

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

September 1999

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Never on Sunday?

Germany wrestles with its "store closing law."

by Paul Kieffer

August 1, 1999, was an historic day for Berlin's Alexander Square in what used to be showcase real estate in the center of the former communist city of East Berlin. A symbolic bastion of "West German" capitalism, the Kaufhof department store opened its doors at precisely "high noon"—12 o'clock. Hundreds of shoppers waiting outside poured into the store and began making their purchases. By the time Kaufhof closed its doors some five hours later, an estimated 50,000 people had visited the store. This historic event had nothing to do with the debut of a new store—this Kaufhof store has been there for several years now. History was made because August 1 was a Sunday!

On the same day over 100,000 shoppers were making their rounds in Leipzig, south of Berlin, as stores in the inner city there also opened on

Sunday. Although stores were open only during the afternoon hours, store managers and shop owners reported sales proceeds from Sunday's short shopping spree as much as 20 percent higher than on a normal workday with its longer hours.

For *World News and Prophecy* readers in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, this news item might seem a bit strange. After all, Sunday-shopping in many countries is the rule, not the exception. But not here in Germany, where the Ladenschlussgesetz ("store closing law"), first enacted in post-war Germany in 1956 and last revised in 1996, prescribes store closings from Monday through Friday at 8 p.m. and on Saturday at 4 p.m. Sunday exceptions generally are permitted only for emergency services (police, ambulance services) and for tourist-related

businesses like restaurants, souvenir shops, gas stations and the public transport system.

Kaufhof claimed to abide by the letter of the Ladenschlussgesetz by having cashiers attach "Berlin souvenir" stickers to all items purchased, even though most shoppers were thought to be from Berlin and were shopping on Sunday because it was a novelty, and for some, also more convenient than on a regular workday.

The "Third" Commandment in Today's Business World

The current Ladenschlussgesetz draws its philosophical underpinning from the observance of the "Third" Commandment, as the Ten Commandments are counted in the Catholic and Lutheran churches, Germany's two

(See "SUNDAY," page 3)

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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).

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The United Church of God provides *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) as an educational service for interested persons. The purpose of WNP is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of current events in the light of Bible prophecy. Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis and Bible commentary, WNP is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

“SUNDAY,” (Continued from page 1)

largest churches. (The Sabbath commandment as the third dates primarily back to Augustine, who combined the First and Second Commandments into one and then split the tenth into two separate ones, both of which prohibit different aspects of covetousness.)

Historical references here readily admit that Roman Emperor Constantine declared Sunday, the first day of the week, to be the official Christian day of rest. In a legal sense Sunday is now the “seventh” day of the week, having been introduced as a “German industry standard” (“DIN”) January 1, 1976. Calendars printed in Germany show Sunday as the seventh day of the week. (See “First Day of the Week?” below.)

Since 1891 Sunday work in general has been prohibited in Germany by law, although the legislation enacted at the time was probably more a victory for social democratic thought and unionism over capitalism than a victory for perceived biblical righteousness.

In today’s Germany a paragraph adapted from the prewar Weimar Constitution gives Sunday rest from work constitutional status: “Sunday and state recognized holidays enjoy legal protection as days of rest from work...” (paragraph 139). In decisions rendered in 1992 and 1995 Germany’s Supreme Court in Karlsruhe confirmed that employers have the constitutional obligation “to protect the rest from work on Sunday and holidays.”

However, time doesn’t stand still. Today’s world is not the world of Constantine or that of medieval European church-state society. Modern Germany is quite different from the patchwork quilt of kingdoms, duchies, etc., that made up “Germany” at the start of the 19th century when the industrial revolution began. The integration of national economic interests into a European community is proceeding according to plan, and the European Union finds itself increasingly challenged by the economic realities of globalization.

To survive in today’s economic climate, companies have to be more

flexible, service oriented and responsive to the competition. That competition often has its origins beyond a country’s own national borders, especially for a country like Germany, which generates approximately a third of its GNP by its exports. The Ladenschlussgesetz can inhibit German competitiveness. A German company, unable to use work shifts on all seven days of the week, may have to compete with a foreign company not subject to the legal requirement to shut down on Sunday.

An earlier revision of the Ladenschlussgesetz in 1994 recognized this negative potential for German industry and authorized exceptions to the Sunday work prohibition. Local officials can approve Sunday work when “competitiveness is reduced unacceptably and the approval of Sunday and holiday work will ensure continued employment.” In a global market economy this situation may exist practically anytime, and the Volkswagen Company and one of its major suppliers already have permission to work Sunday shifts.

The last revision of the “store closing law” in 1996 appears in retrospect to have put the first crack in the dike of the Sunday prohibition against work. Weekday store closings until 8

p.m. were authorized (previously 6:30 p.m.), Saturday closings until 4 p.m. (previously 1 p.m.) and on Sunday bakeries were allowed to open for three hours in the morning to provide Germans their beloved fresh rolls (“Brötchen”) on the “seventh” day of the week. At the time church officials criticized the decision to allow bakeries to open on Sunday. The Catholic archdiocese of Hildesheim (near Hanover in northern Germany) issued a clear statement emphasizing the validity of the Ten Commandments as a code of conduct and of the “Third” Commandment in particular.

As might be expected, the Sunday store openings in Berlin, Leipzig and two other cities in eastern Germany drew mixed responses. Shoppers and businessmen were delighted; union officials and church representatives voiced concern.

Germany’s new President Johannes Rau, son of a Baptist preacher and for many years governor of Germany’s most populous state, voiced his opinion that Sunday was not “any old day” and should not be made into a day of “consumption and sales.” The chairman of the Lutheran church council in Germany, Manfred Kock, referred to the recent Sunday sales as “dancing around the golden calf.”

The First Day of the Week?

“Sunday, Monday, Tuesday...” The days of the week were posted on the wall with Sunday at the top and Saturday at the bottom. My colleague from Britain was teaching her class of 3- to 6-year olds the English names for the days of the week. We work together here in Bonn, Germany, at a school where children can learn English. The majority of the children are German.

She then asked the children, “What does Sunday mean in German?” One child answered, “Montag.” The teacher said, “Montag means Monday.” The child began to argue with her that Montag must mean Sunday because Montag is the first day of the week and she had Sunday at the top as the first day of the week. The other children agreed.

This scenario made me realize how the calendar change made in 1976 in Germany has become ingrained in society. These are children of parents who grew up with a calendar that begins with Monday and ends with Sunday. For them the “right” calendar has Sunday as the last day of the week.

This experience also reminded me of Daniel 7:25 in regards to the law passed in 1976 that changed the German calendar: “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time” (emphasis added).

—Monica Kieffer

Although not directly related to the current conflict, it is interesting to note last year's 111-page papal epistle "Dies Domini" in which Pope John Paul II admonished Catholic Christians to attend mass on Sunday and avoid all activities incompatible "with the sanctification of Sunday."

For the time being, at least, the work-on-Sunday conflict has been resolved by court injunctions declaring "Never on Sunday." The Kaufhof department store remains closed on Sunday, but it and hundreds of other businesses await the outcome of a bill presented to Germany's Bundesrat (the equivalent of the U.S. Senate, representing the 16 German states) by the city-state of Berlin.

The bill would change the "store closing law" into a "store opening law" and allow stores to be open Monday through Saturday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Although the bill does not deal directly with the issue of Sunday work, the proposed expansion of business hours is quite substantial and—if passed as law—would represent for many observers a further step toward eventual liberalization of the Sunday work prohibition.

In today's increasingly secular society with declining moral influence from this world's churches, it is difficult for the author to imagine how the European Union—and in particular Germany, which accounts for 30 percent of the combined GNP of the 11 European Monetary Union (Euro) nations—can remain competitive in the global economy without at least some liberalization of the Sunday work prohibition that exists in Germany and to a lesser degree in other EU countries.

Prophetic Implications

Would the introduction of Sunday work in Germany change our overall prophetic viewpoint? Not necessarily. First, let's look at some background material that is clear and then proceed from there to possible implications, which may not be so clearly defined in scripture.

God's prophet Daniel recorded a remarkable prophecy in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. Even modern biblical scholars recognize the prophetic implications of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which gives us a "disclosure of God's plan for the ages till the final triumph of Christ" and "presents the foreordained succession of world powers that are to dominate the Near East till the final victory of the Messiah in the last days" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 7, pages 39, 46).

Without prior knowledge of its content, Daniel explained the details of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Daniel 2:31–33).

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his Babylonian Empire was represented by the head of gold (verses 37–38). The silver, bronze, and iron and clay components of the image, or statue, represented three powerful empires that were to follow mighty Babylon (verses 39–40). As confirmed by modern biblical scholarship, Daniel's interpretation, inspired by God, provided an astounding preview of history by presenting, in symbolic form, the sequence of great empires that would dominate the civilized world's political scene for centuries.

"The silver empire was to be Medo-Persia, which began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539.... This silver empire was supreme in the Near and Middle East for about two centuries" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 7, page 47).

"The bronze empire was the

Greco-Macedonian Empire established by Alexander the Great.... The bronze kingdom lasted for about 260 or 300 years before it was supplanted by the fourth kingdom" (ibid.).

"Iron connotes toughness and ruthlessness and describes the Roman Empire that reached its widest extent under the reign of Trajan" A.D. 98–117 (ibid.).

The fourth empire was represented by the lower portion of the image



Source: www.kauffhof.de

Kaufhof, a large department store in Berlin, was fined for opening on Sunday

Daniel saw, from the legs downward. Viewing the image "chronologically," so to speak, from top to bottom, the feet and 10 toes would be, in chronological order, the last existing part of the succession of empires that Daniel saw.

Additional aspects of this succession of world-ruling empires were revealed to Daniel in a later dream. This time the four empires were represented by four beasts: a

lion, a bear, a leopard and a fourth beast described as "terrible" and unlike the other three (Daniel 7:1–7).

Notice what verse 7 says about this fourth creature: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns."

What is the meaning of the 10 horns? The ultimate fulfillment of this part of the prophecy is yet in our future. The 10 horns appear to refer to an end-time federation of 10 kings. This concurs fully with Daniel 2:44, which obviously indicates that the second coming of Christ will occur at a time during which vestiges of the fourth beast, or kingdom, still exist: "And in the days of these kings [the "toes" of the image] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom

shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

The book of Revelation predicts the same event—with the same participants—that God inspired Daniel to describe: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:12–14).

Daniel’s prophecies in their culmination and Revelation 17 describe the same event: an end-time federation of 10 kings. The 10 kings of Revelation 17, depicted as 10 “horns” (Revelation 17:3 and 12), are part of a beast being ridden by a fallen woman (verses 1 to 4) who is “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (verse 6).

God’s true Church is depicted as a virtuous woman in scripture. A harlot or fallen woman, by contrast, depicts a false religious system: “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17:5). Bear in mind that a rider upon a “beast” usually controls or directs the “beast” upon which the rider is seated.

In Revelation 13 we see two beasts depicted; one of them is able “to make war with the saints and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7), and the other masquerades “like a lamb,” but in reality speaks “like a dragon” (verse 11). This second beast performs miracles (verses 13 and 14), and he “exercises all the authority of the first beast” (verse 12). The second beast of Revelation 13 is a religious power, since it appears like a lamb and works miracles, although in reality it speaks like its actual source, Satan! The fallen woman of Revelation is drunk with the blood of the saints, and the second beast of Revelation 13 uses the power of the first beast of that chapter to

force people to worship the first beast (Revelation 13:12).

In addition to forcing people to worship the first beast of Revelation 13, the second beast enforces a sign on the people who refuse to worship the first beast: “He [the second beast] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16–17).

The language used—“right hand” [actions or behavior] and “forehead”



Source: www2.vwv-online.de

Historical photo of Volkswagen assembly line. VW was given permission to work on Sunday to compete internationally

[mind, thoughts]—is identical to the description God gave His people Israel in the Old Testament to describe what His law should be to them (Exodus 13:9; Deuteronomy 6:8).

Of all the points of God’s spiritual law, the Ten Commandments, the one that is questioned or ignored most frequently is the commandment involving the Sabbath, which God intended to be a special sign for His people (Exodus 31:13). In fact, the Sabbath can be viewed as a test of a person’s willingness to be totally subject to God’s will for Christians.

(That is not to say the mark of the

beast and the sign of Sabbath keeping are similar in all regards. The sign spoken of in Exodus 31:13 is obedience to a commandment—not a literal mark or number. Refusal to work on the Sabbath may cause one to receive the mark of the beast.)

In our traditional interpretation of Revelation 13:16–17, we have thought that the religious beast of Revelation 13 would enforce Sunday worship as a counterfeit Sabbath. Although this possibility cannot be ignored or considered to be impossible, enforcement of Sunday worship is not the only possible cause for one to receive the mark of the beast. The “mark” could be enforced by making it impossible for people to obey God and keep His Sabbath, rather than by forcing them to observe Sunday as a day of rest and worship. Making it impossible for people to keep the Sabbath causes disobedience just as much as forced Sunday-worship would cause.

In a seven-day-a-week society with no set “weekend” or day of rest, people would work alternatingly in continuous shifts. For many industrialists the opportunity to use production equipment and assembly lines with only occasional shutdowns for maintenance would also increase productivity and reduce production costs, making their products more competitive in an increasingly “globalized” economy. For a relatively high-wage area like Europe, a seven-day production week with workers alternating their regular workweek of five days would reduce overall costs and even increase employment.

Although the reaction from church officials in Germany to recent store openings on Sunday was negative, churches here have changed their positions on various issues over the centuries. A compromise with the “Third” Commandment could be just as plausible as the German church’s position generally permitting military service.

Either way, the mark of the beast is coming, and Germany’s debate on its Ladenschlussgesetz is not yet over. ❖

Red Cross Warns of “Super Disasters”

Increasingly natural disasters are raising concerns of man's impact upon the ecological balance. Is there cause for concern? What lies ahead in the next century?

by Mario Seiglie

In a dramatic message, the International Red Cross recently admitted their alarming statistics showed a notable rise of unusually large natural catastrophes they call “super-disasters.” They consider mankind is partly to blame for the increase of these mega-cataclysms.

“Everyone is aware of the environmental problems of global warming and deforestation on the one hand,” said Dr. Astrid Heiberg, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “and the social problems of increasing poverty and growing shanty towns on the other. But when these two factors collide, you have a new scale of catastrophe. At the Red Cross and Crescent alone, we have *a huge increase* in the number of people needing our assistance due to floods and earthquakes. In the last six years, it has risen from less than half a million to more than five and a half million” (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society press release, *The World Disasters Report for 1999*, emphasis added throughout).

Summary of 1999 Red Cross World Disasters Report

The first chapter in *The World Disasters Report for 1999* ominously stated, “Compared to the 1960s, the past decade has seen the number of great natural catastrophes *triple*, costing the world's economies *nine times* as much—the bill for 1998 alone was over US\$90 billion.... From tsunamis and earthquakes to floods and famines, humankind is increasingly threatened by the forces of nature. With almost a billion people

living in unplanned urban shanty towns, deforestation wrecking ecological defenses against catastrophic natural events, and global warming making the forces of wind, rain and sun even harder to predict and counter, the world is at risk *as never before*.”

With more information available, a large number of scientists are becoming convinced mankind is influencing the weather patterns around the world. “By analyzing the consequences of Hurricane Mitch and the deadly twins, El Niño and La Niña,” the Red Cross press release adds, “the report shows compelling evidence of a trend towards weather triggered *super-disasters*.... The developing world will continue to be hardest hit by the cascading effects of *human-driven* climate change, environmental degradation and population pressures.... Already 96 percent of all deaths from natural disasters occur in developing countries.”

Cynthia Long, of the U.S. based Disaster Relief Organization, commented on the Red Cross report: “The report found that human-driven climate change and rapidly changing socio-economic conditions have and will continue to set off chain reactions of devastation leading to more *behemoth catastrophes*.... By analyzing the massive hurricanes, droughts, floods and epidemics that plagued the planet last year, the organization discovered a dangerous trend toward ‘super-disasters’.... Declining soil fertility, drought, flooding and deforestation drove 25 million ‘environmental refugees’ from their land and into vulnerable squatter communities of crowded cities. Fleeing from weather-devastated homes, the group represented 58 percent of the total refugee population worldwide” (“International Red Cross Predicts

This past year, according to the Red Cross report, was the worst year for natural disasters since they began keeping records.



More than two million people have lost their homes in China's floods this year (Photo by Jane Marin, courtesy International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

More Global 'Super Disasters,'" Disaster Relief Organization, June 25, 1999).

Doug Rekenhaller, managing editor of the U.S. Disaster Relief Organization, stated, "Indeed, the clear-cut lands of the developing world and the negligent environmental policies that make them that way increasingly are being implicated in natural disasters around the globe.... These barren hillsides send rainwater, rocks, and mud racing into lowland areas where unsuspecting villages often are entombed in their homes. Thousands of people have died this summer as the result of such flash floods and mudslides unleashed by monsoon rains" ("Loss of Trees Leads to Worsening Disasters in Developing World," Disaster Relief Organization, September 22, 1998).

1998 the Worst Year for Natural Disasters on Record

This past year, 1998, according to the Red Cross report, was *the worst year* for natural disasters since they began keeping records. "More major natural disasters occurred in 1998 than in any other year on

record," the agency stated.

Is this just bad luck? Not according to the Worldwatch Institute, based in Washington, D.C., which concluded most of 1998's disasters were actually "unnatural" since they consider mankind has played a prominent role in worsening these effects.

"From deforestation of mountain slopes to development in flood plains and watersheds," noted Rekenhaller, "from poor topsoil management to excessive burning of fossil fuels, mankind increasingly is becoming *an enemy* to his own state. Complicating the picture are data trends indicating the planet is rapidly warming. Last week, the World Meteorological Organization announced that 1998 was the warmest year since records began being kept in 1860. Moreover, 1998 marked the 20th consecutive year in which global surface temperatures were above normal. Seven of the hottest years on record have occurred in the past decade.... As a result, the majority of scientists today are convinced Earth is warming."

Even scientists who are skeptical of a man-made global warming trend have admitted the recent evidence is

compelling. "It is very important that we not jump to conclusions about weather extremes because, in a sense, every year has its extremes," explains Rob Quayle of Global Climate Lab. "But some events in 1998 just were so striking that it is *obvious something is going on*. This definitely was a year characterized by weather extremes."

More Frequent Killer Hurricanes and Tornadoes

For the first time in this century, in September of 1998, four hurricanes simultaneously plowed through the Atlantic Basin. Since 1995, this area has been victim to 48 hurricanes, 15 of major proportions, of which the monstrous Mitch reached the maximum Category 5 with 180 mph winds. It killed at least 11,000 people, caused \$5 billion in damages, left millions homeless and much more poverty in the area. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew caused \$30 billion in damages.

The reason for this increase in hurricanes and their intensity is also being blamed partly on global warming. "Earth's warming also is affecting the oceans," comments Rekenhaller, "where sea surface temperatures in some areas are the warmest ever recorded. And those heated waters are being blamed—at least in part—for this year's [1998] bumper crop of tropical storms, hurricanes, and ultra-heavy rainfalls in some areas of the world. The warmer waters also are being blamed for a massive die-off of coral reefs around the world, which not only serve as hearth and home to marine life, but also as natural barriers to tsunamis and other damaging coastal waves. The result of all this warming is that the storms that roar in from the oceans are larger, are laden with unusually large amounts of moisture, and are powered by strong winds, all of which serve to make life miserable for those living in their paths."

Also, the number of twister-related deaths in the United States

reached its highest level in 24 years. In the first half of 1998, three F5 tornadoes, the rarest and most powerful of the twisters, wrought havoc in their paths.

Kevin Trenberth, director of the Climate Analysis Section of the National Center for Atmospheric Research recently completed a study that backs the idea that regions of the earth are experiencing wetter or drier than normal conditions.

“As the earth warms,” explains Trenberth, “more and more moisture is sucked into the atmosphere. There is 10 percent more moisture in the air today due to increased evaporation. When a storm system picks it up, it delivers that to the earth much harder than if it wasn’t there. At the same time, dry regions are experiencing longer droughts. That’s what you get with global warming. The warmer temperatures pull tremendous amounts of moisture into the atmosphere, leaving some areas dry while delivering a lot of rain to other regions. These droughts, in turn, lead to massive crop failures and famine. As one example, Texas and Oklahoma suffered through the second worst drought of their history last summer, resulting in billions in aid to farmers and ranchers.”

This unstable weather pattern can explain the common phenomenon nowadays of having massive rains in some places and drought in others. In a recent report, climatologist Jonathan Overpeck suggested that the mega-droughts that periodically occur across the planet could be increased by global warming and lead “to a natural disaster of a dimension *unprecedented* in the 20th century.”

Not all the news is negative. Global warming has increased the growing seasons. A 35-year study of plant life shows spring is arriving six days earlier and fall is being delayed by five days. Plant life does respond favorably to increases in average temperatures. Yet the toll is great if the price is the instability of weather patterns which churns killer hurricanes and tornadoes, creates devas-

tating floods in one area while it slowly broils other territories into parched lands.

As noted above, there is some controversy over what actually is causing the weather-related disasters we have witnessed recently. It may or may not be attributable to “global warming.” But it is indisputable that revolutionary upheavals have been occurring—and indications are that they will continue. “Super-disasters” and “mega-droughts” are not the normal terms used by sober scientists and agencies such as the Red Cross, which usually resist sensationalizing the news.

Perhaps the best summary of this worldwide trend toward global warming, and man’s part in it was given by Worldwatch Senior Researcher Janet

This unstable weather pattern can explain the common phenomenon nowadays of having massive rains in some places and drought in others.

Abramovits in December 1998. “I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say I can set my watch by next year’s disasters. We’ll have landslides in the Pacific Northwest this winter when heavy rains hit the deforested hillsides [it happened]. We’ll have heavy springtime flooding in Europe [also has occurred]. We’ll have tropical fires [also has happened]. It’s becoming so easy to predict” (Doug Rekenhaller, “The Year in Review: Are Weather Extremes Now the Norm?”, Disaster Relief Organization, December 11, 1998).

Centuries ago God promised His specially loved people that they would experience a perfectly balanced symbiosis of sunshine and rain—neither



This man in Zhangxi, China, has no chance to clean up his home until the flood waters recede (Photo by Jane Marin, courtesy International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

too much, nor too little. He declared these ideal conditions for food production and for safe living conditions to be “blessings”—and indeed they are (Deuteronomy 28:12).

He linked those blessings to the behavior of the people, warning them that weather would spin out of balance when the populace abandoned His revealed spiritual values. “I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:19–20).

How much of what is happening in the world’s weather is merely “natural cycling” and how much is directly related to the ungodly conduct of its citizens? It seems clear that the world is not being blessed with good weather.

Mankind would do well to look to its conduct and to humbly seek the One who can provide what we lack. ❖

Divorce Revolution Spawns Cohabitation Generation

Results of a Rutgers University study are sobering and disconcerting—the majority of today's young adults are inclined toward living together outside of marriage.

by Cecil E. Maranville

There was an outside chance 30 years ago that a 6-year-old child might know a child from a home broken by divorce. Today there is an outside chance that a 6-year-old child might know a child from a home not broken by divorce. The oddity is becoming the child from the home of his married biological parents.

Hyperbole? Maybe. Maybe not. A phenomenal change has quietly swept through Western society, and few seem to know about it. Fewer still seem to care. Over the course of the last few decades, societal norms have evolved from viewing divorce as a stigma to seeing it as normal, natural and often necessary. Sociologists summarize this radical change by referring to “the divorce revolution.” The children of the divorce revolution are not buying the cavalier philosophy about divorce being normal. And they are taking steps that will—they think—help them to avoid the pain and costs associated with broken marriages. The divorce revolution has spawned “the cohabitation generation.”

“By simple definition, living together—or unmarried cohabitation—is the status of couples who are sexual partners, not married to each other, and sharing a household” (“Should We Live Together?” A Comprehensive Review of Recent Research by David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The National Marriage Project: the Next Generation Series*. Emphasis added throughout).

The biblical term for unmarried cohabitation is “fornication.” God reveals that sexual relations outside of marriage are damaging. “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Why? What did God know that people have been discovering the hard way?



The national marriage rate has dropped 43 percent over the past four decades to its lowest point ever.

Far from insignificant, the trend toward cohabitation is nothing short of revolutionary. About 11 percent of couples cohabited before marriage between 1965 and 1974; 44 percent of couples cohabited before marriage between 1980 and 1990; over 50 percent of couples marrying today cohabit before marriage. Nearly 60 percent of high school seniors agreed or mostly agreed with the survey statement that cohabiting is usually a good way to prepare for marriage.

In 1970 the number of people living together without marriage was 523,000. Today, the number exceeds four million!

Marriage statistics are equally revealing—and equally shocking. The study found that the national marriage rate has dropped 43 percent over the past four decades to its lowest point ever.

Why Young People Choose Cohabitation

Why? What has caused this revolution? In large part, it's a result of the divorce revolution, aided by a general loosening of attitudes toward

God reveals that sexual relations outside of marriage are damaging. Why? What did God know that people have been discovering the hard way?

morality. Having witnessed and experienced firsthand the negative results of divorce, today's youth want to avoid them. "For today's young adults, the first generation to come of age during the divorce revolution, living together seems like a good way to achieve some of the benefits of marriage and avoid the risk of divorce. According to surveys, *most young people* say it is a good idea to live with a person before marrying..." (ibid.).

They believe that cohabiting couples who eventually marry will have stronger marriages for their having lived together first. Cohabiting, they reason, enables them to get to know each other much better than people who enter into marriage without first living together. Then, if things don't work out, the relationship can be broken without the hassle of either legal procedures or religious permission.

They believe that many divorces will be avoided by starting relationships with a "trial period" of living together. Cohabiting, they contend, will provide opportunity for the unmarried man or woman to experiment enough that he or she will find the ideal match before eventually entering into marriage.

That's not to say that all young adults have the same reasons for cohabiting. Some live together with no intention of marrying. Others live together briefly before marrying each other. And still others see cohabiting with various partners as preparation for marriage with someone—eventually.

And additional reasons are argued for cohabiting. It is claimed that cohabitation provides economic benefits. Young adults perceive the idea that living together is a more progressive, realistic approach to today's world than old, repressive, Victorian attitudes toward intimacy.

The feminist movement, with its theme of reversing male dominance of the American family, encourages cohabitation instead of traditional marriage roles. The modern approach, it is argued, allows a woman more control, more freedom and less subjection to men.

Included in the report were the results of a survey of a group of young adults about their views of living

together and marriage. All were single, working 20-somethings from New Jersey.

"[Most] of them thought marriage should occur [only after] there are children, and children should come after a house is bought and a couple has a good annual income—around \$75,000 in the women's views.... [The] young people saw... cohabitation as a good way to test compatibility, detect character strengths and weaknesses, and arrange certain household economies.... Women preferred short-term cohabitation, saying they could determine the man's suitability for marriage in a few months. In contrast, many of the man said they could cohabit indefinitely" ("Cohabitation No Formula for Future Bliss in Marriage," by Cheryl Wetzstein, *The Washington Times*).

Models of good marriage relationships are sadly missing. "I'm worried most because of the teenagers," Popenoe

We're witnessing the evolution of "the throwaway relationship" much like many other disposable items in our consumer society.

said, adding, "Teens don't even know anyone who's happily married."

No Evidence of Any Advantage

In spite of such a vast increase in numbers of couples cohabiting unmarried, and in spite of the many reasons offered for their behavior, *there is no evidence that cohabitation makes any positive contribution to marriage whatsoever!*

In fact the evidence runs strongly to the contrary, that cohabitation is detrimental in many ways. Here is what the Popenoe-Whitehead research found:

Living together before marriage *increases* the risk of divorcing after marriage. "A 1992 study of 3,300

cases...based on the 1987 National Survey of Families and Households, found that in their marriages prior cohabiters 'are estimated to have a hazard of dissolution that is about 46 percent higher than for noncohabiters'" (op. cit., Popenoe-Whitehead).

Living together outside of marriage increases the risk of domestic violence for women and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children. "One study in Great Britain...found that, compared to children living with married biological parents, children living with cohabiting but unmarried biological parents are *20 times* more likely to be subject to child abuse, and those living with a mother and a cohabiting boyfriend who is not the father face an increased risk of *33 times*" (ibid.).

People who cohabit are much more likely to enter unsuccessful cohabiting relationships again. They become serial cohabiters. Leaving one relationship apparently makes it easier to leave another—rather than providing the stability that many say they seek.

Fully three-quarters of children born to cohabiting parents will see their parents split up before they reach age 16, whereas only about a third of the children born to married parents face a similar fate.

Chances that cohabiting mothers will marry their child's father are declining. The most recent statistics show that it'll happen in only 44 percent of cases.

Economic relationships of cohabiters are often tenuous.

Depression in cohabiting couples runs *more than three times* the rate among married couples. Overall, unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and well being than married couples.

In summary, instead of providing the benefits of marriage without the problems, cohabitation delivers much the opposite—the problems of poor marriage relationships without many of the benefits of good ones. If anything, cohabitation is somewhat of a "low level marriage," similar to what was called a common law marriage in another day and time. It teaches a low-commitment, high-autonomy, selfish pattern of relating and mirrors the worst of a self-fulfillment approach to marriage. Rather than help anyone escape from the ills of

the divorce revolution, cohabiting unmarried perpetuates its flaws.

We're witnessing the evolution of "the throwaway relationship" much like many other disposable items in our consumer society.

Religion Ineffective in Reversing the Trend

In the United States of 30 years ago, people who lived together unmarried were said to be "living in sin," but U.S. society is rapidly distancing itself from those religious roots. Many young people associate getting married before living together with values of a different, past generation—values that are not for now, not for the current generation. It's attractive to them not to worry about having to discuss their relationship with a clergyman either at the beginning or at the dissolution of their union.

"Underlying all of these trends is the broad cultural shift from a more religious society where marriage was considered the bedrock of civilization and people were imbued with a strong sense of social conformity and tradition, to a more secular society focused upon individual autonomy and self invention. This cultural rejection of traditional institutional and moral authority, evident in all of the advanced, Western societies, often has had 'freedom of choice' as its theme and the acceptance of 'alternative lifestyles' as its message" (ibid.).

Men have long misappropriated religion as authority to suppress and abuse women. Seizing advantage from reactions to those wrongs, the feminist movement has influenced religious thought and practices to be more accepting of cohabitation. The feminist angle is that cohabitation is a more positive arrangement for women. (As noted above, research shows that just the opposite is true, that the incidence of abuse increases.)

Religion ought to take the lead in teaching and encouraging the practice of balanced, biblically based roles for husbands and wives to reverse further erosion of marriage. Instead, some religions rush to take a more popular stance, attempting to respond to and accommodate social trends. They have begun to offer "com-

mitment ceremonies" as an alternative to marriage ceremonies!

Those who read and believe the Bible would know that it's God's will that relationships between single men and women progress to marriage *without* living together first. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity [fornication, KJV, or in the vernacular, cohabitation]; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:3–7, RSV).

Are most religions teaching what God says on this crucial issue, and leading people in ways that will benefit them the most?

"[Few] religions prohibit cohabitation or even actively attempt to discourage it, so the religious barrier may be quite weak. . . . [As] the practice of cohabitation in America becomes increasingly common, popular distinctions between cohabitation and marriage are fading. In short, the legal, social and religious barriers to cohabitation are weak and likely to get weaker. Unless there is an unexpected turnaround, America and the other Anglo countries, plus the rest of northern Europe, do appear to be headed in the direction of Scandinavia" (ibid.).

Scandinavia, principally Sweden and Denmark, lead the world in cohabiting couples—along with the lowest marriage rate and one of the highest divorce rates.

What Does the Future Hold?

Popenoe and Whitehead wrote, "We recognize the larger social and cultural trends that make cohabiting relationships attractive to many young adults today. *Unmarried cohabitation is not likely to go away.*"

That translates into more abuse of women and children, more depression, more unhappiness *and more divorce*. In order to address issues such as healthcare, financial contracts and child custody, new legislation will be written to accommo-

date this "marriage without getting married" relationship called "living together."

And cohabiting is often done supposedly to *avoid* the very problems it brings on. It makes a sane person want to scream.

"Unlike divorce or unwed childbearing, the trend toward cohabitation has inspired virtually no public comment or criticism," says the Popenoe-Whitehead report. Well, *World News and Prophecy* is commenting: living together unmarried is but another wrong, rather than righting the wrongs of the divorce revolution. It is sin—sin that has been dressed up in more acceptable-sounding words perhaps, but sin nonetheless. When people sin, they pay a price, their children pay a price and their entire nation pays a price—a terrible price.

Christ's words resound with wisdom and warning: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery [*porneia*, meaning immorality, including fornication or unmarried cohabitation].' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27–28).

Knowing the damage that it would inflict on humankind, His urgent counsel is to avoid it *at all costs*. In His own words: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29–30).

Whether or not a couple should live together unmarried cannot be decided by economics, convenience, societal trends, personal preferences—by human opinion in any form. Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. He alone makes the rules. He alone is justified in saying what works and what doesn't. If only people had the sense to listen to what He says, instead of choosing to experiment. What a hard way to learn.

(The Popenoe-Whitehead report can be read in its entirety at <http://www.smart-marriages.com/cohabit.html>.) ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

Sino-Russian Alliance

Stratfor's organizing theme for its 1999 Annual Forecast is found in the title: "A New and Dangerous World." That concept remains valid and the fundamental trends identified within that theme remain intact. The most important trend identified in that forecast was: "Russia and China will be moving into a closer, primarily anti-American alliance in 1999." That process is well under way and is also intensifying.

A Sino-Russian alliance has not yet fully taken shape. Nevertheless, matters are rapidly moving in that direction. Therefore, it is Stratfor's view that the single most important global theme of the third quarter of 1999 will be fairly quiet, yet intense, diplomacy between Russia and China as they explore the precise meaning and implementation of their strategic relationship (Stratfor's Third Quarter Forecast, June 27, 1999).

Yeltsin Meets With Chinese Leader

BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN: (AP)—President Boris Yeltsin met his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin, and the Russian leader renewed his call for the two nations to work together to build a "multi-polar world."

Yeltsin and Jiang held one-on-one talks before taking part in a five-nation summit in the Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan. The summit was intended to improve stability along China's lengthy border with Russia and three former Soviet republics.

After tension between Moscow and Beijing during the Cold War, relations have warmed considerably in this decade, and the leaders of the two countries meet regularly.

Whenever Yeltsin meets top Chinese officials, he calls for strengthening ties as part of an effort to counterbalance U.S. clout in global affairs.

Jiang did not mention the United States by name, but he appeared to refer to Washington when he said that there was a "new display of hegemony relying on force, and it has already drawn concern on the international scene."

The five-nation summit, which included Kyrgyzstan, Kazakstan and Tajikistan, was the fourth such meeting since April 1996, when the leaders first met in Shanghai, China,

and agreed on a series of confidence-building measures along the border.

Future Energy Shortages Predicted

BOSTON: (CNN)—This summer's withering heat has forced some power companies to warn they are on the brink of running out of electricity. And just because it hasn't happened near you doesn't mean it won't in the future.

A recent study by New York-based Allied Business Intelligence, a technology research firm, predicts that in the next 10 years a growing strain on energy resources in the United States will lead to power shortages everywhere except Middle America—with deadly results.

"Lives are always lost during heat waves. It's the weakest, the sick, elderly," says ABI analyst Michael Kujawa. "Air conditioners will go off in some critical situations...and the numbers will go up."

A Divorce at the Click of a Mouse

Warring couples in Britain can now end their marriage quickly and cheaply—using the Internet.

For just £79.99, couples can file divorce papers with the click of a mouse—if neither partner contests the split.

In its first week, more than 300 British couples downloaded papers from the site—potentially saving hundreds or even thousands of pounds in solicitors' fees and court costs.

The petition, affidavit and decree nisi are drafted, based on answers users give to a series of questions on-line. On-line lawyers check the details and send the forms to the court.

Patricia Hardcastle, spokeswoman for the Roman Catholic Church, described the service as "repellent."

"There's something very impersonal about having to do it on-line. Nobody wants to go through it, but at least we had to do everything face-to-face, which might have made people stop and think," she said.

But Richard Cohen, legal director of the Desktop Lawyer service, said: "Just because it's easy, it doesn't mean it's going to incite people to get divorced. Up till now people had to use a solicitor; we've made a daunting task a bit easier," he told *The Observer* (1999 Sky Online, July 29, 1999).

TB Infects Third of World Population

Nearly a third of the world's population is infected with the bacterium that causes tuberculosis, according to a report published [in August], with 7.96 million new cases of the disease reported in 1997.

The study, by the World Health Organization (WHO) blamed poor control strategies for the situation, adding that more than half of the new cases reported in 1997 occurred in five Southeast Asian countries.

Control failures were also cited for high rates in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, along with high rates of HIV infection in some African countries where the disease has hit people whose immune systems have been weakened.

The study, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, estimated that in the 212 countries monitored by WHO, 1.86 billion people, or 32 percent of the global population, now carry the bacterium that causes the disease (1999 Reuters Limited).

Drug Use Down Among Teens, Up Among Young Adults

WASHINGTON: (CNN)—Illegal drug use declined among younger teens in the United States last year, but increased slightly among young adults, according to the U.S. government's annual drug use survey.

The use of illicit drugs among 12- to 17-year-olds dropped from 11.4 percent in 1997 to 9.9 percent in 1998. However, among 18- to 25-year-olds, drug use increased from 14.7 percent to 16.1 percent during the same period.

The mixed results in the 1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reflect a continuing widespread drug problem, but a hopeful sign that the anti-drug message may be reaching those in their early teens.

Saddam Hussein Stepping Down?

Reports are mounting that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein may be preparing to step down, thus paving the way for the removal of sanctions against Iraq. He does not particularly need to go, as he is quite effective at breaking U.N. sanctions. However, his would-be partners would prefer to do business above board, and may be urging him to retire. It's a win-win deal for all involved, from Russia to Iraq to the United States. All that remains is for Saddam to figure out how to frame retirement as his last great victory.

Diplomatic sources in Amman, Jordan, have confirmed that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has given new roles to his son, Qusay, and Iraqi Vice President Taha Yashin Ramadan. While the moves may have been made due to Izzat Ibrahim's deteriorating health, there appears to be a deeper meaning. Saddam has also replaced a number of ambassadors in an effort

to present a new face to the international community. The changes are likely cosmetic, aimed at repairing Iraq's international image so that the U.N. will lift economic sanctions.

However, the sleepy little war has had a significant character change in the past few weeks. On August 19, U.S. aircraft bombed targets outside of the no-fly zones, inside the central region where Iraq retains clear sovereignty. At about the same time, the U.S. openly shifted its targeting from responsive attacks against aggressive Iraqi moves, to attacks on fuel and ammunition dumps.

About a week after that, an Agence France-Presse report out of Amman claimed that an unnamed Western diplomat had stated that the U.S. and U.K. were preparing a "large-scale" operation against Iraq. Simultaneously, Arab leaders started to condemn Saddam Hussein ostentatiously.

The Jordanians, after an opening to Saddam following the death of King Hussein, cooled their relations with Saddam. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was reported to have "washed his hands" of Iraq. Bashar al-Assad, son of the Syrian president, called Saddam a "human beast." All told, it appears that the war is shifting from its sleepy phase. The question, of course, is what it is shifting to and why it is shifting now (Stratfor.com, August 17, 26 and 30, 1999).

Bin Laden Has 20 Nuclear Bombs, Says Expert

WASHINGTON—Saudi fugitive Osama Bin Laden is believed to have up to 20 nuclear bombs and is seeking to launch a massive terrorist strike against the United States, a congressional investigator and author says.

Yosef Bodansky, a researcher of the House Task Force for Counterterrorism and author of a new book on Bin Laden, [revealed at a] news conference...that Bin Laden has been seeking to follow up on his bombings of two U.S. embassies in east Africa one year ago. Echoing U.S. officials, Bodansky said Bin Laden was thwarted in plans to blow up the U.S. embassy and two consulates in India last December and January.

Bin Laden has biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and has received technical help from Iraq, Bodansky said. The nuclear weapons include suitcase bombs acquired through Chechnyan rebels (1999 World Tribune.com).

Kazakhstan Registers Seventh Case of Bubonic Plague This Year

MOSCOW—A woman in southern Kazakhstan has been hospitalized in the seventh case of bubonic plague registered this year. The 46-year-old patient was admitted to a hospital in the Kzyl-Orda... Kazakhstan's Emergency Ministry reported, according to the Interfax news agency. Earlier in the month, a 13-year-old boy died of bubonic plague in the former Soviet Central Asian republic. (1999 Nando Media).

Contributors: Peter Eddington, Cecil Maranville

“WHEAT,” (Continued from page 16)

wars become fewer and farther between. “This isn’t attacking a hill,” he says, “but it is about coming up with the same techniques to solve a problem.”

Reporter Reitman relates how Russell recently returned a cow to its rightful owner, seeking to build trust in a Serbian community through a symbolic gesture. A Serbian farmer had complained that an ethnic Albanian in a nearby village had stolen his cow. Russell accompanied the Serbian farmer to retrieve the animal, which clearly recognized its owner. “Is that your cow?” Russell recalls asking an ethnic Albanian. “But what about my cows?” replied the Albanian, whose cows were stolen during the war. “We’ll worry about your cows later,” Russell said as the Serb walked off with cow in tow. The Serbian town is now less hostile towards the U.S. forces.

“You Don’t Understand the History”

Reporter Reitman puts voice to the overwhelming task at hand by relating Russell’s stonewall response against intolerance. “They tell me, ‘You don’t understand the history,’ says the major who has a degree in military history. ‘I tell them, we don’t want to know anything about the history, anything about the hate. I have no desire to hear it and every desire to be impartial.’”

Russell’s response reminds me of the story of the man who rushed into the marriage counselor’s office and said, “You’ve got to help me! My wife is historical!” “You mean hysterical,” replied the counselor. “No, I mean historical,” replied the man. “She keeps bringing up the past.” This proverbial dilemma between a married couple would confront Russell in an even more powerful way in a greater arena. Major Russell pursued solutions to replace the hysteria and history. The really big issue is not the past, but the present reality of getting wheat out of the fields and into the flour mills before the summer rains begin, so that there will be bread come winter.

The major gathered all of the local village mayors, both Serb and Albanian, and sat them down in a gymnasium heavily guarded by U.S. forces. He laid out a plan of how the towns would be divided into two co-ops. He delineated how Serbs and Albanians would be issued free fuel and supplied legitimate IDs to insure security during the harvest. The *Times* staff writer shares the moment of Russell’s striving to unite both sides in a common cause.

“This plan is about sharing your assets, sharing your sweat and reaping the benefits.” Russell uses his background as the son-in-law of a chicken farmer to try to create common bonds. He concludes with, “I take a risk for your peace every day, and I’m not even from your country. Why don’t you take a risk for peace?”

“But the War Spoiled Everything”

Day in and day out, meeting after meeting, Russell looked for some ray of hope. Any breakthrough! Finally, the Serb mayors were willing to cooperate.

Traditionally, the three combines in the Serbian village of Pasjane would harvest the fields of the Albanian town of Lastetia, which doesn’t have harvesting machines. Dobrivoje Paunovic, 53, broke forth, “It’s a good idea! We always worked together. We had many friends, who were Albanian, and for 20 years we lived together, but the war spoiled everything. We’re willing to help them because *the wheat doesn’t recognize the hatred*” [emphasis added].

Separately, the ethnic Albanians agreed, but in the same breath said it could not work. It is a dialogue that echoes throughout the region. “How can you cooperate when the Serbs massacred us, burned down our village and killed 24 of our villagers?” replied Mustaf Berisha. Told of his former Serb friend’s remarks, he got particularly angry: “He’s the very man who led police in to our village—the one distributing arms to everybody in the village, even the children.” Paunovic strongly denied everything.

There’s more than wheat standing tall out on the farm. There is a high wall of well-founded fear that

can only be torn down by people who can move beyond the past. To be stuck in the past is to be bound in the present, which in turn denies any future—be it for the Serb, the Albanian or for anyone reading this column.

Forgiveness Is Very Costly

Author Tim La Haye in his book *Anger Is a Choice* (pages 111-112) quotes David Augsburger’s *The Freedom of Forgiveness*: “Forgiveness is very costly. It costs you, not the person being forgiven. Forgiveness means that justice will not always be fulfilled. Forgiveness does not rebuild the house that has been burned down by someone carelessly playing with matches. Forgiveness does not always put a broken marriage back together. Forgiveness does not restore virginity to the rape victim. Forgiveness is letting go. It is the relaxation of your ‘death grip’ on the pain you feel.”

Augsburger seemingly could have been in the gym in Kosovo listening and watching Major Russell referee between the two opposing sides. He continues, “Forgiveness seems too easy. There should be blood for blood. Eye for eye. Yes, you can knock out a tooth for a tooth in retaliation, but what repayment can you demand from the man who has bro-



“Waging peace” can be very challenging in the Balkans

ken your home or betrayed your daughter or ruined your reputation?”

Augsburger concludes by quoting an old saying. “Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; avenging an injury makes you but even with him; forgiving it sets you above him!”

Seemingly, the Serbs and Albanians remain at the level of eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Such a village, such a country, such a world leaves everyone toothless and blind and the “wheat that doesn’t recognize hatred” is left to rot in the field. Few of us have experienced the horrors visited upon many of the Balkan people of varied ethnic and religious backgrounds whose only reason for injury was “they were different.” Personally, humanly, we, too, wouldn’t want to budge. How will the cycle of pain ever end?

Another Time, Another Harvest

Long ago at another time of harvest, two peoples that were enemies came into the field to work together. The book of Ruth vividly describes the story of the young Moabitess working alongside the residents of Bethlehem. Her people and the House of Israel had been enemies for some time. It took courage for Ruth to come to glean the field, courage for Boaz to welcome her to his field and courage for her fellow harvesters to remain in the field with her. What would the people back in Bethlehem say?

There is a unique similarity between the efforts of Boaz and Major Russell. Both cared, both thought ahead, both were willing to make provisions. Both were willing to take risks. Both protection and substance were offered. Notice how in Ruth 2:8 Boaz states, “Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here.” He will make his stand for this stranger, here—and not pass the responsibility to someone else. In verse 9, Boaz reminds Ruth of how he “commanded the young men not to touch you.” Her place and protection are now assured. But you can’t do much on an empty stomach.

Notice 2:14. “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” Yes, a total sharing of resources. My favorite verse is found just a little further down in verse 16. “Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.” Boaz was planning ahead for this Moabitess’ success at harvest. No Apache helicopters, no town meetings, no combines. Sometimes it just means one person standing taller than the wall of hate that divides people.

Perhaps most importantly, and what is most telling, is that he focused on Ruth’s personal qualities and not on her national or ethnic characteristics.

Notice verses 11 and 12: “And Boaz answered and said to her, ‘It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

“The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” Notice how he focuses on her individual achievements of family loyalty, courage and hard work. Simply put, he was focusing on *what she was doing*, not *where she came from*.

Powerful focus with a powerful outcome. Little wonder Boaz is likened to a type of the compassionate and caring Christ—the ultimate Prince of Peace Who sees to the needs of His people.

Who Failed? The Wheat or the People?

But not all stories have a happy ending, especially in this present age. “Operation Harvest” engineered by Major Russell

in Kosovo suffered a tremendous setback as news circulated that 14 Serbs were massacred while farming elsewhere in Kosovo. He continued to encourage both sides to work together. Finally, when there was a step forward, bad weather postponed the effort for a day. The next day, the Albanians drove their tractors to the fuel distribution point, which was in a Serbian village.

Things quickly turned ugly. There was only enough diesel for 10 farmers, which annoyed the Serb townspeople who ordered the Albanians out of town before any fuel was distributed. Old tensions flared again! The two sides simply would not work together.

Times staff writer Reitman declares “Operation Harvest has failed” because this was more than simply about a harvest of wheat reaped by combines. It was about the possibility of a combined future for two peoples in one land.

In Major Russell’s section of Kosovo the question must be asked, Who failed? The wheat, the people or Major Russell? I think you know the answer.

In knowing that answer, Matthew 9:37–38 takes on new relevance for us. “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” The focus is not so much on the harvest as it is on the need for harvesters to come to the fore. Men and women of vision, courage and sacrifice who will rise above the cycle of human conflict, and who desire to achieve the extraordinary even if it be in small steps. Men and women who understand the godly equation found in Luke 19:17, that if we have been faithful over little, He will grant us to be faithful over much.

Not everyone will appreciate at this time the message we have to preach both by our words and life’s actions. But it still has to be said and done. One American officer a long way from home is trying to make a difference. I picture him even now slowly and steadily wading into the waving autumn wheat that doesn’t know hate. Although he seems to be alone, he is not. The vision that motivates him says to all, “whether you come or not, this is the way, walk you in it.” ❖



This Is the Way... The Wheat Doesn't Know Hate

by Robin Webber

“Winning the war, but losing the peace” is a well-known maxim in history. It is well known because it is repeated generation by generation, conflict by conflict, continent by continent. It brings to mind the daring dynamism that Jesus’ beatitude forcefully stated in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” Peace, like war, must be waged with vision, imagination, self-sacrifice and a big dash of hope! One such peacemaker, U.S. Army Major Steve Russell, is currently “waging peace” or at least trying to in one of the globe’s toughest neighborhoods—the Balkans. And yes, between you know who—the Serbs and the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo.

Valerie Reitman, a *Los Angeles Times* staff writer, describes Major Russell’s vision, sacrifice and frustration in an article titled “Kosovo Harvest Yields Bounty of Ethnic Mistrust” (*Los Angeles Times*, August 22).

Let’s read his story, which is a good illustration of the self-sacrificing and painstaking blow-by-blow steps real leaders of vision must employ to establish the peace. Not presidents, dignitaries or committees that come and go, sign treaties and go home to a distant land, but the real, on-the-scene person who strives to accomplish the “grunt work” of day-by-day, sometimes moment-by-moment hand-holding of people who only know how to hate one another. I think you will find his work

informative, educational and very real—because even though “good guys don’t always come in first,” they are the first to keep on trying, because it’s the right thing to do.

“Just Get Them Thinking”

Reitman begins the story of Major Russell by describing harvest time in Kosovo. “Two Apache gunships hover overhead, and a dozen armed soldiers stand poised by a remote wheat field. It’s 7 a.m. and the moment of truth for ‘Operation Harvest’ is at hand. Major Russell hopes to entice the farmers to reap their fields together in return for free gas and heavy security. ‘Even a baby step will be progress,’ Russell insists. ‘If we can just get them thinking about the small things like harvesting the wheat instead of looting and burning each others houses,’ the Oklahoman says, ‘it’ll be a big start.’”

A silver-tongued idealist whose oratorical skills have earned him the nickname “Governor” in the Army combat unit known as the Big Red One, Russell, 36, is one of the senior operations people at the helm of the 5,000 man and woman peacekeeping force in Kosovo. He is the epitome of the New Age soldier’s evolution from fighter to peacekeeper as ground

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