author] advises, ‘All terrorist violence, “Islamic” or otherwise, is unjustifiable, unforgivable and contemptible. But just because we condemn does not mean we should not strive to comprehend. We need to keep asking why.’”

We should note two points made here, one by Mr. Cummings and the other by Mr. Burke, the author of the book on al-Qaeda.

Mr. Burke writes of the need to “keep asking why.” This is made impossible by political correctness, which has already made a determination, the verdict being that all cultures can live together in perfect harmony and that, in the event of disharmony, it’s all the fault of those brought up in the traditions of the West. It should be noted that not one Islamic nation believes this, as none allow immigration from the West—they do not believe in assimilation.

Secondly, we should note Mr. Cummings’ comment: “Perhaps it is our own lack of a sense of the sacred” that is part of the problem. It is the Western world’s own lack of conviction on spiritual matters that has allowed the victory of the PC elite, which teaches that all religions are equally valid. This, in turn, means that Islam and Christianity can live peacefully side by side, along with the antireligious and secular (most of the PC adherents).

The Old Testament book of Hosea states: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Ignorance and apathy are enabling the PC brigade to control our minds while militant Islam takes advantage. As one Muslim leader put it in Robert Spencer’s book: “Thanks to your democratic laws, we will invade you. Thanks to our religious laws, we will dominate you.” ❖

# In Brief...

## World News Review

### Terrorist Threat to Sea Gate

Where will the next big terrorist strike occur? Experts are predicting it could happen in a little known but vital waterway, the Strait of Malacca off the coast of Indonesia.

According to the *Wall Street Journal, Asian Edition*, “Lloyd’s List International, the International Maritime Bureau, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Aegis Defense Services and a host of other maritime and security organizations have begun to warn that al Qaeda and its local Southeast Asian affiliates may be planning attacks that would render the Bali bombings of October 2002—al Qaeda’s biggest attack since Sept. 11 in the United States—small potatoes” (Jan. 27, 2004).

More than 50,000 ships pass through the strait each year, carrying half the world’s supply of crude oil. Attacks in the strait—which narrows to 1.5 miles wide at some points—account for more than half the piracy in the world.

Fears are that a hijacked ship could be sunk in the strait, thus blocking one of the main shipping lanes of the world. Ships have already been hijacked as “trials” and captains forced to teach hijackers how to guide and maneuver ships before being released.

These training exercises could be a prelude to a ship carrying liquefied natural gas being run into a port, such as Singapore, then being set off as a bomb. The result would be “more devastating than any bomb” and “too horrible to think about,” said an official with the International Tanker Operators Association.

The Strait of Malacca connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. It is one of the world’s critical sea gates or choke points. Once part of the British Empire, it was a strategic pass for both naval and merchant ships, the guardian and supplier of the empire. After World War II American power replaced the British in the region. Today this vital passageway remains a key factor in shipping for Asia, especially China.

China has become the world’s second largest user of imported oil, behind the United States. Like the rest of the world, most of that oil comes from the Middle East and passes through the Strait of Malacca. China’s leaders will watch any terrorist threat to this area closely. Their emerging economy grows increasingly dependent on imports of oil and other raw materials.

Source: *Wall Street Journal, Asian Edition*.

### The Slave Trade of 2004

Slavery is something of the past, isn’t it? A shocking *Dateline* report on Jan. 23 shows again that it is an everyday occurrence in Cambodia. Even more despicable is the reason: The victims are sold as slaves for sex. But the most deplorable

aspect of the story is that these slaves are children, *some as young as 5 years old*.

*Dateline’s* investigation was about poverty-stricken Cambodia, and the poverty is itself part of the story. A 14-year-old girl related that she came from an extremely poor family in neighboring Vietnam. A woman approached her on her way from school one day and offered her work in a café. The “café” turned out to be a brothel in Cambodia, where slaves are beaten and starved into submission.

The Cambodian government works with human rights groups to rescue children from the slavery of brothels. But an estimated 40 percent of girls who are freed will return to prostitution to support themselves. They are trapped by the ever-present poverty, as well as by the psychologically crippling experiences of working as sex slaves as little girls.

Mu Soc Hua, Cambodia’s Minister of Women’s Affairs, estimates that the number of children involved in this unthinkable horror is 30,000. But Cambodia isn’t the only part of the world where children are so exploited. *Dateline* estimates the number runs into the *hundreds of thousands* worldwide.

Some Cambodian children are sold by their own parents into sexual slavery. In their undercover investigation, *Dateline’s* people posed as tourists in a café. A 15-year-old boy quickly approached them and began his spiel. He introduced his mother to them; she knows what he is doing and gets a cut of the money he makes. Westerners might ask, “How could parents do such a thing?” While it is no excuse, the oppression of poverty, year after year, decade after decade, dehumanizes people to the point of doing these wretched things.

And it’s tourists from the West who are making the sex slave trade profitable. Approximately 750,000 tourists visit Cambodia annually; many, it seems come expressly looking for children. One American radiologist was so unashamed of his intent that he told *Dateline* his name, profession and where he came from!

The United States’ government is actively involved in stopping the sex slave trade in Cambodia. It granted \$1 million to a human rights group, International Justice Mission, which is dedicated to the battle. And the U.S. State Department is now investigating Americans who may have been involved in the crimes.

What a shame that the government has to clean up after its citizens, people who ought to be lending a helping hand to the less blessed of the world. God will not long continue those blessings, if our people squander them on their base lusts.

Holding up a model of how not to live, Paul wrote to Corinth (a cosmopolitan city of sinners) about a time when Israel’s people “played,” that is, freely indulged their sexual lusts. God, Paul reminded, struck dead over 20,000 people. To give you a sense of those figures, if Israel at that time (shortly after God rescued them from Egypt) had a population of 2 million people, that’s

more than 1 percent. Current U.S. census figures estimate the U.S. population at just under 300 million, so 1 percent would be about 3 million people! We're not saying God is going to strike millions of people dead; we're just telling you what Paul said. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Do the American (and other Western) people want to "play," or live moral lives of self-control and care for others? We need to know that God will not long allow us to misuse Abraham's heritage.

Source: *Dateline NBC*.

## Southern Africa in Water Crisis

It rained in Lesotho a few weeks ago—the first real rain since April 2003. Clearly, no country could long support itself in such a prolonged drought. Lesotho is looking at near total crop failure this year. Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe are also looking at significant losses.

Swaziland needs food aid for 25 percent of its population; 11 percent of Mozambique's children under 5 suffer from malnutrition. Zimbabwe's self-destructive policy of stripping its farms from productive families and giving them to people who have neither the skill nor the intention to farm them only worsens the weather-caused crisis there.

Aid from other countries was needed—and received—last year. But this year, the aid is slow in coming. The UN's World Food Program (WFP) says it's short about a third of the money it needs to feed the 6.5 million people in these countries who will not be able to feed themselves this year.

WFP officials have the extremely difficult task of rationing food, due to the insufficient contributions. They suspended general food in Lesotho in January, able to feed only the sick, elderly, children under 5 and pregnant women.

Lesotho's situation is worse, due to steadily declining work in South Africa's mines and on its farms. The changing economic equation means that thousands of Lesotho's migrant laborers can no longer provide an alternate income.

To the grief of those who care, Africans are again among the world's citizens suffering more than most. WFP fears that families will turn to desperate and further damaging actions, including prostitution (see, "The Slave Trade of 2004") and migrating from rural to urban areas. Crowding cities makes the problem of disease an even more frightening potential than it already is.

Famine gives way to disease epidemics. In our age of routine international travel and trade, one country's disease should be the world's *unease*. It would be irresponsible to cry, "The end is near" every time we learn of famine and disease. Jesus listed both of these woes in Matthew 24:7, after which He said they were among events that would be only "the *beginning* of sorrows" (verse 8).

Christ added in Revelation 6's "Four Horsemen" prophecy, "Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (verse 8). The scope of this warning (potentially more than 1

billion deaths) far surpasses the tragedy in the making in Southern Africa—and even then, it seems that is only "the beginning of sorrows."

What is the world in for?

Source: Alexandra Zavis, "Serious Drought Threatens South Africa," Associated Press, Jan. 28, 2004.

## A Book About a Spoiled Generation

"Attention, parents. Better yet, attention parents, grandparents, future parents and [future] grandparents," wrote columnist Betsy Hart in November 2003.

She went on to advocate that her readers run, not walk to the nearest bookstore to purchase two recently published books on parenting. This *World News and Prophecy* writer took her advice, but I recommend only one of the books: *The Epidemic—The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children* by Dr. Robert Shaw with Stephanie Wood. They capture a "snapshot" of this generation, illustrated by these quotations:

"Far too many children today are sullen, unfriendly, distant, preoccupied . . . They whine, nag and throw tantrums and demand constant attention from their parents . . ."

"Take a good look around you. Can you go into stores, restaurants, or libraries without seeing [and hearing] joyless children screaming, sulking, resisting their parents . . .?"

"Do you not notice all the whining, bickering, tantruming . . . while parents, in turn, nag, complain, and often try desperately to ignore their unruly, surly offspring?"

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, Dr. Shaw lists "15 ways to ruin your child and your life," both advising people on what not to do and commenting on what he sees parents doing. They include: "Keep yourself stressed and busy. Give in to your child's whims . . . and demand nothing in return. Let your child think he is the boss of the universe. Don't subscribe to a code of ethics or morality that can override your own impulses—and definitely don't expose your child to such a code."

The book is worth reading, not only to find out what is going wrong, but also for some sound advice on what to do about it. Perhaps without knowing so, Dr. Shaw and Ms. Wood confirm the prophecy of 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

"You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly" (New Living Translation).

Sources: Betsy Hart, "Spare the Rules, Spoil the Child," Scripps Howard News Service, Nov. 7, 2003; Dr. Bernard Shaw with Stephanie Wood, *The Epidemic*, 2003.

Contributors: *Darris McNeely and Cecil Maramville*

# The Intolerance of the Tolerant

*Traditional tolerance is a godly virtue, but subtly the concept has been redefined today. When respectfully standing up for godly values is branded “intolerance”—which is seen as the worst of evils today—then something has gone sorely wrong.*

by Rick Shabi

*How can Christians guard against accepting the “lie” and having our love “grow cold”?*

A college student questions American involvement in Iraq, asking, “Who are we to decide they would be happier living under our form of government?” In response to a survey concerning beliefs about God, a 16-year-old girl replies, “In my mind, the only people who are wrong are the people who will not accept different beliefs as being, well, acceptable.” Many state legislatures are debating the question, “Why shouldn’t couples of the same sex have the same right to marry that a man and woman have?”

While the majority of Americans may not ask those questions, there is a growing trend in our nation to question the value of long-held beliefs and morals. It’s not that the people asking the questions are always concerned with discrimination or even political correctness. Their cause is “tolerance.” But this new kind of tolerance is not the traditional quality, from common courtesy, of respecting people and their differences. Rather, they advocate a wholesale *acceptance* of every conceivable belief, lifestyle and moral standard.

According to those groups seeking change in the way the nation thinks, the majority of Americans do not yet practice “tolerance.” In our centers of education, in the arts and through the media, there is a consistent message of “tolerance” being touted as one of the most important attributes a person can develop.

## What is tolerance, anyway?

*The American Heritage Dictionary* defines “tolerance” as “the capacity for or practice of recognizing and respecting the options, practices, or behavior of others.” By that definition, most of us would consider ourselves and most of our friends and acquaintances to be tolerant people.

Traditional tolerance is primarily comprised of three behaviors. First, we must *respect* the right of others to choose their own lifestyles, even if we disagree with them on moral or biblical grounds. God allows us to be free moral agents. He doesn’t force us to choose His way, even though He encourages us to live according to His decrees.

Notice the instruction in Deuteronomy 30:19: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and

cursing . . .” God set before ancient Israel two distinctly different ways of life, one of which would bring about a satisfying and blessed life. The other would bring about misery and death. In spite of His obvious desire to see His people prosper, He let them choose.

Joshua, too, recognized and respected the right of Israel to choose its own lifestyle years later. “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, *choose* for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served . . . or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell” (Joshua 24:15).

Likewise, today we must respect the rights of others to choose how they will live and what they will believe. It is a God-given right. It also happens to be supported by our nation’s antidiscrimination laws.

Another behavior inherent in traditional “tolerance” is an overriding love for all mankind, whether or not others believe or behave as we do. Christ set the example for us by loving us even when we were sinners—when we weren’t “choosing” the way He would have us choose (John 3:16; Romans 5:18). Regardless of how others treat us or what they believe, we are admonished to love all people, even our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Thirdly, if we are truly tolerant, we will purpose to live in peace with all people, regardless of their lifestyles, beliefs or other choices. “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

This type of tolerance is a Christian responsibility and quality that is supported by the Bible. But this isn’t the tolerance being “pushed” in America today.

## Redefining tolerance

In a May 2003 interview with the Zenit News Agency, which reports on news from the Vatican, Senator Rick Santorum (Republican from Pennsylvania) was asked how a devout Catholic politician could abide by Vatican decrees that establish a moral code of “right and wrong,” yet satisfy a constituency that “places a high value on tolerance and respect for a diversity of opinions.” His reply

captures the essence of how “tolerance” is being redefined in today’s society.

“The cultural elite, that is, our universities, the media and our arts, place a high value on tolerance and moral relativism. We are currently engaged in a culture war, wherein many Americans do not believe in absolute truth and are dictated by moral relativism.

“I cannot accept the fact that many hail tolerance as the greatest virtue. They worship tolerance to the point of not being able to make judgments at all. This is wrong. As G.K. Chesterton said, ‘Be careful not to be so open-minded that your brains fall out.’

“Tolerance, in the true sense of the word, is a great good. If one is truly tolerant, one is respectful of other people’s opinions. This does not mean agreeing with them, but giving them the right to profess their opinions. But, when tolerance is understood in a libertarian, modern way, we falsify the meaning of reality. *I don’t think we should accept tolerance as believing every point of view is equal and good. To do this is to blur the lines between good and evil*” (emphasis added).

Do you see how today’s “tolerance” is being redefined? It is not enough for those with alternative views and morals to have their right to choose respected. It’s not enough for others to live in peace with them. The new tolerance demands much more. It demands the acceptance of every lifestyle and an end of a value system that defines “normal.” Its proponents want the concept of “right and wrong” and “good and evil” removed from the national conscience. This latest strain of historical humanism leaps past the philosophers of Athens to the Garden of Eden and brings to the fore the question, “Who will be God and who will make the rules, God or man?”

God has a stern warning for those who would blur the lines between evil and good. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:20-21).

God expects His people to be able to discern right from wrong and good from evil, as defined by Him in the pages of the Bible. In fact, that *discernment* can be seen as a Christian responsibility.

Of the coming Messiah, it was prophesied that He would “know to refuse the

evil and choose the good” (Isaiah 7:15). Likewise, New Testament Christians, who are imbued with the Holy Spirit, are expected to “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

Christians cannot serve God and the interests of those pushing the new value system. God holds His people responsible for “carrying the torch” of understanding right and wrong, good and evil. We are admonished to “let our lights shine.” One



*Senator Rick Santorum said: “I don’t think we should accept tolerance as believing every point of view is equal and good. To do this is to blur the lines between good and evil.”*

of the ways we can do this is to not allow modern society to affect our views of “right and wrong” and “good and evil,” even if the whole world goes that way.

### **Where does this attitude of “tolerance” come from?**

Much of the news media deluges us with stories that applaud this redefined tolerance or show the “need” for it. Television, radio and the Internet are packed with features and stories that focus on offbeat beliefs and lifestyles and portray them as good and normal.

Entertainment champions alternative lifestyles, non-Christian religions and the need for all people to “accept” everyone else. Often the message of the story is that people with biblically based values are narrow-minded, foolish, “behind the

times” or just downright prejudiced or biased.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul makes a remarkable comment: “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, *according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:1-2). In a time before there was radio and TV, Satan still ruled the “airwaves.” How much more true that is today! It’s no wonder that the airwaves are a major vehicle by which a redefined “tolerance” is being promoted.

But it’s not only the media. Our schools and universities have adopted sex education and multicultural initiatives that teach that heterosexual and homosexual relationships are equally “right.” They teach that Christianity and the Bible hold no more relevance to education than does any other book or belief in any other god. We live in a world where God is constantly under attack—from removing His commandments from public view to attempts to remove His name from the U.S. pledge of allegiance.

Our educational systems teach “tolerance,” which is not truly tolerance at all, but rather the *acceptance* and *approval* of lifestyles and worship practices forbidden by the Bible. Increasingly, American instructors are not allowed to teach the morals or the lifestyles from the Bible, on which foundation the United States was built.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, *who suppress the truth in unrighteousness . . .* because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:18, 21-22).

When people make the choice to turn their backs on God, they will suffer the consequences: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, *who exchanged the truth of God for the lie . . .* And even as they *did not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting” (Romans 1:24-25, 28).

The human mind, when it chooses to leave God, loses the ability to make good judgments about right and wrong. Even “discernment” goes by the wayside (verse 32) when people choose to believe *the lie* instead of God. Under modern-day definitions of “tolerance,” we are expected to *approve* or *accept* those practices that are contrary to Christian morals espoused in the Bible.

### Why would people think this will bring what they want?

The young people of Western nations see a myriad of examples in the millennia of mankind’s history of the effect of one nation that believed it was “right” going unjustly against another nation. They see the effect of one religion believing it was “right” persecuting and tormenting people with different beliefs. They see the effect of Hitler thinking he was “right” and mobilizing a nation to try to enforce his extreme beliefs on a continent. They see the effect of one race claiming superiority over others. Recently, they see the actions of a very few who commit hate crimes against those with whom they disagree.

Advocates of the redefined tolerance point to these examples and reason: “It is extremism that leads to great harm, whenever a person believes his idea, lifestyle, religion or morals to be *right*. Therefore, we should eliminate inflexible definitions of ‘right and wrong’ and ‘good and evil.’”

When you think about it, it seems right, doesn’t it? It seems like this idea just might work. But God warns, “There is a way that *seems right* to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 16:25).

### Where is all this headed?

But where is all this leading? Is today’s world, bent on virulent humanism, going to lead to a multicultural Shangri-la for all? Let’s peek into the future through God’s Word and see where the ageless Creator of all says this will lead. Christ showed that near the end time *personal* persecution, offense, betrayal and hate will be directed at Christians for *His name’s sake* (Matthew 24:9-11). A time is foretold when even family members will betray and hate each other, for His name’s sake.

What does Christ stand for? Of the coming Messiah, it was prophesied that He would “know to refuse the evil and choose the good” (Isaiah 7:15). Throughout His

ministry, Christ came to preach obedience to the Commandments (Matthew 5:17-20). If we follow His example and commandment to us, we, too, will stand for the discernment of “good and evil” and “right and wrong.” Could it be that our position will not sit well with a world that has adopted “tolerance” as its primary virtue?

Christ also prophesied, “Because *lawlessness will abound*, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). Could it be that “*lawlessness*” is the result of an age of “tolerance,” a time when the distinction between “right and wrong” and “good and evil” is blurred? Could it be that the time of “lawlessness” is the time when a lack of discernment is one of many sins that will define the world?

It is in an age of lawlessness that “the love of many will grow cold.” The “love of many” was apparently able to stand firm in the face of war, famine, pestilence and earthquakes that were the “beginning of sorrows.” But the “love of many will grow cold” in an age where human reason replaces godly righteousness, when “tolerance” dictates that all should “approve” of every lifestyle, belief and god, and accept them as equal.

During this time of relative peace, it is prophesied that the love of many will give way to the way of the world. They will yield their “crown of righteousness” to “believe the lie” (2 Timothy 4:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:11). Yes, it appears that many will fall prey to an attitude that will permeate the world and, at least for a time, bring peace and prosperity.

But this system, this time of “lawlessness,” has its inherent flaw. It’s the same flaw that has plagued every plan of man from the beginning of time. Even “tolerance” has its “intolerance.” Its proponents, too, will believe that it is the only right way. And it will try to enforce its beliefs on all those who will not yield to it.

In Revelation 13, we read about a “beast” power that opens its mouth in blasphemy toward God, setting itself up as authority in place of God (Revelation 13:6). The whole world will worship and wonder after this power. It brings in its wake temporary peace and prosperity. But this “tolerant” society will not “tolerate” those who disagree with its philosophy.

“It was granted to him to make war *with the saints* . . .” (Revelation 13:7). The enemies of the state will be those who

“keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Could the saints be considered enemies because they continue to discern between “right and wrong” and refuse to yield their “love” to a system of “lawlessness”?

Satan is the force driving the “beast” power, and the source behind the “lie” that will grip and deceive the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He has always wanted to wage war with the saints. “[The] wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow on the string, that they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart” (Psalm 11:2). “The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him” (Psalm 37:32).

### What is the antidote?

How can Christians guard against accepting the “lie” and having our love “grow cold”? What can we do to ensure that we “endure to the end” as Christ admonishes us to do?

The apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, foretold of a coming time of lawlessness that will precede the return of Jesus Christ. He admonished his first-century audience, in words that we would do well to heed: “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled . . . as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first [when “the love of many will grow cold”] . . . For the mystery of *lawlessness* is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way . . .

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, *because they did not receive the love of the truth that they may be saved*. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

The antidote to the coming age of “lawlessness” or “tolerance” of all lifestyles and beliefs is to have a *strong love of the truth*. What more reason can we have to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)? ❖

**“FOREVER EYES,”** (Continued from page 16)  
vision that Paul so vividly describes—the Kingdom of God—which is that “eternal weight of glory.” They are given to cure us of our natural shortsightedness, worsened by the paralyzing moments of our human frailties or by world events that swirl around us. They are given to us and the scales of our human blindness are lifted, so we can see how God is actively involved with our well-being.

Yet, with all this said, we can live as if they don’t exist. Some may not know they have already been granted these eyes. Some may have forgotten how to use them. Saddest of all, some may consciously choose not to use them.

### **Just imagine, what an advantage!**

But consider, for just a moment, what an advantage such vision can give! Mary Welchel asks whether we ever wonder what it would be like if we could see over a hill or read a sign from miles away. Just imagine! You could see trouble coming and avoid it or see something good coming and embrace it. With vision like that we could see consequences, establish correct priorities, make the best of our time, avoid the tyranny of the urgent, discern the intentions and motivations of others clearly, accept the uncontrollable and live a contented life! “Forever eyes” grant us God’s perspective beyond our trying personal moments, beyond the troubling headlines of today’s news.

“Forever eyes” change how we view time. God’s Word tells us we have a limited number of days. In contrast, it also tells us our gift of salvation is eternal life. But for now, we are locked into a time cage of seconds, hours and days—an enclosed world of beginnings and endings. The reality is, our days are numbered and we don’t know when our number is up.

Moses recognized that natural eyes don’t look at time the way the ageless God does. Moses also recognized that at our best, we get locked into a world of “seventy years; and if by reason of strength . . . eighty years” (Psalm 90:10). He implored God in verse 12, “So teach us to number our days.” Have you ever considered that Moses might have meant much more than living each day to its fullest? Have

you ever considered that he might have been encouraging us to additionally look at our days now in relationship to all eternity? The focus is not on what is behind, but on what is ahead.

### **Eternity doesn’t come cheaply**

Eternity doesn’t come cheaply. It comes at the cost of using the godly gift of “forever eyes” each and every moment—even moments that humanly don’t always come with immediate gain.

It reminds me of the story of the young boy who got into a conversation with God. He asked God, “What is a million dollars like to you?” And God

*“Forever eyes” change how we view time. God’s Word tells us we have a limited number of days. In contrast, it also tells us our gift of salvation is eternal life. But for now, we are locked into a time cage of seconds, hours and days—an enclosed world of beginnings and endings.*

answered back, “It is like a penny.” Then the boy asked, “And what is a million years like to you?” God once again answered, “It is like but a second.” The boy then asked in a quiet, but excited manner, “May I have one of your pennies?” God paused and then replied, “Sure, but you’ll have to wait a second.” Eternity does not come cheaply; neither does it come all at once. That’s why we must use the godly gift of “forever eyes.”

Life is not easy. There are great successes and heartbreaking failures. Both are a part of life. Both can help make us complete in Christ. God often places what look like insurmountable walls before us that are actually bridges to eternity if we use our “forever eyes.” “Forever eyes” focus on what God desires and they clearly see His saving power in our lives. They also clearly spotlight our part in the equation. And at times, the equation adds up to suffering to mold us into Christlike completeness.

Hebrews 13:12-14 gives us the assurance that we are not alone in our trials, neither are those trials lost on God. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”

It is obvious that the Holy Spirit inspired the author of Hebrews to tell his audience to stack up whatever they are going through, in the present or in the future, against that which is to come—glorious, worthwhile eternity. What small stuff is bothering us today that we won’t even be thinking about in 24 hours? What big crisis is embedded in our life right now that doesn’t amount to a “hill of beans” when stacked up against eternity with God?

### **Hold on to those “forever eyes”**

God clearly makes a comparison between the eyes we are born with and our new eyes, the “forever eyes” that we are granted at our conversion. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Paul tells us, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.”

Once God gives us this gift, He expects us to hold on to it and use it—now and always. It is not ours to stow away or to give away, nor can anyone take it away. For these eyes are actually the eyes of God given on loan to us. They are given to assist us in looking beyond the disappointment, despair and depression caused by events in our personal lives. They are given to Christians to look beyond the disappointment of our nation’s turning from God or the emergence of a lethal system of church and state yet to arise on the world scene or the persecution by Satan of those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Perhaps the clarion call of Isaiah 30:21’s resounding statement, “This is the way, walk in it,” is best given voice by Paul when he says: “For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Hold on to those “forever eyes,” now and always. ❖



by Robin Webber

## The Godly Gift of “Forever Eyes”

**A**t one time or another, we have all seen the bumper sticker wisdom, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” It is certainly good advice. But the truth is we all sweat over all sorts of small stuff. Beyond the “small-fry” matters of life, there truly are weighty issues in our personal existence that, humanly, can be all-consuming. Personal issues such as a threatening disease, the loss of a loved one, a child who won’t respond to our love, the loss of a cherished job, a business deal that’s gone south, a marriage gone sour and, yes, for some of us, a God who seems far away.

Just for a moment, let’s peel away the bumper sticker wisdom and go a couple of layers deeper to a basic reality check on our personal condition. Regarding any current problem, we might ask ourselves, “What difference will it make 24 hours from now?” Just think a moment. Is it truly worth the energy load that you have assigned to it and the heart distraction from those other matters that are truly worthy of our life’s devotion? The truth is that some issues that confront us must be stacked up against nothing less than eternity.

### Moving beyond the “urgency of now”

Fundamentally, this last thought means moving beyond the “urgency of now” to implement a long-range perspective. It’s a different way of viewing things called, “living with forever eyes.” It’s a phrase and a concept expounded by Mary Whelchel in her book, *Looking With Forever Eyes*, published by Servant Publications. Its subtitle, “How to Live in the Light of Eternity,” tells how she thinks God would have us travel through life.

But why bring this up in a publication like *World News and Prophecy*? Because, if we are “sweating the small stuff”

now, if we are gasping for psychological air, if we are overwhelmed spiritually by some of the weightier matters of ordinary life—then we need to be reminded that biblical prophecy clearly indicates “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1).

With this biblical reality check in mind, let’s take some personal inventory. If we’re sweating over the small stuff now, or even reeling under the very real burdens of our natural existence, how then will we ever handle the prophesied future when matters are going to escalate right off the scale? Let’s look at the godly gift of “forever eyes.”

### Outlining the challenge

The passage in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 outlines the idea. “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

“Forever eyes” are not natural. They are a spiritual gift! Speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:3, Christ said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Let’s consider this analogy. Newborn babies arrive with a brand-new pair of natural eyes. When we are “born from above” by God’s miracle, we, too, are given new eyes—“forever eyes.”

Christ clearly states that they are given to us to see the  
(See “**FOREVER EYES**,” page 15)