

# WORLD NEWS and PROPHECY

## Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

September/October 2000

Vol. 3, No. 8

# A Modern Tale of Two Cities

*The spotlight is currently on two world capitals. While both play key roles within today's political and religious mix, it is their future role that readers should carefully watch and understand.*

by Darris McNeely

Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, told an enduring story of events and characters caught in the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution. Paris and London, the two cities of the title, were at the center of the world stage during the 18th and 19th centuries. Their roles have diminished somewhat today and we find two other cities in the news during the year 2000. One has sought to enslave mankind with chains of spiritual darkness. The other represents freedom, dignity and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. What happens in these other two cities will play a pivotal role in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. God's people need to understand.

### Jerusalem

Let's look at the first of the two cities, Jerusalem. Bible prophecy

shows several key events taking place in this city. In Revelation 11:2, we are told that gentiles "will tread the holy city underfoot." Verse 8 says, "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

Jerusalem is called both a holy city and a type of Sodom and Egypt. This is quite a contrast for a city revered by three major faiths. Here also is a description of the death of

the two witnesses after they have finished their testimony before the beast. Jerusalem is the stage for these end-time events.

What is taking place in Jerusalem today?

(See "TWO CITIES," page 3)



*Two cities to watch: Jerusalem and Rome*

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The Hug Drug—or Sorrow Sold for Sweetness? — The Little Country That Could**

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Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available on November 10 on the Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml#4>.

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.

## Mideast peace talks

The recent peace talks at Camp David came to a futile conclusion when it was clear that the Israelis and the Palestinians could not come to an agreement over the status of Jerusalem.

According to a piece in the *New York Times* of May 21, 2000, “Jerusalem is rarely publicly discussed by Israeli or Palestinian leaders in anything but black-and-white terms. It is the ‘eternal, undivided capital’ of Israel, on the one hand, and the future capital of the Palestinian state on the other: seemingly irreconcilable concepts that have led many intelligent politicians to recommend that the issue be left unresolved in the current, supposedly final, peace talks.”

Indeed Jerusalem’s status has not been resolved and threatens to be a major stumbling block in any effort to achieve a major peace accord. The prophet Zechariah accurately predicted the central position and troublesome nature of the city in end-time geopolitics. “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:2–3).

When it comes to Jerusalem, today’s leaders seem to be “drunk” with greed over control of the city. The most hotly contested part of the city is the area called the Temple Mount. Here are two sacred Islamic shrines as well as the Wailing Wall, important to the Jews. The Palestinians wish to erect their flag over this site and claim a significant victory in the long-standing struggle between Arab and Jew.

## A brief history

The history of Jerusalem has been a succession of changes, revolutions, sieges, surrenders and famines—each followed by restorations and rebuilding. Its time of greatest glory was under David and his son Solomon. It was the latter who built

the fabulous temple described in the books of the Kings.

Over the centuries, the city has been the scene of much contention. Christians and Muslims have alternately slaughtered each other in battles to control the city. Multiple thousands of people have died under the banner of the cross and the crescent within the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

From 1948 to 1967, the city was divided between the Jews and the Arabs. Israel gained control and united the city during the Six Day War. Since then, the Israelis have guaranteed all the major faiths access to all the holy sites. The push to achieve a settlement of the Palestinian homeland issue has again highlighted the emotional pull of the city.

Today, tension continues over the Temple Mount area. Undoubtedly, this site will become a flash point in the future.

## What lies ahead?

Prophecy shows us that Jerusalem will be the focal point of key events prior to the return of Christ. Notice what Christ revealed, “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15–16). The reference is to Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9. Within this detailed prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, Daniel describes “one who makes desolate” (verse 27). Here, in this major prophecy, God reveals a future conflict involving a covenant (agreements, treaties or accords?) and sacrifice.

Jerusalem’s future will see strife between conflicting ideas. As in every war, many people will suffer hardship. Notice what Christ said in His Olivet prophecy: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in

those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20–24).

## The second city

What will bring this scene to this climax? To answer, let’s look at the other city of our story.

In Revelation 17, the apostle John describes a woman with a name upon her forehead, “Babylon the great.” What does this woman symbolize? “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18).

Here in prophecy is described a great city called Babylon that will sit astride an end-time combine of nations described figuratively as the beast. Will this be a literal revival of the ancient city of Babylon, or, are we to look for another city to fulfill this prophecy? Let’s first understand the history of Babylon.

In Genesis 11, we see a tower being built at a place called Babel. This tower, built under the direction of Nimrod, becomes the symbol of human culture without the revealed knowledge of God at its core. Man begins building a society apart from, and in defiance of, God. It is something that God cannot allow to continue, lest civilization progress too rapidly for His plan. So He confounds the languages and scatters the people.

Babylon was later built on the ruins of this site. The city becomes the antithesis of God’s purpose and the ancient scourge of God’s people. Babylon, derived from a root word meaning, “to confound,” is symbolic of the system of spiritual confusion that overlays the entire world. A modern city labeled “Babylon the great” will, like ancient Babylon, set the cultural and religious standards for the end-time political-religious empire of the “beast” of Revelation.

*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* explains the biblical implications of this Babylonian heritage: “As the realm of the devil...Babylon is...understood as the arch-typical head of all entrenched world-

ly resistance to God. Babylon is an age long reality including idolatrous kingdoms as diverse as Sodom, Gomorrah, Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, and Rome.... Babylon, the mother of all harlots, is the great *source and reservoir* of enmity to God, as well as the objectified product of the ‘one mind’ [Revelation 17:13, 17] which gives power and authority to false gods. As such, she is the antithesis of the virgin bride of Christ, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of God” (p. 338, “Babylon”).

Will this city be a revival of the literal city of Babylon, or is the Bible speaking symbolically? The idea that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt has been popularized in a series of books by Tim LaHaye called *Left Behind*. In these books, the seat of the New World Order and the antichrist is found in Babylon, located in modern day Iraq. But is this where we should look?

The “woman” John describes is a worldwide religious system based in a city (verse 18), but its roots are ancient Babel and Babylon. Only one religion and only one city matches that description today. That city is Rome, within which is Vatican City, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. Let’s look at what John says under the inspiration of God’s Spirit.

In Revelation 17, John says that the woman is a “harlot” (verse 1), and that kings have “committed fornication” with her (verse 2). The reference to fornication between “the woman” [the Babylon system] and “kings” [the nations] is spiritual symbolism.

This city is spiritually unfaithful to God. It must therefore claim a relationship to God which He now repudiates before all the world. For hundreds of years the Roman Catholic Church has claimed to be the “mother” church of Christianity. Its popes have historically claimed to be the Vicar of Christ. This belief is well documented through history.

### **Vatican takes center stage**

This dogma has been restated recently by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. On September 5, 2000, a 36-page paper titled “Dominus Iesus” was released, which says: “Only in

the Catholic Church does Christ’s Church subsist in all her fullness. Nonetheless, outside the Catholic Church ‘elements of truth and sanctification’ exist that are of the Church.... Consequently, there exists only one Church (which subsists in the Catholic Church) and at the same time there exist true particular Churches that are non-Catholic.” (Press Release, Vatican Press Office, September 5, 2000).

Specifically the document reiterates long-held Catholic teaching that salvation is possible only through Christian revelation. Non-Christian teaching may contain elements of truth but are deficient spiritually. The same applies to other Christian faiths. Catholics are told to uphold the teaching that the sole path to spiritual salvation is through the Catholic Church. Religious relativism, the idea that all faiths are valid and equal, is denied. “This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect that the [Catholic] Church has for the religions of the world, but it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifference [that] leads to the belief that one religion is as good as another” (ibid.).

Official Catholic dogma states that full salvation is possible only through its rites and teachings. All other faiths, “...suffer from defects” (ibid.).

### **A cup and colors**

Another piece of evidence is given in verse 4. “The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”

In ancient Rome, scarlet and purple were reserved as the colors of the Roman Caesars. It was the symbol of royalty. The Roman soldiers mockingly placed these colors on Christ at His crucifixion (Matthew 27:28). The purple and scarlet colors of today’s Catholic bishops and cardinals were inherited from the Empire. Notice this comment from historian Will Durant. “When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title *and vestments* of the *pontifex maximus*... passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror. The reins and skills of government were

handed down by a dying empire to a virile papacy...” (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 3, “Caesar and Christ,” 1944, pp. 671-672, emphasis added).

Within the Catholic Mass, no vessel is more important than the chalice. Tradition calls for it to be of gold. Or if it is made of silver, then the inside lining must be of gold.

### **A history of persecution**

In Revelation 17:6, John describes, “the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”

Earlier this year, Pope John Paul II made a historic apology for the past record of persecutions by those acting on behalf of the church. Though the apology was careful not to say that the church had erred, it still brought attention to the long record of death and injustice inflicted on those who dared to oppose or differ with the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

It is said that Christian Rome killed far more Jews than did pagan Rome. On July 15, 1099, soldiers of the first Crusade sacked Jerusalem, killing all the Muslims of the city. All the Jews were herded into a synagogue and burned alive. For many, their last scene in this mortal life was the sword and cross-emblazoned shield of their executioner. Millions died in the Inquisition.

### **Reigning over the kings of the earth**

One other piece of internal evidence needs our attention. “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18).

Throughout history, the papacy has crowned and deposed kings. Pope Leo III on Christmas day 800 crowned Charlemagne, the great Frankish king. Henry IV’s struggle with Pope Gregory VII included an excommunication. When a repentant Henry stood barefoot in the snow outside the papal residence, the spiritual power of the church was clearly demonstrated.

(See “TWO CITIES,” page 15)

# Russia's Time of Troubles

*Current troubles only serve to underscore long-standing weaknesses in the Russian system of government. Will Putin have the vision to lead his nation? Will Russians demand a stronger leader?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**T**he late Andrei Sakharov was the nuclear physicist who gave the Soviets the hydrogen bomb. He and his wife, Yelena Bonner, later became prominent dissidents, critical of the Soviet regime that finally collapsed in 1991. Yelena Bonner summed up the Soviet government with these words: "The Bolsheviks are like a bunch of squatters who have taken over a house and are waiting for the police to arrive."

Having taken over the Russian house in 1917 without the consent of the people, the communists (Bolsheviks) attempted to fill a vacuum left by the collapse of a dynasty that had ruled for over three centuries. The communists never seemed to know what they were doing and consequently made a big mess of everything.

It appears that little has changed. The new democratic Russia is led today by a former KGB official who seemed bewildered during the country's latest crisis—the sinking of the Russian nuclear submarine, Kursk.

Officially, it didn't sink—it simply "descended to the bottom of the sea." Officially, no lives were lost and contact with the sub was maintained at all times. Until, that is, no more lies could be told and the true extent of the disaster had to be revealed. By then, it was too late for foreign technology, sent upon request by Britain and Norway. Officially, foreigners are still blamed for the incident, the Kursk supposedly having been hit by an American or British submarine during naval exercises. It is more likely that torpedoes in the submarine exploded, killing most of the men immediately, with the others dying in the days that followed.



*Russian President Vladimir Putin has been under fire as a result of the Kursk and other recent crises*

Russians may not know how to run a modern democracy and free market economy, but they do know their history. Comparisons have been made between the Kursk and Khodynka Field, between "Czar" Vladimir Putin and Czar Nicholas II. On the same day that reports of the Kursk first surfaced, Czar Nicholas II was in the news as he was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church along with the other members of his immediate family.

Nicholas was to remember Khodynka Field for the rest of his life. It was the site of the

first big disaster of his disastrous reign, on his coronation day in 1896. Thousands of people had gathered on the field to receive free beer and gifts. Before the day was over, 1,400 were to die as crowds got out of control, panicked and stampeded. People were crushed to death or suffocated.

When Nicholas first heard the news, he and his wife, the Empress Alexandra, wanted to go immediately to Khodynka Field, but were advised against it. The French Ambassador was holding an official banquet and ball to celebrate the coronation and the French Republic was Russia's major ally at the time. Nicholas and Alexandra attended the ball and thereby gained a reputation as a cold and heartless couple, a reputation only made worse by subsequent events.

Fast forward to today. President Putin remained on vacation during the submarine

*In Russia there's a feeling that the present system is only temporary, that the country is waiting for something better to come along.*

tragedy, showing a lack of feeling toward the families of those who lost loved ones on the Kursk. Newspaper reports later said that his first concern when hearing of the loss was of the financial consequences; his second, the impact on the navy. Only then was any thought added for the men.

After 70 years of communism, during which the people had no rights and no recourse to settle injustices, it is understandable that Russian leaders lack experience and don't know how to react in a crisis like this. There is still a pervasive feeling that "squatters have taken over the house and are waiting for the police to arrive." There's a feeling that the present system is only temporary, that the country is waiting for something better to come along—a governmental system that will usher in another 300 years of stability.

### Fascination with Czarist past

Fascination with the czars continues. Perhaps it's the ubiquitous Imperial architecture of the Romanov period that still dominates the skyline of Russia's second city St. Petersburg. Or the pre-Romanov architecture of the Kremlin in Moscow and other kremlins in other ancient cities. Or the restored fortunes of the ancient Orthodox Church, again at the center of Russian life after 70 years in the communist wilderness.

Centuries old Russian Orthodox churches are being restored, their unique onion domes dominating ancient communities, in stark contrast to the hideous massive concrete blocks that were communism's architectural gift to the Russian people. The new architecture, like modern technology, seems to be letting the people down while the magnificent palatial buildings of the 18th century remain securely standing and fully functional.

Peter the Great founded the Romanov capital of St. Petersburg about 300 years ago. During World War I, when Russia was at war with Germany, the city was renamed. The German *burg* was replaced by the Russian word for city, *grad*. But Petrograd didn't keep its name long. Following the death of the first communist leader, the city's name was changed to Leningrad.

A joke going around the city during

the Gorbachev reforms in the late 1980s was of an opinion poll asking the people of Leningrad the following questions:

Where were you born? Answer: St. Petersburg.

Where did you go to school? Answer: Petrograd.

Where do you live now? Answer: Leningrad.

Where do you expect to die? Answer: St. Petersburg.

The joke accurately predicted the restoration of the old name of St. Petersburg.

There was a similar joke more recently.

What was the national anthem at the beginning of the century? Answer: "God Save the Czar."

What was the national anthem during the Soviet period? Answer: "Communist International."

What will be the new national anthem? Answer: "God Save the Czar."

That hasn't happened yet. Rather, Russia has no national anthem. Again, there's this sense of a temporary system in place. The country is waiting for something else to come along.

### Quest for completion

This deep sense of longing was summed up recently in Russian historian Edvard Radzinsky's book *The Rasputin File* (British title—*Rasputin: The Last Word*) based on material about the last days of the Romanovs that has only recently become available.

Radzinsky, who hosts a popular history program on Russian television, was a member of the "Government Commission for the Funeral of the Royal Family"—the family that the Bolsheviks murdered in July 1918. Their bodies had been hastily disposed of in the city of Ekaterinburg. The commission's task was to recover the bodies, identify them through DNA and arrange for a suitable funeral. It was decided that the czars should be buried along with most of their ancestors in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg. The following is part of Radzinsky's account of the day of the funeral.

"Then the funeral march burst forth. The cortege of buses with the royal coffins began to move. And the miracle was

extended. The quarrels all vanished. And the entire city came out to meet them. People stood in an unbroken line, extending for many kilometers, from the airport all the way to the Peter and Paul Fortress. And there were people in the open windows of the buildings. And others were waiting on their knees. And the President [Yeltsin], who the day before had refused to attend the funeral, had that day suddenly flown to Petersburg to repent before their coffins for all our evil deeds in the departing century.

"They found their resting places in the Peter and Paul Cathedral—across the Neva River from their palace and among the tombs of their ancestors. And all Russia buried them that day. And in the country, there was a long forgotten sense of joyful union, of a moved, happy ease. As if a stone had fallen away from the soul. As if some terrible spirit had at last released the 'czars' and flown away from Russia for good. Or was it only for a moment? And an illusion, after all?" (Edvard Radzinsky, *The Rasputin File*, 2000, pp. 502–503).

It is as if Russia has not yet come to terms with its history. Again, this can be understood with the realization that the Soviets froze history. It was as if nothing of any great significance happened before they came to power and everything that had taken place during their 70 years was perfect. No other interpretation was allowed. Now Russians are free to discover, to learn and to think about their past and to compare themselves with other European countries they knew little about under communism.

A new book, *Nicholas II: The Interrupted Transition* by French historian Helene Carrere d'Encausse shows the reformist nature of the last czar's regime, that Russia was slowly moving toward a constitutional monarchy, which was the model for the more successful European nations at that time. Communism interrupted this. Now the country is trying to make up for lost time and build on those early reforms.

Radzinsky explains that Russia missed its opportunity to restore the Romanovs immediately after the collapse of communism in 1991. This was not entirely the fault of the Russian govern-

ment or people. The Romanov family is itself divided into two factions, each with a different claimant to the throne.

There was no talk of a restoration of autocracy. The European experience has been that constitutional monarchy is the best way to ensure democracy. Under that system, the head of state is a hereditary position with very limited political powers. This severely restricts the probability of a politician becoming a dictator. It doesn't always work, but historically it has worked well in many countries. On the hand, most republics around the world have too easily succumbed to dictatorship. Russia under communism and Hitler's Germany are two of the worst examples.

### Formula for dictatorship

The present Russian system makes it too likely for a dictator to arise. Repeated crises like those in August will likely lead to stronger central government and eventually could lead to one man becoming a dictator. Fears of this were increased recently when the Russian president's powers increased at the expense of regional governors and Russia's fledgling free press came under attack with the arrest of a media mogul.

August was a catalog of disasters for the new Russian president. An explosion in a Moscow subway caused a number of fatalities. Speculation is rife that Chechens were behind the bomb blast in retaliation for Russia's continued disastrous presence in Chechnya where countless young Russian men have been slaughtered in a bloody conflict without end.

Then the submarine disaster followed. Before the month was over, a fire in Moscow's 33-year-old television tower left a small number of firemen dead and a dangerous building that could collapse at any time—"symbolic of the state of the nation as a whole," claimed President Putin. When the tower was built, it was the pride of the Soviet system. It is taller than the Empire State Building.

The last decade has seemed like a replay of Russia's "Time of Troubles," the period between the two dynasties that ruled Russia for over a thousand years. Comparisons were drawn between Boris Yeltsin, president of Russia until a few



*This 1914 photo shows Czar Nicholas II with his wife and five children*

months ago, and Boris Godunov, the interim czar who dominated Russia at the beginning of the 17th century.

After that a new dynasty began in 1613 with the coronation of the 16-year-old Mikhail Romanov. Ironically the first and last Romanov czars were named Michael. Nicholas abdicated in favor of his brother Michael who was to be a constitutional monarch. The Bolshevik revolution ended his reign before it began.

A further irony is that the first Michael was at the Ipatiev Monastery when asked to be czar. The last Romanovs were slaughtered in the basement of the Ipatiev House. Ironies like this are not lost on the Russian people.

With no nobility to speak of and a Romanov family divided, it is unlikely that Russia will introduce a constitutional monarchy. This increases the likelihood of dictatorship—unless Russia can move fast to improve its economy.

### Catch-22

Here's Russia's Catch-22: Economic progress depends on political stability. But political stability is not likely until there is some economic progress. This would give a government legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The perception in Russia that people in government are like "squatters waiting for the police to arrive" has a great deal of truth to it. People at the highest levels of government in most countries are

corrupt—they line their own pockets at the expense of the people they are supposedly serving. It was Lord Acton, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg at the time of Peter the Great, three centuries ago, who observed that "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Russian leaders are no longer autocratic, but an all-pervasive bureaucracy also perpetuates corruption. One reason the search for survivors of the Kursk took so long was the need for rescuers to obtain permits from different departments before being given permission to act.

Another Russian irony is that many Russians would like to see a return to autocracy. They look back at their history and see that the leaders who accomplished the most for the country all had absolute power. Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Stalin are the three most often mentioned. Catherine the Great is another.

In the midst of all the present confusion, it is interesting to note a return to religion in the country. Radzinsky's book shows the role that religion played in the country prior to the revolution. The state church was the Russian Orthodox Church, as it is again. Moscow was the "Third Rome" after Rome and Constantinople. The country's official name was the "Holy Russian Empire."

After seven decades of religious persecution by the communists, Russia celebrated 1,000 years of Christianity in 1988 during the Gorbachev thaw. The people

remembered Vladimir, the Grand Prince of Kiev, who ordered the forced baptisms of all his subjects when he himself decided to convert. Naturally, under such conditions, many of the old pagan beliefs and practices survived and continued right down into modern times. The Orthodox Church struggled with a rival spiritual power at the time of the last czar, a mystical amalgam of orthodoxy and paganism that, through the monk Rasputin, influenced the royal court.

Now religion is back at center stage in Russia. The Orthodox Church again dominates the religious life of the nation. Under pressure from the church, the government has made it more difficult for Western religions to practice there.

### **Biblical solutions to Russia's problems**

There's an irony here, too. The irony is that the solution to Russia's present crisis lies in the pages of the Bible. The Scriptures contain a great deal of advice for governments, both ancient and modern. There is advice, too, for those ruled, as well as for rulers.

Perhaps the most famous passage in the Bible regarding government contains Christ's instruction to "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Tax evasion is a major Russian problem. Without revenue, government cannot function. Teachers, military personnel and others on the government's payroll go unpaid for months. Even when they are paid, their wages are so low they hardly cover the monthly food bill. The commander of the Kursk received the equivalent of \$250 per month. Conscripts on the sub received only \$30 per month, when they received any pay at all.

The revenue shortage also meant that only three submarines could be in service at any time—this in a nation that was one of the two most powerful military nations on earth just 10 years ago.

Although tax evasion is a sin, the Scriptures highlight a contributory cause of this problem—the incredible ability and appetite of government to take too much for itself.

When the Israelites rejected God and said that they wanted to be ruled by a human leader like all the nations around them, God warned them of the natural tendency of government to take more and more from the people. This warning is recorded in 1 Samuel 8:

"This will be the behavior of the king [any human leader] who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

"And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. *And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day*" (verses 11–18).

Here we see God's warning against big government and the tendency of governments to start small and become big. Under the communists, the government controlled everything. Under the czars, prior to the liberation of the serfs under Czar Alexander II as recently as 1861, the people were mere possessions of their rulers. With such a history, the heavy hand of government is still a major problem in Russia. Some would even make it heavier as a solution to current problems.

When the people have no rights, the economy will not flourish. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). For a nation to thrive, its people must have the prospect of bettering themselves. As individuals prosper, so the nation itself becomes richer.

Russia has made attempts during the last decade to encourage individual initiative, but government's heavy role has ensured that criminal activity, from tax

evasion to trafficking in human beings and drug smuggling, is the quickest way to make money. This also means that money has accumulated in foreign banks outside of the country, thereby depriving Russian companies of much needed investment.

A major weakness of many nations in today's world is that the ordinary people have no rights. This includes property rights. Any accumulation of assets means nothing—everything can be taken away at the slightest whim of government. The biblical book of Micah addresses this problem. Speaking of a time in the future after the return of the Messiah and the establishment of righteous government over all the earth, we read that "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, *and no one shall make them afraid*" (Micah 4:4).

Russia urgently needs a law giving the people the right to private property protected from government confiscation. A system of checks and balances is needed to stop the excesses of government. There is still no law in place granting farmers the right to their own land in perpetuity—land they can work hard on, develop and hand down to their children. Such a law would boost agricultural production, ensuring greater prosperity for all.

Perhaps all this is too much for Russia's new leader, Vladimir Putin. Being the leader of a great nation was overwhelming to ancient Israel's King Solomon. Realizing his own limitations he asked God for "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:9). Verse 10 states that "the speech pleased the LORD." This humble attitude when inheriting the mantle of power allowed God to give Solomon great wisdom in ruling the nation of Israel.

Such humility today on the part of world leaders would also be answered.

Russia is going through a major era of change. Change can be negative, but it can also be positive. Russia has a historic opportunity to break away from its past and move toward a better political and economic system than it has had before either under the communists or the czars. It's a historic opportunity that Russia's leaders cannot afford to miss. ❖

# The Hug Drug—or Sorrow Sold for Sweetness?

*Millions of teens and young adults around the world are getting high on ecstasy. Evidence is mounting that this drug has dangerous side effects—much worse than initially thought.*

by Cecil E. Maranville

**E**cstasy, also known as “e,” “Adam” or “XTC,” is the latest fad drug among youth. That’s not to say that it is new—it was developed nearly a century ago by the German pharmaceutical company Merck and was used by psychotherapists briefly in the 1970s. It was popular for a few years in the 1980s as a street drug and then faded from the scene until recently. Now its use among youth is growing.

British police estimate that 500,000 Brits take the drug each weekend. Of the half-million young tourists visiting the Spanish island of Ibiza every summer, one in eight takes ecstasy nearly every night. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) says the drug is available in at least 21 states as well as in Canada, and that it’s especially popular with college students and young professionals.

E is called a “club drug,” because it is sold and used in dance clubs. Club drugs are popular with high school seniors and college students at all night underground parties with techno music, which are called “raves.” Commenting on a recent ecstasy bust in Phoenix, Arizona, police estimated that up to 90 percent of youths who attend rave parties take e.

Users believe it to be a “hug drug,” a drug that lowers the user’s inhibitions and makes him experience feelings equal to those brought on by the sweetest success or the achievement of a lifetime. It is said to be nonaddictive. Unlike any other drug, it heightens feelings of empathy, understanding and acceptance of other people. Probably the principal focus of users in this pleasure-pumped culture is ecstasy’s reputed ability to amplify the delights of sexual intimacy. The crowning attractiveness of e is that it doesn’t do anything harmful to the user—at least, that has been the hype surrounding it. And young people are accepting the

pitch by the millions. They pay \$20 to \$40 per hit/pill, which gives them a 6-to-8-hour high.

“Eight percent of U.S. high school seniors say they have tried it at least once, up from 5.8 percent in 1997.... [U.S.] customs officers have already seized more ecstasy this fiscal year, more than 5.4 million hits, than in all of last year. In 1998 they seized just 750,000 hits” (*Time*, “The Lure of Ecstasy,” by John Cloud, June 5, 2000). No one can say with certainty how many hits made it onto the streets.

## A multibillion dollar “industry”

*60 Minutes II* reported on its August 8 program that Amsterdam is the primary source of e coming into the United States. Reporter Vicki Maybrey interviewed a Dutch criminal investigator whose special unit has closed down 35 ecstasy production labs in just the last five years. However, given the incredible profit margins involved, 10 labs pop up for every one that is put out of business.

An ecstasy-producing machine from one of the closed down illegal labs was shown on the program. It was capable of producing 300 pills *per minute* at a cost of 20 cents each. That’s 1.2 million pills a week, assuming that the machine operates for 10 hours every day. For a manufacturing cost of \$240,000, criminals produce drugs with potential market value of \$24 to \$48 million per week. Calculating the annual output for 50 weeks (do criminals give their employees two-week holidays?), that translates into \$1.2 to \$2.4 billion annually, *per lab*.

Considering the Dutch investigator’s sober acknowledgment that 350 labs have sprung up in the last five years in his jurisdictional area of South Holland alone, the potential for ill-gotten gain stag-

*“Eight percent of U.S. high school seniors say they have tried [ecstasy] at least once, up from 5.8 percent in 1997....”*

gers the imagination. Small wonder that organized crime is heavily involved in the distribution and sale of e. Maybrey said officials believe Israeli and Russian organized crime rings are responsible for most e brought into the U.S.

If that is true, offshore organized crime is working hand in hand with U.S. crime families. Salvatore Gravano was arrested in Phoenix, Arizona, early this year for his involvement in peddling as many as 30,000 ecstasy pills a week. Gravano is better known by his nickname, “Sammy the Bull,” given to him when he was a hit man for the mob, before he turned informant on the John Gotti crime family. The case is still in trial, but Gravano’s ecstasy organization is said to include a white-supremacist gang known as the Devil Dogs (because, believe it or not, gang members “bark” when they assault their victims).

Unsavory merchants, to say the least. Why are young adults by the millions willing to sample their wares?

Undoubtedly there is an element of anti-establishment daring so often a part of youth. “If my parents don’t like it, I do! If my parents don’t want me to take it, I will!” Further, e use is now a fad. It’s what “the in crowd” is currently “into.” And, ecstasy has a glowing reputation among the party culture for its many positive attributes and its reputed low downside.

### What gives ecstasy its glowing name and reputation?

What causes those “positive attributes”? The chemical name for ecstasy is methylenedioxymethamphetamine, known by the acronym MDMA. It’s “a synthetic, psychoactive (mind-altering) drug with hallucinogenic and amphetamine-like properties,” according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) ([www.drugabuse.com](http://www.drugabuse.com), MDMA (ecstasy), p. 1).

E users argue that the drug is not hallucinogenic, but rather “an acute antidepressant.” That’s a misrepresentation of what ecstasy does, as we will show. The

ecstatic feelings created by MDMA are the result of a neurotransmitter known as serotonin. Although science does not fully understand the role of this neurotransmitter, serotonin is thought to help create positive moods. MDMA has a double force effect that infuses the brain with large amounts of serotonin.

First, it orders neurons that store serotonin to empty themselves.

It takes about an hour for receptors to bind with the serotonin and begin to cause feelings of empathy, happi-



ness, increased sociability, enhanced sensation of touch and responsiveness to light. (Due to the powerful impact of light on the senses of e users, raves commonly have light shows. Rave dancers will wave glowing colored wands as they party, because of the highly pleasurable sensation it gives them. Parents need to be alert to teens who own brightly colored light wands, an indication of e use.) The pleasurable feelings, called “rolling” in the drug culture, can continue for several more hours.

How is MDMA able to evoke sensory responses greater than what the body normally produces? The amount of serotonin chemically “ordered” to be released by MDMA is a greatly increased level over what these neurons would release under normal conditions.

But, that’s only the first line of coercion by e on the brain’s normal functions.

A normally functioning brain is designed to take some of the released serotonin back into its storage neurons. So, not all released serotonin binds to receptors—usually. However, MDMA

chemically blocks the re-uptake of serotonin, forcing more to bind to receptors, thus further amplifying the positive sensations associated with this marvelous neurotransmitter.

Only in this way does MDMA mimic an antidepressant, which also blocks the re-uptake of serotonin. However, antidepressants work only with the serotonin *naturally* released by the brain—a much smaller amount than that “kicked out” by MDMA. It’s therefore a distortion of fact and a serious misrepresentation to claim that ecstasy is “an acute antidepressant.”

### OK, what’s the downside?

What’s wrong with ecstasy? If the only affects were the hazards that we’ve already described, it sounds like little more than a harmless “rush.” If only that were true. The NIDA reports that short-term effects of “MDMA are similar to those found with the use of amphetamines and cocaine. They are:

“**Psychological difficulties**, including confusion, depression, sleep problems, drug craving, severe anxiety and paranoia, during and *sometimes weeks after* taking MDMA (even psychotic episodes have been reported).

“**Physical symptoms** such as muscle tension, involuntary teeth-cleansing, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movements, faintness and chills or sweating.

“**Increases in heart rate and blood pressure**, a special risk for people with circulatory or heart disease” ([www.drugabuse.com](http://www.drugabuse.com), NIDA Infobox, p. 1, emphasis added).

Some of these short-term effects have been fatal. MDMA raises the body temperature and causes profuse sweating. Caught up in a drug-induced euphoria in the crowded and chaotic environment of a rave (with up to 2,000 partygoers at a time), e users who did not realize what was happening to them have died from heat exhaustion and dehydration. Others have died from drinking too much water in an attempt to counteract the drug’s negative effects.

“Between three and 10 percent of the white population (statistics are unavailable for other groups) have a genetic defect which causes them to produce less

of the main enzyme which metabolizes MDMA. This means that if they take a normal dose, they can overdose. In Europe, there have been *dozens of deaths* related to this problem” (NewsWatch.org, “News You Can Abuse?” by Maria Szalavitz, Dec. 8, 1999, emphasis added).

The absence of normal amounts of serotonin in the brain as one comes down from an e-induced high translates into a seriously depressed state of mind, called “terrible Tuesdays” by users. Ignorant of what they have done to their bodies, some users attempt to counteract their depression by taking another or even several more hits of e. The first additional dose may be able to squeeze a little more serotonin from their storage neurons, but the effect is minimal. Any further hits will do nothing to relieve depression. Normal brain functions require up to two weeks for serotonin to be replaced.

Serious as they are, these short-term problems constitute the best of the downside problems of taking MDMA. The long-term problems are worse, much worse.

### Brain damage

Several factors cause damage to the brain. To understand, we need to take another look at what MDMA does to brain neurons. We already looked at the fact that it forces the release and use of large amounts of the neurotransmitter serotonin. We also saw that it prevents the re-uptake of serotonin to its storage areas. MDMA also causes the release of another neurotransmitter, dopamine.

MDMA allows the dopamine to return to the neurons that previously stored serotonin. The result is catastrophic, because the dopamine is toxic to those neurons. Their ability to store serotonin again is greatly diminished, if not ruined. Without serotonin, a person would suffer from clinical depression. Duke University pharmacology Professor Wilkie Wilson warns of the possibility of permanent brain damage to ecstasy users. “The drug is spreading so fast among so many people that I’m really afraid that we’re going to have *a generation of depressed people*” (ibid. *60 Minutes II*, emphasis added).

Where does the neurotransmitter

dopamine come from? It is stored in its own neurons, which are “ordered” open by MDMA in the same way that it forces the release of serotonin. When forced open, dopamine’s storage neurons are damaged in a way that affects motor control. “Damage to these neurons is the underlying cause of the motor disturbances seen in Parkinson’s disease” (ibid. NIDA Infobox, p. 1).

The NIDA also reports that recent findings link MDMA use to long-term damage to those parts of the brain critical to thought and memory. It cites research on monkeys exposed to MDMA for only 4 days that suffered brain damage that was evident *6 to 7 years later* (ibid.).

It’s too soon to tell with absolute certainty what all of the long-term consequences of taking MDMA will be. But, it’s fair to say that ecstasy is no “hug drug.”

*The NIDA also reports that recent findings link MDMA use to long-term damage to those parts of the brain critical to thought and memory.*

Evidence “against the safety of MDMA has mounted to a point where even those who once thought the drug safe are getting anxious” (op. cit., Szalavitz). Szalavitz quotes John Morgan, a City University of New York pharmacologist who initially believed that most people had little to worry about toxicity of the drug. Dr. Morgan has changed his mind. He now says, “at this point there is really not much criticism possible [of the human neurotoxicity data on MDMA]...*the time to worry is now*” (op. cit., Szalavitz, emphasis added).

### Christian youth just say, “NO!”

For the Christian, to use or not to use ecstasy is a no-brainer. People who allow

their appetites, social pressures and fads to determine their behavior, *will use drugs*.

Listed with other common behaviors of people who “go with the flow,” is “sorcery” (Galatians 5:19–21). The Greek word used, *pharmakeia*, encompasses other meanings, but one is drug use. Our English word *pharmacology* comes from it. Given the fact that human nature has a penchant for drug use, and that our present world has a multibillion dollar drug market that panders to peoples’ desires, only young people of sound mind and character will have the strength not to use drugs.

A Christian youth respects the fact that his or her body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” belonging to God (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Health is something to be jealously guarded and maintained, for our bodies are not ours to trash.

Apart from the physical considerations, there are legal ones. It’s a serious crime to manufacture or sell ecstasy. That’s enough to warn off a Christian youth, who lives by the creed, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God.... For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.... Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath [legal consequences] but also for conscience’ sake” (Romans 13:1, 3, 5).

Since June 1985, DEA regulations put ecstasy in the Schedule I classification of the Controlled Substances Act—a classification generally used for dangerous narcotics that have a high potential for abuse and *no medical usefulness*. (Other Schedule I drugs include heroin and LSD.) Manufacturers and sellers of Schedule I drugs are subject to fines of up to \$125,000 and 15-year prison terms, but legislation has been proposed that would strengthen these penalties.

Hopefully, anyone who is drawn to the alluring reputation of ecstasy will think twice in light of these cold, hard facts. Parents of high school and college students should realize that their children regularly receive flyers inviting them to raves, with an “e” printed on the flyer that announces to all that ecstasy will be available. Talk with your children about e.

Is e a hug drug? No way. So much hype, such a big lie. And such a terrible price to pay for believing it... ❖

# In Brief...

## World News Review

### Abortion in the News on Several Fronts

A horrifying story of murder was reported in the Chinese province of Hubei, where family planning officials drowned a newborn baby in a rice paddy—in front of its parents. The baby's crime? He was the fourth child of his parents, born in a country that has tried to enforce a one-child policy for 20 years. Various methods of enforcement have been used, including forced abortion and abortion that targets girls. The officials initially tried to kill the infant by forcibly injecting the mother with a saline solution to cause her to abort. Miraculously, the baby survived and was born naturally.

His father was ordered to murder the baby when he was born, but the father refused. A doctor cared for the infant and gave it to his parents to take home. The government officials were waiting for them when they arrived.

In the U.S., Texas Governor George W. Bush raised the highly controversial subject of partial birth abortions in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. The governor promised to sign into law a federal bill that would ban the unspeakably cruel procedure, should he be elected president.

The current U.S. administration, well known for its support of all types of abortion, recently issued guidelines that would permit federally financed scientists to conduct research on human embryo cells. Scientists are supposedly justified in working on embryos to obtain stem cells, "because retrieval is conducted when the embryo is still a one-week-old microscopic ball of undifferentiated cells, long before any organs or limbs have developed." As if that means the embryo is not a human being. Representative Henry Hyde is credited with the astute observation that, "the human embryo will not develop into a German shepherd."

The executive order permitting this research was issued in the name of "saving lives," because it is hoped that stem cells could be used to grow any human organs needed for transplantation. U.S. law prohibits this type of medical research, which plainly requires taking the life of the unborn. However, the guidelines skirt the law by parsing words, saying that federal research could be conducted only on cells from embryos that "were destined to be discarded anyway." That means they will likely be the castoffs from fertility clinics. Someone other than a federal employee must "destroy" (read, "kill") the embryos.

These guidelines are destined to spark a firestorm of controversy in the U.S., as did a similar announcement that was recently made in the U.K. Many scientists want to press ahead with human cloning, due to a setback in "xenotransplantation"—transplants from a nonhuman source. The Roslin Institute, which gave the world Dolly, the cloned sheep, has been working on research into pigs-for-transplant. However, Roslin has abandoned this research in light of recent revelations that animal viruses can be transferred from donor animals to humans.

In a related story, legal reports say that an obscure case in North Dakota could effectively undo the quarter-century-old *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling. Most probably assume that the high court's ruling was based on "a woman's right to choose." That's not the case.

It was based upon concern for the health of the mother. Hence the potential of the North Dakota case. It's a suit brought against an abortion clinic in Fargo for a pamphlet it distributes that says no medical research supports claims that abortions cause an increased risk of breast cancer.

Actually, according to the suit, overwhelming research exists that proves a woman's health is endangered by abortion. Therein lies the potential undoing of *Roe v. Wade*.

Dr. Joel Brind is a professor of biology and endocrinology at Baruch College of City University of New York. He explains that breast cancer is linked to reproductive hormones, especially estrogen. A woman's risk of developing breast cancer is lowered the sooner she has her first child.

Estrogen levels increase exponentially at conception, leading to the growth of "undifferentiated" cells in the breasts, in preparation for milk production. In the final weeks of a full-term pregnancy, those cells change into a form ready to fulfill that motherly task.

However, when the pregnancy is terminated by an abortion, those cells remain "undifferentiated" and highly susceptible to carcinogens. (Curiously, when a woman miscarries, she doesn't have the same susceptibility.)

Obviously, financial and legal support for pro- and anti-abortion forces are lining up for what may turn out to be a historic case.

Sources: 2000 WorldNetDaily.com; PRNewswire; *The Guardian*; *The Observer*; Washington Post Service; "Stem Cell Research," by Mona Charen, August 28, 2000, Creators Syndicate, Inc.

## Realignment of Nations and Shifting Sovereignty

With a proposal simply titled "Peace," reformers in the UN want to supplant national sovereignty through a UN standing army. Such a force would have a more legitimate presence in situations such as Kosovo last year—widely perceived to be a thinly cloaked U.S. action that used NATO and the UN for its national objectives.

Armies have to be financed and, typically, governments raise revenues through taxation. The "Tobin Tax" on all international financial institutions, payable to the UN's coffers, was proposed five years ago.

Globalization is a common byword used by proponents of UN power. What they advocate is nothing short of a one-world government—an idea applauded by many, so long as they would control the newly generated center of power. Of course, it's roundly opposed by all sovereign powers that see themselves losing self-determination. Not the least of the opponents is the U.S., current host of UN headquarters.

The proposal might seem laughable—were it not for the fact that Bible prophecy indicates that a world government will be forged at the end of the age. The dynamics of weak nations pushing for it for their gain, and strong nations opposing it, because of their potential loss, show the reality of what forces will come to play in the fulfillment of prophecy. Nations will come together when they need to—or are forced to do so.

In a related development, signs point to a pullout by U.S. troops from Kosovo, bogged down in centuries-old ethnic conflict that some believe was not lessened by NATO's incursion.

The mood in the U.S. is, "Get out before American blood is shed." Should U.S. soldiers come home in body bags, there will be no stopping a U.S. pullout. With NATO fractured, Europe would be the logical power to step into the gap.

Will the Europeans be forged into a sovereign power, simultaneously diluting the sovereignty of the individual members, in a scenario similar to that proposed by UN reformers? In a little noticed development at the EU summit in Portugal in June, "the EU agreed to form a 5,000-strong police force by 2003 that could be deployed to spots in need of civil authority."

The force would have a 1,000-man contingent that could be deployed within 30 days. The EU "plans to assemble a 60,000-strong peacekeeping force over the next three years as well to handle a much wider array of tasks."

As could be expected, not all EU members agree on its purpose or function. Some states want to see it used to strengthen NATO, while at least France would like to see it replace the American-dominated NATO. "Regardless of how it eventually looks, the Union is slowly building itself a real military arm. Brussels just took a big bite out of national sovereignty."

Sources: "Millennium Madness at the United Nations," by Phyllis Schlafly, August 9, 2000, Copely News Service; "European Police Force Dilutes Sovereignty of EU States," 2000, WNI, Inc.

## Crucial Referendum in Denmark

The Danes will decide whether or not to join the European Common Currency (the euro) on September 28. At this writing, according to *The Observer*, "the vote is balanced on a knife's edge." The *International Herald Tribune* adds, "The latest Gallup survey on Danes and the euro... showed 44 percent in favor of joining, 43 percent against and 13 percent undecided." It appears to be a toss-up and the outcome could be crucial, affecting similarly planned referendums in Sweden and Britain.

The Danish government supports joining the euro, while a curious combination of right and left wing elements oppose it. One of the latter groups pointed out that "if you have a common currency, political power will be transferred from the national parliaments to Brussels, to bureaucrats and technocrats. When you have an economic union, you also have a political union."

Denmark's referendum is being closely watched in Sweden and Britain. It is speculated that if the Danes do vote "no," Sweden may abandon its plans to call its own referendum. But a "yes" vote followed by the same result in Sweden would then mean that 14 of the 15 European Union members have embraced the euro, with Britain the lone country out in the cold. This would put a lot of pressure on the increasingly isolated British to take that fateful step and join the European Common Currency.

Sources: "Danish Doubts Add to Woes of Euro," by Ian Black in Vjele, Denmark, *The Guardian*, June 9, 2000; "The Nation That Likes to Say 'Nej' [No]," by Andrew Osborn, *The Observer*, August 27, 2000; "Danes on the Euro: Divided and Digging In," by Barry James, *International Herald Tribune*, August 29, 2000.

## Containing South Africa's Crime Problem

South Africa has the world's worst peacetime statistics for murder, rape and robbery. To add to the problem, the police forces there have a reputation for incompetence and corruption.

The start of a solution: Create a special force of "Untouchables" modeled on the special squad led by the legendary Elliot Ness, who combatted crime in Chicago during the American prohibition era in the 1930s. This has been done.

Among the minimum requirements for this new force, named the Scorpions, are a university degree and the ability to speak no less than four of South Africa's official languages. The final 100 recruits were selected out of 7,000 applicants. The main determining factors were integrity and intelligence.

Reporting journalist John Carlin summed up future prospects: "Whether the Scorpions will repay the faith invested in them cannot be assessed until a couple of years have passed, by which time their numbers should have swollen to 2,000."

Source: "Sting in the Tail," by John Carlin, *The Independent on Sunday*, July 23, 2000.

Contributors: Cecil E. Maranville and John Ross Schroeder

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

1997, Kimbala, a southerner, found himself trapped among northerners. He was subsequently arrested, thrown in jail for a month and tortured. When he was released, his body was riddled with burns. He could hardly walk. He was angry and began taking revenge, at first with a machete. Then he killed an Angolan mercenary, took the man’s assault rifle and used it to kill and loot. But last month, without hesitation and without compensation, Kimbala handed his weapon to the government of Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who led Kimbala’s rivals to victory in the short but bloody war.”

Let me give it to you straight. This one man, along with many others, had courage to voluntarily hand over his weapon to the enemy. Kimbala stated, “Now that there is peace I prefer to give my weapons back.” Now his one wish is to return to the one job he knows best—driving a taxi.

Justin Kimbala is simply one human piece of the greater mosaic of his country, which is again being glued together. Since a general amnesty has been granted to all militia, war zones are shrinking, refugees are returning and death and malnutrition are plummeting dramatically, as humanitarian aid is now able to reach those most in need.

This little country has achieved the seemingly unachievable, a steady truce of seven months on a continent fractured by broken treaties. Most importantly, as Simmons points out, “It is the Congolese themselves, not regional brokers or outside powers, who decided that they had ‘had enough’ of war.” As Emmanuel Bounouanza, head of the National Resistance Council, so aptly put it, “Having fought for a long time, we realize that war cannot solve our problems. We have to stop sometime; we can also be an example to those other countries.”

What other countries? The Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly called Zaire), the Republic of the Congo’s larger neighbor to the east, has had its peace deal collapse while never having had its fighting completely cease. An international peace deal for Sierra Leone has collapsed with the kidnapping of peacekeepers. Likewise, there is little confidence that Ethiopia and Eritrea can peaceably settle their scores regarding the Horn of Africa. This is why Colonel Bounouanza proudly exclaims, “This is what makes our case quite original.”

Why so original? Perhaps the great Russian novelist Tolstoy states it best in his work, *War and Peace*: “Drain the blood from men’s veins, and put water in instead, then there will be no more war.” You and I know this hasn’t happened yet.

The fourth century theologian Augustine of Hippo described the problem this way: “It is with the desire for peace that wars are waged.... Every man seeks peace by waging war, but no man seeks war by making peace. For even they who intentionally interrupt the peace in which they are living have no hatred of peace, but only wish it changed into a peace that suits them better...” (*Great Ideas*, Syntopicon 11, p. 1,015).

As Colonel Bounouanza soberly reasoned, “Many people have died. Much of the infrastructure has been destroyed. We think it is useless to keep fighting.” Due to raw experience, they have come to the reality of Ernest Hemingway’s simple and blunt

words that “in modern war there is nothing sweet or fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good reason.”

## The shooting stopped first

The Congolese would be the first to tell you they have a long way to go towards their ultimate goal. Powersharing among rivals is still needed, the foreign mercenaries need to go and penalties for horrific war crimes still need addressing. But with this stated, Jacques Bandelier of the U.N. Development Program properly highlights this little country’s achievement: “At least in Central Africa, this is the only place where there is real optimism.” Reporter Simmons succinctly pinpoints the cause for this optimistic scenario. “In typical African conflicts, a political settlement usually precedes a cease-fire. But in the Congo, the shooting stopped first.”

Jocelyn Mouthithys-Madimgou, mayor of Dolisie, put her finger on it when she said, “The Congolese themselves have woken up and are wondering, ‘Why are we killing each other?’ They have decided: ‘No more killing.’ Nobody told the Congolese to stop. They made the decision themselves.”

The Congolese did not expect outside international pressure to cure what ailed them from the inside. The survivors looked one another in the eye, and dealt with the heart of the matter.

As James 4:1–3 outlines, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

Most people don’t ask the right questions. They will not grow out of their dilemmas until they also ask the big questions, which move to the heart of the matter. Human renewal on a personal plane or national level has always failed where only the surroundings have changed. It must start inward and move outward to have lasting impact. From an inward notion, the Congolese had the wisdom, courage and vision to pursue peace earnestly.

But peace comes not only from the absence of conflict. It requires solutions for the issues that started the strife. The marauding militias numbered nearly 31,000. Many of the former combatants were young men who were easily induced to take up arms because of unemployment and uncertainty. The militias offered prestige, power and unlimited opportunities to plunder and extort money from innocent civilians.

As another former militia member, Christian Pandy, so honestly stated, “Once you have a gun in your hand, everything is possible.” To yield the fruit of peace, you must be willing to replace the evil with good, and at times be willing to spend the proverbial nickel to make a “dime of peace.” Some of the militiamen have been coaxed to return their weapons for a payment of 15,000 Congolese francs, or about \$20. Others, like Kimbala, have voluntarily surrendered their weapons.

A project sponsored by the U.N. Development Program is seeking to help about 4,700 ex-militia members regain their livelihoods. A pilot program offers the opportunity to become

## “TWO CITIES,” (Continued from page 4)

Pope Clement IV had the power to “sell” millions of his fellow Italians to a French king in return for an annual fee. The pope threatened excommunication if the annual payment was not met. It would be a stretch to imagine that Pope John Paul II would try to do something like this today. However, the articles of faith that allow this are still on the books within the church. This is a little known fact among those who know only the benign face of today’s Catholic Church.

One other point should be made. In the last decade of the first century, when John received the book of Revelation, there was only one city he, and the Church of God, would have identified as “Babylon”—Rome. Rome had sacked Jerusalem and burned the temple. Rome had killed Paul and other Christians. Rome was responsible for John’s exile to the island of Patmos. For the past 15 centuries, “Rome,” through the Catholic Church, has been ruling through its pagan-derived rituals, traditions and teachings. No other city in history meets the exact criteria described by John in Revelation 17 and 18.

### The situation today

In the meantime, the issue of Jerusalem’s status in the current peace talks awaits a resolution. Could the Vatican and papacy offer its good services to break through the Gordian knot that prevents a peace?

In July, while the Israeli and Palestinian leaders were meeting at Camp David with President Clinton, the pope urged that Jerusalem be governed under international protection. “. . . I want to ask all the parties not to neglect the importance of the spiritual dimension of the city of Jerusalem, with its sacred places and the community of three monotheistic religions that surround them” (*Sydney Daily Telegraph*, July 24, 2000).

### The lesson for God’s people

This tale of two cities will come to a climax with the return of Christ and the time of judgment upon the nations. Bible prophecy indicates “Babylon” and Jerusalem are destined to touch every human life in the great upheaval at the end of this human age. God’s elect need to discern between the two and have the wisdom to choose correctly. When it comes to what these two cities offer, God does not give His people the choice of “blending” or blurring the lines. Revelation shows there are two ways of life offered by these cities. One is a way that enslaves the “bodies and souls of men” (Revelation 18:13). This city and its culture of deception and death will impact the whole earth, then come crashing down. God warns His servants to “come out of her” before it is too late (Revelation 18:1–5).

We are told to seek after the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother (Galatians 4:26), a city of light, truth and glory, which will liberate all mankind from the age-long deception of the great false city (Revelation 21:9–11).

Out of the worst of times, in tribulation and the Day of the Lord, will ultimately come the best of times in the light and life of the New Jerusalem. ❖

self-employed. Ex-combatants who present a feasible business project to the agency are awarded start-up capital of at least \$500. As Christian Pandya, age 31, exclaims, “The opportunity was like a breath of fresh air. It is an opportunity to restart everything again and regain some dignity.”

Nobody here is a “Pollyanna.” Everyone recognizes that there are still guns out there, although more are being turned in every day. As Major Andre Bousso-be-Bouya, head of the mixed contingent of government and ex-resistance forces in Mossendjo pinpoints, “Our mission is to make everybody understand that peace is priceless and everyone has to give up their weapons. It’s a long process. It won’t end tomorrow.”

True, it will not end for either the Republic of the Congo, or the entire earth, until the return of Jesus Christ.

### Christian peace mission

Christians are also on a mission of peace. As Romans 8:22 so emphatically echoes, “the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” Until what? As verse 19 brings out, “The creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” These same sons of God are in training now.

They are individuals who are motivated and moving beyond “groaning” to growth. Individuals who are willing to lay down their arms in whatever conflict they find themselves. People in training who ask the big question, “Isn’t enough, enough?” Individuals of note who don’t have peace forced on them, but rather have peace come from within them. Individuals like you and me who recognize that we too must be willing to pay whatever cost. Students of the Bible who recognize that peace is not manufactured in a vacuum, but comes by replacing evil with good (Romans 12:21). Most importantly, visionaries who are willing to offer others entrance into a world that has eluded them until now, a world of dignity.

Isaiah 32:16–20 prophetically speaks of a future time when there will be a total farewell to arms. “Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, though hail comes down on the forest, and the city is brought low in humiliation. Blessed are you who sow beside all waters.”

The work of righteousness that brings about peace is simply that—a lot of work. That normally means that you go first, and turn in the armaments that maintain your self-imposed protection that really isn’t getting you anywhere. Many countries should. Many people should. Maybe you should.

There is a little country that could and did. They did it by taking responsibility for their own actions. As we zoom down the crowded thoroughfares of bustling Brazzaville, we come up behind a taxi. A head pops out. It’s Justin Kimbala, who’s doing what he loves best—driving a taxi. He startles us with a question too few of us fully contemplate. “Where are you going?” We reply, “We’re lost!” He smiles from his taxi and shouts out that millennial refrain “Follow me, this is the way.” But, before you do, can I ask you a question? What’s that you are holding in your hand? ❖

# This Is the Way... The Little Country That Could

by Robin Webber

“Sir, this is a funny war we’re fighting,” said an aide to General Dobey, British commander of Malta during World War I, stationed in Palestine in 1916. “The Muslims won’t fight on Friday, the Jews won’t fight on Saturday, and the Christians won’t fight on Sunday.”

With Solomon-like wisdom, Dobey replied, “Well, if you can find four other world religions that refuse to fight on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, because of their holy days, you have solved the problem of world peace.”

Masterful saying and a cute thought, but the reality is that true peacemaking doesn’t wait for the right day but begins today with who we are, what we are and the big job that lies before us. Making peace is never self-convenient because it normally takes a “chunk of ourselves” and a lot of heart to make it happen. That’s why many never attain this summit of achievement, and yes, it is a climb.

Most of us are familiar with the children’s book, *The Little Engine That Could*. A frail little piece of ironclad determination that against all odds and reason “huffed and puffed” its way to the summit of success while other larger engines



Republic of the Congo

Source: The CIA World Factbook

could only begrudgingly stare in wonderment. Recently, *Los Angeles Times* staff writer Ann M. Simmons reported on a small nation in Africa that is setting a remarkable example to the larger nations around it.

In her article titled, “In Congo Republic, Peace Calls for a Farewell to Arms,” which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on August 17, 2000, Simmons describes a nation that is not looking for external solutions, but is grappling with internal dilemmas that it alone must come to terms with. Let’s look at the Republic of

the Congo and understand how it’s endeavoring to slowly and surely climb back from war.

## Courting peace

War very rarely leaves a nation or people where it found them. Reporter Simmons begins her story by sharing one man’s return to his pre-war livelihood. As she reports, “War turned Justin Didier Kimbala into a gun-toting militiaman. When fighting based on region and ethnicity erupted in June

(See “COUNTRY,” page 14)