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Where Are America and Europe Really Headed?

Following his success in winning the November election, President George W. Bush has shown himself willing to talk to European leaders about how to handle the world's problems. The White House no longer speaks of "New Europe" and "Old Europe." But do the most recent diplomatic initiatives by the president and Secretary of State Rice only mask bitter rifts over major international issues, including the sale of arms to China?

by John Ross Schroeder

"**T**oday America and Europe face a moment of consequence and opportunity," said President Bush in his recent 40-minute Brussels address before high-ranking European leaders. It is hard to imagine that the president's conciliatory tones would not ease frictions in the transatlantic relationship, at least temporarily. In fact, not a few European leaders have said that Mr. Bush's recent trip has reconnected him with Europe.

However, we must also take a wide-ranging look at the long-term consequences. Unknowingly, is the die already cast? Will current trends and future events propel America and Europe into a very serious adversarial relationship that cannot be easily mended? Is the worst yet to come?

Further, does a body of knowledge exist, totally outside the awareness of these two world powers, that will have a decisive impact on their relationship? Does a Higher Power have a plan and purpose that involves



U.S. President George W. Bush tries to reconnect with Europe at a joint press conference at the European Council in Brussels, Feb. 22. (Reuters/Yves Herman)

the direction of European events?

Before we address these questions, let's look briefly at the contemporary history of Europe.

Europe in the 20th century

During World War I, communism reared its ugly head in the territory

(See "EUROPE," page 3)



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Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

World News and Prophecy online: Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available by May 11, 2005, on the Internet at:

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



"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things . . ." ACTS 3:21

People in the Streets

Recent scenes of citizens taking to the streets to express themselves have stirred the imagination of many. A few weeks ago the citizens of Ukraine marched in an "Orange Revolution" to protest the heavy hand of a government that did not want to abide by recent elections. They forced another election that had to be respected, and the result is a change in government and a hope for better times.

On Jan. 30 Iraqis went to the polls, under great threat from terrorists, to cast ballots for a new government. It was a historic event for that country to take part in elections with this much freedom.

Recent days have seen Lebanese in the streets protesting Syrian interference in their country's affairs. On Feb. 14 former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated by a bomb blast as he drove through the streets of Beirut. It is widely suspected that Syria was responsible since Hariri had called for Syria to cease its influence in his country. Syria has had a presence in Lebanon since 1989.

One Lebanese leader had to compare scenes of Lebanese protest with the fall of the Berlin Wall more than 15 years ago.

There have even been reports of Egyptians marching in Cairo protesting the long autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak.

It is the scene of people, common people, rising against tyranny and unjust government. It is a picture of people yearning for freedom to live and to love in peace and dignity, without another human depriving them that privilege.

Regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or sex, the great human need is freedom. It has been and will always be at the core of events that shape the experience of man on this planet.

Freedom is the great gift God gave to humanity when He placed two ways of life, symbolized by the two trees of Genesis 2, before Adam and Eve at the beginning. They had freedom to choose.

Freedom lies at the heart of our relationship with God, the Creator. And we see this innate need springing up at what may be an interesting juncture of history.

The people in the streets of Kiev, Baghdad, Beirut and Cairo are reacting to oppression, greed and misgovernment. They may not replace it with anything better—history shows that humans rarely do. But these expressions of freedom may trigger reactions and other far-reaching events that could reshape our world. They are occurring in two regions, Europe and the Middle East, that will play critical roles in Bible prophecy. History has shown that all it takes is a small, even unintended, event to trigger larger events of global significance.

We have to applaud the common man and woman who take a stand for freedom. This cry of the heart is a reflection of what Paul wrote about in Romans 8:22, a creation that ". . . groans and labors with birth pangs . . ." while it suffers under the bondage of corruption. Real liberty will come with Jesus Christ when He restores a just government based on the eternal laws of His Kingdom.

Then will freedom—true freedom based on godly righteousness—be brought to all nations.

—Darris McNeely

“EUROPE,” (Continued from page 1)

that became the Soviet Union. The revolution of 1917 paralyzed the creativity and initiative of the Russian and other Slavic peoples.

Before its eventual fall, another satanic ideology called fascism gripped much of Europe. The Third Reich only lasted 12 years (1933-1945), but many millions perished in World War II because of it.

Finally the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) effectively ended communism in Europe. One of the most astute American strategists in the U.S. policy establishment said he “never thought it would happen.” Nonetheless, the Cold War ceased as an important consequence.

As a result, *Financial Times* writer Philip Stephens summed up the situation we now face. “For most of the past half-century we were able to assume that the western democracies by and large shared the same set of ambitions and played by the same set of rules. The context was provided by the cold war. No longer. The political earthquake that began more than a decade ago with the collapse of communism and gathered force with the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001 has yet to subside” (Jan. 7, 2005).

Right now both America and Europe are faced with an economically emergent China, but with a backward political system and a poor human rights record to boot. And the two differ on at least one major policy toward China.

How to deal with China

The European Union is on the brink of taking steps to end the arms embargo imposed after the tragic events occurring at Tiananmen Square. America strongly disagrees with this proposed move, given continual Chinese threats to invade Taiwan and the additional arms muscle and new military technology that China would have should Europe sell her its most advanced weapons.

A senior Pentagon official plainly stated: “They’re talking about helping the Chinese kill Americans more effectively. This is not what Europe



U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shakes hands with Japan's Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura as U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Japan's Defense Minister Yoshinori Ohno get up from a joint press conference Feb. 19. Machimura and Ohno were in Washington to discuss a major revision to the U.S.-Japan security alliance that would for the first time identify tensions between China and Taiwan as a flashpoint in Asia. This occurs with the European Union on the verge of removing its arms embargo on China. (Reuters/Jason Reed)

should be doing” (*Financial Times*, Dec. 24, 2004).

But these concerns are not confined to the president and the Pentagon. The U.S. Congress is watching this situation very closely. The House of Representatives has already passed a statement representing their feelings against Europe lifting the Chinese arms embargo. The margin of passage was 411 votes to 3.

Clearly America does not want Europe to facilitate the desires of China’s military establishment. (Incidentally, as recently reported on BBC radio, an item surfaced that indicates China’s aging generals are lobbying in terms of actually attacking and conquering Taiwan, the island to which many Chinese fled when communists took over mainland China in 1949.)

A proverb says that money answers all things, and it certainly rings true in these international mat-

ters. *The Economist* reported: “This week it emerges that the EU is now China’s biggest trading partner: in 2004, trade between the two amounted to almost 160 billion [euros—\$210 billion], an increase of 35% over 2003” (Jan. 15, 2005).

Japan is also deeply concerned about Chinese intentions. Sino-Japanese political relations are frosty and the Japanese prime minister is increasingly standing up to China. *The Financial Times* stated that “Japan and the U.S. will today sign a new joint security agreement that puts Tokyo on a more assertive footing in East Asia at the time of rising Chinese power.”

According to Kurt Campbell, former assistant secretary of defense for Asia and now a security analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, “This statement clearly suggests that Japan and the U.S. share a strategic, parallel



Some Europeans believe “it is in the interest of the world that Europe ‘throw its weight on the scales to counterbalance the hegemonic unilateralism of the United States.’”

interest in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait” (Feb. 20, 2005).

American endorsement of a United Europe: a wise move?

Ironically, perhaps the most worrying thing long term is not the policy disagreements, but the president’s promise of support for a strong and united Europe in his recent Brussels speech.

Some European voices are openly advocating an adversarial relationship. Consider the new book *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe* by Daniel Levy, Max Pensky and John Torpey. Anatole Lieven, senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington D.C., is instructive in his book review for the *FT Magazine*.

“An effective foreign policy can only be devised by a ‘core’ Europe—in other words, France, Germany and those Western [or perhaps a few Eastern?] European countries that choose to follow their lead. This is necessary, they say, because it is in the interest of the world that Europe ‘throw its weight on the scales to counterbalance the hegemonic unilateralism of the United States’” (Feb. 19, 2005, emphasis added throughout).

Other European voices are calling for even more aggressive policies toward America. Consider the views of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and French philosopher Jacques Derrida. They advocated a common foreign policy for core Europe in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. Anatole Lieven’s startling assessment: Derrida and Habermas argued that European identity can and must be built on the basis of overt opposition to the United States.

The biblical perspective

The mention of a core Europe or a core group of European nations resonates with Bible prophecy in the books of Daniel and Revelation. It concerns a latter-day revival of the Roman Empire.

Daniel prophesied of four kingdoms, which history shows to have been the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman Empires (Daniel 2:28-39). This Hebrew prophet speaks of the overwhelming strength of the last of these empires (verse 40). After the original Roman Empire finally passed into history, the Bible speaks of several resurrections, the last of which is yet to occur.

God’s Word predicts that a group of

10 “kings” (national leaders) will give rise to a frightening union that will fulfill many end-time prophecies. The book of Revelation tells us: “The ten horns . . . are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13).

Put these particular prophecies together with the true understanding of the origins of the Anglo-American peoples. Our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* shows that the American and certain English-speaking British Commonwealth nations are the descendants of ancient Israel. As this booklet reveals, after a period of relative Anglo-American dominance, the Bible predicts national downfall and eventual captivity of these nations.

Indications are that the 10 kings will constitute a core group of nations from within the territory of the old Roman Empire. Their actions will be the catalyst to bring this coming calamity to complete fulfillment. The fundamental cause, however, will be a widespread failure to live up to national duties and responsibilities along with widespread immorality of every kind.

Where are America and Europe really headed? To a place they would not go if they truly understood the long-term consequences. ❖

Recommended Reading

There is much more to the story than we can possibly cover in this article. To understand more fully, please request or download our free booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.



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

Syria in the Crosshairs

World opinion is that Syria appears to have gone one step too far in its deadly game of sponsoring terrorism. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri will have far-reaching consequences for Syria, as well as for the entire Middle East.

by Cecil E. Maranville

Already at odds with Washington for a number of reasons, Damascus finds itself in the crosshairs of the Bush administration, as well as the governments of Europe.

Although Bashar al-Assad's government decried the car bombing that killed popular former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Syria is the prime suspect behind the killing. The United States has recalled its ambassador from Syria, and the European Union is joining the United States in calling for an international investigation, as well as for free elections in Lebanon and the lessening of Syria's presence there.

Syrian officials have variously called the assassination "a terrorist act" and "a horrendous criminal attack." President Assad urged the Lebanese people "to fortify their national unity and to reject those seeking discord." The Syrian foreign minister added: "We hope the Lebanese people will remain united and strong and continue to reject domestic strife and foreign intervention." And the Syrian information minister praised Mr. Hariri for fighting for "Lebanon's growth, prosperity and independence."

Syria acts as if the world doesn't know about its activities in Lebanon, or that it doesn't care. Their official comments are patently meaningless on account of Syria's direct link with terrorism in that country.

Syria has been sponsoring terrorism against Israel for decades, principally from southern Lebanon. Syria is the "foreign power" seeking to destabilize Lebanon and preventing it from becoming independent. Syria maintains a force of approximately 15,000 troops in Lebanon to ensure that the country follows the wishes of Damascus. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559 last September, reaffirming a call for respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and for the withdraw-



Reuters/Albert Gea

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was killed in a car bombing, with Syria the prime suspect. Hariri is shown Sept. 13, 2004, when the UN's Urban Development Agency awarded him for his work in the postconflict reconstruction of his country.

al of "all foreign troops," which meant the Syrian army.

Satellite of Syria

Lebanon has literally been a satellite of Syria. Mr. Hariri indeed fought for Lebanon's independence, but how bitterly hypocritical of the Syrian president and the information minister to praise him in death for doing so, when he was fighting for independence from Syria! In fact, he resigned from the Lebanese government last October in protest after

The United States has recalled its ambassador from Syria, and the EU is joining the United States in calling for an international investigation, as well as for free elections in Lebanon and the lessening of Syria's presence there.



Members of the Israeli army alpine unit train on Mount Hermon, the Golan Heights, Feb. 16. Captured from Syria in the 1967 war, the area is closely guarded by Israel (Reuters/Gil Cohen Magen)

Damascus pressured Lebanon to extend the term of its pro-Syrian president.

So you see how absurd it is for the Assad regime to wring its hands in shock and horror at the assassination of Hariri.

And it is little wonder that the Lebanese people are scorning diplomatic niceties coming out of Damascus. Thousands have marched in angry protests, attacking Syrians and Syrian interests.

In death, Hariri may have accomplished what he was not able to accomplish in life—free Beirut of Damascus’ stranglehold, for Syria may have no choice but to yield to the international pressure to withdraw from Lebanon completely. Even before the assassination, the United States had already levied heavy sanctions against Syria for its support of terrorism, and Washington is poised to turn up the heat.

Israel the reason

Immediately after the death of Hariri, the Israeli government

announced that Syria would have to expel the offices of terrorist groups from its territory, end its occupation of Lebanon, allow Lebanese forces to take control of the border with Israel and stop acts of aggression against Israel, before it would reenter negotiations about the sensitive issue of the Golan Heights.

The Golan Heights is a 459-square mile plateau at the southwestern edge of Syria and the northeastern tip of Israel. It’s a logical jumping-off point should Syria invade Israel (as it has in past wars). For several years leading up to the 1967 war, snipers used to shoot into Israeli villages from atop this hilly area. But Israel captured the Heights in 1967, officially annexing it in December 1981 during the Begin administration. The international community hasn’t recognized Israel’s right of ownership and has long pressured it to return the Golan Heights to Syria.

The Golan Heights are also an important source of water for Israel, for within it are the headwaters of the Jordan River valley. The Golan

Heights borders on the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee, a major freshwater source for Israel. Bashar al-Assad’s government wants to reopen negotiations for the return of the Golan Heights to Syria (talks broke down five years ago), but sentiment runs high against the idea among Israelis, given the strategic issues involved. With 20,000 settlers in the area, the cost of relocating and compensating them for their losses would amount to about \$10 billion.

Israel is the reason for Syria’s interest in Lebanon. It’s been a staging area for attacking Israel for decades. President Bush said in his recent State of the Union address: “Syria still allows its territory, and parts of Lebanon, to be used by terrorists who seek to destroy every chance of peace in the region.” Syria blatantly supports the terrorist group turned political party, Hezbollah, as well as many Palestinian terrorists.

Russia is making matters worse. Recently, it announced the sale to Syria of a sophisticated weapons system (including surface-to-air missiles), ignoring U.S. and Israeli back-channel requests that they cancel the deal. Russia’s president justified the sale by declaring, “First of all, we understand and are committed to maintaining the balance of power in the region. We understand our responsibilities” (“Russia Tells Israel Arms Deal With Syria Will Go Ahead,” *The Daily Star*, AFP, Feb. 16, 2005).

“A terrorist bazaar”

President Bashar al-Assad is much less subtle than his late father about Syria’s ties to the Hezbollah militia. The elder Assad never had a face-to-face meeting with Hezbollah’s leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah, although Hafiz al-Assad certainly used the terrorist militia to his advantage. But the current president meets with Nasrallah frequently. Some reports say Bashar al-Assad supplied Nasrallah with missiles when Hezbollah pounded Israel from southern Lebanon in March and April 2002.

Assad is a wild card in the Middle

East, as no one knows with certainty whether he has firm control of Syria, or the ability to provide stable leadership for the enigmatic nation. For that matter, no one knows exactly what goes on within this country of 18 million people.

Is the “accidental president” fully in charge, or is the country run by an old guard from his father’s days? (Bashar’s brother Basil was the designated heir to Hafiz al-Assad, until Basil was killed in a car accident only six years before the elder Assad’s death. Bashar was an ophthalmologist practicing in London until his brother’s death, when he was recalled to Syria to undergo extensive secret grooming for taking over from his father.)

Jeff Babbin of *The National Review Online* called the country “a terrorist bazaar” (“Regime Change, Again,” Nov. 12, 2003). Washington charges that it has chemical weapons (including a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin and possibly VX) and that it is developing offensive biological ones. It has an inventory of Scud and SS-21 short-range missiles armed with chemical warheads.

Violating UN sanctions, Syria earned \$3 billion in secret trading with Saddam Hussein’s regime. It provided safe haven for many of Saddam’s fleeing thugs, as well as for billions of dollars looted from the Iraqi people by his regime. Syria may also have given Hussein a hiding place for his weapons of mass destruction.

World News and Prophecy reported last year on Jordan’s serendipitous interception of a terrorist plot to blow up its intelligence headquarters with a mixture of 71 chemicals that would have produced a toxic cloud of death for up to 80,000 people. The chemicals almost certainly came from Syria (or Syrian-controlled Lebanon), whether from Saddam Hussein’s cache or from Syria’s stockpiles.

That alone demonstrates the critical danger of the Syrian regime.

A journey through time

Israel and Syria have crossed swords many times throughout history. When Syria was, for the most part,

a group of city-states, mainly Damascus, Hamath and Zobah, it often clashed with the kings of Israel and Judah. We read of King David killing 22,000 Syrians from Damascus and Zobah (2 Samuel 8:5).

Interaction between these territories was not always negative. Jesus and His disciples likely spoke the language of the people of Aram, which was Aramaic. When Christ began His ministry, His fame spread through all of Syria (Matthew 4:24).

Bible students will recognize the names of Syrian cities where the Church of God took root in the first century, according to the book of Acts. They include Damascus, Antioch, Seleucia and Caesarea Philippi. And, of course,

Syria provided safe haven for many of Saddam’s fleeing thugs, as well as for billions of dollars looted from the Iraqi people by his regime. Syria may also have given Hussein a hiding place for his weapons of mass destruction.

the apostle Paul was struck down and called of God when en route from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Syria was of great strategic importance for many centuries, due to her position at the intersection of three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe), and on a crossroad between the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Black Sea and the Nile River. She lay upon the famous silk route between China and Europe.

Alexander the Great conquered Syria, and after his death it passed to one of his generals, Seleucus. He and the territory he ruled became the king of the North of the prophecy of Daniel 11. Antiochus Epiphanes, who set up the first “abomination of desolation” in the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 11:31), was a king of Syria.

Thus, modern Syria stands in the

shadow of history. The Syrian Tourism Office accurately claims, “A journey through Syria is a journey through time.”

Abomination of desolation yet to come

Bible students know that there is another “abomination of desolation” yet to come. So said Christ in foretelling events that will occur just before His return (Matthew 24:15). By the time of Christ, Syria had come under the control of the Roman Empire, so that great power inherited Daniel’s “king of the North” mantle.

The Roman Empire waxed and waned, realizing several resurrections between Christ’s time and now. Although this last great empire long since migrated from the Middle East, it still concerned itself with events in this critical region. We believe it will come to life yet again, and that it will precipitate the modern abomination of desolation in Jerusalem. You can read the details of Daniel’s prophecies in our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Given the ever-increasing influence of the EU, as well as the historically strategic importance of Syria, it’s conceivable that the final king of the North will again envelop Damascus. It is arguably an important Islamic country, if for no other reason than for its strategic location. As we reported in these pages last month, Turkey is presently aggressively petitioning to join the EU, promising that it would be a conduit for expanding European influence into Eurasia. Could the EU’s umbrella of influence one day extend over Syria? Time will tell.

Democratic reform next door in Iraq (and perhaps in Lebanon soon) will bring pressure on Syria to come in from the cold of its isolation from the world community of nations. Given the relentless pressure from Washington on state sponsors of terror, Syria will definitely be making changes. ❖

In our January 2005 issue, we stated the size of China as 9.6 million square miles. That should read “9.6 million square kilometers.” It is approximately 3.7 million square miles. *World News and Prophecy* regrets the error.

African Debt—Is Wiping the Slate Clean a Good Idea?

Britain's finance minister, Gordon Brown, is proposing that the G7 countries cancel Africa's debts to Western banks. Will this move give Africa the economic boost it needs to finally get off the ground?

by Melvin Rhodes

It sounds reasonable enough, but will it work? Gordon Brown, the British chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister), is proposing that the G7 countries (the seven richest countries of the world) cancel the debts of the poorest countries of Africa.

A few months ago I was in England sitting with some friends in a charming English country garden. The subject of Africa came up. Then it was how best to help with the limited aid available.

Some Western nations are quite generous with their aid, but recipient nations in Africa were critical of what the aid was to be used for. So one individual present echoed the solution repeated by many commentators that the African leaders themselves—the people on the ground—were best placed to make the decision on how the money should be spent. Again, it sounds reasonable enough, but will it work?

Richard Dowden has had decades of experience working in Africa, including eight years as Africa editor for *The Independent* (United Kingdom) and six years as Africa editor of *The Economist*. He is now president of the British Royal African Society. Mr. Dowden was interviewed on the BBC's *World News* program, shown nightly on many PBS stations across the United States.

His considered opinion was that canceling the debts of the African nations would not make any difference; that the real problems in Africa lay elsewhere.

Something certainly has to be done about Africa. African nations have now been independent for almost 50 years, but Africa remains the only continent to have gone backwards economically during that same period of time. Many people in Africa struggle on less than one dollar a day. Most don't even earn that—they are subsistence farmers eking out a meager existence on small pieces of land.

At independence, African nations had no

debts. Many had considerable assets left by their former European rulers, money that was often squandered in the first flush of independence, wasted on grandiose prestigious projects that were not sustainable.

As the money ran out, leaders often turned to Western banks, which were only too willing to lend them money in the naive belief that governments were bound to pay them back.

Much of this borrowed money did go back into Western banks—usually Swiss bank accounts held by the African presidents who borrowed the money. While the bank accounts of the presidents grew fatter, the people got thinner as their standard of living progressively declined. That particular generation of African leaders has now died out, but the debts they accumulated in the names of their respective countries remain.

Should they be canceled?

Fears have been expressed in some of the debtor countries that, if the debts are canceled, banks will not trust them with any further loans. However, others are saying that the cancellation of the present debts will only lead to new and greater debt being accumulated.

What is often overlooked is the corruption that lies behind this mountain of debt, something with which Richard Dowden would be all too familiar, having spent many years covering Africa for the media. Those of us who have lived in Africa have experienced this, almost on a daily basis.

It is this corruption, at the highest levels of African society, that is one of the root causes of Africa's problems. It is the primary reason the cancellation of African debt won't make any difference to the welfare of the African people, unless it is accompanied by serious changes in African culture.

Endemic corruption

It is difficult for people in Western nations

Something certainly has to be done about Africa. African nations have now been independent for almost 50 years, but Africa remains the only continent to have gone backwards economically during that same period of time.

to appreciate just how pervasive corruption is in some parts of the world. The following are fairly typical examples.

Every year we hold a summer camp for teens in the West African nation of Ghana. About a dozen teens travel from Nigeria, via Benin and Togo, two small French-speaking countries, to join us at the camp. The official cost of the road journey is \$120 per teen. With the additional costs of all the extortion practiced en route, the actual cost is slightly more than double that, \$250 per teen. Nigeria, Togo and Benin remain among the most corrupt of all African nations.

This is nothing compared to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it is estimated the average citizen loses 80 percent of his income to corrupt officials!

Ghana has made considerable progress in overcoming endemic corruption, though corruption still exists. Twenty-five years ago, corrupt administrations had progressively reduced Ghana from being the richest African colony in colonial times to what would today be called a “failed state.” At that particular time, virtually nothing could be accomplished in the country without a “dash,” a euphemistic name for a bribe, which also added a twist of humor to what was a national tragedy.

Going to the bank did not enable you to withdraw your own funds from the bank, at least not until you had given the teller some of the money for himself. Even a visit to the post office required a “dash” before you could buy the postage stamps necessary to write home to ask for more money!

Permits were required for just about everything, and when you went for a permit, a dash was not only expected, but absolutely required to facilitate the permit you needed. When my wife came down with malaria and ended up in the local hospital, it was made clear that nothing could be done until the doctor received a bottle of whisky—we only hoped he would treat her first before consuming the contents!

When I went for my Ghanaian driving license, I was told I had a choice. I could either pay for a driving test and fail, or give a dash and pass (without the test). The standard of driving in the

country at the time suggested that most had opted for the second option! In fact, to this day, many drivers are illiterate, which means they cannot have taken the test, though they must have a license to drive!

Following a bad accident, in which our Land Rover was hit by a bus driven by a drunken driver, the judge canceled the subsequent court case, having been bribed by the relatives of the bus driver.

At the time of all this corruption, Ghana was under a military government. Many hoped that corruption would go away with an elected government. But this was naive.

Nigeria at the present time has a civilian government. However, a recent report in the *Financial Times* (London)

In trying to decide how best to deal with African debt, Western countries are in a quandary. There is little Western countries can do to ensure that African leaders will not siphon off money loaned to them in the future by Western banks.

showed that corruption is, if anything, worse than under the military. Indeed, many African nations are in a never-ending cycle in which the military is needed to overthrow corrupt elected civilian governments; in turn, the military eventually comes under pressure to hand over to civilians because they are so incompetent!

Meanwhile, the leaders of both civilian and military governments accumulate vast amounts of money in overseas bank accounts, much of it “borrowed” from Western banks on behalf of their countries. Even when they are overthrown, the money often cannot be retrieved. Judgment and justice are two qualities that suffer greatly whenever there is corruption.

In trying to decide how best to deal

with African debt, Western countries are in a quandary. There is little Western countries can do to ensure that African leaders will not siphon off money loaned to them in the future by Western banks. A proposal by African leaders that some sort of “peer review” be set up is unlikely to succeed as corruption is a problem throughout the continent. Canceling the debt already accumulated is one issue—further loans in the future would only enable even more corruption to take place at the expense of the African people.

How can this be stopped?

What is amazing is that this corruption thrives in countries where the vast majority of people claim to be Christian. Christians are commanded “to walk just as He [Jesus Christ] walked” (1 John 2:6). Jesus Christ was perfect, without sin (Hebrews 4:15). “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version).

Among the laws that Jesus did not transgress are the following: “You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute . . . And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:6, 8).

In the book of Deuteronomy, we read: “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous” (Deuteronomy 16:19). Proverbs 17:23 adds, “A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back to pervert the ways of justice.”

These verses deal with the moral issues raised by corruption. The proposal to the G7 countries is an attempt to deal with the economic consequences. But without changes at every level of African society, canceling the debts of African nations will accomplish nothing.

Thankfully, a time is coming when Africa will have righteous government that does not permit bribery and corruption. In a prophecy about the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, our soon coming King, in imposing His government upon the earth, is going to “order it and establish it with judgment and justice” (Isaiah 9:7). ❖



A Page on the World

Reviews of books that count, endure and light the path ahead

The United States of Europe

T.R. Reid makes the case for the EU being the United States' greatest threat.

Reviewed by Melvin Rhodes

The European Union is the greatest threat to American interests in the world today.” So said T.R. Reid on NPR’s *Diane Rehm Show* toward the end of December. Mr. Reid is a *Washington Post* correspondent who was the head of the paper’s London bureau for years. His interview was to promote his new book *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*.

After being interviewed by Ms. Rehm, Mr. Reid took call-in questions. One caller asked him if the European Union was a fulfillment of Bible prophecies about the coming Beast power. Mr. Reid clearly did not know anything about this.

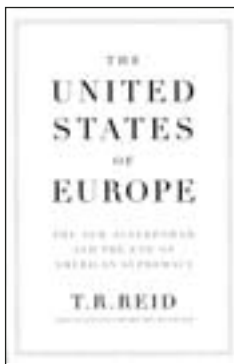
His book, then, is a strictly secular account by an American observer of the contemporary European scene. And his book backs up his point that the EU is the greatest threat to American interests in the world at this time—greater even than Islamic terrorism. A threat does not have to be violent to be serious.

“At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a geopolitical revolution of historic dimensions is under way across the Atlantic: the unification of Europe. Twenty-five nations have joined together—with another dozen or so on the waiting list—to build a common economy, government, and culture. Europe is a more integrated place today than at any time since the Roman Empire.” So begins the “Prologue” to Mr. Reid’s book.

He adds on the same page: “The New Europe cannot match American military strength (and doesn’t want to, for that matter). But it has more votes in every international organization than the United States, and it gives away far more money in development aid. The result is global economic and political clout that makes the European Union exactly what its leaders want it to be: a second superpower that can stand on an equal footing with the United States.”

Nine chapters follow looking at different aspects of the EU, showing clearly how the nations of Europe have actually surpassed the United States in many ways. As Mr. Reid points out, only in the military area is the United States still ahead. But events elsewhere in the world show there is a limit to what American military power can achieve!

Mr. Reid’s book is long overdue. The European Union has been developing into a formidable challenge to American power for many decades. One of the biggest turning points in the U.S.-EU balance of power was the introduction of the euro just over three years ago. Americans are addicted to overspending, both on the personal and at the governmental level. The result is a falling



U.S. dollar and a rising euro, significantly altering the economic balance of power in the world. This trend looks set to continue.

Watch out if the oil-producing countries start pricing their oil in euros!

The 25 countries of the EU are a bigger market and a bigger single economy than the United States. The population of the EU is more than 50 percent greater than that of the United States. But this is only part of the picture. Through its trade deals, the EU’s tentacles spread into every part of the world, giving it a global power and influence the United States simply doesn’t have.

That’s why the United States received so little support at the UN two years ago when seeking support in Iraq. Because France and Germany, the two leaders of the new Europe, were opposed, most of the nations of the world were opposed, supporting those countries from whom they receive the most aid and with whom they have the most trade.

Mr. Reid puts his facts and figures together in an easy-to-read style that helps lead you to agree with his conclusions. The one thought that really changed my perception of U.S.-EU relations was the realization that the EU gets its way around the world through trade and aid, in stark contrast to the world’s greatest military power, which seems increasingly frustrated at attempts to get its way. In other words, there are limits to the effectiveness of military power.

He details how corporate genius Jack Welch “. . . lost the biggest business deal of his brilliant career because he didn’t understand the European Union until it was too late” (p. 228). Phenomenally successful as CEO of General Electric, Welch became a legend in the corporate world. His last great coup was to oversee the merger between GE and Honeywell Corporation.

While the proposed deal sailed past U.S. regulators without difficulty, it ran into an impenetrable wall in the Directorate-General for Competition of the EU. Europe vetoed an all-American business deal! Other giant U.S. businesses have had the same experience, including Microsoft, Intel, Coca-Cola WorldCom/MCI and Sprint. Exactly how this is possible makes fascinating reading.

There are a few factual errors in Mr. Reid’s book, but they are minor and do not detract from the central message that it’s time Americans woke up to this great threat. Sadly, the book is hard to find in bookstores, confirming my theory that the more important a book is, the harder it is to locate! You will likely find it on the bottom shelf of the new nonfiction section (or Amazon.com). ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

Rapid-Onset AIDS

Public health officials in New York City recently encountered what appears to be a rapid-onset AIDS strain. Whereas the typical cycle has been about a decade between infection with the virus and the onset of full-blown AIDS, this patient went from infection to presenting the symptoms of the full-blown disease in a matter of a few months. As well, the strain is resistant so far to most of the medications that have been helpful in some measure to AIDS patients.

The New York City patient is potentially a one-man trigger of a major outbreak, for he claims to have had unprotected sex with 100 men in the past few months. The possibilities for an immediate epidemic are staggering, if this truly is a new rapid-onset strain.

However, many doctors and scientists working with AIDS, including researcher Richard Gallo (who was one of the first to identify HIV), say that the NYC Health Department went public much too quickly with their suspicions. Not enough is known about the patient, the critics claim, to say with certainty that he indeed has a rapid-onset strain of HIV/AIDS. And, the figure of a decade between HIV infection and full-blown AIDS is only an average. There have always been a few people on the high end of the curve, whose cycle is rapid in comparison to the average.

Regardless of what else happens, there is a sweeping cry for routine HIV testing, something some health experts have been recommending already. Two large federally funded studies concluded recently that the cost of routine testing of virtually every adult for HIV/AIDS would be offset by a reduction in new infections. Also, it would mean that people infected with HIV could be started on

a treatment program early, when drugs work best.

Adding this testing to basic wellness checkups would be costly to an already struggling health-care industry. Treatment is also expensive—running about \$15,000 a year.

As it is, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) requires routine HIV screening in areas where the rate of infection is greater than 1 percent of the population. The UN now recommends routine HIV/AIDS testing in the developing world, where 90 percent of the people with AIDS do not know that they have it.

Russian AIDS Much More Serious Than Previously Thought



Russian students rally outside government building marking World AIDS Day in Moscow, Dec. 1, 2004. (Reuters/Alexander Natruskin)

In a related story, U.S. and Russian experts announced in January that AIDS infections in Russia are at 1 million, which is three times the number

officially reported. In addition, 8 in 10 of those infected are under 30 years of age. Murray Feshbach of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which conducted the research, offered a grave assessment of the impact of AIDS on Russia, should the country fail to act immediately:

“The consequences will be devastating to the society, family formation, to the military, labor productivity” within two to three years (Maria Danilova, “Study: AIDS Problem Growing in Russia,” Associated Press, Jan. 12, 2005).

The seriousness of the situation isn’t getting through to the government, however, for the study estimates that HIV/AIDS programs are underfunded by nearly 4,000 percent!

Part of the recommended programs for the United States, Russia and the developing world is to warn people of the consequences of what is called in politically correct language “risky behavior.”

Put more plainly, several types of sin spread HIV/AIDS, including homosexual behavior, sex with prostitutes, sex with multiple partners and illegal drug use (involving “dirty needles”). Honoring our Creator by keeping the rules of behavior He gave us in the form of the Ten Commandments would turn this unbelievably costly burden around. The consequences of failing to do so are impossible to overstate. The cost is more than humanity can bear.

Avian Influenza—A Worldwide Plague?

The February issue of *The New Yorker* magazine ran an article on the potential of avian influenza, the so-called “bird flu” of Asia. It’s a killer, leaving hundreds of millions of dead animals in its wake across a dozen Asian countries.

(See “NEWS,” page 13)

Germany's Record Unemployment and Political Change

Reaching the 5 million unemployed mark had an immediate impact on Germany's national confidence. In a poll taken a couple of days after the unemployment figures were released, 85 percent of the Germans surveyed expressed concern for their personal future.

by Paul Kieffer

*Edmund Stoiber
(who ran against
Gerhard
Schroeder in
2002) fears that
". . . the
economic failure
of the Schroeder
government is
creating a
breeding ground
for extremists
who exploit the
hopelessness of
people and
thereby
endanger our
democracy."*

Germans are worried. Their country is one of at least four European Union member states where employment has exceeded the 10 percent rate.

According to February's unemployment statistics, for the first time since 1932 more than 5 million Germans are without a job. Those currently without a job aren't the only ones who are worried though. "The February figure will be significantly higher," Germany's labor and economic minister warned on Feb. 21 (*Financial Times*, Feb. 22, 2005).

Reaching the 5 million mark had an immediate impact on Germany's national confidence. In a poll taken a couple of days after the unemployment figures were released, 85 percent of the Germans surveyed expressed concern for their personal future. Every third German who still has a job is apprehensive that he will lose it.

In the eastern part of the country—formerly the nation of East Germany—50 percent of jobholders fear they will be laid off. Two out of three believe that the nation's unemployment rate will continue to rise.

Increasingly, there is a lack of confidence among the German people that their government will be able to turn the tide on unemployment. They are fearful over Germany's prolonged economic slump.

As a result, considerable pressure is on Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's government. Part of it stems from the recent success of Germany's ultra-right NPD party (the National Democratic Party). The NPD has been around a long time. It made headlines as early as 1968 when it won and held seats in a German state legislature for one term.

Now, 36 years later, its former success has been repeated. The NPD won 12 seats in last

fall's elections for the state legislature in the new state of Sachsen (Saxony) within what was formerly East Germany. The NPD garnered 9.2 percent of the votes cast, an increase of 7.8 percent in the five years since the last election.

With unemployment rates twice as high as those in its western states, Germany's newer states in the eastern part of the country have become fertile ground for ultra-right political activity.

The NPD has a radical "Germans first" platform. It demands that immigration to Germany must be highly restricted and that foreign guest workers must be sent home so Germans can take their jobs.

Several state elections will be held this year. If the German economy doesn't show significant improvement soon, the NPD is poised to attract—especially among the young—even more voters who are disillusioned with the traditional parties' efforts to solve the nation's economic problems. This is a grave danger in the heart of Europe—especially since Austria also has a similar ultra-right political party.

Conditions similar to those pre-Hitler

The recent unemployment figures prompted Bavarian Governor Edmund Stoiber—who opposed Chancellor Schroeder in the 2002 election—to accuse Schroeder of promoting indirectly the far-right NPD through his failing economic policies.

Stoiber fears that ". . . the economic failure of the Schroeder government is creating a breeding ground for extremists who exploit the hopelessness of people and thereby endanger our democracy" (*Welt am Sonntag*, Feb. 6, 2005).

He thinks that Germany could be approaching a crisis very similar to the one it faced in



Leaders of the far-right German People Union (DVU) and German National Democratic Party (NPD) march during a demonstration in Dresden Feb. 13, the 60th anniversary of the city's destruction in World War II. The march by neo-Nazis cast a shadow over official events. (Reuters/Pawel Kopczynski)

1932, which opened the door for Adolf Hitler to seize power. It was in that election that millions of disenchanted voters propelled the Nazi party to a prominent position of influence in the German Reichstag.

Chancellor Schroeder, of course, is convinced that he is not underestimating the potential danger of the NPD's gains in the polls. His response to the NPD plan to conduct a protest rally in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate on the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe (May 8) has been to ask "decent democrats" to hold a counter rally.

But mere demonstrations will not be enough to bring the current tensions to an end. Germany must quickly begin solving its unemployment problem if it is to counteract the growing sense of frustration and hopelessness within the country, especially in its eastern states.

There are some hopeful indications that the government will act in time. But if it doesn't, a real tragedy could be in the making. Germany's economy is the largest in Europe. It is essential that its government remain stable because of its impact on the economy—and conse-

quently the political stability—of all of Europe. History has made it very clear that a radical government can disrupt the political scene of the entire European continent.

Leaders with an extreme agenda

All present European governments seem determined to prevent such a crisis from happening again. However, biblical prophecy indicates that at least a few European governments will once again come under the control of leaders with an extreme agenda.

Therefore, it is important to be aware of the warnings that the Bible gives us concerning the future of that portion of the world that once hosted the Roman Empire.

Those warnings are presented in considerable detail in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. To learn the significance of those warnings and understand why certain current trends in Europe today could be early precursors of their fulfillment, be sure to request or download your free copy of our booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. ❖

"NEWS," (Continued from page 11)

Last December, the outgoing secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Tommy Thompson, called the avian flu one of the greatest dangers facing the United States.

The director of the CDC's Thailand office tells of watching thousands of seemingly healthy birds suddenly begin to shake, and then, simply fall over dead. It is shocking to see.

Even more disturbing is the fact that the avian flu has jumped species to human beings and that it is just as deadly for the people who become infected. So far, the death toll numbers only in the dozens in Vietnam, Thailand and other Asian countries. But the potential is much, much more serious.

The World Health Organization (WHO) puts the current ratio of fatalities to cases at 72.5 percent. It also issued a report early this year on "influenza pandemic preparedness and response" in bleak terms: "The present situation may resemble that leading to the 1918 pandemic."

The WHO's conservative estimate of the deaths from a worldwide epidemic is 7 million. "Michael Osterholm, the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, calculates that a pandemic on the scale of the devastating global influenza epidemic of 1918 would kill *at least a hundred and eighty million* people today" ("Avian Flu, on the Verge of an Epidemic," *The New Yorker*, cited on <http://drudgereport.com>, Feb. 20, 2005, emphasis added). Over 40 million people died in the 1918 flu pandemic.

The same article quotes Robert Webster, a virologist who has been studying this strain of influenza for decades as calling it ". . . the worst flu virus I have ever seen or worked with or read about."

Health officials are working hard to try to contain the flu in Asia. Last September the HHS announced a contract to manufacture and store 2 million vaccinations for the United States.

Webster advises that we have to prepare for this flu in the same way that we would prepare for going to war, calling the disease "a natural bioterrorist."

Contributor: Cecil Maramville

“COMMON MAN,” (Continued from page 16)

The tragedy of the Civil War that the nation was about to experience could only be understood and given proper interpretation for the ages by a man who was molded by sorrow and rebirth.

Why do Americans esteem the bearded and rugged mug of this man on our pennies and on the pages of history books? Why? His experience is our experience. It is that sense of humanity that endears Lincoln to generations of America in a way that other forefathers could only wish to be theirs. While their deeds are no less noteworthy, it is the fabric of raw unrefined humanity that weaves tight the bond between Lincoln and his generational audience.

In speaking of God’s love affair with the common man, Lincoln understood Henry David Thoreau’s comment that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” But he adds a hope-filled element that is not sensed in the New Englander’s commentary.

No, we are not alone even in darkness or the mundane commonality of life’s wear and tear. It is not for naught. There is a purpose being worked out here below that is noticed by the Divine. The same man with a Rolodex of 12 filed failures (at least those recorded) is also the same author who penned, “I cannot conceive how a man could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.”

That no flesh should glory

This God of the heavens inspired Paul long ago in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 to record: “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.” “Why?” you ask. “That no flesh should glory in His presence” (verse 29).

Together, Lincoln and Paul remind us of a biblical reality when it comes to God. He is not interested in where you came from or how common you might

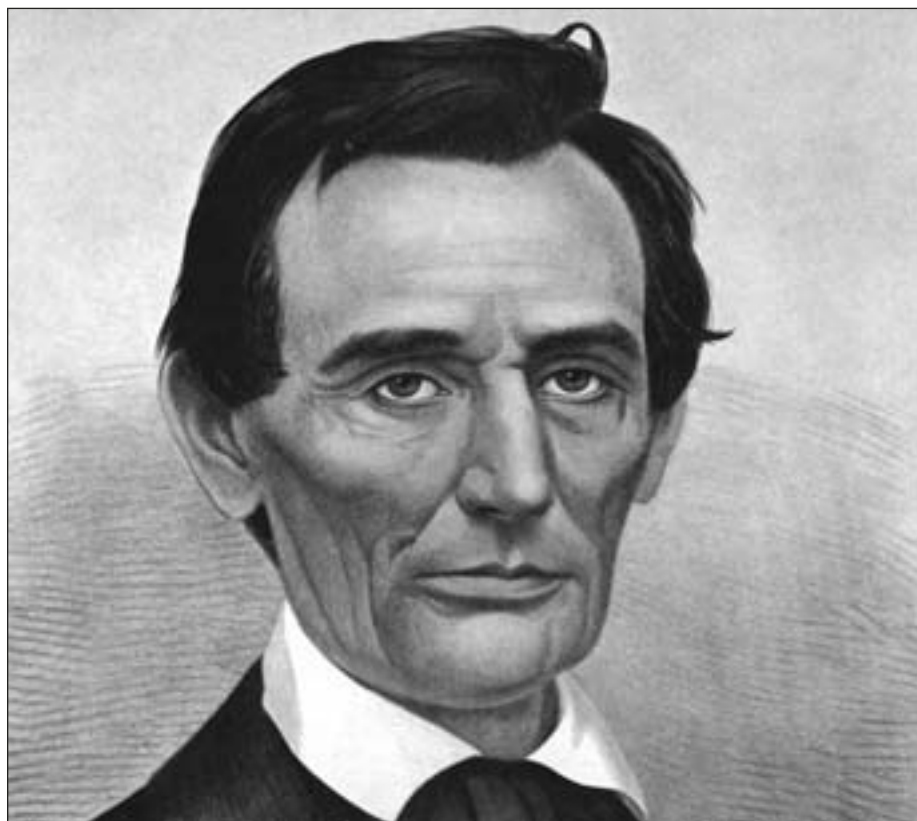


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Abraham Lincoln was a common man who accomplished uncommon things and understood God’s love of the common man.

appear to others. God can take care of the common and turn it to His purposes so that He will be revealed through us. God loves to shower His purposes on those who appear ordinary and cause them to become extraordinary. He always has, right from the beginning.

“Let Us make man in Our image”

In the great underpinning verse of all Scripture, Genesis 1:26, we find God declaring, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . .” But how did God start the process? What were His building materials? Diamonds, pearls, gold, Teflon or fiberglass? No.

Genesis 2:7 tells us, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground.” That’s what Adam literally means, “from the ground.” Sounds better than “dirt man.” But the reality is—when it’s all said and done—we’re just so much clay. Add a little water and we’re really just mud!

I remember as a kid in eighth grade learning that I was worth 98 cents in

trace minerals. Of course, that was 40 years ago. Now with inflation, I’m probably worth more. It’s humbling, and yet Lincoln reminds us God loves the common man and Paul chimes in that our commonness is designed for God’s glory to shine through this layered shell of clay.

But the clay forgot

But the first man of clay forgot his “birth” from the dusty earth. He wasn’t satisfied with the thought of God’s glory shining through him, so he sought his own light and settled for the weakened glow of human reasoning.

Thus, a plan of action went into effect. Not from man, but God! Humanity would be offered a plan of rescue. The first prophecy throughout all Scripture is found in Genesis 3:15. It’s found right at the beginning of the Bible—not in Daniel or Revelation. This revelation in Genesis foretells the coming of a Savior. It describes the dynamic struggle between God and Satan for humanity.

God prophetically proclaimed,

“And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed [Christ]; He shall bruise your head [a crushing fatal wound, Romans 16:20], and you shall bruise His heel [the temporary death of Christ].”

But it was prophesied that the arrival of a divine answer to humanity’s separation from God would not arrive with fanfare, but to the contrary, would seemingly go unnoticed by almost all. Isaiah 53:2 sets the stage in describing, “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him, He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

This prophecy relating to Jesus Christ infers He would be pretty common, fairly ordinary in outward appearance, almost invisible on the human radar screen. Let’s just say it—downright plain, fitting in with the rest of us.

And that is the beauty of Jesus Christ. He was common as He could be as the Son of Man and yet God loved this “common Man.” Born in a stable temporarily converted into overflow housing, raised as a Man with hands calloused by hard work, reared in a conquered land, Jesus Christ could easily understand the desperation of the everyday man. And still there was a beauty in this common Man that makes all of us ugly. Oh, yes, God loved this common Man.

God hasn’t changed His style

And so, God still continues to work His plan. The manifesto of Genesis 1:26 and the blueprint of prophecy, as defined in Genesis 3:15, are headed toward completion in the style that God loves best. He works with the small, the common and the unwanted. He works with clay and makes a living soul. He works with slaves and makes them a nation. He works with shepherd boys and turns them into kings.

He takes a hamlet in the backwoods of Judea and says this is where it’s going to happen (Micah 5:2)! He works with a harlot and offers her a role in the pedigree of His Son. He offers a boy

with merely scraps of food the opportunity to feed an entire crowd.

Oh, yes, God loves the common man and woman who make themselves available and willing toward His will. He takes their little and, yes, our little and gives it worth. He makes it everything toward His glory.

When we remember who we are and where we came from and never forget who God is and where He wants to take us—the future is ours in Him. The Bible plainly declares the days yet ahead are going to incredibly challenge God’s saints. Prophecies indicate the punishment of nations that have forgotten God’s manifest blessings.

Focus where God focuses

In Romans 8:18-19, Paul proclaims on God’s behalf: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”

This is where God opens the curtain, in effect, and says to all, “Look what I have done! I have made good on My promise. The common dust of this earth has become divine, the sons of God! This treasure in earthen vessels [2 Corinthians 4:7], these capsules of clay, these unrefined beings that have been made worthy by acceptance of Me, are now made manifest throughout heaven and earth declaring My works and My word.” That moment is going to make all other moments worth every conceivable sacrifice in our here and now.

Oh, yes, God loves the common man who does the uncommon thing. Long ago the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 30:21 about a voice that would tell us, “This is the way, walk in it.” It is Lincoln’s voice that says, “God must be a lover of the common people, or He would not have made so many of them.”

It is a voice that persevered beyond the immediate world of travail and despair and rose to greatness. It’s a voice and message that can touch us today. And, because we now know a little more about how God works, may I say, “Thank God for the common man.” ❖

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by Robin Webber

Thank God for the Common Man

As I sit at my computer to share a thought with you, it is Presidents' Day in America. When I was growing up there was no such thing. We celebrated George Washington's birthday on Feb. 22 as a national holiday and observed Abraham Lincoln's birthday as a state holiday on Feb. 12.

The month of February was vigorously devoted to studying these two great patriarchs of the American experience. Indeed, they are men whose shadows of greatness touch us down to our very day.

Somehow under the innocuous banner of the all-inclusive "Presidents' Day," something is sadly lost. In celebrating the inclusiveness of all and the mediocrity of some, the deeds of the daring can go unnoticed or become lost in the haze of time.

A precious kernel of truth

But one thing I don't want lost on our reading audience is a little bit of insight shared by President Lincoln. It's a precious kernel of truth with tremendous biblical overtones to consider. He once said, "God must be a lover of the common people, or He would not have made so many of them."

The word *common* means ordinary or, as *Webster's Dictionary* defines it, "unrefined." Yet Lincoln by his statement places the common man on a pedestal and dedicates him to God's affection.

With such a thought before us, how does this comment from the sage of Illinois allow the reader to better understand the great prophetic realities of Scripture? Let's go back in time before we move forward together.

Lincoln rightly came by the attributed statement about the "common man." He was born in a log cabin in Kentucky. He was educated in the frontier schools of Indiana. He would struggle to support his family on the pioneer plains of Illinois. He was far from the genteel streets of Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston.

It was not easy for people on the frontier. Life and death often hung in the balance. Triumph or failure often were twin events on any given day in America. In the young republic, people were free from the security of constraining societal caste systems. They were free to make choices. But such choices also had consequences. Reading through Lincoln's life is like thumbing through a Rolodex of failure in search of despair. Lincoln had a series of public and personal defeats and setbacks before reaching the presidency in 1860.

He never forgot where he came from

Even in the bright spot of his 51st year, we must remember that upon the moment of supreme personal triumph, half the nation slipped away to form a new country rather than experience his administration. And yet this man who would become the 16th president of the young republic is often considered in the pantheon of the three greatest chief executives—if not the greatest.

Yet few, including ourselves if we had been contemporaries, would have recognized greatness in the making. The man from Illinois knew where he wanted to guide a divided nation, but he never forgot where he came from or what he had to experience to arrive on the doorstep of history.

(See "COMMON MAN," page 14)