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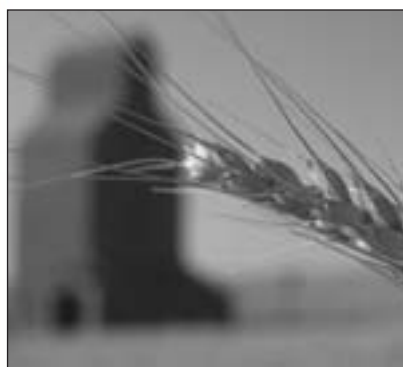
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Same-Sex Marriage Threatens Civilization

Many fail to realize the dangerous path that same-sex marriage is leading us down. Far more is involved than the opportunity for two members of the same sex to marry.

by Larry J. Walker

The battle over same-sex marriage continues, though not always on the front pages. A showdown is likely to occur before or during the upcoming national elections in the United States.

The PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) Web site cites a new survey indicating that 52 percent of Americans would favor a law that prohibits same-sex marriage. A recent *Washington Post* poll found that fewer than four in 10 Americans support same-sex civil unions that would provide some of the rights and legal protections of marriage. Legislatures in 38 states have adopted so-called Defense of Marriage Acts, which define marriage as a contract between a man and a woman.

Yet two Canadian provinces have now made same-sex marriages legal. And the highest court in Massachusetts ruled last November to allow same-sex marriages, which began May 17.

PBS commentator Jeff Sheler referred to these cases as "a changing of the guard, a social shift of historic proportions." He commented, "The controversial change has sent shock waves through legal and religious communities on both sides of the border."

Theological positions regarding marriage

Reactions to the issue of same-sex marriage serve as the latest barometer of whether the Bible is acknowledged and used as the basis of morality.

(Marriage and family are still reeling from earlier attacks of permissiveness, adultery, premarital sex, disrespect, rampant divorce and remarriage, abuse and a host of other societal changes.)

In many cases today, human reason trumps Scripture's fundamental teachings. Bible passages are either misinterpreted or discounted by those who advocate a personal agenda that conflicts with its plain teachings.

Liberal theologians conveniently dismiss the inerrant authority of the Scriptures and consider many historical events, including the creation account of Genesis 1, to be myths. Many of the plain statements by the apostle Paul are seen as temporary, cultural matters.

One church official, after writing off the clear teachings of Scripture as "cultural" and thus obsolete and irrelevant in our present-day civilization, concluded, "Keeping the faith is what counts." But faith in what? Apparently faith in a stripped-down version of Scripture tailored to individual preferences and prejudices.

Some claim that the human authors of the Bible were ignorant of the dynamics of homosexuality and the capacity for people to love someone of the same sex and to make a commitment of marriage. In their minds civil rights take precedence. Even some conservative Christians share that viewpoint, citing passages in Romans 13 that urge

(See "SAME-SEX," page 3)

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

'Let Freedom Reign'

On June 28 at 10:26 a.m. local time in Baghdad, American proconsul Paul Bremer turned control of Iraq over to a new Iraqi government headed for now by Iyad Allawi. News was flashed to U.S. President George W. Bush who was attending a NATO summit in Istanbul, Turkey. With a grin, a glance at his watch and a scrawl of words, "Let Freedom Reign," the American leader leaned over to British Prime Minister Tony Blair to inform him of the historic handover, done two days ahead of the announced schedule.

And so Iraq gets a new birth of freedom and the world waits and holds its breath. Fifteen months after Coalition troops invaded and ousted the murderous dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, a new interim government takes over with the hope of steering the country on a path to take its rightful place among the nations.

It will not be an easy job. The week before the handover was the bloodiest period since the occupation. Hundreds of Iraqis died in bombings perpetrated by terrorists intent on undermining any government connected with the United States. Iraq is a failed state composed of a matrix of peoples who fear one another. The next 60 to 90 days will be crucial.

Mr. Allawi has a large task. He once headed an unsuccessful coup against the Hussein regime, and since the Americans support him, he has two strikes against him in the eyes of many Iraqis. Supporters of the former Baathist government still hold out hope that they may find a way to return to power as they did in 1968 after five years of exile. To them this is just another setback in a long history of regional power plays. It is the one left standing who wins the fight.

America's will to remain in the region and guarantee the security of this new government will now be put to the test. American leaders have said they will remain as long as needed. There is little doubt American troops are needed to support the interim government.

However, a number of unknowns could change the equation. Should John Kerry replace George W. Bush in the White House, a new doctrine could emerge, one quite different from the highly interventionist policy of the current administration. Further terror attacks and loss of American soldiers could turn the mood of the American public to one of wanting its troops home and the country uninvolved with international quarrels. There is also the chance of unforeseen events, like 9/11, that transform the international scene.

When America's founding brothers completed their constitutional convention, Benjamin Franklin was asked by a woman bystander what kind of country now existed. "A republic, madam," he replied, "if you can keep it." Sadly, Iraq does not seem to have a Franklin, Jefferson or Washington among its current crop of leaders. The country and its people cry out for justice, security and peace. The majority of the common people, like most people everywhere, wish only to live, love and work with a hope for a future. Neither their religion nor their faith has produced this peace in recent decades.

We can pray for their peace and prosperity. We can pray that their new leaders can give them a new government that frees them from tyranny and oppression. God knows they need a period to heal. For decades fear tactics have governed them. Like all other nations they await the time of restoration under the government of the supreme Creator of life. God speed the day when freedom reigns upon the whole world.

—Darris McNeely

“SAME-SEX,” (Continued from page 1)

Christians to submit to civil authority.

Threats of homosexual issues to civilization

A homosexual man, who claims to be a devout Episcopalian, boldly stated in a PBS interview, “Family has been redefined. We no longer have, for various reasons, mother, father, two children. It can be now mother and two children; father, two children. It can be lesbians, one child, two children. It can be gay men.”

Herein lies the greatest concern. Same-sex marriage is not just about two people seeking permission and approval to make a legal commitment of marriage. It is about redefining longstanding, biblically based, fundamental aspects of our culture. It is the opening salvo on a moral battlefield with grave stakes for modern civilization, as we have known it.

Gay activists will not be content with the right to marry. They want equal rights and full acceptance of homosexuality as a legitimate “lifestyle.” This means that employers, including churches and schools, would be required to hire practicing homosexuals as teachers, pastors and in other occupations that influence the thoughts of others, including children.

Are you prepared for an even greater influx of love songs, television programs and movies based on homosexual couples? Even television commercials and other forms of advertising will pick up the trend. What effect will all of this have on your children and grandchildren?

We don’t need to guess at the answers. It has already begun. One young Christian husband and wife were shocked when their young son brought home a book from his elementary school titled *The King and King*. The story centers on a young prince who tells his parents that he loves someone of his own

sex. So their destiny as a royal couple is dubbed king and king instead of the traditional king and queen. The young couple expressed their dismay to school officials who defended the teacher’s selection on the basis that other parents did not share their concerns.

This is one isolated incident, but one that will soon become commonplace if the present trend continues. Same-sex marriage is but a foot in the door to full recognition and legal approval of homosexuality in every aspect of life. Time appears to be in their favor. What is now the silent majority would become a silent minority, muzzled by “hate law” provisions geared to silence opposition. What is now the vocal minority would continue its campaign with the goal of becoming the majority and establishing homosexuality as the norm.

Think it can’t happen? It already did—in Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible exhorts us, “And don’t forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with sexual immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and are a warning of the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil” (Jude 7, New Living Translation).

Importance of Christian reaction and response

The apostle Peter wrote that “God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him” (2 Peter 2:7, NLT).

Although God refers to him as righteous, in the eyes of many Lot would be labeled as “homophobic.” This is another tactic to turn the tables on opponents of same-sex marriage and homosexuality. The prophet Isaiah decries this tactic,

“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!” (Isaiah 5:20).

What about today? Is there enough commitment and determination by the majority of Christians and other citizens to resist the powerful efforts of the firmly entrenched gay activist minority? How deeply motivated are Christians to nip this in the bud? Jesus said in John 9:4, “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (New Revised Standard Version).

In some areas of Canada it is even against the law to quote the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality

In the United States legislators in several states are frantically seeking to protect the legal status of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. President George W. Bush has voiced support for a constitutional amendment that will limit marriage to heterosexual couples.

The current version allows for civil unions for homosexual couples, giving the amendment opponents on both sides of the issue. Many traditional-marriage advocates consider this as an unacceptable compromise, and many homosexuals view it as unjustly discriminatory. Even this weakened version has been given slim chances for congressional approval.

In 1 Timothy 2:2 Paul exhorts us to pray “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” The Louw-Nida lexicon offers, “that we may live in entire godliness and propriety,” and adds the comment, “In some languages ‘propriety’ is best expressed as ‘to act in the right way’ or ‘to act as one ought.’”

Civil rights vs. legal responsibilities

Viewpoints on same-sex marriage reflect a growing trend of emphasizing rights over responsibility. One young homosexual in Portland, Oregon, protested in a television interview, “This is the 21st century; we should be able to do whatever we want to do.”

(See “SAME-SEX,” page 8)

Christian Hope and Help for Homosexuals

Often people have been raised in a dysfunctional home environment they could not control, which left them susceptible to sexual sins. In light of this, God’s ministers compassionately help Christians who wish to conquer wrong sexual inclinations of whatever nature. The United Church of God provides a compassionate ministry to help educate, comfort and assist Christian men and women in surmounting this challenging personal issue. We offer a publication titled *Anchor*, a magazine of hope for Christians struggling with homosexuality. More information about *Anchor* can be found at its Web site, www.anchorhelp.com.

A Coming Time of Martyrdom

Many don't grasp the fact that true Christianity is deeply rooted in the writings of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament. The last generation of Christians will not escape the same burdens that the Jews have had to bear for centuries.

by John Ross Schroeder

During June arsonists desecrated two more synagogues in the north of London. It's rather hard to believe that more than 100 British synagogues have been attacked in the last four years. Yet this has happened in the green and pleasant land which, since the 17th century, has had a long history of basic tolerance toward the Jewish community.

As Jewish author Simon S. Montefiore observed in *The New Statesman*: "11 September and Iraq have sparked the return of a medieval anti-Semitism" (June 28, 2004). In many countries the Jews in general are now falsely seen as a unified and dangerous political cabal, hatching all manner of conspiracies against the Palestinians in particular and mankind in general. Some are ludicrous in the extreme, but still readily believed by all too many gullible people.

A long history of persecution

In the wake of a wave of anti-Semitic attacks involving looting and murder, Russian Jew Menachem Ussishkin lamented the long history of Jewish misfortunes before Allied statesmen at the Paris Peace Conference on Feb. 27, 1919, following World War I (1914-1918).

Speaking in Hebrew, he said: "Nowhere have we found rest for our weary spirit nor for our aching feet. Persecution, expulsion, cruel riots, unbroken distress—such have been our lot during all these generations in all of the countries of the world, and in these very days—when the wielders of the world's destiny have proclaimed the liberation of the nations, the equality of the nations and the self-determination of every separate nation—Russian Jewry, which I represent here, is undergoing fresh torrents of murder and rioting, the like of which were never known even in the Middle Ages" (quoted by historian Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, 1999, p. 41).

The Bible records accounts of anti-Semitism. Remember the book of Esther? Haman plotted to kill all Jews, old and young, throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus (Esther 3:6-13). Haman even managed to obtain the king's signature on his decree of destruction, but God intervened and prevented it

through the heroic efforts of Queen Esther and her guardian, Mordecai.

The Jewish connection with Christianity

Regrettably, mainstream Christians have all too often been guilty of anti-Semitism. Far too much of their fundamental theology has been based on rejecting key points of God's law revealed in the Old Testament—the sacred book whose preservation the Creator committed to the Jewish community (Romans 3:2; Matthew 23:2).

Although German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was deeply anti-Semitic, the main thrust of his writings were directed against Christianity. He wrote: "The Jews have made mankind so thoroughly false that even the Christian can feel anti-Jewish *without realizing that he is himself the ultimate Jewish consequence*" (quoted by Irish author Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Suspecting Glimpse*, 1972, emphasis added throughout).

Along with the rest of mankind, the Jews have always had their problems. After first confronting the bad behavior of the gentile peoples in chapter 1 of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul followed by indicting the Jewish people for not living up to their sacred legacy in chapter 2. Yet he concluded by saying: "What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2).

Later Paul devotes three whole chapters of Romans (9 through 11) to the eventual redemption of the Jews. "All Israel [including the tribe of Judah] will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

But this key biblical passage at the beginning of Romans 3 shows us the respect the Jewish people should be accorded for their highly significant role in history, and most especially by Christians. British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930), perhaps the principal architect of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (a benchmark development in the eventual founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948), "was an intellectual with a strong sense of the Jewish contribution to religion and morals, philosophy and the arts."

Secretary Balfour said in a parliamentary speech

Regrettably, mainstream Christians have all too often been guilty of anti-Semitism.

in 1904: “The treatment of the [Jewish] race has been a disgrace to Christendom, a disgrace which tarnishes the . . . fame of Christianity even at this moment” (quoted by Conor Cruise O’Brien, *The Siege*, 1986, pp. 27-29).

Jesus Christ Himself plainly said to the Samaritan woman: “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, *for salvation is of the Jews*” (John 4:22). Later the apostle Paul explained that “he is a Jew who is one inwardly” and not of the outward flesh (Romans 2:28-29; compare Jeremiah 4:4).

Clearly Christianity is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Old Testament, which Christ and His apostles frequently quoted, paraphrased and alluded to in the New Testament Scriptures. After all, the Church is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). There is no way to justify “Christian” anti-Semitism.

A martyrdom of Christians

The book of Revelation—the final book of the Bible—is almost entirely about the future, about both good and bad events yet ahead of us. The bad comes first, followed by infinite and everlasting goodness in the Kingdom of God.

Like the Olivet prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, Revelation contains several frightening passages about the persecution of God’s people. The first is historic and possibly prophetic as well.

This message came directly from Jesus Christ and was directed to the church of Smyrna. “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Please note that 10 days most probably means 10 years, since a day can mean a year in prophetic symbolism (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34).

Human beings persecute others under the unseen but very real influence of Satan

the devil and his demons. They neither know nor understand the evil power that is motivating them.

The apostle John also saw in vision a prophetic martyrdom for the end time. As the blood of Abel figuratively cried out to God after Cain murdered him (Genesis 4:10), others who have been martyred symbolically cry out to their Creator for judgment (Revelation 6:9-11). They are told, however, that “they should rest a little while longer [death is pictured as a sleep in the Bible], until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” (verse 11).

And in the future, the prophetic Beast “opened

his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. *It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.* And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation” (Revelation 13:6-7). Please read that again—especially the part set off in italics!

A martyrdom of Christians is on the way and there will be no escaping by fleeing from one nation to another one as some of the fortunate Jews were able to do prior to World War II. Apparently all nations will be caught up in the grip of this Beast power. Only those whose names are written in what Scripture calls “the Book of Life of the Lamb [Christ]” will understand what is really happening (verses 8-9).

Remember Jesus said to His disciples that the time would come “that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service” (John 16:2). But those who are so deceived have no real spiritual knowledge of either the Father or the Son (verse 4). They are motivated by the unseen Satan.

A commandment-keeping people

Thankfully, however, there is more to the story. Revelation 12 speaks of a way of escape for the Church “into the wilder-

ness.” Figuratively, the Church is likened to a woman in the Bible. When some are taken to a place of safety, it says “the dragon [Satan] was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, *who keep the commandments of God* and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (verse 17). True Christians are going to become supremely unpopular in an increasingly disobedient world.

The true people of God, the commandment-keepers, do not practice or approve homosexuality, same-sex marriages, abortion and many other vile habits that some mainstream Christian churches are increasingly party to. Those who observe God’s commandments will never tell you that the Creator’s law is done away. “Here is the patience of the saints; here are *those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*” (Revelation 14:12).

Talking about the eternal and everlasting city of God, the Bible says: “*Blessed are those who do His commandments*, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). Clearly commandment-keeping is an important theme running through the book of Revelation.

A new (so-called) translation of the Bible has recently been published that twists the Scriptures to encourage fornication and other biblically unlawful practices. News reports say that a few of this world’s leading theologians are already encouraging people to read it. If you value your salvation and future life in the magnificent Kingdom of God, you will avoid following any such ungodly advice whose ultimate source is the unseen Satan, the archdeceiver of all nations (Revelation 12:9).

A dangerous time for God’s people

Speaking of the end time, Jesus Christ said: “And because *lawlessness will abound*, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). This is a blunt warning from our Savior. By definition true love includes observing God’s commandments—the diametric opposite of lawlessness. “For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Almost everywhere one hears a message about how it is sometimes OK, (See “MARTYRDOM,” page 11)



“The treatment of the [Jewish] race has been a disgrace to Christendom” (British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour in 1904).

Is This the End of the American Empire?

President George W. Bush's trips to Europe during the month of June attracted significant anti-American demonstrations. At the same time, the United States announced troop withdrawals from Europe and Korea as the handover in Iraq took place. Analysts speculate what would happen if America withdrew from its international role.

by Melvin Rhodes

British historian Niall Ferguson is one of the most prolific historians writing today. He is Herzog professor of history at New York University's Stern School of Business and senior fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. In addition to these responsibilities, he has been writing more than one book a year and countless articles for different magazines. He is also refreshingly perceptive about the world in which we live. As an atheist he does not see things through biblical eyes, but, without realizing it, much of what he writes confirms Bible prophecy.

In an article in the latest issue of *Foreign Policy* (July-August, 2004), Mr. Ferguson writes of "A World Without Power." His introductory paragraph says this: "Critics of U.S. global dominance should pause and consider the alternative. Who would replace America if it retreated from its current role? Not Europe, not China, not the Muslim world—and certainly not the United Nations. Unfortunately, the alternative to a single superpower is not a multilateral utopia, but the anarchic nightmare of a new Dark Age."

Mr. Ferguson gives three reasons for the imminent fall of the American superpower. As he puts it: "The United States suffers from at least three structural deficits that will limit the effectiveness and duration of its quasi-imperial role in the world.

"The first factor is the nation's growing dependence on foreign capital to finance exces-



U.S. soldier stands guard in front of the Fifth Corps headquarters of the U.S. Army in Heidelberg, Germany. The Pentagon announced troop withdrawals from Europe in June. (Reuters/Vincent Kessler)

Who would replace America if it retreated from its current role?

sive private and public consumption. It is difficult to recall any past empire that long endured after becoming so dependent on lending from abroad."

America is overdrawn

As if to emphasize this point, the same issue of *Foreign Policy* carried an article by Lawrence H. Summers, president of Harvard University and former secretary of the Treasury during the Clinton administration. In the article, titled "America Overdrawn," Mr. Summers highlights a simple fact: "There is something odd about the world's greatest power being the world's greatest debtor . . . Much has been made of U.S. dependence on foreign energy, but the country's dependence on foreign cash is even more distressing. In a real sense, the countries that hold U.S. currency and securities in their banks also

hold U.S. prosperity in their hands. That prospect should make Americans uncomfortable.”

Whereas Mr. Summers looks at the economic consequences of American profligacy, Mr. Ferguson looks at the geopolitical consequences.

Mr. Ferguson continues with his second and third reasons for the end of American supremacy. “The second deficit relates to troop levels: The United States is a net importer of people and cannot, therefore, underpin its hegemonic aspirations with true colonization. At the same time, its relatively small volunteer army is already spread very thin as a result of major and ongoing military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.”

Emphasizing this fact, the Pentagon in June announced troop withdrawals from Europe and Korea, significantly reducing its presence in both areas.

“Finally, and most critically,” writes Mr. Ferguson in explaining his third point, “the United States suffers from what is best called an attention deficit. Its republican institutions and political traditions make it difficult to establish a consensus for long-term nation-building projects. With a few exceptions, most U.S. interventions in the past century have been relatively short lived. U.S. troops have stayed in West Germany, Japan and South Korea for more than 50 years; they did not linger so long in the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Haiti or Vietnam, to say nothing of Lebanon and Somalia. Recent trends in public opinion suggest that the U.S. electorate is even less ready to sacrifice blood and treasure in foreign fields than it was during the Vietnam War.”

So who then will replace the United States?

Mr. Ferguson’s conclusions about the decline of American power are not new. Professor Paul Kennedy, another British historian who is now lecturing at Yale University, wrote his monumental best-seller *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* in 1987. In his book, Professor Kennedy studied “Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000” and concluded that the same trends that brought down the British, French and Spanish empires, would inevitably also bring down the Soviet and American



U.S. soldier stands guard at a U.S. Army base in South Korea. Troop reductions for South Korea were also announced in June. (Reuters/Kim Kyung-hoon)

superpowers. The Soviet Union was to prove him correct very quickly, leaving the United States as the world’s only remaining superpower.

If history shows that America’s decline is unavoidable, then the question all should contemplate is, who will replace the United States as the world’s dominant power?

Mr. Ferguson, having already stated, “certainly not the United Nations,” in his introductory remarks, looks at three possible contenders. Each is dismissed for various reasons. The three are: Europe (“too old”), China (about to go through a “coming economic crisis”) and Islam (“the Muslim world is as divided as ever”).

He then presents a credible alternative—the idea of a power vacuum around the world. In effect, that nobody will replace the United States as a superpower.

Nobody alive today can remember such a time. We have to go back a long way in history to see a time when there was such a vacuum, where no single power was dominant. In fact, we have to

go back over 1,000 years to the ninth and 10th centuries, part of the so-called Dark Ages, when there was universal anarchy.

However, Mr. Ferguson makes the case that there was a more recent time when the world was in a transition period from one superpower epoch to another. That was the period between the two world wars.

At the end of World War I, the great continental European empires that had lasted for centuries had all collapsed, as had the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. The British and French Empires remained intact but had been greatly weakened by over four years of intensive conflict. The United States at this time could have taken over as world leader, but the mood of the American people was to withdraw from the world stage. The British Empire was left to manage the world as best it could. The result of this relative power vacuum two decades later was the rise of national socialism and a second major conflict that finally finished off the British Empire and left the United States sharing global leadership with Moscow.

American empire not the same as the British

In his latest book, *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire* (2004), Mr. Ferguson shows that the American empire suffers from limitations with which its predecessor, the British Empire, did not have to contend, mainly because of the third reason highlighted earlier in this article: “Most U.S. interventions in the past century have been relatively short lived.”

Whereas the British would conquer a country and then rule it indefinitely, imposing upon it a variation of the British political system, Americans prefer to go into a country with an “exit strategy” already in mind. This does not put down roots of democracy nor does it ensure long-term American interests.

On Britain’s empire going before the American empire, consider the prophetic statement of Genesis 48:20, “He set Ephraim before Manasseh.” (This biblical connection is explored in detail in our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.) The American empire took over Britain’s interna-

tional role at the end of World War II. Instead of directly ruling other nations as the British did, the Americans have military bases all over the world and try to enforce the Pax Americana through its military might. This has effectively delayed the total chaos that would have engulfed the world if the U.S. Congress in 1945 had taken the same approach as at the end of World War I, turning its back on international responsibilities and commitments.

Writing in 1940, America's preeminent historian James Truslow Adams said this of the consequences of the fall of the British Empire, at that time fighting for its life against Hitler's Third Reich: "Different peoples may have different ideals of government but for those who have been accustomed to freedom of person and of spirit, the possible overthrow of the British Empire would be a catastrophe scarcely thinkable. Not only would it leave a vacuum over a quarter of the globe into which all the wild winds of anarchy, despotism and spiritual oppression could rush, but the strongest bulwark outside ourselves for our own safety and freedom would have been destroyed" (*The British Empire, 1784-1939*, p. 358).

What Mr. Adams did not foresee was that the United States would take over from Great Britain, not the role of international caretaker, but rather that of international policeman. Consequently, the full repercussions of the fall of the British and other European empires have not yet become apparent. However, into many parts of the world where the British once ruled, "the wild winds of anarchy, despotism and spiritual oppression" have definitely rushed, including large swaths of the Middle East, which the British once dominated. An American withdrawal from the rest of the world would likely lead to universal chaos and confusion, a return to the Dark Ages not seen in over a thousand years.

Another superpower in the wings

The picture Mr. Ferguson paints fits in well with the overall picture presented in Bible prophecy. Scripture shows us that at the time of the end there will be a union of 10 kings, which is a final

resurrection of the Roman Empire. No mention is made of the United States at this point in time, but the Beast power prophesied to come clearly does not have the characteristics of the United States or Britain. It would appear that by this time the United States is no longer a major player on the world scene. Perhaps following the demise of American power we will see anarchy and despotism spread around the world, leading in a short period of time to the rise of the Beast power, purportedly to save the world from itself.

Mr. Ferguson rules out Europe as the next superpower because it's "too old." He is referring to demographics: The white population of Europe is aging rapidly. There is a very low birthrate and there is a corresponding influx of immi-

The EU economies could sustain a military on a par with that of the United States, if they really wanted to—or needed to. We believe a colossal crisis or crises are coming that will impel Europe to coalesce into that superpower form.

grants from Third World countries to make up the deficit. This is all very true, but even experts cannot see the unexpected twists and turns of history.

The June 19 issue of *The Economist* carried a three-page article comparing the economies of Europe and the United States. Comments have often been made of how moribund the euro-area economies are and how much better the American economic system works. But *The Economist* article looked more deeply into the two areas and concluded that they are on a par. This means that the EU economies could sustain a military on a par with that of the United States, if they really wanted to—or needed to.

We believe a colossal crisis or crises are coming that will impel Europe to coalesce into that superpower form. For more information, see our booklets, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. ❖

"SAME-SEX," (Continued from page 3)

This mindset is a recipe for anarchy, not freedom.

Some seem to forget that citizenship is not just about one's own personal freedoms. It also includes the rights and freedoms of others. The laws of the Bible define true freedom and form the basis of the civil governments of the United States and other Western nations.

In the United States, the concept of "civil rights" seems to be elevated above the rights of governments to establish and enforce laws that define and safeguard the freedoms of everyone. The Bible presents the law of God as "the perfect law of liberty," or as the New International Version translates it, "the perfect law that gives freedom" (James 1:25).

Redefining and rejecting the laws of God puts us on a course that threatens the freedoms that we presently enjoy and take for granted. Tampering with the longstanding definition of marriage, sometimes called a divine institution, as the union of one man and one woman, described in the opening chapters of Genesis, threatens the very building blocks of society—marriage and family.

God told the first man and woman to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). He designed the two sexes for that purpose. Two men or two women cannot produce children as biological parents. Marriage and family are also fundamental to the plan of God in the spiritual lessons that He wants us to learn from these relationships as He designed them.

Future of marriage and family

Jesus emphasized that "from the beginning of the creation God made [us] male and female" (Mark 10:6). That same Jesus promises to restore all things in His coming Kingdom (Acts 3:20-21). That will certainly include restoring the appropriate marriage and family relationships that are clearly spelled out in the Bible.

In the meantime mankind has some bitter lessons to learn from disregarding and defying these most fundamental truths of the Bible that form the moral basis of civilization. ❖

Keep Your Eyes on Iran

There's more than meets the eye with Iran's recent arrest and release of British sailors picked up in the strategic border area of Shatt al-Arab. Why doesn't Iran want Iraq to succeed? How stable is this Islamic republic, which is on the brink of becoming a nuclear power?

by Cecil E. Maranville

A few weeks ago, Iran captured eight sailors of the British Royal Navy in the Shatt al-Arab ("Stream of the Arabs"), claiming they had crossed into Iranian waters. The Shatt al-Arab, Avrand Rud in Persian, is actually the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. These historic waterways converge for their final 120 miles (200 kilometers) en route to the Persian Gulf. The rivers' strategic value to both Iran and Iraq is enormous.

Disputes over the boundary between the two countries go back centuries, with the first major treaty to resolve the matter signed in 1639. The agreed upon border was a snakelike line that followed ancient tribal customs and loyalties. But even then, the land on both sides of the waterway just above the Gulf belonged to people from the same tribe, the Marsh Arabs.

Wars over the boundary erupted sporadically through the centuries until shortly after World War I, when the middle of the river was set as the borderline.

The bitter and bloody eight-year war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s was fought over this floating boundary.

Most media reports about the conflict involving the British sailors say they were on a training mission, showing Iraqis how to patrol against oil smugglers and smugglers of foreign insurgents. Both are serious problems. Reports suggested that Iran's seizing of the sailors was a trumped-up reaction to the British (as well as French and German) accusation that Iran was not complying with the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections of its nuclear program.

But most reports seem to miss the implications of the fact that no Iraqis were detained when Iranian forces arrested the Brits. It stands to reason that there would be Iraqis involved if the British were training them at the time.

U.S. foreign policy and Middle Eastern affairs expert Michael Ledeen suggests a totally different scenario: "The Brits were laying down a network of sensors to detect the movement of ships toward major Iraqi oil terminals" ("Ready for \$60-a-Barrel Oil?" June 23, 2004).

Sabotage in Shatt al-Arab

He theorizes the Iranians or their surrogates are likely to attempt to sabotage the Iraqi oil facilities along the Shatt al-Arab, principally Basra. If this were to happen, the Iraqis could have great difficulty loading their oil onto ships at Basra, which is critical to the survival of the new Iraq. When a sabotaged oil pipeline shut down operations a few weeks ago, Iraq lost \$65 million every day it was unable to load tankers at Basra.

But Iran has a joint venture with Iraq, a 6.2-mile (10-kilometer) pipeline across the Shatt al-Arab that transports crude directly to Iranian terminals. Why would it want to sabotage Basra's facilities? Iran's mullahs are urgently intent on causing the democratizing of Iraq to fail. Not only would shutting the ports at Basra choke off Iraq's much-needed revenues, it would also provoke a spike in the price of crude oil on the world market—hence the title of Mr. Ledeen's article: "Ready for \$60-a-Barrel Oil?" The high price for crude would bring a significant windfall to Iran, which is in great need of cash.

According to such speculation, high-priced oil would create such havoc in the U.S. economy that it would likely throw the presidential election to the Iranian-favored candidate, Senator John Kerry.

The Shia clerics in Iran fear that the transformation of Iraq will incite Iranians to demand a more democratic government for their country; the mullahs do not want a democratic Iraq next door.

Tangled web of bureaucracy

Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran (the Islamic Republic of Iran) came into being on April 1, 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini won his long struggle to overthrow the shah. He continued as supreme leader until his death a decade later. The government structure is a puzzle by Western standards. Iran has elections, which may be a surprise to many. The public elects 86 clerics to the Assembly of Experts, which in turn selects one of its number to be the supreme leader for life.

Obviously, the Assembly of Experts didn't select Ayatollah Khomeini to be supreme leader,

The Shia clerics in Iran fear that the transformation of Iraq will incite Iranians to demand a more democratic government for their country; the mullahs do not want a democratic Iraq next door.

because it didn't exist when he took power. But the Iranian citizens did choose the Assembly of Experts that elected Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei.

That has a democratic sound to it, until you learn that the public isn't free to nominate whoever it wishes to run for the Assembly of Experts. Eligibility is decided by a quasi-judicial body of 12 jurists, called the Council of Guardians. Half of its members are chosen by the supreme leader and the other half are nominated by the head of the judiciary and approved by the Iranian parliament. More on the parliament in a moment, but first, take note of the tremendous power that the Council of Guardians has. In reality, it largely controls the government. These 12 men are all conservative clerics.

The country votes directly for its president. The first president chosen was the conservative Hashemi Rafsanjani. But he was routed in the presidential election of 1997, which brought in a reformer, Ali Mohammad Khatami-Ardakani, who is still in office. While he does not have the latitude to make sweeping changes in the country, his selection was unsettling to the conservative clerics and encouraging to an increasingly disillusioned and oppressed people.

Even more unsettling to the mullahs was the parliamentary election of 2000, which swept a majority of reformers into the country's legislature. But the clerics maintained such tight control that there has been little true reform. The parliament numbers 290 and is chosen by direct elections, but again, the Council of Guardians has full authority to approve or disapprove candidates.

Iran held a parliamentary election in February this year, but the results are still not known! The Council of Guardians unilaterally disqualified some 2,500 candidates—most of whom were members of the reform party and therefore seen as a threat to the conservative hold on the country.

Claims of election fraud

Further, the regime had 10,000 "mobile voting booths" driving around to gather votes. In the city of Malekan, for example, there are 45,000 eligible voters, but reports say the election tally showed 50,000 votes were cast! There were also

reports that high school students were threatened with refusal when they apply to university if they did not vote—and vote the party line. In spite of this, only 12 percent of the eligible nationwide electorate participated in the balloting. The populace is clearly disillusioned with Iran's version of participatory government.

There is still more to the web of government upon government. In 1988 there were so many conflicts between the parliament and the Council of Guardians that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini created yet another governing body to resolve those disputes. This is the Expediency Council. It evolved into an advisory body to the supreme leader, making it a powerful—and unelected—arm of government. The president of the Expediency Council is none other than former national President Hashemi Rafsanjani.

In January 2002, President Bush called Iran one of a three-part "axis of evil." He mentioned the Expediency Council in that speech, too, calling for reforms in Iran that would prevent "the unelected few" from thwarting the interests of the democratic majority.

In withdrawing from Western influence, the Islamic Republic of Iran also lost much-needed investment capital from the West. Thousands of young people are out of work. Twenty-five years ago, the students of the country supported Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution that toppled the shah and severed ties with the West. Interestingly, it could well be the students of today who spark the movement that throws off the conservative Islamic restraints and causes Iran to look westward again.

Terror and the nuclear threat

True to President Bush's description of the Iranian regime being evil, Iran is a bla-



Members of Iran's leadership (Parliament Speaker Gholamali Haddadadel, President Mohammad Khatami, former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, former Speaker Mehdi Karroubi, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Judiciary Chief Mahmood Shahroodi) sit beneath a portrait of Supreme Leader Khamenei during a ceremony to mark the the 15th anniversary of the death of the founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran June 3, 2004.

tant subsidizer of terrorism. It is no secret that Iran sponsors Hezbollah ("Party of God"), "the world's most successful, and perhaps most dangerous, terrorist organization," said *The New Yorker Online's* Jeffrey Goldberg ("Party of God," Oct. 7, 2002). Before 9/11, Goldberg notes, Hezbollah killed more Americans than any terrorist group, including 241 marines slain in their Beirut barracks, and about 60 other Americans in other attacks.

Backing Hezbollah puts Iran hand-in-hand with Syria, another of the terrorists' patrons. As yet unexplained is Syria's association with the terrorists who nearly pulled off the worst terrorist attack in history in Jordan recently. Some of the criminals came from Syria, as well as some, if not all, of the weapons of mass destruction with which they were caught.

Reuters/Rahab Homavandi

Iran has feverishly poured insurgents into Iraq, before and after the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, to try to destroy it and then to manipulate control of the country. If the mullahs cannot control Iraq, they want it in chaos, so it will not threaten their rule in Iran. We reported the Iranian regime's plain backing of the troublesome Moqtada al-Sadr in our last issue.

Another rather startling development has been under reported by the world's press: A Saudi newspaper, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, says that Iran has massed four battalions on the Iran-Iraq border, presumably ready to enter the country in the event that the new Iraqi government crumbles and the Coalition pulls out.

Reminiscent of the "Saddam two-step" with the IAEA, Iran is resisting having UN inspectors monitor its nuclear facilities. The regime huffed indignantly at the suggestion its nuclear power program cloaked a weapons program. So, for a while, the world turned a blind eye toward Iran's nuclear activities, in spite of plain evidence from U.S. spy satellites. Removing all pretenses to the contrary in late June, Iran defiantly announced that it would resume production of uranium centrifuges, the only use of which is the production of nuclear weapons.

Sex slavery and drug addiction

Although Western nations are in no position to cast any stones in the arena of sexual misconduct, some aspects of life within Iran are particularly horrendous. Donna M. Hughes writes for *Insight on the News* magazine that Iranian women and girls are sold as sex slaves by the thousands. She reports that the sex slave trade is one of the most profitable activities in the country. The victims are sold throughout the Persian Gulf region, as well as to Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Drug addiction is a huge problem in the poverty-stricken country, and some parents are even selling their daughters for drugs. After the Bam earthquake, slave traders kidnapped many orphaned girls and took them to a sex slave market in Tehran.

One might think that the strict conservative mullahs would prevent such a horror, but some "government officials themselves are involved in buying, selling and sexually abusing women and girls" ("Iran's Sex Slaves Suffer Hideously Under Mullahs," May 28, 2004). There are

reports of girls who have run away from the rural areas to cities to take refuge in shelters, only to have government officials force them into prostitution and then run the prostitution rings. Women have reported that in order to get a judge (who is a religious authority) to grant a divorce, they are required to have sex with him.

The social conditions—unemployment, drug addiction, exploitation of women—make for tremendous unrest. In response the mullahs are tightening their grip. The Council of Guardians and the Expediency Council effectively ended the reform party by excluding its candidates from the parliamentary elections in February. But rather than capping the nation's unrest, the mullahs may be forcing a situation that can only explode.

It seems American foreign policy is betting on that to happen. (Undoubtedly, the United States is working behind the scenes to encourage opposition groups.) Europe has left Iran to its own ways, largely because of the EU's dependence upon Iranian oil.

What will happen next?

Will Iran metamorphose into a stable Islamic democracy? That's highly unlikely. Or will it succeed in ruining a democratic Iraq and create a twin of itself, an Islamic republic under Shia control? It will likely try to accomplish this.

Will it stand down from its entrance into the nuclear club? Iran's leaders are answering with a defiant "No!" Or will it develop nuclear warheads for its missiles capable of striking Israel and all other nations in the region? As frightening as this scenario is, it's the logical progression of having a nuclear weapons program.

Will it terminate its sponsorship of Hezbollah and rogue terrorist groups? That's not likely. Or will it succeed in installing an Islamic republic in Lebanon? This is one of the main objectives of Hezbollah, along with wounding Israel at every opportunity.

What happens next in Iran clearly portends major consequences for the Middle East and for the world. Watch Iran, which stands in the shadow of the once mighty Persian Empire, spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Be sure to use our free booklet, *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, to analyze developments in the light of Bible prophecy. ❖

"MARTYRDOM," (Continued from page 5)

depending on the circumstances, to play fast and loose with the commandments of God—the Ten Commandments. You view it in the movies and on television, you hear it on the radio, you see it when you visit your news shop—it's everywhere. It's a message of situation ethics. And, in spite of all that you see in the Bible such as those verses quoted in this article, many churches preach messages that claim God's laws are no longer binding today.

A Christian lives in a world dangerous to his or her salvation. He or she has to actively avoid evil influences to survive spiritually. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," says the apostle Paul, adding that God will help you to do it (Philippians 2:12-13).

The last generation of Christians that successfully overcomes the world and triumphs over these evils with the help of God is sure to become very unpopular to the point of blatant, undisguised hatred.

Persecution in its extreme forms is sure to happen, just as it has to the Jewish people throughout much of their history, and particularly during the period of the Holocaust. Jesus said: "And the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

Although true Christianity is never easy and we only enter the Kingdom of God after many trials and tribulations (Acts 14:22), the rewards in the family of God will far outweigh both our present and future difficulties. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). ❖

Recommended Reading

To better understand the background and thrust of this article, please request our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Is There Really a Devil?*



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download them from our Web site at www.ucg.org

In Brief...

World News Review

The Money to Select a President

Millions and millions of dollars are being collected and spent in the U.S. presidential bid. The most ever spent by candidates for president was \$343.1 million in the 2000 election. The actual total of money spent was much higher, \$528.9 million, which included general election public funding and convention public funding.

The rate at which money is being spent in this election cycle indicates that it will probably set a new record. As we go to press, the latest totals of funds raised for Senator John Kerry is \$180 million. President George W. Bush raised \$215 million for his reelection before stopping to raise funds for others.

There was a great ballyhoo over undue influence on candidates through large campaign contributions during the 2000 election cycle, which led to the U.S. Congress' passing of a campaign finance reform law. No sooner had the law taken effect than organizations and individuals began to pour money through loopholes.

One way is through groups supposedly not controlled by the political parties, such as MoveOn.org and The Media Fund, both opposing President Bush, which have spent about \$25 million as of the end of May.

There are countless ways to rain money into a campaign. Linda Chavez, former union official and author of *Betrayal: How Union Bosses Shake Down Their Members and Corrupt American Politics* gives us this shocking insight: "Unions spend [an] estimated \$800 million [on the presidential campaign], much of it hidden in the form of salaries for union officials assigned to work on political campaigns, get-out-the-vote efforts, and other unregulated contributions" ("Union Influence," Townhall.com, June 16, 2004, emphasis added).

Opensecrets.org catalogs the money spent in the 2004 presidential election cycle up through the end of May. First consider nine unsuccessful candidates for the Democrat ticket:

- Howard Dean—\$51.5 million.
- John Edwards—\$32.4 million.
- Wesley Clark—\$28.6 million.
- Dick Gephardt—\$20.9 million.
- Joe Lieberman—\$18.7 million.
- Dennis Kucinich—11.4 million.
- Bob Graham—\$5.4 million.
- Al Sharpton—\$687,000.
- Carol Moseley Braun—\$600,000.

On their own quest for the White House:

- Lyndon Larouche—\$9.3 million.
- Ralph Nader—\$900,000.
- John Kerry—\$120.4 million.
- George W. Bush—\$150.3 million.

That comes to a little over \$450 million, with more than five months and two major conventions to go. That does not include money spent on the races for the U.S. Senate and House openings, already nearly \$360 million. And these figures do not include the actual cost of receiving, tallying and reporting the votes (or the cost of legal challenges, such as in Florida in the 2000 election cycle). Nor does it measure the amount of money spent by the news media reporting on the campaigns.

The actual cost of the 2004 election cycle will certainly exceed a billion dollars and likely more—much, much more. Saying it isn't so bad, Pete Du Pont noted: The U.S. spends twice to three times as much on potato chips as it does on political activity—merely 0.05 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product ("Hooray for Campaign Spending," *OpinionJournal*, wsj.com, July 11, 2001). He added that \$100 million was spent in 1995 just to market Seinfeld reruns. (Not only does the amount of money spent on elections seem obscene, but the idea that so much is spent on potato chips and TV's "slop culture" is not cheerful either!)

Saudi Arabia: Trouble Taming the Tiger

For decades, Saudi school children have been taught anti-Semitic and anti-American propaganda. It was no fluke that 15 of the 19 9/11 terrorists were Saudi Arabian. A recently released Saudi intelligence poll shows that Osama bin Laden could have had thousands more volunteers. Taken just weeks after 9/11, the survey found that 95 percent of Saudi Arabians from ages 25 to 41—with college educations—supported the terrorist.

Clearly, the long-held premise that terrorists are poor and uneducated is no longer true.

Even Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah recently let slip an anti-Semitic remark, saying in a news conference after a terrorist attack on a Saudi oil refinery that the Jews were to blame. MSNBC reported the crown prince's statement: "Zionism is behind it. It has become clear now. It has become clear to



U.S. presidential campaign Web sites are bringing in new money as the 2004 campaign promises to be the most expensive yet.

us. I don't say, I mean . . . It is not 100 percent, but 95 percent that the Zionist hands are behind what happened."

The Saudi interior minister followed with this absurd claim: "Al-Qaeda is backed by Israel and Zionism" (Andrew L. Jaffee, "Saudis Blame Jews for Terror," June 19, 2004).

Coming from average citizens, these statements would be unsettling. Coming from the head of the government and a chief aide, they are deeply disturbing.

Anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism were undoubtedly in keeping with the thinking of the Arab peoples of the 1950s. It seems natural for poor people to hate the prosperous. Slandering others—especially Jews—undoubtedly seemed harmless. Strengthening nationalism through denigrating other nations that were traditionally unpopular was the easy way, and the Saudi government chose the easy way.

It allowed, encouraged and funded the radical Islamist Wahhabi sect. When the sect evolved into a threat to the sprawling self-indulgent Saudi royal family, the government continued funding the Wahhabis as virtual protection money. "We will fund you to take your radical actions to other countries; just leave Saudi Arabia alone" seems to have been the understanding.

For the very same terrorist attack that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah blamed the Jews on Saudi TV, the Saudi government told the Western press that the culprits were al-Qaeda: One message for the folks at home; another for the West. That is, the government has wanted it both ways: anti- and pro-American.

In this cozy little world, back in 1990 Osama bin Laden (living in Saudi Arabia at the time) actually offered his forces to the royal family to help it remove Saddam Hussein's invading troops from Kuwait.

Throughout the decades of teaching little children to hate the United States and Israel—throughout the decades of funding radical Islamic ideas—Saudi Arabia was also an ally of the United States. It made that plain to all Arabs by allowing a U.S. base on its soil in the 1991 Gulf War.

Now the tiger has returned home to attack its keeper. The Saudi's duplicity began to backfire after the United States pressured the kingdom to expel bin Laden in 1994. His al-Qaeda terrorists are now attacking Saudi Arabia from within.

So, we have a truly bizarre phenomenon: Anti-Semitic, anti-American terrorists are attacking Saudi Arabia for being pro-America and therefore pro-Israel, while the Saudi government officials blame the Jews (and therefore America) for the terrorists' attacks.

The Saudis are sitting on a ticking bomb—a nation of people schooled in prejudice and terrorists who no longer honor their protection money. Increasing unemployment and decreasing government handouts make the nation ripe for revolution.

A Shrinking Wheat Belt?

There was a time in the American plains when the wheat harvest was so abundant that the silos and barns were filled to overflowing. The grain was piled in the streets of small farm-

ing towns till it could be shipped off to market. The scene has changed in recent years as America's role as the world's dominant wheat producer has diminished.

According to a recent piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, the United States now claims just one quarter of the world wheat export market. Other nations with cheaper land and labor have become better at farming and are taking advantage of falling trade barriers. Some economists predict that within 20 years America may no longer be a net exporter.

Terry Zetterlund, the loan officer at Great Plains Bank in Eureka, South Dakota, advises clients to get out of wheat if they want to stay in business. "We aren't the big player anymore," he says.

America's agricultural balance of trade is being pressured by the country's growing appetite for largely imported foods such as olives and avocados. If current trends continue, the United States might run an agricultural trade deficit by the end of the decade, according to calculations by economists at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana (June 18, 2004).

In a historic reversal, wheat is again pouring out of the Black Sea region of Russia. Long a sleeping giant with an abundant supply of cheap, fertile soil, Russia is now putting that land to work through political and market reforms. Combined with neighbors Ukraine and Kazakhstan, Russia will supply 11 percent of the world's wheat exports over the next 12 months, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Some economists see the region controlling 20 percent in about a decade.



Some economists predict that within 20 years America may no longer be a net exporter of wheat.

A series of events beginning with the Crimean War in the mid-1800s altered the Russian farming climate, resulting in the migration of farmers to the American plains where similar growing conditions enabled them and their descendants to grow America into the "world's bread basket."

Two years ago a U.S. drought diminished its wheat crop, allowing Russia to temporarily pass it as the leading wheat exporter. America has recovered, but USDA economists say Russia's wheat production could soar 30 percent within a decade if it adopts further reforms. That would pressure U.S. exports to places like the Middle East.

Drought, competition and other factors are placing the American wheat farmer into riskier positions. The wheat belt is being drawn tighter.

Contributors: Cecil Maranville and Darris McNeely

“TIME;” (Continued from page 16)

Republicans could only afford to lose six of their own party members’ votes. Six Republicans had already stated they would vote “not guilty.” “Infamy!” cried the *Philadelphia Press*. “The Republic has been betrayed in the House of its friends.”

But what about Edmund Ross? He was the only man who had not declared his vote, and it would be his vote that would make the difference in American history.

“I . . . looked down into my open grave”

Initially Sen. Ross had been considered a sure vote for conviction. Here was a “Kansas man” who had been proabolition, a major in the army who had voted negatively toward every Johnson initiative to this point. He had condemned President Johnson’s treatment of Secretary Stanton. He neither liked the president personally or politically. Yet he was openly condemned for not announcing his conclusions in a preliminary poll.

Sen. Ross generated deep concern with his words to Sen. Sprague of Rhode Island. “Well, Sprague, the thing is here; and, so far as I am concerned, though I am Republican and opposed to Mr. Johnson and his policy, he shall have as fair a trial as an accused man ever had on this earth.”

Mr. Kennedy described the intense pressures Ross faced: “Ross and his fellow doubtful Republicans were daily pestered, spied upon, and subjected to every form of pressure. Their residences were carefully watched, their social circles suspiciously scrutinized, and their every move and companions secretly marked in special notebooks. They were warned in the party press, harangued by their constituents, and sent dire warnings threatening political ostracism and even assassination.”

Mr. Kennedy quoted from David Miller Dewitt’s *Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*: “The full brunt of the struggle

turned at last on the one remaining doubtful Senator, Edmund G. Ross.” Replying to a threatening letter from a constituent, Sen. Ross laid the gauntlet down by declaring: “I have taken an oath to do impartial justice according to the Constitution and laws, and trust that



“I almost literally looked down into my open grave. Friendships, position, fortune, everything that makes life desirable to an ambitious man were about to be swept away by the breath of my mouth, perhaps forever”
(Edmund G. Ross).

I shall have the courage to vote according to the dictates of my judgement and for the highest good of the country.”

Then the moment of truth came. Sen. Ross would freeze-frame the dramatic moment years later by reminiscing, “It was a tremendous responsibility, and it was not strange that he upon whom it had been imposed by a fateful combination of conditions should have sought to avoid it, to put it away from him as one shuns, or tries to fight off a nightmare . . . I almost literally looked down into my open grave. Friendships, position, fortune, everything that makes life desirable to an ambitious man were

about to be swept away by the breath of my mouth, perhaps forever.”

Sen. Ross’s lament reminds one of another time and place when Mordecai warned and encouraged Esther by stating, “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13-14). At times like this, one must dig deep, dig true and, yes, seemingly alone.

Sen. Ross’s hero, Abraham Lincoln, once stated, “I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the

reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left and that friend shall be down inside of me.”

President Lincoln was a reader of the Bible. Perhaps in the challenging moments of life and leadership he had pondered what Christ had stated in Matthew 16:25-26: “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

“How say you?”

In the day of judgment, the chief justice finally came down the roll call to Sen. Ross and inquired, “How say you? Is the respondent Andrew Johnson guilty or not guilty of a high misdemeanor as charged in this article?”

John F. Kennedy summed up the dramatic moment this way: “Every voice was still; every eye was upon the freshman Senator from Kansas. The hopes and fears, the hatred and bitterness of past decades were centered upon this one man.” In a determined voice, Sen. Ross stated, “Not guilty!” For all practical purposes the trial was over and the conviction lost.

What were the thoughts behind these two simple words from a man who personally and politically disliked the man on trial? Years later, Edmund Ross would write in magazine articles that “in a large sense, the independence of the executive office as a coordinate branch of the government was on trial . . . If . . . the President must step down . . . a disgraced man and a political outcast . . . upon insufficient proofs and from partisan considerations, the office of President would be degraded, cease to be a coordinate branch of the government, and ever after subordinated to the legislative will.”

One thing was for sure. The vision of the “open grave” was real. Sen. Ross immediately began to receive threats and insults. One stated, “Kansas repudiates you as she does all perjurers and skunks.” A Kansas supreme court judge sent him a wire stating, “The rope with which Judas Iscariot hanged himself is lost, but Jim Lane’s pistol is at your ser-

vice.” (Jim Lane, a suicide victim, had been the previous senator from Kansas whom Ross had replaced.)

Sen. Ross would serve out his term and would often during that time be referred to as “traitor.” Secretary of War Stanton would come out of his self-imposed office barricade, President Johnson would later serve as a senator from Tennessee, but Ross and each of the other six Republicans would never return to elected office. Politically, *they were through*.

It would take the country 20 years to catch its breath from the Civil War period and come to its senses. The “Tenure-of-Office” act was found unconstitutional. “Those Kansas newspapers and political leaders who had denounced him in earlier years praised Ross for his stand against legislative mob rule,” Kennedy wrote. “By the firmness and courage of Senator Ross, *the country was saved* from calamity greater than war, while it consigned him to a political martyrdom, the most cruel in our history . . . *He acted right*” (emphasis added).

The difference between the holy and profane

Why should Edmund Ross’s example be important to us? Revelation 5:10 states that God will make us “kings and priests.” Ruling within God’s government and making sound judgments and decisions are part of the future of the resurrected Christians who will assist Christ in the literal Kingdom of God on this earth. In 1 Corinthians 6:2, Paul states, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” This requires decision making that may affect human life and the well-being of future generations.

In Ezekiel 44:23-24, God offers this job description of priests by stating, “They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments.”

What is the difference between the holy and the profane? In one sense, the things that are holy are those matters that stand the test of time, because they are godly in nature. They are mat-

ters that move beyond convenience, haste, emotion and a rush to judgment. The unclean and profane items may seem good for the moment, offering instant gratification to and winning the applause of sincere people.

Values over feelings

Yet God is not nearly as interested in feelings as in the values that ultimately shape society. Edmund Ross lived in times that were emotional, dizzy and dismaying. The country had just experienced the greatest single conflict of its brief history—a war that pitted brother against brother.

Proverbs 29:18 so aptly states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (King James Version). On principle, Sen. Ross recognized that an erosion of presidential power by a vengeful Congress would not only pave the path to an even harder reconstruction, but would also jeopardize all future presidents facing matters of vital national interest. In one of the darkest episodes of U.S. political history, one man stood out as a light of reasoned principle.

Zechariah 8:23 prophetically indicates that in God’s Kingdom people of vision and principle will be in demand because such values will be *immediately* recognized as precious—not 20 years later as was the case for Ross’ wisdom. Notice what it says: “Ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man [a godly man], saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

Values, convictions and courage are like lighthouses in a dark world. Perhaps even now you are facing situations in which you seem to “stand alone” on principle.

We read examples like Esther and Edmund Ross to know that we are not alone. Ultimately, what is most important is not what we know, but what we do—starting today. Edmund Ross’ courageous example during the trial of his century certainly exemplifies the millennial refrain of Isaiah 30:21, “This is the way, walk in it.” But his time and trial is past. Let’s move forward toward our present and future trials with the same moral fortitude. ❖

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by Robin Webber

'For Such a Time as This'

Many men and women through history have stood up for what they believed was right and just, even when the majority was against them. Such courage serves to encourage us, whether on the home front or in the halls of power.

In 1955, then Sen. John F. Kennedy wrote a book titled *Profiles in Courage*. The book contains a number of short stories that depict Americans who made a difference in their time, including John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Sam Houston and a little-known figure, Edmund G. Ross. Mr. Kennedy opened the profile of Mr. Ross by focusing the reader "on a lonely grave, forgotten and unknown, [where] lies 'the man who saved a President.'"

Edmund Ross was the freshman senator from Kansas who cast the pivotal vote of "not guilty" that ultimately derailed any possible conviction of President Andrew Johnson in his 1868 impeachment trial.

The die is cast

Let's understand the times and the man. The Civil War was over. The victorious North, through the "Radical Republican" majority in Congress, was in the process of imposing a harsh peace on the vanquished Southern Confederacy. Mr. Kennedy stated that Abraham Lincoln "prior to his death had already clashed with extremists in Congress, [who] had opposed his approach to reconstruction in a constitutional and charitable manner and sought to make the Legislative Branch of the government supreme."

The main target was none other than the courageous, if less than tactful, President Andrew Johnson, a Tennessean

who had been the only Southern member of Congress to refuse to secede with his state. President Johnson had committed himself to the "policies of the Great Emancipator to whose high station he had succeeded only by the course of an assassin's bullet."

The flash point issue was the recently passed "Tenure-of-Office" bill, which essentially gave Congress the power over the president concerning removal of government personnel. The pivotal act of no return on President Johnson's part was the firing of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, whom he had inherited from President Lincoln, but whom he considered a tool of the "Radical Republicans" and a near military dictator of the conquered South.

Initially, this "Tenure-of-Office" act did not specifically include cabinet members. Secretary Stanton, sensing the moment and the mood of Congress and the American people, barricaded himself in his office and there remained. The die was cast.

The political atmosphere was incredibly tense and threatening. Thaddeus Stevens, master of the House of Representatives "with a mouth like the thin edge of an ax," coldly stated the prevailing feelings against the president: "Let me see the recreant who would vote to let such a criminal escape. Point me to one who will dare do it and I will show you one who will dare the infamy of posterity." As the trial moved forward, "the chief interest was not in the trial or the evidence, but in the tallying of votes necessary for conviction."

The numbers game became the all-telling focus. It would take a two-thirds majority to convict. The Democratic senators' vote was taken as lost. The

(See "TIME," page 14)