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Written in Stone or on the Heart? The Controversy Over the Ten Commandments

Over 80 percent of Americans surveyed in one poll said they favored keeping the Ten Commandments on display in the Alabama Judicial Building. That's good. Whether they would want to see Alabamans—or all Americans—truly living under the moral dictates of all God's commandments is another question entirely.

by Darris McNeely

The controversy that erupted last month in Alabama sparked a nationwide debate about the public display of the Ten Commandments. A federal court ruled that a 5,280-pound monument had to be removed from the lobby of the Alabama Judicial Building. Alabama's attorney general, Bill Pryor, ordered it removed on Aug. 28, saying that the rule of law must be upheld.

About 100 protestors, who had been keeping vigil outside the building, watched as the granite shrine was removed. Some yelled, "Put it back!" One red-faced and obviously angry man yelled, "Get your hands off our God, God haters!" Others watched quietly with tears streaming down their faces, silently praying.

The issue raises once again the deep cultural battle raging within America. Those holding deep religious convictions feel that a mixture of liberal media, educators, entertainment moguls and courts is eroding the moral underpinnings of the



Reuters/Iamt Chappell

Workers remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from public view in the Alabama Judicial Building, Aug. 27

nation. The courts are at the heart of this current battle.

Why would a federal court order the removal of the monument? It is ironic that on the facade of the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington is a representation of Moses holding the tablets containing the Ten Commandments. On the currency of the country is the saying, "In God

(See "COMMANDMENTS," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Connecting the Dots

Remember the puzzles we played as children where you connect the dots to reveal a picture of an object or a person? I have been thinking recently about this game and applying it to our current world. There is a new image appearing. Can we see it? Do we see it, but pretend it is not happening?

The Western world will not always be as it is in the present. Events are taking place before our eyes that will change the way of life we have taken for granted for so long. This month marks the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A newly published book called *Why America Slept* (by Gerald Posner) details the missed opportunities America had to forestall such an attack. Missed opportunities litter the landscape, providing convincing information that had preventive steps, based on credible evidence, been taken in the decade before the attack, thousands of people would not have lost their lives. Many experts continue to say that another major attack is coming upon a major Western nation. Many also ask, Is enough being done to prevent such a blow? Are we truly prepared at the personal level?

Two years after 9/11 we continue to drift. I see it in the way major news companies focus and shape American views. It is easy to slip back into the sensational and salacious news items. Alleged sex scandals of basketball stars are covered extensively and lead the news for weeks. Murder cases, political recalls and vain and petty campaign efforts by grasping politicians dominate serious discussion. No one wants to ask the hard questions of the moment, the questions that could lead us to an effective national renewal.

With two recent court decisions, we see our nation taking the form of a broken vessel that cannot hold anything of moral value. Removing the state laws forbidding sodomy and ordering the removal of a public display of the Ten Commandments from a judicial building are omens of darker clouds on the horizon. These are two among many other signs that indicate the American way of life is changing. The United States is going through a benchmark change that, unless halted and reversed, will transform this country Americans love. We cannot see that the freedoms we cherish draw their basis from the spiritual laws outlined in the simple yet profound document known as the Ten Commandments. Like so many other nations in history, we do not like to retain God in our knowledge.

God said through Jeremiah, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). We are gradually leaking the essence of our life when we turn our backs on any vestige of moral heritage rooted in the law of God. Unless we go through a national repentance unlike any in our history, we are going the way of every nation, great or small, that has cast aside the restraints that are outlined in God's great spiritual law.

Go ahead, be honest, really honest. Connect the dots of our present world. See the developing picture of a world and age that is coming to a close. There is still time to turn and live righteously in this present evil world. Discern the times, make the right choices and build the right kind of enduring relationship with your Creator. We are moving closer to the time when Christ will intervene to restore justice and righteousness within a new world.

—Darris McNeely

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<http://www.ucg.org/wnp/>

“COMMANDMENTS,” (Continued from page 1)
We Trust.” Yet a court has issued a ruling to remove this Alabama monument.

In the Alabama case, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the monument’s removal on the grounds that it is an unconstitutional establishment of religion. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” For years, the argument in legal circles has been whether the framers of the Constitution intended freedom *of* religion or freedom *from* religion.

One need only look at the circumstances of the time to understand what was on their minds. America was founded on the principle that there would be no established state religion like that found in the Old World. Those who came to America’s shores were escaping religious persecution imposed by the state and wanted freedom to worship God in the way that they chose.

Late 18th-century America was already a religiously pluralistic society. Protestants, Catholics and Jews coexisted with an assortment of deists, agnostics and atheists in the newly formed republic. The framers of the Constitution clearly intended to guarantee that religious freedom in the First Amendment. Rather than seek to distance themselves from God, they understood the role of His law, as codified in the Ten Commandments, as a foundation of the nation’s laws.

Let’s look at the words of these men and see how they felt about the legal system they were creating. There can be no question they were relying heavily on a biblical heritage to chart their course.

In 1778 James Madison, a primary architect of the Constitution and a future president, remarked: “We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions . . . upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves . . . according to the Ten Commandments of God.”

During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Benjamin Franklin admonished the assembled delegates with these famous

words: “If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His [God’s] notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.’”

Franklin urged that each session begin with prayer, beseeching God for guidance and wisdom in their work. Today both the Senate and House of Representatives maintain a full-time chaplain and open each session with prayer. You have to wonder when this practice will be called into question in our current climate.



On U.S. currency it says “In God We Trust.” Yet a court has issued a ruling to remove a Ten Commandments monument.

What is happening in America?

Former federal judge Robert H. Bork wrote of his concern about the judicial system in his 1996 book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*: “Contrary to the plan of the American government, the Supreme Court has usurped the powers of the people and their elected representatives. We are no longer free to make our own fundamental moral and cultural decisions because the Court oversees all such matters, when and as it chooses. The founders had no idea that [a] Court armed with a written Constitution and the power of judicial review could become not only the supreme legislature of the land but a legislature beyond the reach of the ballot box” (1996, p. 109).

A judicial system with judges who make decisions based on politics and the

prevailing culture is altering the social landscape of the United States. It is also significantly changing the meaning and application of its Constitution. Whether or not Americans like it, this is now how their federal courts function. A single judge or a panel of judges can make a ruling and that becomes the final decision in a case, whether it is right or wrong. And all others are bound by law and the structure of American government to implement the decision. If a judge, such as Roy Moore in Alabama, decides not to obey the decision, the system begins to break down, creating another problem. Carried to the extreme, it’s called a revolution.

The religious fervor that Judge Moore and his supporters demonstrate is a two-edged sword. On one hand, men and women like the judge are outraged and indignant at the judicial drift in America. They rightly see the moral decay in society and worry for its future.

On the other hand, when any group takes the law into its own hands, another form of anarchy can arise. Religiously motivated domination has historical precedents that cast a frightening pall over this issue. Would we want to see any religion in the hands of man begin to drive the engine of any modern state? The Bible shows such a system will arise, not within the United States, but within a worldwide government before the return of Jesus Christ. That system, called Babylon the Great, will bring the world to the brink of annihilation. As we study the current issue, it is good to keep in mind God’s warning about human government and the future role of religion.

A breakdown in society

This is more than just an argument over the placement of a stone monument containing the Ten Commandments. At the core of this issue is a breakdown in our society. The court rulings in this case reflect deep currents of change that have been moving for more than 40 years.

The courts are making judgments based on the current moment and that is undermining the Constitution. The framers of that document said it was meant only for a moral people. When the laws of man or God are interpreted according to the prevailing winds of popular culture, they have no real meaning. John Adams, America’s second president, said, “Our

Constitution was made only for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

When television competes with itself to cross the lines of decency and morals by depicting homosexual relationships as normal, you are seeing society lose its moral bearings. When entertainers engage in lesbian kisses before a nationally televised awards show, and America merely sits back, watches and talks about it, you are seeing the lines of decency moved beyond the pale. That is where we are today. We are no longer “slouching towards Gomorrah.” We are in a free fall toward the fate of that doomed city.

A talisman of protection?

How does God view the placement of His commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building—or any other public display for that matter? Let’s see what He had to say to ancient Judah through the prophet Jeremiah.

As Judah spiraled down to its collapse, Jeremiah was told to stand in front of the temple and deliver the following sermon. “Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!” If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

“Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 7:2-11, NIV).

The people, and some of their leaders, felt that as long as they had the temple and at least a semblance of the form of worship

that accompanied it, they were safe and secure; no harm would come. The reference to the temple was a warning that the Jews’ actions were not sanctified merely because they cloaked themselves with the ultimate symbol of religion at the time, the temple.

The warning speaks to us yet today, lest we make the mistake of thinking that a physical representation of the divine will is enough to preserve, protect and defend a people. Throughout Scripture, God points to substance over style. It is obedience to the spiritual law and faith in the God behind that law that ensure His presence among the people, not the mere displaying of a copy of His law.

That temple in Jeremiah’s time contained the Ark of the Covenant that held the tablets of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments.

God desired a righteous people who lived by the word of the law, not merely giving lip service to it. It did not matter that they passed by the temple, which contained tablets of stone. That alone did not make a changed life. There had to be a commitment to obey and live by the laws written on stone in the temple. In the end, God was not interested in a building or its contents. He pointed the people to Shiloh, where the tabernacle of the wilderness had stood for years. Shiloh was a pile of stones, uninhabited. Such would be the fate of Jerusalem if they did not repent (verses 12-15), which is to say if their individual lives did not “display” those commandments.

Judah was guilty of flagrantly breaking the Ten Commandments. Their idolatry was provoking God to anger (verses 18-20). God wanted a people who would obey His voice and live by the words of the law; this was the heart of the relationship He desired (verse 23).

Written on the heart

Today there is no public display of the commandments that by itself can guarantee a righteous and moral society. Each of us must look inside ourselves and ask whether or not we truly love God’s law. “Oh, how I love Your law,” wrote the psalmist (Psalm 119:97). Read the next seven verses of this Psalm to see how one should approach God’s law. They are a source of wisdom, understanding, morality and sound judgment. They are at the heart of any

true relationship with the Creator.

God reveals to us His ultimate intent—an eternal relationship with His laws at the core of our heart and mind. Notice: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

It is sad indeed to see the once morally strong United States shy away from publicly acknowledging God and His beautiful law. But it is infinitely sadder to realize that its people are not living by it or enjoying the benefit God intends through it.

Regardless of what others do, you can begin to experience this kind of relationship with God now. Request and read a copy of our booklet *The Ten Commandments* to learn how this law applies in the everyday life of a Christian. Don’t put it off any longer. Your life today will be greatly enriched. ❖

Recommended Reading

Millions want the Ten Commandments to be kept on display, but how many really know all of them or how and *why* God wants us to keep them? Request *The Ten Commandments* booklet to explore the Bible teaching on this vital subject. It is provided free of charge.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at www.ucg.org

“Mr. Smith” Takes on Washington

Perception is reality. People in the developing world often have an unrealistic view of America. The results can be deadly, as America pursues its foreign policy goals.

by Melvin Rhodes

His name was Smith, an unusual name for an African. The young man was just 18 years of age. We were talking outside the royal palace in Kumasi, ancient capital of the Ashanti kingdom in what is now the Republic of Ghana.

I had taken a group of North American visitors to see the palace. As I had seen it a number of times before, I suggested they go inside for a tour, while I stayed in the van. Young Mr. Smith approached the car and asked me to buy some of his art work, greeting cards that he had made himself, each with its own Ghanaian design. Each card was 2,000 cedis, Ghana's national currency—or four cards for less than one U.S. dollar, at the current rate of exchange. I bought a few from him.

I remarked that one of the students who had gone into the palace was also called Smith, Logan Smith, a 22-year-old United Youth Corps volunteer from Washington state. I asked “Smith” how he got his name.

“My father was a goat smith, so he called me Smith. Smith is my first name.”

He told me that he was a student in a remote village not far from Elmina, a coastal town famous for its Portuguese-built slave castle, a major tourist attraction. I commented on the fact that Kumasi is a long way from Elmina. He said his father died and his mother was a market woman in Kumasi. Smith came to Ghana's second city every summer to try to sell cards to raise money for another year of education. “They won't even allow you to enter school unless you have 1¼ million cedis to give them.” That's less than 150 U.S. dollars, but it's a few months' wages for the average Ghanaian. Even more for somebody selling cards for a pittance.

He asked me where I was from. “From America,” I said. He then asked me a few questions about America.

Finally, having gained my confidence, he

asked me: “What do you think of the Bush administration?”

Cautiously, I responded with: “Well, there are many facets of the administration. Which aspect of the Bush administration are you asking me about?”

He leaned forward and told me. “I've been reading this paper from Iraq,” he said. “The Americans, they are trying to take over the whole world. They want Iraq for its oil. Just today, Charles Taylor said that America wants Liberia for its diamonds.” (Charles Taylor was president of Liberia until mid-August when he left for exile in Nigeria under U.S. pressure. Western press sources reported that he indeed made this accusation.)

Smith expressed the opinion that America would not stop until it had taken over the whole world.

I asked him if he was a Muslim. He said: “No, I'm a Christian.”

I tried to defend the United States, but his mind was made up. To him, America is an evil power determined to take over the world, conquering all in its wake.

Later, I was to recount this conversation to a United Church of God pastor in Ghana. A former Muslim, he related that he had recently surveyed some friends to ask them for their opinions on the continuing situation in Iraq. Five were Muslims, five were Methodists and five were Pentecostals.

The Muslims all said the United States was trying to conquer Iraq for its oil and to spread Western decadence in the Middle East. The Methodists thought that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government was a good thing, but that the country should now be handed over to the United Nations. The Pentecostals, members of U.S.-based churches, were all supportive of the U.S. stance in Iraq.

You can draw your own conclusions from this

The United States is not winning the propaganda war, partly because of its immoral portrayal of itself in the entertainment media. Others also use propaganda to blame America for their own problems.

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.



Popular perceptions of America come largely from the entertainment industry. Most movies, television programs and music espouse decadent values, giving peoples around the world the impression that all Americans are irreligious and hedonistic.

survey. The results were no surprise to me—clearly, Ghanaians are just as divided on the issue as are many people elsewhere, including the Iraqis, the Americans, the British and the Australians, the latter two countries the only nations that gave substantial military support to the United States during the recent war.

What is clear is that the United States is not winning the propaganda war. Pictures of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are ubiquitous throughout West Africa—I've yet to find one of either President Bush or Prime Minister Tony Blair, a reflection of popular sentiment.

However, I do not believe that the primary cause of the problem is America's fault.

Perception is reality

Certainly, the United States could improve its reputation around the world.

Popular perceptions of America come largely from the entertainment industry. Most movies, television programs and music espouse decadent values, giving peoples around the world the impression that all Americans are irreligious and hedonistic. Cleaning up its entertainment industry would go a long way toward improving its reputation around the globe. Proverbs 14:34 says: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

The same entertainment industry portrays a very violent culture, creating the perception abroad that all Americans are

violent. In the minds of many, this means that the American government therefore is violent.

And, "Westerns" portraying Texans as they do, people from Texas are seen as being the most violent, which translates into what Smith said to me on the streets of Kumasi: The Bush administration is an aggressive, warmongering, violent administration bent on taking over the world. For its oil, mainly, since the press often mentions President Bush and Vice President Cheney's past association with the oil industry.

Please note: We are only reporting the commonly held *perceptions* about America in the developing world, not asserting that they are accurate.

But these perceptions are still not the biggest factor influencing young men like Smith.

Africa in Chaos

To illustrate this, I need to quote from another Ghanaian, a man brought up in the West African nation who fled the country during the 1979 June 4th Revolution that brought the erstwhile Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) to power. I remember it well—I was there through the revolution and the chaos that followed.

George Ayittey is a Ghanaian-born author, residing in Virginia and an associate professor in the Department of Economics at American University. In



Africa Betrayed, Ayittey shows how Africa's postcolonial leaders betrayed their own people. The men universally revered as the liberators of the continent were, in fact, the ones who enslaved their own peoples to serve their own selfish ends. He wrote a second book, *Africa in Chaos*, "to examine why Africa has been imploding and remains intractably mired in poverty" (1998, p. 24).

Note the following observations from this African writer: "Writing a book on Africa is always an extremely difficult undertaking. Not that the issues and problems defy solutions; quite often the solutions are simple and as clear as daylight. But so many extraneous factors intrude that rational and dispassionate discussions are scuttled. A book on Africa must cross racial, cultural, ideological, geographical, ethnic, religious and class lines.

"Leftist radicals tend to see a 'racist conspiracy plot' in every African misfortune. The colonial bogeyman has been the favorite of African governments and intellectuals. 'Political correctness' prevents whites from criticizing inane policies of African leaders, while black Africans often blindly defend these leaders in the name of 'racial solidarity.' As a result, there is much confusion about what Africa must do to overcome its woes" (ibid.).

Consider his statement: "The colonial bogeyman has been the favorite of African governments and intellectuals."

Simply put, Africa's leaders since the end of the colonial era around 1960 have blamed all of their problems on "colonialism." *Africa in Chaos* shows that the real problem is the modern leaders themselves. They have taken the wealth of their own countries for themselves, while their people suffered a dramatic fall in their standard of living. While Africans fed themselves adequately in the colonial era, most African nations today need food handouts to keep their people fed.

As with all propaganda, "repeat a lie often enough and everybody will believe it." So said the father of modern propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, a leading Nazi in World War II. Blame everything on the Jews and the people will go along with the Holocaust. Blame everything on the colonialists and nobody will look at us—this is the thinking of today's African

(See "AFRICA," page 15)

The Ancient Prophecies of Amos: Applicable to the 21st Century?

Does what we see happening to our Western world today relate to Bible prophecy? Will we eventually exhaust God's longsuffering and patience if we persist in our transgressions of His laws? What are some of the main principles we should learn from the Old Testament book of Amos?

by John Ross Schroeder

Nearly three millennia ago in the eighth century B.C., the Hebrew prophet Amos wrote a highly significant book indicting the amoral and immoral behavior of Israel and Judah along with that of some surrounding Mideastern nations. Seldom read or heeded today, how do the warning words of Amos impact our world of the 21st century?

Amos begins his prophecy by articulating God's anger against Syria, Gaza, Ammon and Moab—Mideastern nations that anciently bordered Israel and Judah—and whose descendants remain in that general area even today. Several times he uses the phraseology, "For three sins [transgressions of God's law, 1 John 3:4] . . . even for four" in establishing the basic reasons for the divine displeasure with them.

Amos out of step?

But the focus of this prophetic book soon shifts primarily to the 10-tribe northern nation of Israel and secondarily to the southern country of Judah. At the general time of his prophecy, Amos appeared to be out of step with the times in prophesying disaster for the house of Israel. Both nations were enjoying relative prosperity and power under the governments of the time. One scholarly book observed: "Seldom was a prophet so out of step with his times." But was he really?

Historical hindsight shows us that roughly 30 years after Amos' prophecy the Assyrians took the northern tribes into captivity (721 to 718 B.C.). At that time Israel ceased to function as a sovereign nation. Clearly Amos had been a great patriot in warning the house of Israel to cease and desist from its ungodly lifestyle and to begin a serious campaign of commandment-keeping.

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream," was the way God eloquently expressed His divine wishes (Amos 5:24, New International Version throughout). But subsequent events sadly

proved that the house of Israel paid little attention either to Amos or to the contemporary Hebrew prophet Hosea, also divinely sent to warn the country.

God held ancient Israel responsible

When God chooses a nation for a sacred responsibility, He holds it specifically accountable for its national conduct. "Hear this word the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt [referring to the Exodus]" (3:1). This prophecy also includes the southern house of Judah, which later went into national captivity at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon well over 100 years after the demise of the house of Israel.

But why was our Creator so concerned about Israel's bad behavior? God had said: "You only have I chosen of all the families [nations] of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins. Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (verses 2-3). The house of Israel was clearly out of step with God—foolishly going in a completely different direction, a path that could only lead to further untold sufferings and misery.

Blatant injustices in the courts, careless disregard for citizens living in poverty and sheer complacency were some of Israel's primary transgressions. Real patriotism was in very short supply. God indicted the elite and the intelligentsia with the words: "You do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph" (6:6). They did not comprehend the signs of that time, nor understand the massive problems the house of Israel (which "Joseph" symbolized) was drifting into.

Running out of patience?

If Christians are told to develop patience, God is the epitome of long-suffering, ever waiting for sinners to repent. But at the time of Amos' writing, His patience with the house of

God is the epitome of long-suffering, ever waiting for sinners to repent. But at the time of Amos' writing, His patience was rapidly running out.



"The general population too, is being given a visual junk diet of soaps, smut and soft porn" on TV . . . The British government's chief inspector of schools has stated that "five-year-olds have led disrupted and disheveled lives."

Israel was rapidly running out. God had said: "I will spare them no longer" (7:8). And after showing Amos a basket of mature summer fruit He sternly stated: "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer" (8:2).

Remember that our Creator had given humankind 120 years to repent before bringing the Flood on the earth. By nature God is slow to anger and reluctant to punish His people. To Him real repentance is a far better option. He takes no joy in punishment. Yet at the end of the day His strong sense of divine justice will prevail.

Nonetheless, it was many years after Amos' prophecy before the northern nation of Israel (Samaria) was actually taken into captivity by Assyria. God had generously given the country time and space to repent.

Yet He had warned them well in advance: "For the LORD God Almighty declares, 'I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel'" (6:14).

Many of our readers will already understand that the United States and Britain stand identified today as the house of Joseph or the house of Israel. These two nations are the primary descendants of the lost 10 tribes to

inherit the identity of Israel in the end time. If you have not yet read our full-color brochure *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, please write for or download your free copy today.

Prophecies yet to be fulfilled

Bible prophecy can be dual in nature. That is, prophetic statements sometimes have more than one fulfillment. This basic principle of duality is thoroughly explained on page 5 of our free brochure *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.

So the prophecies of Amos can easily be dual, foretelling not only God's judgment on the ancient house of Israel, but also His hand of discipline on the modern descendants today. And in principle, the spiritual lessons drawn from the book of Amos apply across the board in today's pulsating world.

Further, Jesus Christ's Olivet Prophecy tells us something very significant about events just preceding the time of His second coming. "For this is the time of punishment [vengeance, KJV] in fulfillment of all that has been written [in the Old Testament prophecies]" (Luke 21:22, emphasis added).

Armed with these crucial biblical

keys, we are better able to evaluate world and national conditions afflicting our modern times today.

National afflictions of Joseph

The peoples of Britain are among the primary descendants of the patriarch Joseph. Several national trends are far from favorable. For instance, in the words of Yasmin Brown, feature columnist for *The Independent*, "Even we on the Left are shamed by the verbal corruption infecting the nation's bloodstream" (reprinted by the *Daily Mail*, July 17, 2003).

A survey published by Mediawatch UK, which reviews television programs, discovered that in the first six months of this year the "F" word was used more than 1,400 times in TV films shown on British television. Also, "there were more than 1,000 other swear words—all used gratuitously." And according to Ms. Brown, "The general population too, is being given a visual junk diet of soaps, smut and soft porn" on TV, in addition to all the vulgar language.

She asks: "How can we stand by and let the greatest, most versatile language in the world trash itself, degenerating into a pile of offensive sounds?" A very good question!

On another front, a recent Citizen Adult Survey based on some 12,000 citizens in over 100 local authority areas (funded by the Economic and Social Research group) concluded that "only two thirds of people believe that the law should be obeyed as a matter of course" (*The Times*, Aug. 28, 2003). One third of British citizens believe that, in some circumstances, it is perfectly all right to avoid paying taxes.

On yet another level, the British government's chief inspector of schools has stated that "five-year-olds have led disrupted and disheveled lives" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Aug. 31, 2003). According to this high official, "Verbal and behavioral skills of the nation's five-year-olds were at an all-time low." Small children seem to have great difficulty sitting still, have little sense of danger, can't fasten buttons, etc.

School officials are attributing this sad set of circumstances to a lack of parental discipline, both parents working out of the home and the almost uni-

versal use of TV as a babysitter. (Obviously there are many exceptions, but the numbers are great enough to cause the British government's chief inspector of schools to make this comment in a well-respected major national newspaper.)

Finally in Britain, according to a recent report called *Getting There*:



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“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” (Amos 3:3). The House of Israel was clearly out of step with God.

Reducing Crime on Public Transport, “Crime on public transport is scaring people away from traveling on trains and buses . . . [the] Survey finds that one in three people are too frightened of crime to use [these] services” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Aug. 31, 2003).

Just related to this reporter

The above examples are just a few of many similar news clippings that I have collected in a very short time. Of course, other articles will tell you that Britain is a great place to live—and it is! I am a very satisfied resident!

Yet consider my favorite village in all of England. It is a great place to relax over a cup of coffee and a snack. It offers everything that a journalist like me could possibly wish for: nonsmoking coffee shops, the best small bookstore I have ever run across, a newsstand that sells several American newspapers as well as domestic editions, a very good public

library, a Bible college with an excellent in-house bookshop—all within easy walking distance of each other.

And yet the proprietor of my favorite coffee shop personally related the following to me. He lives upstairs above his shop and I have known him for several years. Just within the past five days of this writing, one local pub was closed down and its license temporarily revoked for failing to control violent customers, my favorite bookshop was broken into and robbed of 10 days' income, many shop windows have been damaged, etc. I cannot even recall all the incidents he related. The night before he told me of this sad crime spree, he couldn't get to sleep until 3:30 a.m. because of the dreadful noise teenagers were making in front of his shop in the early morning hours.

How much is too much?

This is not to pick on Britain exclusively, because manifold similar problems and difficulties are replicated daily in most other nations of our Western world.

The question we must all ask ourselves is this: When will God repeat to Himself about us what He said anciently about the house of Israel through the pen of the prophet Amos—“*I will spare them no longer*”?

One may conclude that Sept. 11, 2001, was a divine warning to the United States and the Western world in general. The divine protective shield was at least partially withdrawn. On that fateful day, the enemies of America inflicted a grievous national wound (psychological, as well as physical) on the greatest country in the world.

USA Today recently reported that the American crime rate is the “lowest in 30 years” (Aug. 25, 2003, Atlantic Edition). Only the murder rate and the rate of forcible rapes showed an increase, disturbing facts in themselves. Yet one sincerely hopes that the significant drop in several categories of crime reflect that at least some American citizens have reexamined their lives for the better in response to the twin tragedies

that befell New York City and Washington, D.C., on 9/11.

Still many serious problems remain in the United States. For instance, the sex industry continues to grind out thousands of porn films, videos and CDs annually—readily available for paying customers of many well-known hotels across America. Sadly, these pornographic films are exported all over the world making the United States a primary source of moral pollution, along with several nations on the European continent.

How much is too much? Once our Creator delayed the punishment of an ancient people, remarking that “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” Sadly, the Amorites continued their lethal, lawless way of life and they eventually became the object of God's anger. He acted!

Yet God's mercy and patience is still beyond our human understanding. When will His almost inexhaustible patience finally run out? He grieves over our national sins and longs for His people to repent.

Although the Bible does not enable us to calculate the time of the end, it nonetheless provides the discerning reader with an invaluable insight into when the general season begins. To understand where we now are and where we are headed in light of biblical prophecies about world trends and events, please request or download our free brochure, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* ✦

Recommended Reading

What's ahead of us now? What does the Bible say about our future? We offer several well-researched booklets that can help. Request *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. They are provided free of charge.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at www.ucg.org

Jails Overflow, While Justice Flags

“Do the crime. Do the time.” This popular slogan slathered over billboards and bumper stickers reflects a politically popular approach toward crime. The approach is partially effective, but the cost is choking states, counties and municipalities—and more importantly, it is not rehabilitating criminals.

by Cecil Maranville

One of the most popular political platforms in recent years is that of being tough on crime. People want to be safe; they want their children to be safe; they want their communities to be safe. So, a “lock them up and throw away the key” mentality motivated the legislation of strict crime laws, which in turn reduced some crime and filled America’s jails to overflowing.

Britain’s jails are also overcrowded. The BBC recently solicited people’s opinions about what to do about the problem (Web published, Aug. 28, 2003). Several people advocated the same “get tough” approach the United States has been following. Michaela Manvill of Devon advises: “Prisons should go back to the way they used to be, two to four people to a cell, locked in them for 23 hours a day with only porridge or bread to eat and water to drink!”

Several recommended the reinstatement of the death penalty—by hanging.

But the results of the U.S. “get tough on crime” approach are receiving mixed reviews.

U.S. jails and prisons currently hold more than 2 million men and women, according to data recently published by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). That translates into one in every 142 Americans. The present ratio of the population in prison is more than four times what it was in the mid 1970s, five times the rate of imprisonment in Britain, eight times the rate in France and 14 times the rate in Japan (Charles Meredith, “Education Key to Addressing Prison Cost,” 2003, *The Morning Call*).

As with any statistics, these can be interpreted in different ways, depending upon what one chooses to emphasize. Liberal voices decry skyrocketing numbers of arrests and incarcerations for relatively minor offenses, while conservative voices applaud decreased violent crime trends.

The liberal *New York Times* editorialized recently: “Locking the door and throwing away the key may make for good campaign sound bites, but it is a costly and inhumane crime policy” (“The Growing Inmate Population,” July 31, 2003). One major reason for the increase is stricter drug laws, with mandatory jail time. Drug offenders make up more than half of all federal prisoners. Another is the “three-strike” laws (a third felony conviction automatically results in a long sentence, regardless of the seriousness of the crimes).

Jeff Jacoby of *The Boston Globe* disagrees: “Actually, keeping known criminals locked up is a sensible and effective crime policy. *The [New York] Times* laments that it costs \$22,000 per year to keep each inmate in custody, but that is not an exorbitant price for preventing millions of annual murders, rapes, armed robberies, and assaults. The cost to society of a single armed robbery has been estimated at more than \$50,000; multiply that by the 12 or 13 attacks the average released prisoner commits per year, and \$22,000 an inmate looks like . . . quite a bargain” (“More Prisoners, Less Crime,” Aug. 29, 2003).

The BJS report indicates that the “get tough” approach may indeed be successful with most violent crimes, including robbery and aggravated assault. Homicide and forcible rape, however, are up an average of .8 percent and 4.0 percent respectively over the last year (FBI figures). Comparing the rates of violent crime (other than these exceptions) to 10 years ago, the numbers are down an impressive 54.6 percent.

But it doesn’t help to use bits and pieces of the report to make political points. Jacoby intimated the high cost represented in the BJS statistics. Let’s look into that.

Choking costs

In light of the current deficit, every level of government is feeling the budget crunch—prisons included. What does it cost to keep 2,021,223 men and women in prison? The already alluded to average annual cost of \$22,000 per year translates into the staggering figure of *\$44 billion* per year to make criminals “do the time.”

Of the total, 1,200,203 are in state penitentiaries; 665,475 are in municipal and county lockups. The cost of keeping them there is choking state and local government budgets, already suffering from sharply reduced revenues in a sluggish economy.

Direct expenditure to house prisoners in the United States rocketed 442 percent from 1982 to 1999. This does not include the cost of investigating, arresting, trying and convicting offenders. Police costs for the same period rose 244 percent, while judicial costs went up 314 percent (BJS figures).

What’s the “sticker price” from arrest to conviction to incarceration for every level of government? BJS reporting shows that the federal government paid

Direct expenditure to house prisoners in the United States rocketed 442 percent from 1982 to 1999. This does not include the cost of investigating, arresting, trying and convicting offenders.

out \$4 billion in direct expenditures in 1982; by 1999, it was paying \$21 billion, an increase of 419 percent. Counties were paying \$9 billion in 1982 and about \$35 billion by 1999. States paid out \$10 billion in 1982; by 1999, their costs were over \$50 billion. And, municipalities spent \$12 billion in 1982 and a choking \$39 billion in 1999 (BJS; all figures are rounded off).

Costs have only gone up since 1999, while revenues have seriously declined. Many prisons are overcrowded, and building new ones is not cheap. An Associated Press report puts the cost of building new jails at \$100,000 *per cell* (“More Inmates, Less Cash,” July 28, 2003).

Some might say that’s what society has to put out in order to protect itself from crime. That would be true, if imprisoning people resulted in their rehabilitation, but the facts demonstrate that is not the case.

Recidivism

“Recidivism,” according to *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary* means, “a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior; especially: relapse into criminal behavior.” Do prisons rehabilitate people, turning them into productive, stable citizens?

BJS statisticians Drs. Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin tracked 272,111 prisoners in 15 states after their release in 1994. There are four different measures of recidivism: (1) rearrest; (2) reconviction; (3) resentencing to prison; (4) return to prison with/without a new sentence. Lest we bog down in statistics, we will concentrate on just the first—rearrest.

Consider that 67.5 percent of prisoners released—two out of every three—were rearrested within the three-year period (not necessarily for the same type of crime that originally put them behind bars). “Released prisoners with the highest rearrest rates were robbers (70.2%), burglars (74.0%), larcenists (74.6%), motor vehicle thieves (78.8%), those in prison for possessing or selling stolen property (77.4%), and those in prison for possessing, using, selling weapons (70.2%)” (“Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994,” BJS, June 2002, p. 1).

(This is the most up-to-date study. It takes a long time and a great deal of coordination to produce such an analysis.)

Are longer prison sentences more effective in rehabilitating criminals into

good citizens? “No evidence was found that spending more time in prison raises the recidivism rate” (*ibid.*, p. 2).

Are prisons at least becoming more effective in rehabilitating the men and women behind their bars than they were in the past? No, they aren’t.

In “Reentry Trends in the United States,” the BJS compares a similar three-year study done from 1983-86 with the one above, from 1994-97. Within three years of release, 62.5 percent had been arrested again—actually better than the recidivism rate 11 years later.

There are two serious underlying and largely unaddressed problems that affect recidivism. *About 80 percent of prison inmates have serious drug and alcohol problems* (Ronald Fraser, “Prison Alternatives Would Save Florida Millions of Dollars,” *The Tallahassee Democrat*, Feb. 14, 2003). Additionally, most prison inmates lack the education and/or skills to be able to secure and maintain employment upon release.

Since most of the emphasis has been on getting criminals arrested, little has been done to correct these problems.

“Make ‘em pay” vs. “make them productive”

Many, unfortunately, continue their drug habits and their violent ways behind bars, meaning that they are potentially worse off upon release than they were when incarcerated.

What alternatives are there? Forced to economize, a number of states are experimenting with ways to reduce judicial expenditures. One method is the implementation of “drug courts,” which specialize in imposing sentences of treatment versus jail time for drug users. Not only do these programs save money, but they turn drug offenders into productive citizens.

The other major alternative is to provide a basic education, including trade skills to undereducated inmates, to make them more employable and stable, upon release. Early results from both experimental programs are promising.

In our money-driven society, the motivation for implementing these programs is purely financial. If it helps the bottom line, it has a chance. There’s surprisingly little orientation for seeking ways that would benefit both victims and criminals.

Receiving a sliver of attention is “cre-

ative sentencing,” by which convicted criminals work to pay direct restitution to victims of property crimes. Beautiful in its simplicity, it’s a shame that this program is not at the top of the list for such crimes.

Restitution was the core principle of the property statutes God gave the nation of Israel in Exodus 22. Everyone benefits: The victim actually regains property or money taken from him; the process is rehabilitative for the criminal; the state does not have to pay to incarcerate him.

The Bible teaches that justice needs to be both swift and fair. Any approach short of that only encourages criminal behavior: “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

But the Bible also teaches mercy and repentance, dealing with people on an individual basis, rather than with “a one-size-fits-all” approach to crime. God’s way is not to punish for punishment’s sake, but rather with the objective of turning the heart and mind of the offender away from the sin (that is, breaking the highest law—His, 1 John 3:4) that destroys them, to lead the person into a lawful way of living that will bring rich and abundant blessings for him and all of society.

Religious groups often take Jesus’ words, “I was in prison and you came to Me” (Matthew 25:36), as license to evangelize. But they ignore the context, in which Jesus is speaking in terms of meeting people’s needs, and the broader context of the Bible, which neither encourages nor authorizes stereotypical proselytizing. Presently, the two pressing needs of prisoners (who can be rehabilitated) are recovering from alcohol and drug addictions, at the same time as getting a basic education.

What a different world this would be if the entire justice system revolved around meeting people’s needs—protecting the innocent, and helping the guilty to change (if they possibly can).

We aren’t advocates for prison reform, but rather announcers of the fact that Christ will change the entire system. This messianic prophecy implies the perfect blend of fairness and firmness: “But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4). ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

Will Common Diseases One Day Collapse the Economies of the West?

In the current climate of constant threats of terrorist attacks, of anthrax scares and biotoxin fears, who could guess that a heat wave would hand France one of the greatest tragedies in its history? The official count is still unknown, but as of this writing, the death toll in France for the period of Aug. 1 to 15 was 11,435, and most victims were elderly. The country simply cannot afford to care for its senior citizens in the way that it should. Discussions are under way about the possibility of every worker donating one day's wage per year (by working through a national holiday) to generate emergency funding.

Alzheimer's will grow by 150 percent in the United Kingdom by 2050. By the same date, the number of people with Alzheimer's in the United States could reach 300 percent of today's numbers—that's up to 16 million Americans. This projection, based upon U.S. census data, comes from the Rush Institute on Healthy Aging.

Sheldon Goldberg, president and CEO of the U.S. Alzheimer's Association, warned: "If we don't find answers soon, it will be devastating on multiple fronts." Unless advances in research produce effective treatments, the Rush Institute declared that the projected increase is *enough to bankrupt the American Medicare system.*

Meanwhile, in China economists blame the 3.7 percent shrinkage in Hong Kong's gross domestic product for the second quarter of the year on the SARS outbreak. Toronto also lost tens of millions of dollars in tourism revenues when the World Health Organization declared the city unsafe, due to a lengthy period of uncontained SARS infections there.

SARS is a pneumonia-like virus, believed to have "jumped" from animals to humans in the Guangdong province of China, where the illness claimed hundreds of victims. Recent investigations in the province revealed the presence of a variation of SARS in several test animals, as well as some healthy people. The people may not become ill themselves, but they are carriers of the disease.

Apart from the possibility of the introduction of a new strain of SARS, scientists are warning that the regional strain will most likely reappear when the next flu season begins.

The flu itself could become a bioterror weapon. Scientists from the University of Texas Health Science Center say that commonly known information from the genome of the 1918 flu epidemic could be used to create an even more deadly strain than that one, which took the lives of 20 to 40 million people.

Even in our modern world of advanced technology and medical science, we are ever vulnerable to common diseases. We need to be mindful of the fact that good health is a blessing

from God, one that we cannot afford to take for granted. There is a direct correlation between our respect for and application of God's laws and the prosperity of our countries. As America rushes to distance itself from God's great laws, we would do well to take heed of His sober words in Leviticus 26:14-16.

"But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart."

Sources: ABC News, Agence France-Presse, BBC.

Sept. 11 Conspiracy Theory Becomes Bestseller in Germany



"As the second anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks approaches, a book that claims the stunning events of that day were supported and perhaps organized by U.S. intelligence services is nearing the top of the bestseller charts in Germany.

"Die CIA und der 11. September. Internationaler Terror und die Rolle der Geheimdienste (The CIA and Sept. 11: International Terror and the Role of

the Secret Services) was up two places to No. 5 in the non-fiction segment of this week's *Der Spiegel* list . . .

"The author, Andreas von Bülow, a former member of the German cabinet, does not directly accuse the Central Intelligence Agency . . . [but] strongly suggest[s] a CIA link to the attacks."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Weekly, Sept. 5, 2003.

Homeland Security Warns al Qaeda Planning New U.S. attacks

"A Department of Homeland Security advisory issued [Sept. 4] warns that al Qaeda is working on plans to hijack airliners flying between international points that pass near or over the continental United States . . .

"The advisory includes a laundry list of possible attack scenarios, and says al Qaeda may be researching how to disseminate diseases and toxins by contaminating water and food, or aerosolizing an agent in an enclosed space . . .

"The advisory notes that al Qaeda has successfully used suicide bombers and warns that terrorists 'will employ novel methods to artfully conceal suicide devices.'"

CNN, Sept. 5, 2003.

Indonesian Vice President Calls U.S. “King of Terrorists”

“Indonesia’s Vice-President, Hamzah Haz, has accused the U.S. of being the ‘king of terrorists’ in a scathing attack that echoed the language of many of the Bali bombers. In remarks that may signal a split in the Indonesian Government’s campaign against terrorist groups, Mr. Hamzah ridiculed suggestions Indonesia had a serious terrorist problem . . .

“‘Who is the real terrorist? It is the United States for they have attacked Iraq. In fact they are the king of terrorists,’ Mr. Hamzah, head of the Islamic-based United Development Party, said.”

The Sydney Morning Herald, Sept. 5, 2003.

“Old Europe” Rejects U.S. Proposals Again

“France and Germany dug in for another diplomatic battle yesterday when they rejected American proposals for a new UN resolution on Iraq . . .

“Facing daily casualties in Iraq and large-scale bombings that killed Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations envoy, and the Shi’ite leader Ayatollah Muhammad Baqer al-Hakim, Washington is to seek a new UN resolution to encourage other countries to send troops and funds.”

The Telegraph (London), Sept. 5, 2003.

Europeans Question U.S. Global Role

“Europeans have grown more critical of U.S. global leadership, while American support for a strong European partner has increased over the last year. This is the conclusion of the Transatlantic Trends 2003 survey, which was conducted in June 2003 . . .

“The poll showed that Europeans starkly question U.S. global leadership. Overall, only 45% of Europeans—a large drop-off compared to 64% in

2002—see strong U.S. leadership as desirable. In contrast, 80% of Americans, consistent with last year’s 79% continue to see strong EU leadership as desirable.”

EUObserver.com, Sept. 5, 2003.

Leader Asks EU to Recognize Christianity

“According to [European Commission President Romano] Prodi, ‘the monotheist religions, particularly the Christian religion,’ have been ‘one of the essential roots of Europe and one of its factors of development,’ as ‘the history of Europe and the history of Christianity are indissolubly united.’ All this ‘must be recognized in the Constitutional Treaty,’ he writes.”

ZENIT News Agency (Vatican), Sept. 4, 2003.

EU Founding Father to Be Recognized as Saint?

“The former head of the French government and president of the European Parliament, Robert Schuman, is on the path to beatification. An investigation into his nomination for a sainthood is due to conclude by the end of this year, the Polish Catholic News Agency (KAI) reports . . .

“The Schuman plan unveiled on 9 May 1950 is regarded as a milestone in European integration and celebrated as ‘Europe Day.’”

EUObserver.com, Sept. 4, 2003.

Removing Prayer From Parliament in Australia?

“A move to replace the [New South Wales] Parliament’s opening prayer with a moment’s silence to reflect or pray has outraged Christian groups, who say it is the first step towards eliminating God from public life.”

Australian Associated Press, at World-Wide Religious News, Sept. 2, 2003.

Contributors: Cecil Maranville and “Current World News & Trends” staff

World News and Prophecy on the Web



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- “Turkish PM wants EU Constitution to Avoid Religious Reference.”
- “[EU] Convention Battle Continues.”
- “Belgium Stands Firm Over EU Military HQ Plans.”

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“DREAM,” (Continued from page 16)

as a servant (Genesis 39:4), a prisoner (Genesis 39:21) or standing before Pharaoh interpreting his dreams (Genesis 41:25-41). Sometimes it takes a dreamer to know a dreamer.

Joseph’s dream never wandered from him. It gave him purpose and created a discipline to meet the future. His dream would serve as the defining vision of his life. The dream never changed. Joseph changed!

Yes, Joseph and Martin Luther King Jr. have something very much in common. They were dreamers. Their dreams cost them dearly, yet both held to their vision.

Dripping with freedom

Forty years down the lane of time, what do we gain from the dream of this latter-day dreamer, who would feed a nation and world with the sustenance of personal dignity and freedom? So often we only hear the echo of the famous last words of his speech: “Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!” Little do most people realize that the entire speech is soaked, saturated and dripping with one thought and one thought alone—freedom!

Dr. King began his speech with homage to Lincoln by echoing the thoughts of the Gettysburg Address: “Fivescore years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.” He quickly moved to the present by stating: “But one hundred years later, the Negro is still not free . . . And so we’ve come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.”

Rays of hope and optimism

But Dr. King, while ever the realist of the present plight, injects rays of hope and optimism by further declaring: “We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.”

He recognized there was hard work ahead. A work that could be deterred by seeking immediate gains of payback—hurt for hurt and injury for injury. Therefore, he stirred the audience towards better passions by reminding them to “forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degen-

erate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.” A few lines later, he would “pepper” this thought with the basic Christian rule of thumb to “continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.” It is here that Dr. King expressed the redemptive optimism of people of faith given by Paul in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good [not that all things along the way are good] to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”



The “I Have a Dream” speech would be the oratorical catalyst that would awaken social consciousness to such an appropriate level that the U.S. Congress would ultimately pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, forever changing the country.

Hammering home the point

With the force of a blacksmith’s hammer on an anvil, Dr. King nine times declares, “I have a dream.” The rhythm of his speech carried his listeners towards a vision of the dynamic future foretold by the prophet Isaiah: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places made smooth. The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:4-5).

With this picture of a godly world in place, Dr. King then concluded with eight lines of “let freedom ring” from the heights of America.

But it is in the ninth verbal sounding of “let freedom ring” that Dr. King purposefully introduces the last tolling with an inclusive, “when we let freedom ring.” It is here that Dr. King avoids the mistake of the younger Joseph. The

dream is not solely about him, but about the good of others. It is now no longer an exclusive dream; now it is everyone’s dream and everyone’s responsibility to bring it to pass.

“The fierce urgency of now”

It is a 40-year-old dream that has stood well the test of time. But it is a dream not yet enjoyed by all people around this globe. We, the staff of *World News and Prophecy*, also have a dream. In spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, we still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the Christian dream. It is rooted in the words of Jesus Christ who stated in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

There are times when people will say to our staff, “Why be so critical? Why not leave some issues alone? Why do you have to keep bringing up matters like the rise of a Beast power, the deception of a False Prophet, the ungodliness of soci-

ety, the future demise of these United States, the wrongfulness of abortion, the sin of practiced homosexuality and on and on?"

Why? These matters aren't simply going to get better or go away by putting our heads in the sand and being satisfied with the ever diminishing nature of the moral and spiritual status quo. The fierce urgency of now places personal and divine demands on us to "cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression" (Isaiah 58:1).

We choose to ring a bell

Yes, like Dr. King, we choose to ring a bell of moral clarity, in a world that wants to be left alone to go its own way. We choose to ring a bell of warning to awaken those nations that mistakenly interpret the patient mercy of God for the lack of a sure judgment day that is coming upon the nations. We rejoice in ringing a bell of freedom's joy that the very real Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ is coming to this earth.

We choose to see a world beyond this troubled moment. We look forward to a world free from Satan, free from sin and free from self. Freedom is a beautiful word. Freedom in Christ is a beautiful experience. For a Christian, freedom cannot be an afterthought, but a value laced throughout our thoughts, words and deeds.

In the midst of his famous speech, Dr. King asked the rhetorical question some then were asking regarding his civil rights crusade, "When will you be satisfied?" His answer that follows resonates with the fullness of the millennial refrain of Isaiah 30:21, "This is the way, walk in it." He proclaimed, "No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until 'justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.'"

Those times are yet ahead, so we remain dissatisfied in a world apart from godly freedom. Oh yes, the way of a dreamer can be lonely, be it Joseph in the pit or Martin standing alone before throngs of people in the shadow of Abraham Lincoln. The path of a dreamer is never easy, but worth the wait. Thus, we wait along with you. Hold on to the dream! ❖

"AFRICA," (Continued from page 6)
rulers and many Western intellectuals.

Citing David Lamb's 1983 book, *The Africans*, Ayittey catalogs Africa's wealth and potential: "Africa is four times the geographical size of the United States and, with its approximately 700 million people, has more than thrice that of the United States. It is a continent with immense untapped mineral wealth. Africa has 40% of the world's potential hydroelectric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium; 30% of the uranium in the non-communist world; 50% of the world's gold; 90% of its cobalt; 50% of its phosphates; 40% of its platinum; 7.5% of its coal; 8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas; 3% of its iron ore; and millions upon millions of acres of untilled farmland. There is not another continent blessed with such abundance and diversity" (introduction).

At independence in 1957, Ghana was Britain's richest colony in Africa, with a per capita income higher than that of some European countries. It was the world's biggest producer of cocoa and had the third biggest gold deposits. Additionally, it was blessed with thriving agricultural, bauxite and timber industries. Four years later, it was bankrupt and has never recovered.

Singapore also got its independence from Great Britain in 1957. The small Asian island state went from strength to strength, while its independent African sister went backwards. Why? Ayittey stated the painful truth in ringing clarity. His analysis of the causes of Africa's problems is a must-read for all those interested in the future of Africa.

If I could find Smith again, I would give him a copy.

Understandable wrong conclusions

It's not his fault that he thinks the way he does. On film, he sees Americans living a wealthy lifestyle, while he is poor and cannot even afford to continue his schooling. The reason for this disparity of income, in his mind, is that America exploits the world's poor; that America steals the oil and the diamonds from other countries, making Americans rich while the majority of people in the Third World live on less than one U.S. dollar a day.

To Smith this must be true, as many African leaders keep on saying it's true

(though, I should add, not the present government of Ghana). Making matters worse is the fact that liberal intellectuals and academics in the West, seemingly motivated by hatred of their own countries, express the same sentiments.

Writing about the leaders, the "liberators," of independent Africa, Ayittey describes them as "crocodile liberators, Swiss bank socialists, quack revolutionaries, and grasping kleptocrats. After independence true freedom never came to much of Africa. Nor did development" (p. 7).

The second generation of leaders is even worse in Ayittey's estimation: "The second generation of military rulers, who assumed control in the 1970s, emerged from the dregs: They were more corrupt, incompetent, and brutal than the civilian administrations they replaced" (ibid.).

They were reminiscent of a 3,000-year-old observation made by Israel's King Solomon: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning!" (Ecclesiastes 10:16.) Frequently, Africa's revolutionaries in the 1970s were young men from the junior ranks of the military, often uneducated, even illiterate. They had one purpose in mind—to feed themselves, literally and figuratively.

Solomon added: "Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness!" (verse 17).

Sadly, Africa's postcolonial history has been one of repeated political instability, a seemingly never-ending power struggle with different factions constantly fighting each other for power and control.

As George Ayittey pointed out, political correctness makes it impossible to state the obvious, even in the supposedly free nations of the West. Yet unless the truth is told, America and Britain will continue to lose the propaganda war.

I have no doubt that the next time I visit Kumasi there will be more "Smiths" standing outside the royal palace—as indeed, there are outside other royal and presidential palaces around the world. The "colonial bogeyman" today is the United States. It's far easier to point the finger of blame at Washington than to look in the mirror to more clearly see yourself. ❖



by Robin Webber

A 40-Year-Old Dream With Shades of Eternity

Forty years ago this past August, a relatively young man stood before an audience of a quarter of a million people gathered in the hallway of democracy between the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument, known as the National Mall. There he shared a dream with his fellow citizens. One man, with one dream, in one speech spoke of one cherished treasure that had eluded his people—freedom.

The moment had arrived; Martin Luther King Jr. walked onto the national stage and into history by bringing a message marked with his even-paced and ever-rising oratorical crescendo that mixed words, metaphors and thoughts from the biblical prophets of old, Shakespeare and slogans of long ago New Deal optimism. In his now well-known conclusion, he defined his dream with word pictures of mountaintops ringing with freedom (crafted from "My Country 'Tis of Thee") and then punctuated all he had said with the valiant cry of joy from an old "Negro spiritual."

The "I Have a Dream" speech would be the oratorical catalyst that would awaken social consciousness to such an appropriate level that the U.S. Congress would ultimately pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, forever changing the country. Dr. King would be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, but he would also be cruelly rewarded with a martyr's death in 1968 for his life's work "for the cause of brotherhood and peace."

Another dreamer, another time

Dr. King would not be the first dreamer to be faced with the taunt of "Who does he think he is?"—thus inviting an uncertain future. Neither would he be the first dreamer to seemingly be silenced or cruelly struck down by people seeking to maintain the status quo. Long ago, another young man shared a dream that placed him in harm's way. It is recorded in your Bible in Genesis 37.

Joseph, Jacob's next-to-youngest son, came to his physical brothers and declared, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed" (verse 6). This and an accompanying dream (verse 9) plainly indicated that young Joseph would ultimately hold an influential position over his family and ultimately the world of his time.

The key word and concept that distanced Joseph from his brothers was the term *bowing*. Joseph interpreted it in the sense of "preeminence" and his family members interpreted it as "subservience." Based upon immediate reactions and no time for reflection, both sides handled the dreams poorly. Both were wrong and both would have to grow in maturity. But for the moment, selling him into the living death of slavery seemingly silenced "the dreamer."

But Joseph held to this simple dream God had planted in his heart. He held on through a darkened pit, the smells of the slave market and the false accusations of an ungrateful master who put him in prison. Whatever position Joseph was placed in, he ultimately found favor, whether

(See "DREAM," page 14)