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Waves of Devastation and Disaster: What Do They Mean for You?

As we struggle to come to terms with the worst earthquake in 40 years and the Indian Ocean tsunamis that followed in its wake, we should be asking important questions like "Where is God?" and "What spiritual lessons should we learn?"

by John Ross Schroeder

Yesterday evening my wife, Jan, and I were entertaining a couple, two longtime friends, in our home. Just before dinner my friend asked me if I had heard about the Asian tsunami. I hadn't, since I'd been very busy with regional editorial tasks.

We turned on CNN and it quickly became very apparent that the world had a major disaster on its hands. A series of earthquake-triggered tsunamis had brought sudden death and destruction to parts of Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and other areas of Southeast Asia and Africa.

The death toll at the time was estimated at 4,800. This figure soon began to rise exponentially. It now appears the final toll will pass 150,000, with many more thousands of deaths from disease predicted to follow.

The irony of partaking of a delicious evening meal with close friends right in the midst of a monumental disaster half a world away was not lost on me. Feelings of guilt crossed my mind. But it was not until the early hours of the next morning,



A damaged house on Phi Phi Islands in southern Thailand, Dec. 27, 2004, after a tsunami swept through this tourist resort (Reuters/Surapan Boonthanom)

as I could not sleep, that the full impact and meaning began to hit me.

Where is God?

Most of the many morning newspaper accounts attributed the tide of death to the awesome power unleashed by our own planet. The term "nature" was used over and over again, implying some sort of force beyond reason or understanding was involved.

We acknowledge our own fragility in (See "DISASTER," page 3)



**World News
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BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

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

Editor: Don Ward

Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editors: Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson, Cecil E. Maranville

Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things . . ." ACTS 3:21

Signs of Our Times

Students of Bible prophecy have long searched the Scriptures to try to understand the times in which they live. Like Christ's disciples, we want to know what will be the signs of His coming in the power of the universe.

Every year at this time we see the usual reviews of the past year and projections of what will come in the next. At this time of year, I'm always curious to read a publication by *The Economist* titled *The World in 2005*; its editors try to look ahead and give us a forecast of what is to be. However, we are safer if we stay with what Jesus Christ outlined in His Olivet Prophecy of Matthew 24. Here Christ spoke of the impact of false religion, war, famine, pestilence and other specific indicators. These are the well-known "four horsemen" of Revelation 6, the first four of seven seals.

In Matthew 24:7 He mentioned "earthquakes in diverse places." As I write, the world is dealing with last month's earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Indonesia. More than 150,000 are known dead (some estimates are as high as 1 million) and many thousands more are likely to die from disease and starvation in the aftermath of the destruction. Ironically this quake occurred one year to the day after another huge quake killed thousands in northern Iran.

The past decade has seen a rise in what some call "superdisasters" that take an increasing toll in life and property. It does little to scoff and say that disasters have always occurred or that modern communication does a better job of reporting events. We are seeing events foretold by Christ—events He says are just "the beginning of sorrows." We grieve at the loss of life in Asia and want to reach out to do what we can. But we must brace ourselves for more to come.

Christ highlighted Jerusalem and the Middle East as a place to watch (Matthew 24:15-16). Events there continue to move the world closer to prophesied events. Iran's nuclear capability is a growing threat that will not go away. The Iranian regime has shown itself hostile to Israel and those who back her. With North Korea and Iraq, it is part of what U.S. President George W. Bush called an "axis of evil" three years ago.

Radical Islamic elements continue to push outward, threatening to upset the stability of other Western nations. The recent brutal stabbing of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh has been a wake-up call in some quarters of Europe. Some realize the potential threat of an unassimilated Muslim minority in many West European countries. Reason, tolerance and a pluralistic approach do not work with every group of immigrants. A terrorist attack on Europe of the magnitude of the Sept. 11 attacks on America could push Europe into a reactionary status that could change its demeanor. An aroused Europe could come against Middle Eastern nations that harbor or support terrorists. This would mark a dramatic fulfillment of prophecy.

Christ's warning about the rise of false religion extends into Revelation 17 where He shows a global economic power coupled with a great religious power. This system is called Babylon the Great and holds sway over the world. Major changes will take place in the world we know today to create this colossus.

World News and Prophecy has a mission to explain the meaning of today's news in the light of Bible prophecy. Each year brings us closer to the fulfillment of these major prophecies. It is not always pleasant to have to bring this chronicle of bad news to the attention of our audience. But we must be true to the biblical mandate to watch and to warn. And we are careful to always frame our message with the true and living hope of the promise of the "restoration of all things" that Christ, the glorious fifth horseman of Revelation, will ultimately bring. Christ promised to shorten the days of trouble that lie ahead and rescue this world. In that promise is our true hope.

—Darris McNeely

“DISASTER,” (Continued from page 1)

the face of this terrifying demonstration of what we call “nature’s power.” As noted British columnist William Rees-Mogg stated in *The Times*: “We are not in control; the tsunami has demonstrated this ancient truth” (Dec. 27, 2004). That’s true, but there is more to the story.

Few understand that very long ago God placed on earth an archangel named Lucifer (specially created as a bringer of light). Eventually he chose to rebel against his Creator, turning this beautiful planet into a sorry scene of waste, confusion and devastation. (The story of how Lucifer became Satan the devil is primarily told in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. To understand in much more detail, please request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

Later, in seven days God restored and renewed the earth into the idyllic place it had once been. He created the first man and woman and placed them in the Garden of Eden. But like the fallen Lucifer, they too rebelled against their Creator and God had no option but to banish them from their paradiselike garden. Adam and Eve set a pattern of disobedience for mankind, and we have been going astray from God ever since.

But from the very first, God has had a plan for the redemption of humankind (Revelation 13:8). He made our kind in His very own image and He has never given up on us. So our Creator has on occasion directly intervened in human affairs to keep that plan on course, knowing that in due time He would bring it to full fruition.

In His divine wisdom and to help fulfill His basic purpose, God has chosen to leave Satan in charge of this earth until the time of the future return of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul acknowledged the devil’s rulership by calling Satan “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). Three times in the book of John, Jesus referred to Satan as the ruler (“prince” in the King James Version) of this world.

The patriarch Job suffered greatly at the hands of the devil. In a series of disasters—one involving a great windstorm and another that may have been a bolt of lightning—Satan destroyed everything Job possessed, leaving only him and his wife.

Satan then afflicted him physically to the extent that his three friends didn’t even

recognize him at first. God allowed this to happen to Job for a great spiritual purpose. After he had deeply repented and learned the lesson, God gave him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10-16).

This tragic incident illustrates the power of Satan as the ruler of this present world and demonstrates his eagerness to bring suffering on humankind. This is not to say that he is behind every disaster like this latest earthquake/tsunami or every personal misfortune, but to highlight his harmful influence during “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). He has the power to spread misery and suffering throughout his domain.

So the question remains: Why does



An elephant helps clear the debris of houses damaged by the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

God sometimes allow such devastation to take place, and what should our reaction be?

How should we respond when disaster occurs?

Jesus called to mind a disastrous accident in teaching us all a very important lesson. Referring to a great tragedy in Jerusalem, He said: “. . . Those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; *but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:4-5, emphasis added throughout).

Our shortsighted way of life often brings on the potential for disaster. God has created a world of cause and effect. Proverbs 26:2 tells us that “the curse does

not come without a cause” (Bible in Basic English). Sometimes, however, there is a long time lapse between cause and consequence. This is what deceives humans into thinking that they can get away with their evil deeds (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Somehow we like to play Russian roulette with our precious lives.

This world is recklessly drinking iniquity (lawlessness) like water. We are removing ourselves farther and farther away from God and His righteous way of life, willingly rejecting His blessings and protection.

Herein lies the answer to the question, “Where is God?” People have pushed Him out of their lives and even out of their consciences. And He is allowing them to do so, for now.

This morning *The Daily Telegraph* in London published two editorials on the same page. Not surprisingly, the first one was titled: “A Terrible Reminder That Nature Is Dangerous” (Dec. 27, 2004). It was about the disastrous effects of the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean.

The second, just below, was entitled: “Losing Our Religion.” The connection between the two will become obvious. This last editorial consisted of commenting on an accompanying feature article in the same paper titled: “Britons’ Belief in God Vanishing as Religion Is Replaced by Apathy.” Likewise the drophead read: “The national mood towards faith is one of indifference.”

The second editorial talked about Britain “becoming a nation of shoulder-shrugging agnostics who, instead of thinking systematically about religion, *react to tragedy by improvising rituals with the nearest objects to hand*, such as flowers or teddy bears” (emphasis added). God, of course, would far prefer that the reaction be personal repentance of their individual transgressions of His law.

(The British example is used simply because England is where I live and needed information is more readily accessible. If I still resided in my native United States, its example would probably be more appropriate. America acknowledges God to a much greater degree than Britain, but still doesn’t live His way.)

The latest British poll conducted by *The Daily Telegraph* is far from encouraging. The feature article mentioned earlier sums up the startling findings: “In 1968

more than three quarters of people, 77 per cent, said they did believe in God. That figure has fallen by nearly half to 44 per cent—a minority of the population. *The proportion prepared to admit that it does not believe in God has more than trebled from a mere 11 per cent in the late-1960s to 35 per cent today.*”

Reacting with repentance

It's very encouraging to see that the Western nations (including Britain) have immediately pledged millions of dollars of disaster aid and have begun airlifts of desperately needed supplies to these battered regions. This tradition of generosity and help for those in need is an outgrowth of these nations' long Judeo-Christian heritage and is to be highly commended.

But how should we *personally* react to a disaster of such enormous proportions—no matter how far away? Again, Jesus Christ said not to take our lives and well-being for granted, that they can disappear in an instant due to circumstances beyond our control. *Personal repentance*, He said, is the only sensible response to disaster (Luke 13:1-5).

We need not go farther than our track record with the Ten Commandments. Our nations continually break God's great spiritual law with seeming impunity, and then we wonder why bad things tend to happen.

When God sent His prophets to warn ancient Israel, the inhabitants often reacted by stoning them. Later He sent His very own Son and they likewise murdered Him. Then the Church Jesus built was assigned the task. It is still on the job. But few today really and truly like to hear where their misguided way of life is taking them.

We don't like God interfering in our business. As mentioned above, an increasing number don't even acknowledge His existence. Even those who do generally fail to keep His Commandments.

One of the purposes of this prophetic publication is a call to repentance. If you are stealing in some way, heed the words of the apostle Paul: “Let him who stole steal no longer” (Ephesians 4:28). If you are having an affair, remember the words of the book of Hebrews: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and *adulterers God will judge*” (Hebrews 13:4). Jesus simply said to a woman He had forgiven: “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

No matter what course your neighbor or your nation as a whole may take, you can turn from your sins and begin to live a righteous life by the indwelling of Jesus Christ through the power of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20). As a reader of this newsletter, you are most likely being called to repentance by your Creator.

Don't leave your life to the vagaries of time and chance. Act now!

They haven't perished forever

One final but important point is that the many innocents who perished in this disaster have not perished forever. God will cause them to live again in a world of peace and safety. And, more importantly, they will then have an opportunity to become His sons and daughters too. To understand more fully, please request or download our free booklet *What Happens After Death?* (www.ucg.org/booklets). ❖

Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ said the appropriate response to disasters is personal repentance. The Christian way of life is a way of changing to become like Christ. Request *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* to learn more about the Bible teaching on this vital subject. It is provided free of charge.



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

Deadly Earthquakes and Killer Tsunamis

The 20th century saw 10 devastating earthquakes, each killing more than 50,000 men, women and children. The worst was the 1976 catastrophe that took about 650,000 lives in China. The other deadly temblors struck Japan, the former Soviet Union, Italy, Peru, Pakistan and Iran.

America is also in danger. Besides Los Angeles and San Francisco, other U.S. cities that could experience major earthquake damage are Anchorage, Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Las Vegas, Reno, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, St. Louis, Memphis, Atlanta, Charleston, New York, Newark and Boston (from a Federal Emergency Management Administration study released in 2000).

Modern scientists are coming to understand more and more about fault lines and the stresses of plate tectonics. They are beginning to uncover some of the mysteries of what causes earthquakes. But scientific knowledge is not a substitute for an understanding of biblical prophecy.

Consider the prophet Isaiah's description of how the earth will be rocked and laid waste, most likely during the end-time fulfillments of Christ's Olivet Prophecy (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) and similar prophecies depicted in Revelation.

“The foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up,

the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; *so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion* that it falls—never to rise again” (Isaiah 24:18-20, New International Version).

As discussed above, time and chance and the unseen evil spirit ruler of this world play a part in disasters today. But the Bible talks about the ultimate cause of a series of end-time disasters being humanity's moral conduct. Mankind rebels against God and His way of life. We cannot deny that bad things happen when God's great spiritual law is continually broken. Notice verse 21: “In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.”

Luke 21:25 may be describing end-time tsunamis. Jesus Christ said: “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, *nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea*” (NIV). Witnesses described the noise of the tsunamis in Southeast Asia as the roaring of a jet engine or a freight train. People are now much more aware of the deadly force of giant ocean waves.

If you would like to understand what the Bible says is ahead for humankind, please write for our free brochures *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. ❖

On the European Union Menu: Turkey

Though many in Europe oppose Muslim Turkey's admission to the European Union, the EU has agreed to begin official negotiations. Where will this lead? What does Bible prophecy reveal?

by Paul Kieffer

At their final summit meeting for the year, held in Brussels on Dec. 16 and 17, 2004, leaders of the European Union reached a historic agreement to begin official negotiations with Turkey on that country's bid for full membership in the EU.

If negotiations are successful, Turkey would become the EU's first Muslim country. Since a sizable portion of Turkey is also outside the traditional geographic scope of Europe, the Brussels decision is viewed by some political observers as setting the stage for a new phase in EU development.

For those living beyond the borders of Europe, the question of Turkish membership in the EU may seem a distant and trivial issue. But Bible prophecy suggests that it could be the first step in radically changing Europe's present relationship with the rest of the world.

No real appetite for Turkey since 1963

Turkey's relationship with what became the European Union began in 1963 when Turkey was granted "associated" status, which provided it preferential trade status and other benefits. Turkey first applied for full EU membership in 1987. However, a number of issues repeatedly blocked progress toward official negotiations. Among them were Turkey's occasionally unstable political system and its human rights record, which were deemed incompatible with European standards.

However, the EU repeatedly indicated its willingness to begin official talks on membership, provided Turkey continued its internal reform process. For example, Turkey announced two years ago that it would no longer carry out the death penalty, one of the prerequisites for EU membership (no EU member country has a death penalty).

Despite the undeniable progress Turkey has made in adopting European standards, the possibility of Turkey becoming a full member makes many EU leaders and citizens nervous. An interesting dichotomy has emerged between some EU



German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan pose before a meeting in Brussels, Dec. 16, 2004. EU leaders were poised to set a date to start accession talks with Turkey (Reuters/Anatolian)

leaders and their citizens, especially in France and Germany. French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder have been quite vocal—individually and jointly—in supporting Turkey's bid for EU membership.

However, public opinion polls in both France and Germany have repeatedly shown that a majority in both countries opposes Turkey's admission into the EU, largely over concerns about the effect that Turkish membership might have on European institutions and culture.

French publicist Sylvie Goulard's critical essay on the EU's expansion policy toward Turkey, titled "The Great Turk and the Republic of Venice," sold out its first printing within one

The question of Turkish membership in the EU may seem a distant and trivial issue. But Bible prophecy suggests that it could be the first step in radically changing Europe's present relationship with the rest of the world.

week of publication in mid-October 2004. Just one week prior to the Brussels conference, Germany's opposition parties published an open letter to Chancellor Schroeder, urging him to reconsider his position on Turkish membership.

The Lutheran Church in Germany questions Turkey's human rights record toward its non-Muslim citizens. And further concern in Germany was fueled recently by a report of the independent Institute for Eastern Europe debunking the claim that Turkish EU membership would be an economic benefit for the EU.

Senior European statesmen Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing also are well-known critics of Turkish EU membership. Merely three months before the summit, former German Chancellor Schmidt urged caution on admitting Turkey into the EU. He argued that Europe needs a lengthy consolidation period to absorb increased financial obligations arising from having admitted 10 new countries as EU members on May 1, 2004 (*Die Zeit*, No. 39, Sept. 16, 2004).

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French president, frequently expresses his view that Turkish membership would mean the end of full political union as the ultimate EU goal. Instead, the EU would become an enhanced free-trade zone.

Drama in Brussels

In the days leading up to the Brussels conference, Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan was busily promoting his country's bid for EU membership. In his public relations effort, Erdogan emphasized that if the EU "wants to be a power and play an important role in the world, then the path will lead through Turkey" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Dec. 17, 2004).

In a personal appeal to the German people published in *Bild*, the largest circulation daily newspaper in Germany, Erdogan emphasized the importance of Turkey's geographic location at the center of Eurasia with historic ties to the Balkans, the Caucasian region, Central Asia and the Middle East. He also rejected claims that Turkish EU mem-

bership would become a financial burden on the EU budget.

The two-day summit meeting in Brussels had its share of drama. On the first day the talks on beginning negotiations with Turkey started well. The Turkish prime minister had earlier emphasized his country's intention to continue its reform path and to modernize its institutions.

Turkey accepted wording in the proposed contract on negotiations that would give the EU the right to restrict certain aspects of full membership for Turkey, depending on the course of negotiations and other developments in the coming years.

If used, this provision will most likely be invoked to limit the "freedom of mobility" clause that guarantees citi-

Could Europe's increasing alliance that backs nations and peoples hostile to Israel, coupled with its growing economic and political power, be nudging it further along the road toward becoming a modern version of the Roman Empire, extending its power and control even into the Middle East and northern Africa?

zens of EU member states the right to live and work anywhere within the European Union. Since surveys have shown that up to 25 percent of the Turkish work force would consider moving to Western Europe in search of higher paying jobs, the limitation would help assuage German and French resistance to Turkish membership.

Talks nearly broke down during a lengthy evening session lasting well into the night when Prime Minister Erdogan refused to accept an EU demand that his country establish diplomatic relations with Cyprus as a prerequisite for starting official negotiations on Turkish membership.

Part of Cyprus is still occupied by

Turkish troops 30 years after Turkish intervention on the island and the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot community from the joint government with Greek Cypriots.

Cyprus was one of the 10 countries that joined the EU in May 2004, after the EU determined that the application for membership submitted by the island's government in 1990 represented the entire island.

When Prime Minister Erdogan reportedly threatened to leave Brussels over the impasse, a compromise was reached. Turkey agreed to work toward full diplomatic recognition of Cyprus before the official negotiations commence on Oct. 3, 2005. With his tactics, Erdogan "undermined the basic prerequisite for any newcomer joining a community—that the newcomer unconditionally accepts all existing members" (*Die Welt*, Dec. 18, 2004).

Will negotiations be successful?

Negotiations on Turkish membership in the EU may last for 10 years or longer, and the start of negotiations is no guarantee that they will be concluded successfully. If they are successful, all current EU members must approve the final treaty stipulating the conditions for full Turkish membership. France and Austria have already announced that a referendum will be held so their citizens can decide how their countries should vote on the issue. Other countries may follow their example.

French President Jacques Chirac has already indicated that the proposed referendum in France on Turkish membership would be held separately from any other EU referendum issue. Next June, France will vote in a referendum on whether to accept the new European Constitution, and Chirac is a shrewd enough practitioner of "realpolitik" to realize that coupling a referendum on EU membership for Turkey with any other issue would likely mean the defeat of both.

The violent reaction in the Netherlands to November's assassination of Dutch movie director Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam by a Muslim extremist shows how easily a referen-

(See "TURKEY," page 10)

China: The Lotus Flower Is Blossoming Again

China only occasionally appears in the daily news in the United States, but it actually deserves much more attention. The road ahead is a rocky one, but leading inexorably toward colossal power.

by Cecil E. Maranville

The story of IBM's sale of its personal computer (PC) unit to China's Lenovo Group Ltd. sent a jolt through the business world. But it didn't garner the attention it deserved from the world in general. Perhaps the story did not catch your eye or ear.

Still, it is a story you should know, for it portends much for the future of the entire world. Get used to hearing "China" in conjunction with manufacturing, exports, imports, the value of the U.S. dollar, trade deficits, military confrontations and much more.

Let's begin by examining what's happening between IBM and Lenovo. It's an oversimplification to say that IBM sold the entirety of its PC business to the Chinese computer giant. Actually, IBM CEO Samuel Palmisano negotiated a business partnership with Lenovo, a deal that instantly makes it the third largest computer company in the world (behind Dell and Hewlett-Packard). IBM isn't selling the store and walking away. At least for the next five years, it will handle all sales and marketing of the PCs that Lenovo produces.

When announcing the deal, Palmisano called it "three-dimensional." IBM will assist China in one of the most significant trends in today's world, that of turning the developing giant into a high technology country. Palmisano nurtured a relationship with the government, as well as with Lenovo executives, for more than a year before putting ink to a contract. He explains, "What we wanted was not a divestiture, but the strategic relationship with Lenovo and China" (Steve Lohr, "Deal With Lenovo Is IBM's 'China Card,'" *The New York Times*, Dec. 14, 2004).

The Washington Post reported a human-interest angle that illustrates what is happening, not only with this deal, but also with many others: "During an IBM employee meeting here Wednesday [Dec. 8 at IBM's PC division in North Carolina], a worker got up and asked a question that perhaps only 10 years ago would

have been unthinkable: If he wanted to keep his job helping to design some of the world's most advanced computers, would he have to move to China?

"On the other side of the globe, at a Lenovo employee meeting in Beijing, a worker got up and asked a similar question that a decade ago also would have been unthinkable, but for different reasons: If he wanted to keep his job, would he have to move from Communist China to America?" (Griff White, "IBM Reassures Workers After Milestone China Deal," Dec. 9, 2004).

IBM in China, Lenovo in North Carolina

The intriguing answer in both cases was, probably not. The home office for Lenovo's PC business will be New York City, but the operations center will be in IBM's former plant in Research Triangle Park North Carolina under the oversight of an IBM executive.

Close to 1,900 IBM employees in North Carolina will become Lenovo employees, and they will continue doing the same jobs that they have been doing. Another 8,200 IBM employees already in China will now work for Lenovo, likewise continuing to do the jobs that they have been doing. So IBM is far from separating itself from the PC business. In fact, it will own 18.9 percent of Lenovo as part of the deal.

China is moving away from the stereotype of "the kingdom of cheap labor." For decades, it has siphoned off manufacturing jobs from the United States and other countries, with its multiple million-man armies of workers, who earn the equivalent of \$80 per month.

China, with 9.6 million square miles, is the third largest country in the world. Its population represents roughly one fifth of the earth's people. There is a massive population shift of inhabitants from the rural areas to urban centers. In 1950, less than 13 percent of Chinese lived in cities. The United Nations estimates that 60 percent will live in urban areas by 2060!

Get used to hearing "China" in conjunction with manufacturing, exports, imports, the value of the U.S. dollar, trade deficits, military confrontations and much more.

Naturally, the poorer people want to move to where they can improve their living standard. That isn't working well, as millions find themselves living in poverty in the cities.

China's booming economy hasn't floated all of its workers up the economic ladder. UN and World Bank officials estimate that the number of Chinese living in poverty is approximately 100 million. Wealth is reaching only about 20 percent of its 1.3 billion citizens, and this block consumes 50 percent of the nation's domestic market. The poorest 20 percent consume less than 5 percent.

Most of the development in the nation is occurring in the east. For example, 80 percent of Beijing has been completely rebuilt. Shanghai and, of course, Hong Kong have strong economies; all are in the eastern coastal region of the nation. But much of the rural interior is undeveloped.

Let's consider what kind of market 20 percent of 1.3 billion people represents. That's 260 million people with money to spend—a marketplace that's the envy of anyone with something to sell.

Chinese consumers by the hundreds of millions

"Chinese consumer" is a new concept to some, perhaps, but not to the business world. McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Accenture, Bearing-Point and many other multinational companies all do business in China. So does Bentley, the British luxury automaker, which has a dealership in Beijing. The base price for a Bentley is \$400,000, and the dealership sold 29 units in its first nine months of operation.

China is Japan's second largest market (after the United States). Chinese consumers themselves purchased 13 million PCs in 2003, according to a Washington D.C. market research company. The company estimates that the 2004 figure will be 15 to 16 million. Dell and Hewlett-Packard are aggressively competing in China for its PC market, not to contract for cheap labor to build their machines, but rather to sell their products to Chinese buyers.

You are likely raising your eyebrows



Reuters/Claro Cortes IV

Lenovo Chairman Liu Chuanzhi shakes hands with John Joyce, senior vice-president and group executive of IBM Global Services, at a ceremony in Beijing Dec. 8, 2004. They announced Lenovo is purchasing IBM's PC business.

now, as you begin to realize the size and buying power of the Chinese market. Merrill Lynch Chairman and CEO Stan O'Neal told an audience of investors about a 27-year-old real estate developer who bought a \$900,000 German-made car at a Beijing auto show in early 2003. Clearly, the Chinese have money to spend. O'Neal reported that U.S. companies sold \$220 billion in goods to China in 2003.

In fact, China has become one of the world's largest markets for automobiles. It's General Motors' fourth-largest market, soon to leapfrog to the number two spot. In November, a Chinese firm announced it would buy Rover, the British car company.

But China buys more than cars. It may surprise many to learn that the country is now the fourth-largest market in the world for Steinway pianos—and Steinway's most expensive models at that. China intends to be a major player in the global economy.

Outsourcing U.S. and European jobs to India, to China

Outsourcing of jobs was a hot-button political issue in the recent U.S. elections and is a continuing issue for Europe. India is a principal recipient of those jobs in the technology sector, due to the fact that many of its people speak

English (from its 300-year history of being a British colony) and to the availability of high-tech workers.

However, India has begun to outsource its contracts to China, which is training engineers at a rate of almost two-to-one over India. A technology sector report by the Pacific News Service says that continuing at this rate, China will actually be able to compete with India for these jobs in a minimum of three to five years.

But China has far from arrived at economic superpower status. In fact, the present GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the country is approximately the same as the relatively small economy of Italy. Jeffrey Garten, dean of the Yale School of Management, explains that China will be no match for the United States for the foreseeable future.

However, the long-term future is a different matter. China's development progresses at a truly mind-boggling rate. It is estimated that the nation will consume 55 percent of the world's concrete production this year in its building projects, along with 40 percent of the world's steel (this demand affects supplies and prices on a world scale).

Competing with the United States, but a long way to go

Garten's assessment: "China doesn't

want to accept U.S. leadership. Confrontation is therefore inevitable” (Tim Luard, “China Takes Place on World Stage,” BBC, Oct. 21, 2004). China is doing its best to secure oil from regions of the world that the United States cannot control—and therefore cannot shut off—such as Chile, Sudan and Iran, and it is willing to pay more than the market rate to do so.

Strangely, even its phenomenal economic growth rate of about 10 percent is a potential problem for China. Inevitably, prices rise in a booming economy, which will likely slow it down.

But the situation is more complex, as the government, not the market, controls the availability of money, as well as the value of the Chinese currency, the yuan. Presently, the yuan is greatly undervalued. In order to participate in the globalized economy, sooner or later, the government is going to have to allow a free market. Should the government do that now, the yuan would spiral upward, making Chinese products much more expensive.

The Chinese government also holds approximately 600 billion U.S. dollars, buying dollars at the rate of \$15 billion per month. Theoretically, China could create havoc in international banking if it should dump its dollars and turn to euros or Japanese yen. But China already has significant holdings of euros and yen, and it wouldn’t benefit China’s growth plans to sell off its dollar reserves now and thus disrupt the global economy. For now the Chinese government feels compelled to keep the yuan pegged to the U.S. dollar. As the dollar sinks, so does the yuan, ensuring that Chinese products remain attractive to U.S. consumers, who thereby benefit even when their dollar is weakened. How long can this imbalance continue?

When and how China will transition from a controlled to a free market also isn’t clear. The behemoth has a long way to go in transforming itself.

Ravenous appetite for energy

Modern China has an insatiable appetite for energy. It cannot get enough. So many dams have been constructed on its rivers that they have created widespread flooding in some areas and water shortages in others. Its demand for electricity is expected to increase by 11 percent this year, when the country plans to

spend \$24.2 billion to build enough power plants to power the equivalent of three New York cities. China recently purchased two Canadian resource giants, Noranda Inc. and Husky Energy Inc.

Its demand for crude oil was a major factor in keeping world prices high in 2004. In 2003 China surpassed Japan as the world’s second-largest importer of oil, leaping over 30 percent from 2002 imports. (While most Asian nations look to the Middle East for their oil, China prefers to buy as much as possible from Russia, enabling Russia to now rival the output of Saudi Arabia at 8 million barrels per day.)

A 1998 World Bank study found that 16 of the world’s 20 most polluted cities were in China, and that it is polluting not



Freshmen of Zhongshan University take part in shooting practice during military training. All the first year university students in China are required to participate in military training. (Reuters/China Photos)

only its own environment, but also the air over Korea and Japan. Consequently, China wants to turn away from coal usage, but the conversion to cleaner energy sources is a slow go.

As recently as last year, 35 million Chinese qualified to receive aid through the UN’s WFP (World Food Program), assistance the UN has been giving China for the past 25 years. WFP officials announced in December 2004 that, according to their estimation, China not only can feed itself, but also that it should now begin to contribute food to needy countries. This shows not only China’s growth, but also the fact

that it is, in some ways, just out of the undeveloped nation stage.

Obsessed to a flaw over Taiwan

China has kept the percentage of its GDP allotted to defense spending essentially even, but as the GDP grows 10 percent per year, so also does defense spending. It is upgrading every aspect of its armed forces, including the acquisition of missiles that could strike mainland U.S. cities. But the United States isn’t in China’s crosshairs for the time being. Rather, it is obsessed with Taiwan. A military confrontation, or worse, an invasion, would do great damage to China in the long run.

There is a real fear that much of its military preparedness (particularly cruise missiles and naval build-up) is being done with an eye toward assaulting Taiwan. In late December, China announced in brutal language that its army would “crush” any move by Taiwan toward independence. Yet that would likely bring the might of the U.S. military down on China, in defense of Taiwan.

The Chinese should wake up to the fact that they are already winning Taiwan back, if only they would exercise the patience for which they are famous. Presently, Taiwan exports twice as much to China as it does to the United States. Foreign investors are flocking to China and away from Taiwan, which has seen such capital drop by half in the last five years—much of it going to China. In fact, 15 times as much foreign investment is pouring into China as into Taiwan.

The recent IBM-Lenovo deal was particularly shocking to Taiwan, which used to be known as the “silicon island” of East Asia. But perhaps the most telling phenomenon is the migration of close to a million people from the tiny island back to the mainland to work. Taiwan only has 23 million people, so this represents a significant portion of its population. But more than that, most of the emigrants are highly skilled managers between the ages of 30 and 50, representing a significant brain drain and leaving Taiwanese and Taiwan-based multinational companies struggling to replace them.

Massive war looms in future

What is the future of China? Mark Helprin, a senior fellow at the Claremont

Institute and recently the author of *The Pacific and Other Stories*, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that he believes China is aiming for military parity with the United States in 20 or more years.

However, if the United States should scale down its military for some reason, China would catch up much more quickly. Conversely, if China slips into civil war or revolution as it transforms into its modern self, it will be set back.

Yet it seems inevitable that China will be both an economic and a military superpower. When considering major issues like peace in the Middle East, Iran's nuclear capabilities, the North African crises, Russian-Asian oil, as well as the economies of the Western nations, China must be considered. When you consider what you will have to pay for gasoline and heating oil, what your computer will cost, what your clothing will cost (including your Armani ties, which China makes), you will have to factor in what is happening in China.

A sobering prophecy found in Revelation 9 foretells a time when an army of 200,000,000 troops will mobilize in a world war that will result in catastrophic casualties.

"Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them" (Revelation 9:13-16).

Whether by itself or in league with other large population nations of Asia, it seems probable that China will be involved in fielding this incredible army. Of course, Asia lies to the east of the Euphrates, which is a natural and a symbolic dividing point between Asia and the heart of the Middle East, as well as North Africa.

You can learn more about the coinciding of economic and military forces in the end time through our free booklets *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* You can download these at www.ucg.org. ❖

"TURKEY," (Continued from page 6)
dum could be influenced by unexpected developments.

Turkey's goal is to be part of the European Union. What other goals might a country have that is geographically closer to Cairo than to Brussels and that is Muslim but not Arab?

Hassan Fatah, columnist for *The New Republic*, wonders whether Turkish foreign policy under Prime Minister Erdogan reflects the desire to be the leader of the Muslim world. As evidence for his musings, Fatah sees "the dramatic change in Turkey's position toward Israel. For a long time Turkey was Israel's reliable Islamic partner in the region, buying arms worth three billion dollars from Israel in the 1990s that were largely used against the Kurdish insurgency. Since Erdogan took office relations have reached a low point with Turkey joining the choir of Arab criticism of Israel, which Israel views as being anti-Semitic" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Dec. 17, 2004).

Interestingly, following PLO chairman Yasser Arafat's death, prominent Palestinian leaders have wondered whether the Turkish model of a Muslim country with a democratic, secular state government could be the role model for their people.

If Fatah is correct in his analysis, then Turkish ambitions may well coincide with EU ambitions, even if some EU citizens remain wary of full membership for Turkey. Europe's leaders "want to expand EU power into Eastern Europe and the Near East . . . to expand the EU as quickly as possible, [and therefore] the heads of state and government display understanding for every wish of the Turkish government" (*Die Welt*, Dec. 18, 2004).

How would adding the Muslim country of Turkey, with its capable and efficient military forces, affect EU relations with the greater international community, especially in the Middle East?

God gave a troubling dream to King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon and then allowed the prophet Daniel to interpret that dream (Daniel 2). The dream covered some major events that would occur in the Middle East and Europe from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until the return of

Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Four great empires would dominate those regions of the world—Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome—all represented in that dream by one imposing image of a man (verses 31-33). A revived version of the Roman Empire, represented by the image's feet and toes, is prophesied to come to power shortly before Christ returns (verses 41-45). The legacy of Imperial Rome—still very much the heritage of Europe—will supply the model for that end-time power's reach for glory.

This final resurrection of the Roman Empire, like the original empire, will be centered in Europe. It appears that it can be seen today in its embryonic form in the European Union. That is not to say that all current EU nations will be part of the final configuration, but those that choose to participate will combine to form a powerful military force. Like ancient Rome, it is destined to push its power into the Middle East, subduing Jerusalem and the modern nation of Israel (Daniel 11:41-45).

Jesus Christ gave this warning: "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near . . . They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:20, 24, New International Version).

Could Europe's increasing alliance that backs nations and peoples hostile to Israel, coupled with its growing economic and political power, be nudging it further along the road toward becoming a modern version of the Roman Empire, extending its power and control even into the Middle East and northern Africa?

Turkey, as was Asia Minor in ancient times, is a bridge to empire. This fascinating country straddles two continents, Europe and Asia. It is where east meets west. Through its doors conquerors have come and gone, and will rise again. To learn more about the roles that Europe and the Middle East will have in fulfilling Bible prophecy, request or download your free copy of our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

Ghana's Election Signifies Progress for Africa

In Ukraine and Iraq there are problems with the electoral process. But in Ghana's recent election, the Fourth Republic seems to be working. Why does democracy work in some countries but not in others?

by Melvin Rhodes

Sir Winston Churchill once famously said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those others that have been tried."

Christians know that the only perfect government will be the coming Kingdom of God. In the well-known passage from Isaiah 9:6-7, we read: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Jesus Christ preached the gospel (good news) of this coming Kingdom (Mark 1:14). But there's still some time between now and Christ's return. Until then, man has to contend with various forms of government, all of which are lacking in some respects.

Nowhere is this failure of government more obvious than on the African continent. Africa is the one continent that has not moved forward in the last four decades. Its peoples are worse off today than they were under the colonial governments that ruled them before independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Ghana's story

Ghana was the first colony in black Africa to be given independence, on March 6, 1957. It was the most progressive, the best educated and the most prosperous British colony on the continent. In the years before independence, it had a functioning parliament, the rule of law, a free press, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and free enterprise. These freedoms were a heritage of the British, who had learned that such freedoms are necessary for successful economic development and prosperity.

The British brought considerable development to their colonies. Many of them have gone back-

wards since independence. Many have learned the hard way that prosperity does not come through government decree. Rather, it comes through basic freedoms—including free enterprise, which enables people to work hard and prosper. People must know that they can keep what they earn, without fear of the government taking it all away from them.

In Ghana, these freedoms did not last long. Within a short time, Ghana was a dictatorship, and the state controlled all the major means of production. The result? Little production and a deteriorating standard of living for its people.

By 1966, things were so bad that there was a military coup. Decades of political instability were to follow as Ghana alternated between civilian government and military rule. Different constitutions were tried in between the military periods but nothing seemed to work.

One problem is the reluctance of African leaders to hand over power. A major reason for this is corruption. When you've had your hands on the public purse, there's a natural fear of handing over power, as exposure and punishment may follow. At the very least, it means that you no longer have the benefit of all that money coming your way.

By 1992, Ghanaians were exhausted and ready to adopt their new constitution, the Fourth Republic, an attempt at a democratic system similar to that of the United States. There is a general election every four years when a president is chosen and representatives are sent to parliament. The president is limited to two terms in office.

The first president under the new constitution was Jerry Rawlings, a man who had led a military junta before his election. At the time he handed over the reins of power in 2000, President Rawlings had been in office almost 20 years. His successor, John Kufour, sought reelection on Dec. 7, 2004. He won over his opponent, John Atta Mills, who had the backing of former President Rawlings.

Although I saw a couple of armored cars driving around the streets, and though there were

If democracy can work in Ghana, why not elsewhere?

reports of one or two election-related deaths in distant places, the election seemed to go as smoothly as it does in Western countries. An American friend who was with me walked over to a polling booth and asked some questions, which led to both of us receiving an explanation of the electoral process. There seemed no way that the election could be rigged. Ghana's election was truly commendable.

There seems every reason to expect that the next election, in December 2008, will proceed just as smoothly. At that election, President Kufour will not be able to stand for reelection. In many countries, constitutional restrictions like term limits are often waived by parliaments coerced into helping corrupt leaders stay in office, but Ghanaians want their constitution to work and seem determined to ensure it does.

The reason is that democracy has paid off for the country.

In the decades of dictatorship, the economy collapsed. Since the return to democracy, the economy has experienced considerable growth every year. Ghana's experience over the last two decades is best summed up in Thomas Jefferson's words: "That government is best which governs least." President Kufour inherited an improving economy from his predecessor, who embraced reforms suggested by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In contrast, the 19th century British historian, Lord Acton, wrote, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Sadly, too many African countries still live under such a system of absolute rule. Indeed, Ghana is a rare gem in West Africa these days. Many other countries in the region have experienced civil wars, coups and other upheavals during the same years that Ghana has experienced its growth.

Comparison with Iraq and Ukraine

If democracy can work in Ghana, why not elsewhere?

The Ukrainian election in November resulted in chaos and almost split the country in two. The pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was the declared winner but massive demonstrations by supporters of the pro-Western candidate,

Viktor Yushchenko, who claimed the election was rigged, resulted in another election being held Dec. 26. The victory this time went to Mr. Yushchenko.

The stakes were high in the Ukrainian election where the major issue was the future course of the country—whether to remain closely tied to Russia or join the European Union. EU membership would ensure democracy and increase living standards for the people. Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin, is accused of interference in Ukraine. In his own country, he has taken increasingly dictatorial powers that have threatened the country's fledgling democratic system.

We don't know for sure who was behind the poisoning of Mr. Yushchenko, but his subsequent facial disfigurement is a constant reminder that many do not want Ukraine to change course in a Westerly direction.

Whether Washington's dream of an Iraqi democracy will ever be realized remains to be seen. But at least Washington can be thankful that one more country, Ghana, has embraced democracy and seems set on a stable and increasingly prosperous course.

The confusion in Ukraine is nothing, however, compared to the situation in Iraq. Elections there are scheduled for the end of January. As the election date looms, violence is likely to worsen. Iraq has traditionally been dominated by Sunni Muslims, but the majority of the people are Shia, as they are in neighboring Iran. Iraq's former leader, Saddam Hussein, received his support from within the Sunni minority. His Baathist conspirators stand to lose a great deal in the coming election, although the Sunnis as a whole are able to have a part in the new government, if they choose to do so.

Democratic traditions

History is the key here to understand-

ing why some countries have a better track record when it comes to democracy.

Ghana was a British colony before independence. Along with all the other British colonies, except British Somaliland (small and short-lived as a colony) and Hong Kong (leased from China), it had a functioning parliament in what was then called the Gold Coast. Freedom of the press, free speech, freedom of religion and free enterprise were all practiced during the colonial period.

Because of this history, Ghanaians have always aspired to have a democratic system. Whenever the country has deviated from democracy, the mass of the people have campaigned to see it restored.

In his book *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, historian Niall Ferguson writes: "When the British governed a country—even when they only influenced its government by flexing their military and financial muscles—there were certain distinctive features of their own society that they tended to disseminate. A list of the more important of these [would include] representative assemblies (parliaments), the idea of liberty, the Common Law, Protestantism (freedom of religion)" (page xxv).

"The British Empire acted as an agency for imposing free markets, the rule of law, investor protection and relatively incorrupt government on roughly a quarter of the world" (page xxiii).

(To understand more about Britain's historical role, request our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

The United States built on these democratic traditions when America broke away from England. At the end of World War II, the United States and Britain imposed the same democratic traditions on the nations they had fought, the Axis powers of Europe and Japan. The nations of Western Europe soon formed the European Union, which requires all its members to have a democratic system of government. The EU's success has led to its incredible growth. Ukraine and others are anxious to join the EU's current 25 members.

But this is not the case in the Middle East. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair talk

(See "GHANA," page 15)

In Brief...

World News Review

Study Shows TV Programming Ridicules Religion

A group called the Parents Television Council (PTC) recently published the results of an extensive study of how the seven commercial broadcast networks treat religion.

Their group analyzed 2,385 hours of primetime entertainment programming on ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Pax, UPN and WB. They found 2,344 references to religion. In stark contrast to the positive attitude toward religion in the United States, the writers of television programming depicted religion in an overwhelmingly negative manner.

The references include all depictions of faith, such as the clergy, a particular church and its doctrines or the faith of an individual. NBC was the worst offender, with 9.95 negative references to every positive one. By contrast, Pax did not have a single negative portrayal.

Fox was second to NBC, with 2.4 negative depictions for every positive one. WB tied with ABC at 1.2 negative vs. one positive. UPN had one negative for every 1.1 positive. CBS had two positive depictions for every negative one.

The later the hour of television programming, the more often negative depictions of religion occurred. During the 7 p.m. viewing block, religious content was presented in a negative manner nearly 17 percent of the time. In the next hour, approximately 21 percent of the references were negative. In the 9 p.m. hour, the rate was 27.5 percent negative. And, in the 10 p.m. block, 28.2 percent of the references to religion were negative.

What is the PTC? Here is how they describe themselves on their Web site: "The Parents Television Council was founded in 1995 to ensure that children are not constantly assaulted by sex, violence and profanity on television and in other media. Our national grassroots

organization has nearly one million members across the United States, and works with television producers, broadcasters, networks and sponsors in an effort to stem the flow of harmful and negative messages targeted to children . . . Most importantly, the PTC produces critical research and publications documenting the dramatic increase in sex, violence and profanity in entertainment. This information is provided free of charge so parents can make informed viewing choices for their own families."

They regularly post a rating for the best and worst in TV programming. You can find the PTC at www.parentstv.org/.

Upstaged in Own Backyard

The United States is still the principal investor and primary trading partner of Latin America's vast markets. However, the region is eager to negotiate even stronger ties with the United States, especially being brought into the NAFTA market as free trade zones. But that's not happening quickly enough for them. And there is a growing Chinese presence in the area that could be called the U.S. backyard.

U.S. President George W. Bush recently spent four days visiting Chile and Colombia. He was greeted by protests and controversy. But it wasn't his visit that grabbed the attention of Latin American newspapers, because his visit was upstaged by the president of China.

"While Bush is expected to call for greater Latin American cooperation in the war on terrorism, Hu (the Chinese president) is doing what U.S. presidents used to do—raising the region's hope with massive trade and investment promises" (*Miami Herald*, Nov. 18, 2004).

The Chinese have promised up to \$100 billion in investments in the region and are flexing their economic muscle for all to see. "South American officials

seemed mesmerized by China's meteoric rise to a world economic power that is promising massive investments in Latin America" (*Miami Herald*, Nov. 21, 2004).

Historically the United States has often been preoccupied in preserving its interests in Latin America. The terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, have changed the focus of what the United States intends to do.

The scheduled 2005 beginning of the 34-country Free Trade Area of the Americas that has been talked about for at least a decade has fizzled away. This was once seen as a bright star on the economic horizon for the United States. It was to be an expansion of the 1994 NAFTA deal between the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Instead of the United States showing the vital leadership needed to promote the hemisphere-wide trade agreement, indifference is being detected by South American leaders.

"The United States, preoccupied with the worsening situation in Iraq, seems to have attached little importance to China's rising profile in the region. If anything, increased trade between Latin America and China has been welcomed as a means to reduce pressure on the United States to underwrite economic reforms, with geopolitical considerations pushed to the background" (*New York Times*, Nov. 20, 2004).

In today's fast-paced world, economic pacts and trade are seen as a means for poor nations to lift their countries out of misery. China is seen as a rising star and a welcome partner. The U.S. market, however, remains the prize. "When Latin American companies or corporations seek some form of foreign finance, they [still] go to New York or lesser financial centres in the US" (Simon Woodward, "US Dollar Decline: Who Suffers?", PriceWaterhouseCoopers, www.pwcglobal.com).

Contributors: Cecil Maranville and Fred Nance

“RED, BLUE,” (Continued from page 16)
the umbrella? That’s when the fireworks begin.

The counterculture of God

I hope and pray that what colors my heart is what emerges from the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. This section of Scripture is often called the Sermon on the Mount. This plank or platform (to use political terms) of Christ’s manifesto never speaks to parties, groups or collective bodies. It does speak to the individual. Furthermore, it is a noteworthy observation that Christ never used colors, but He did draw a stunningly accurate portrayal of how His followers would live.

Make no mistake. It is a declaration of contrasts and distinctions. It is here that He introduces the counterculture of God. It is not the way things are done here on earth, but it is how God exists and how He asks us to live. Jesus clearly said in Matthew 6:8, “Therefore do not be like them . . .” Like who? Like the society around, be they red, blue, pagan or what currently passes for religious folk steeped in their pigeonholing ways, thinking they do their God a service.

Christ, in His own way, took on both the “reds and blues” of His day. He took on the religious folk of His day and called them hypocrites (Matthew 6:5; 7:5), and at the same time rejected the futile worries of the secular world of the gentiles as laid out in Matthew 6:31-32. No, Christ refused to get into the world of color schemes. He was not a broad-brush guy. He offered people worth and dignity recognizing their incredible ability to contribute.

The power of salt and light

He further etched lines of delineation when drawing upon the age-old Latin adage, *nil utilius sol et sal*, which means, “there is nothing more useful than sun and salt.” Jesus didn’t label His followers as red or blue. But He did say they had better be like sun and salt. Salt is pure. It is a preservative. Its antiseptic nature destroys and doesn’t put up with harmful agents. There is no compromise within its healing properties. It also adds flavor. You really know when this distinct agent with its spicy edge is missing.

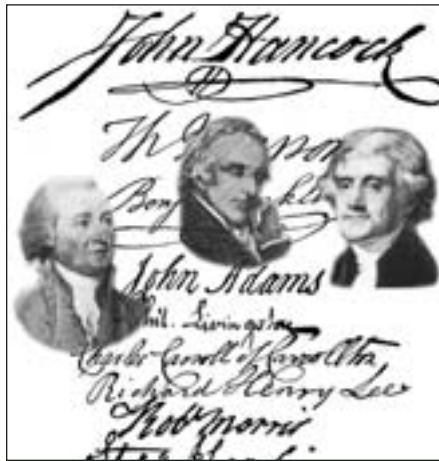
Likewise, light is the direct opposite of darkness. One little candle on a windowsill

deep in the countryside can cut a hole in the darkness for quite a distance. So, too, should be the example of those who profess to follow the Teacher on the mount. Yes, the absence or presence of *sol et sal* creates deep contrasts.

The joy of bringing people together

In Matthew 5:9 Christ said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” Another way of putting it is, “Happy are those who bring men together, for they are being like God.”

Let me use an example from history to illustrate this. The U.S. presidential election of 1800 was the original “red versus blue” battle. In fact, it inaugurated a vicious exchange of words between par-



It took the persistent effort of Dr. Benjamin Rush to bring former friends John Adams and Thomas Jefferson back together again.

ties that has not been matched to this day. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, two notable heroes of the American Revolution, were pitted against one another. These same men had once been friends. Both were sincere. Both loved America, and yet mistrusted the other. They wanted the same thing, but saw it in different ways. Jefferson ultimately triumphed. Adams would concede and recede into frustrated solitude.

Some of you may be familiar with the ultimate reconciliation that came about between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. But most of you will not be familiar with the name of Benjamin Rush

and his part in it. Dr. Benjamin Rush had been one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was a friend of both men. It was his constant and persistent behind-the-scenes letters to both men that finally melted their animosity and allowed them to come to peaceful terms. It would take three years—1809, 1810 and 1811—but finally the animosity thawed.

Embrace, embrace each other

Rush’s efforts finally took hold with his letter of Dec. 16, 1811, to John Adams. He would pen:

“And now, my dear friend, permit me again to suggest to you to receive the olive branch, which has thus been offered to you by the hand of the man who still loves you. Fellow laborers in erecting the great fabric of American independence!—fellow laborers of the gratitude and affection of posterity!—and fellow passengers in a stage that must shortly convey you both into the presence of a Judge with whom the forgiveness and love of enemies is the condition of acceptance!—embrace—embrace each other! Bedew your letters of reconciliation with tears of affection and joy. Bury in silence all the causes of your separation. Recollect that explanations may be proper between lovers but are never so between divided friends. Were I near you, I would put a pen into your hand and guide it while it composed the following short address to Mr. Jefferson—‘Friend, and fellow laborer in the cause of liberty and independence of our common country, I salute you with the most cordial good wishes for health and happiness—John Adams’” (Bill Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*; p. 206).

Adams would ultimately come to terms with his pride and would be the first to write. The first red and blue candidates would remain affectionate friends for the next 15 years until they both died on July 4, 1826, 50 years to the day from that momentous event that had first drawn them together. Oh how history might have taken a different turn if Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, the two other great political rivals of 1800, had had such a man as Benjamin Rush for a friend. Was Benjamin Rush a peacemaker? I’ll let you be the judge. Was he like a purifying speck of salt in a decaying relationship? Was he like a beacon of light in what appeared to be one deep dark cavern of the heart? One

thing I do know, he didn't get stuck with colors, but allowed his heart to be colored with a powerful reality—that our differences should not overwhelm our commonalities.

Prophecy is more than the waving of a wand

The pages of *World News and Prophecy* direct your attention to a future time when people are going to set aside their differences. In that sense, society is going to become color-blind. People are going to throw out the reds and the blues and all those man-made labels, and are going to choose to follow the undiluted culture of God.

The meaningful prophecy of Isaiah 19:23-25 portrays a time when age-old enemies are going to come together in a world without divisiveness. Isaiah proclaims, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptian will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.'"

Will ancient historical animosities disappear with simply the waving of a wand? Will the anger of nations simply melt into nothingness by some form of divine beatific light? Or will Jesus Christ use men and women of goodwill who patiently and persistently strive to bring people together no matter the odds?

I would like to think there are more Benjamin Rushes in the making, for they are needed now more than ever. Men and women who are happy bringing people together because doing so is godly.

In a world of divisions, it is the writings of Benjamin Rush that echo the sentiment found in Isaiah 30:21, "This is the way, walk in it." For there is no better way to bring the reds and blues of the world together than to offer them the encouragement of "embrace—embrace each other! Bedew your letters of reconciliation with tears of affection and joy. Bury in silence all the causes of your separation." Such thoughts are not red or blue, but merely what colors a truly godly heart. ❖

"GHANA," (Continued from page 12)

of the need for democracy in the Middle East to end the political stalemate and violence of the last six decades. But where do you start? Iraq seems as good a place as any. After World War I when the country was first formed out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, the British were given a mandate over Iraq by the League of Nations. They introduced a system of government similar to the British model. But it did not last and British domination was resisted by the Iraqis just as American control is now.

Whether Washington's dream of an Iraqi democracy will ever be realized remains to be seen. But at least Washington can be thankful that one more country, Ghana, has embraced democracy and seems set on a stable and increasingly prosperous course.

Excited at the election, many Ghanaians expressed their appreciation for "peace," something we don't think about at election time in the United States or the United Kingdom. Perhaps this level of appreciation is one reason that voter turnout was over 80 percent, far higher than the United Kingdom and far, far higher than the United States.

Four years ago, the BBC World Service commentator covering the election remarked that he had reported on elections in the United Kingdom, United States and Ghana. Out of the three electorates, he felt Ghanaians were the best informed on world affairs by far.

Ghanaians are still thankful for the peace and prosperity that freedom usually brings. It's not just the political system that they are thankful for—they also appreciate the free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and freedom to work and prosper that accompany the democratic system.

This does not mean that Ghana has solved all its problems or ever will do so, just as no other democracy has. That won't happen until Jesus Christ rules this earth. But meanwhile Ghanaians are happier with what they have now than they have been at any time since independence almost 50 years ago. Other countries would do well to take note of Ghana's example. ❖

How to Contact Us

AFRICA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org
AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122
BAHAMAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas. Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566
BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999
CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca
FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva
FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France
GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228 - 9454636 Fax: 0228 - 9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org
ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035-4523573 E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org
KENYA: United Church of God, Kenya, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org
MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org
MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes. E-mail: mauritius@ucg.org
The NETHERLANDS: United Church of God Holland, P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands
NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763
NIGERIA: United Church of God—West Africa, P.O. Box 1715, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 234-1-791 8009 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org
PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 241-0150 Cell/Text: (+63) 0918-904-4444
SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England E-mail: sverige@ucg.org
SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694 E-mail: rsa@ucg.org
SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796
TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga
UNITED STATES: *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Phone (513) 576-9796. E-mail info@ucg.org
ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (02) 226076. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org
ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare. Cell Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

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by Robin Webber

Red, Blue and God

It seems as if America is fixated on color schemes. The last four years have been defined with various color scenarios. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security came out with an array of colors to remind us of how secure or insecure we were on any given day. Orange alerts became a seemingly monthly event. For now, that has receded in the recesses of our mind.

On the flip side of the coin, the "red" states and "blue" states descriptions seem fairly locked into our everyday jargon as we live through what has come to be called the Culture War. This socio-moralistic battle pits what some consider traditional American values against the more progressive-liberal stream of the national psyche. Its battlefields range from schools to street corners to the airwaves and right into the courthouses of this land.

What colors my heart?

It's been said that modern America is divided almost right down the middle. Not by the Mississippi River, but by a very close statistical divide that shows a clear line of demarcation regarding the rights, freedoms and perceptions of liberty affecting America's future. Yes, all are Americans. Yes, all love their country, but both sides—both colors, if you will—see a different path in front of them.

But red states (conservative) and blue states (liberal) are somewhat misleading terms. Because whole regions within any colored state can be just the reverse color. Here in Riverside County, California, about 70 miles east of Los Angeles, I live in a red area of a red county in a blue state in a nation that has a red president in a world that, if you believe the preelection poll samples, was hoping that America would

elect a blue president (which makes it a blue world, right?). Are you lost yet?

Judged on our own merits

So the big question comes down to this: What colors my heart? You may have noticed that I didn't say "What color is my heart?" but "What colors my heart?" Because when it's all said and done, you and I must be judged on our own merits, not by some pop phrase used to simplify a complicated social fabric.

Why? Because life is more complex than that. "Pigeonholes" and "pigeonholing" may be for the birds, but it is not for people. And yet we all keep on doing it, don't we? It is so easy to attach a label to people and compartmentalize their complexities, and thus diminish their abilities to contribute to the whole.

Then why do we do this? Yes, all of us—in politics, schools, churches and families—continue to spread this virus of separation as we press people into cages of our own satisfying design. And we do so because it's far easier to color code individuals than to sit down and talk to them.

Thus, enemy formations develop. You know, "them versus us." Except we like "us" better, because, well, uh, we are "us." What's really interesting in this ageless scheme of dissolution is how and when some of "them" used to be "us." It's a tragedy of division that goes all the way back to Cain and Abel.

Why is it that so often we are totally satisfied with getting out of the storms of life and getting under the dry safety of an umbrella, until we take a closer look and see who is holding

(See "RED, BLUE," page 14)