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Which Way Europe?

Two voting sessions within a few weeks of each other could set the direction for future events within Europe. The first was the vote for the new pope, Benedict XVI. The second is the French referendum on the EU constitution. Both could have far-reaching implications for the Continent and the world.

by Darris McNeely

Within minutes of the appearance of former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the balcony of St. Peter's as the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI, a commentator said one of the new pope's priorities would be the "re-conversion of Europe."

If so, he will be laboring against centuries of decline in belief and church attendance in Europe. He may get his chance if the expected outcome of this month's French referendum on the European constitution goes the way polls show it will.

French vote on European constitution

On May 29, French voters will vote yes or no on the adoption of the European constitution. Although considerable efforts are being made to reverse this trend, recent polls have shown that 53 to 55 percent would vote "no."

All it takes is one EU member nation to say no and theoretically the constitution is all but dead. Valery Giscard d'Estang, former president of France and father of Europe's constitutional treaty, has said there would be a "crisis" if the treaty were rejected. Since this document is the result of major negotiations and compromises involving thousands of participants, it is likely a new constitution would have to be negotiated.

Several factors are fueling the French opposition, not all of them related to the merits of the document. The French electorate has grown increasingly unhappy with the Chirac government and the direction of the French economy. People are unhappy with the unemployment rate, which is over 10 percent. Workers want higher pay and fear the government may require more than the present 35-hour work week. Large demonstrations throughout the country illustrate the deep dissatisfaction with government policy.

Scandals within the Chirac government also fuel the opposition. In March a trial began for 47 people associated with Jacques Chirac, including politicians, party officials and representatives of some of France's biggest building companies. The defendants are implicated in corruption schemes dating back to when Chirac was the mayor of Paris in the 1990s. This has clouded the credibility of the political elite who favor ratification of the constitution.

In addition, many French no longer see the EU as something that enhances French culture and prestige. Whether this is true or not, it certainly reflects a lack of the leadership needed to convince voters that moving ahead with the European project is in their best interest. It may also show a decline in

(See "EUROPE," page 3)



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& Prophecy**
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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

World News and Prophecy Goes Online!

Exciting changes are taking place with *World News and Prophecy*. We have expanded onto a full Internet Web site to further our mission of giving you the unique perspective on world events in the light of Bible prophecy. So much is happening in today's world, and there is more information available to all of us. It sometimes gets confusing and difficult to sort it all out. And before we can grasp the real meaning of one event, the news cycle changes and moves on to another breaking story. Real understanding of our complex and ever-changing world is a challenging task.

That's where our new Web site is designed to help. When the mainstream media move on to other stories, we step up to give you the biblical perspective of today's world and what it means in the context of God's purpose for mankind. It is not all bad news. There is a larger hope of God's intervention in the affairs of humanity to inaugurate a better world of peace. There is a sure promise from Scripture.

World News and Prophecy is a newsletter designed for those who desire to understand world events in the light of Bible prophecy. It has developed an international audience. Readers gain balanced and well-researched information and perceptions about the future based upon today's events. A new addition is a feature titled "A Page on the World," which gives the audience a book review on literature of note.

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On our new Web site you will find a news blog called Longitude. Blog is short for weblog, a Web site that displays postings with links to other news sources. Breaking news and information can be quickly gathered and analyzed. Items can be referenced with related hyperlinks, personalized with related commentary and then posted to the blog.

Longitude also contains a podcast, a short audio program, 5 to 15 minutes long, with a specifically focused message. The podcast is an MP3 audio file that you can listen to from your computer or download to an MP3 player for later listening.

You can subscribe to both the blog and the podcast through a technology called Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS is a powerful technology that allows you to subscribe to online content and receive notification of new postings within as little as 15 minutes of being published.

For complete information on the software available and how to use them, go to the wnponline.org site and click the "How to Use" icon. The wnponline.org site will provide easy access to the archives of all past issues of *World News and Prophecy* as well as the current one.

You'll want to bookmark this site on your Web browser. [Wnponline.org](http://wnponline.org) will become your online destination for help in navigating the roads of life. The prophet Jeremiah said to "stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it" (Jeremiah 6:16). We'll do our part to help you understand the meaning of the news and where the world is headed.

—Darris McNeely



“EUROPE,” (Continued from page 1)

France’s role within the EU. In the past it has been described as the “indispensable country” among member nations. A French “no” on the constitution could lead to a shuffling of the deck among the leading European nations.

Investor fears

International investors are carefully watching the vote as well. Eric Chaney, chief European economist at Morgan Stanley, was quoted in the April 4 *Financial Times* as saying a “no” vote in France could hit the euro, increase the differentials in bond prices between European countries and increase the risk premiums demanded by investors in countries such as Turkey, a nation with a strong desire to enter the EU.

The same article quotes Tim Ash, an analyst at Bear Stearns, as saying, “A No vote on the French referendum could complicate Turkey’s EU membership talks. The question would be: How can the EU continue to expand when its institutions are in doubt?” (“Investors Fear Effect of French No to Constitution”).

Even if France reverses itself in the days prior to the vote, there are other nations waiting in the wings to say no. The Dutch government is taking measures to win a “yes” vote, as polls show 53 percent of the electorate is opposed to the treaty. And then there is Britain. Though the United Kingdom’s vote isn’t imminent, it seems unlikely at this juncture that Britain will vote “yes.” After all, Britain is one of two EU nations yet to adopt the euro as the basis of their monetary systems.

If rejected, would another constitutional effort be launched? Would it lead to a two-tier EU with, say, a rearrangement into a smaller inner core of major nations bound to one set of agreements, and another larger category for other nations, consigned to the periphery, who would not have the same commitment?

Such an arrangement has been suggested in the past as a means of regulating the disparity in size and influence of the many nations who either are planning to seek or are seeking EU mem-



Pope Benedict XVI arrives for a celebration service in St. Paul’s in Rome April 25 (photo by Reuters/Tobias Schwarz).

bership. It is hard to manage a community of nations that range in size from Germany to Estonia. Add the idea of admitting the Muslim nation of Turkey to the mix, and you see why you have an unstable, hard-to-manage mixture, like the biblical “iron mixed with miry clay” (Daniel 2:43, King James Version).

The church and the EU

It is well known that the late Pope John Paul II was appalled at the omission of any reference to the historic connection between Christianity and Europe in the present constitution. No amount of lobbying by the Vatican could dissuade the writers of the document from their determination to write a secular constitution. The Continent has been described as “post-Christian,” with the teachings of Christianity having little impact on the daily lives of a majority of people. It is this condition the new pope may seek to address in the months and years ahead.

The new pontiff’s chosen name, Benedict XVI, has caused many to speculate on the form and shape his reign may take, since a new pope chooses a name that reflects his philosophy. Benedict XV was the pope during World War I who sought to

prevent the great conflict that plunged the 20th century into decades of turmoil. He tried to heal the animosity between modernist and traditional forces in the church and dreamed of healing the breach with Orthodox churches.

Will the new Benedict seek to use his office to reconcile the differing factions of our present age and prevent the emergence of another time of world conflict? In his initial formal statements, he has already begun to reach out. Time will tell if he will be successful. But there is no doubt he will face a number of pressing issues immediately.

Many articles have listed the challenges before the Catholic Church. Among them is the hard, cold fact of a declining number of ordained priests, especially in the developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the regions where the greatest growth in the church is taking place.

Another problem is the growing number of voices demanding change in many of the basic traditions of the church. Ending the requirement of priestly celibacy, many say, would open the doors for more men in the priesthood. Ordaining women priests is another change many progressives



The Vatican has increasingly been attentive to the dynamic flocks in the developing world. Will attention now shift to the “reconversion of Europe”?

would like to see. Pope John Paul II, and most of the cardinals he appointed, opposed any change in these teachings. Yet there are many voices in North America and Europe who feel the church must loosen its tight grip on these and other matters.

Pope must include the “global South”

Writing in the April 18 *Wall Street Journal*, John-Peter Pham highlighted

what might be the most significant challenge before the church in the coming decades. It is the fact of a shift in the center of power away from Europe toward what he calls the “global South.”

“Europeans and North Americans presently make up only a third of all Catholics. By 2025—that is, conceivably by the end of the next pontificate—that proportion will slip even further to barely one-fourth. As the

historian Philip Jenkins has observed, the 20th century was ‘clearly the last in which whites dominated the Catholic Church: Europe simply is not The Church.’”

Of the 115 cardinals who voted in the recent conclave, the breakdown was 58 European and 57 non-European. In the coming years, the numbers are likely to tilt toward the non-European.

Pham makes the observation that “many have been slow to appreciate . . . that these numbers represent not just a demographic shift, but also one that might have seismic repercussions for an array of ecclesiastical and theological issues. In fact, if John Paul’s Vatican has appeared in recent years to be deaf to the demands of its stagnant and aging Western flocks, it was because the late pope was being attentive to dynamic younger flocks in the developing world. It might well be that this conclave is the last one where issues dear to the hearts of First World Catholics will figure prominently, and the first where a whole series of new concerns emanating from the global South will come to the fore.”

Of course, U.S. and Canadian Catholics contribute the majority of the church’s income, even with the scandals draining their wealth. So their voice isn’t likely to lose all influence with Rome.

Calling for European and World Unity

Some readers may remember Pope John Paul II calling for a Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Ural mountain range in Russia. European unity was a continuous theme throughout the early years of his pontificate. On a visit to Spain in 1982, the pontiff called for the unity of the whole of Europe. Then while speaking to top state officials in The Hague on May 13, 1985, he said, “The Holy See has always sought to encourage this coming together of European communities.”

The Times (London) sent a correspondent to Brussels to cover the pope’s visit there on May 20, 1985, where he spoke to the leaders of the three main institutions of the EEC (now the European Union). Two sentences of his speech sum up what he said: “The borders set by treaties cannot limit the communication of men and nations. Europeans cannot submit themselves to the division of their continent.”

Rather early in his pontificate John Paul II stated: “The Pope has come to speak to the whole church, *to Europe and the world*, to speak about the nations and peoples so often forgotten . . . *He has come to gather all these nations and peoples together with his own*” (*The Pope From Poland*, p. 143, emphasis added).

Incredible words! Like Caiaphas, the first-century Jewish high priest, who somewhat uncomprehendingly prophesied of Christ’s death on behalf of the whole nation of Judah (John 11:49-50), the pope may not have fully grasped the eventual prophetic impact of his own words—especially when one understands key passages in the biblical book of Revelation in the light of what he said. (To understand further, please request or download our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*).

John Ross Schroeder

Papal biographer George Weigel, commenting just minutes after the appearance of Benedict XVI, said he expected the new pope's first priority would be the "reconversion of Europe." It is clear the church's identity and influence in Europe is waning. Not only has a modern materialistic culture sapped the spiritual focus of the Continent, but it also is under great pressure from a rising Muslim population.

As mentioned, Pope John Paul II was distressed when the present European constitution failed to refer to Europe's historic Christian roots. The new pope holds the same view, and Benedict does not favor the admission of Turkey into the EU, which he believes would further dilute a Christian Europe.

Look for the church to focus on what it sees as threats to the heartland of Christian civilization, and take steps to revitalize its presence and influence in Europe. Its dynamic new growth may be coming from the developing world, but the Roman Catholic Church has not written off Europe as dead. Their identities and futures are closely bound together.

However, it is interesting to note the reference to "the global South" in the *Wall Street Journal*. While the reference includes a wide variety of peoples and cultures from Asia to Latin America, there is a biblical reference to the "South" that is more specific regarding a region that will have a dynamic impact on Europe.

Bible prophecy foretells a power from the south, a "king of the South" (Daniel 11:40), which will attack a power called the "king of the North." We believe that the Bible indicates Europe to be the "king of the North." (North and south in the prophecy are given in respect to Jerusalem.) The full prophecy shows a major incursion into the Middle East by the "king of the North" in response to this attack by the "king of the South." (Be sure to request our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* to read the full explanation of Daniel's prophecy.)

The Catholic Church has been historically wedded to the powers of Europe through various alliances and

compacts. Though this relationship has been weakened in modern times, the Bible shows a point in the future when this church-state relationship will come together.

The result will be a world power system unlike any seen before. It will appear to be a force for good, likely bringing peace to various regions and preventing the competing civilizations of the world from ending in complete destruction. With the power of miracles, a great religious leader will first draw attention to himself, and then give credibility and influence to a powerful political leader presiding over a collection of nations (Revelation 13).

Yet the Bible shows this system of nations will be unstable, like iron mixed with potter's clay (Daniel 2:41), and will endure only for a short time. But the global impact of this system of church and state will be significant. You can read more about this in our free booklet, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

We are watching historic events

unfold before our eyes. The story of Europe and religion is yet to be understood in the light of biblical prophecy. Watch for further articles on this subject in future issues. ❖

Recommended Reading

The book of Revelation remains mysterious to most people today, but offers great insight into the events leading up to one of the world's most momentous events—the return of Jesus Christ! For more information, request *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, as well as *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. They are free of charge.



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Mr. Sharon Comes to Washington—and Iran Is on His Mind

Whether there is any way to deter Iran from producing nuclear weapons is one of the most pressing issues facing the world today. The U.S. administration has hinted broadly that it might take military action to prevent Iran from joining the nuclear club. The EU is attempting to negotiate Iran away from nuclear ambitions through a generous package of economic benefits, which the struggling nation desperately needs. For the time being, the United States and the EU appear to be working together to try to resolve the situation.

by Cecil E. Maranville

Iran could be within months of “the point of no return”—the point after which there would be no practical way to stop it from joining the nuclear club.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met with U.S. President George W. Bush in mid-April to discuss the ever-pressing issue of Israeli-Palestinian relations, but he had an even more pressing issue on his mind: The progress of Iran’s nuclear program. Israel’s military secretary, Major General Yaov Galant, showed the American president satellite photos of Iranian nuclear sites and briefed him on the latest Israeli intelligence about Iran’s ability to enrich uranium.

Prime Minister Sharon told the press after his private meeting with President Bush that Israel believed Iran was very close to working out the remaining technical difficulties keeping it from its goal. He hinted that Iran could be within months of solving the problems and reaching what Sharon called “the point of no return,” that is, the point after which there would be no practical way to stop it from joining the nuclear club.

He declared in an exclusive interview with *The New York Post* that he would push Washington to place Iran at the top of its “to do list” once the United States is no longer preoccupied with Iraq. Israel, he said, considers Iran its top threat now that Saddam Hussein is gone, but he warned that a nuclear Iran is also a real threat to the greater Middle East and even to Europe.

President Bush believes the same, but the United States is willing, for the time being, to take a back seat to diplomatic efforts by what’s being called the EU3—Britain, France and Germany. Perhaps the Bush administration sees this as a good way to mend diplomatic fences



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and U.S. President George W. Bush meet at Mr. Bush’s Texas ranch in Crawford, April 11 (photo by Reuters/Larry Downing).

that were flattened in its taking the lead in the Iraq action.

On his recent European trip, the president discussed a common strategy toward the Iranian problem with EU leaders. America is happy to have Europe take the lead this time, using its better standing with the Islamic government to con-

vince it to stop its nuclear program. The EU3 initially agreed with the United States that the international community must steer Iran away from producing enriched uranium.

For its part, Iran argues assertively that what it does regarding nuclear development is entirely its private business, maintaining all along that it intends only to generate electricity through nuclear power. It doesn't explain why a nation with over 10 percent of the world's oil reserves needs to develop an alternative power supply. The reality that makes it next to impossible to simply take their word for it is the fact that the paths to nuclear power generation and to nuclear weaponry are identical.

A French fly in the ointment

But the unity between the United States and the EU may be fracturing, due to the French. The online version of *The Tehran Times* claimed on April 18, "There is a new approach among most European countries that Iran has an inalienable right to make peaceful use of nuclear technology," quoting foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi.

Asefi was overstating the case in claiming "most European countries" felt that way—only *one* European voice is supporting its cause. French President Jacques Chirac is lobbying the others to allow Iran to have an enrichment plant with 3,000 centrifuges. Because the enriched uranium that it needs to generate electricity would also most probably go into the production of nuclear weapons, Chirac is putting his assessment in realistic terms: Such a plant would provide Iran with enough enriched uranium to manufacture one nuclear bomb per year.

It's not clear what the United States would do if that becomes the official EU3 position. American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told *The Wall Street Journal* on April 14 that the United States would give Europe "a few more months" to rein in Iran's nuclear program, "before taking tougher measures." Neither the U.S. president nor any of his cabinet is offering any explanation as to what those tougher measures might be.

President Bush bluntly denounced



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Iran maintains that it intends only to generate electricity through nuclear power . . . The reality that makes it next to impossible to simply take their word for it is the fact that the paths to nuclear power generation and to nuclear weaponry are identical.

Iran's continuing sponsorship of terror in his State of the Union address, encouraging Iranians to "stand for liberty," a not-so-subtle encouragement to revolutionary elements within Iran. Understandably, U.S. concerns include the possibility that Iran might hand terrorists material they need to construct a "dirty bomb," a conventional explosive device that disperses radioactive material.

The Bush administration declares the right to take military action if necessary. It appears to want to keep the Iranians off guard by vague comments from its officials that there are no plans to attack Iran, but at the same time warning, "all options are on the table."

For a while, it seemed that Israel might act as the U.S. surrogate, taking out any Iranian nuclear reactor before it "goes hot," as it did in Iraq, bombing that country's Osirak reactor in 1981. Despite Vice President Cheney's open speculation as recently as January that the Israelis might act similarly with Iran, Prime Minister Sharon put that idea to rest during his April visit to Washington. He said that Israel believes

a coalition of the world's democracies should pressure Iran away from the capacity to go nuclear.

Sharon could also simply be acknowledging the reality that Iran has buried its reactor so deep as to make it invulnerable to the bunker-buster bombs that Israel has in its arsenal.

Is there any reasonable hope that the mullahs could be overthrown by those who, in President Bush's words, "stand for liberty"? It's only remotely possible, and not through democratic means. Iran's Council of Guardians, a 12-man group of conservative clerics with authority over the parliament and the president, has virtually quashed any active presence of reformists in government. President Khatami is only a lame duck. (See the *World News and Prophecy* article on this subject at www.ucg.org/wnp/wnp0407/eyesoniran.htm from the July 2004 issue.)

Would the United States intervene militarily to prevent Iran from being able to produce nuclear weapons? No one knows with certainty, but it seems doubtful. Would Americans back him if President Bush declared the need to go to war in Iran? He would have a hard

sell without clear and irrefutable proof that it was necessary to do so.

But he has sternly warned that the United States will never allow Iran to go nuclear. It sounds like he is drawing another line in the sands of the Middle East.

It's about oil

Iran has countered that threat in this high-stakes game by warning that it would retaliate against the West by closing the Strait of Hormuz, which it controls and through which a staggering 40 percent of the world's crude oil flows. This would send an economic tsunami around the world. Of course, it would also cut off Iran's main source of revenue.

In what could be a related development, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld this April paid his third visit to Azerbaijan in the past 15 months. Although the United States stated no reason for the visit, the Azerbaijani presidential spokesman said Rumsfeld came "to hold new discussions on the principles of cooperation between Azerbaijan and the USA in the sphere of security and [to] solve problems present in this sphere" (Alman Talyshli, "Rumsfeld's Baku Trip Stirs Controversy," *Eurasia Insight*, April 13, 2005).

Since Azerbaijan borders Iran (to the north), "problems in this sphere" could certainly mean the looming showdown between the United States and Iran. There are other reasons for U.S.-Azerbaijani cooperation, even to the point of the United States establishing a base in the country. The Caspian Sea, which both Azerbaijan and Iran border (along with Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan), has become a free-for-all highway for drug trafficking and illegal weapons shipments. The U.S. Armed Forces Information Service, reporting on an earlier Rumsfeld visit to the region, said the Caspian Sea was like a country without any laws or controls.

Another reason for American interest is the oil and natural gas in the region. Although estimates vary, hydrocarbon reserves under the Caspian Sea are enough to take the edge off American dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Conservative estimates project that by 2010, Caspian Sea produc-

tion will exceed the output of Venezuela, South America's second largest oil producer ("EIA Country Analysis Brief, Caspian Sea Region," www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian.html).

But a U.S. base in the region, just north of Iran, would send an unmistakable message to the Iranian mullahs: We can make you stop uranium enrichment if we have to do so.

Cannot simply ignore the threat

Concurrent with its work on a nuclear reactor, Iran's aerospace industry has been perfecting a missile that could deliver payloads throughout the Middle East and beyond. Their principal weapon is the Shahab-3 ("Shahab" means "shooting star" in Farsi; some

Now on the brink of going nuclear and having a workable delivery system, Iran is truly a threat to the world and an ally of China and North Korea.

spell it "Shihab"). As recently as a year ago, the threat from this highly inaccurate "flying aluminum tube" was minimal. Even if it could target a general location in Iraq or Israel, it would have to hit an entire city in the hopes of striking a military target. The political ramifications of destroying a large population center made its use unlikely.

But American GPS (Global Positioning System) technology sold under approval of the Clinton administration to the Chinese Air Force in the mid-1990s "found its way" to Iran and is now guiding their ICBMs with a high degree of accuracy. Additionally, Iran has benefited significantly from North Korean know-how, both in nuclear and missile technology. Iranian missiles could conceivably strike Israeli military bases or American ones in Iraq, Qatar and elsewhere in the region. Their longest-range weapons are now capable of hitting targets in London and throughout Europe.

Iran was a considerable strategic

threat before, when its only weapon was its oil production and its control of the Persian Gulf sea-lanes through the Strait of Hormuz. Now, however, on the brink of going nuclear and having a workable delivery system, Iran is truly a threat to the world and an ally of China and North Korea.

Hence, Mr. Sharon's warning that the stakes of what used to be mostly an Israeli security issue are about to be raised to a concern for all of the Middle East and Europe. Clearly, that means a worldwide security issue.

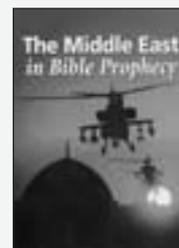
Dangerous times—the prophetic view

The apostle Paul wrote, "But know this, that in the last days *perilous times* will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). That is clearly the state of the world today. Dedicated statesmen from most nations are working feverishly to prevent an unexpected provocation from igniting a global nuclear conflict.

But at some point a worldwide conflict will be ignited. Jesus Christ warned that just before His second coming "there will be great distress, *unequaled* from the beginning of the world until now—and *never to be equaled again*" (Matthew 24:21, New International Version). So destructive will that conflict be that He said, "*If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened*" (verse 22; compare Daniel 12:1-3). ❖

Recommended Reading

Are we in the lull before the storm that Jesus predicted? For a clear evaluation of where present world tensions might lead, request or download our informative free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. It is free of charge.



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A Celebrity Pope

Hundreds of millions of people around the world kept a daily vigil as the pope lay on his deathbed. Even more tuned in by television to watch his funeral. No funeral in the history of the world was seen by so many people. What does this mean for the Catholic Church and the rest of the world?

by Melvin Rhodes

It's been 70 years since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin contemptuously asked French Foreign Secretary Pierre Laval: "How many divisions does the pope have?"

If the answer wasn't clear when communism fell 15 years ago, it should be now following the funeral of Pope John Paul II on April 8. No funeral in history has been watched by so many people, made possible by television. But even on the ground, record numbers of people descended on Rome to be present at what they considered one of history's most significant events.

The deceased himself had inadvertently made it possible by triggering the events that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the iron curtain, thereby enabling hundreds of thousands of his fellow Poles to travel to Rome. This would have been impossible 26½ years ago.

The pope, it turned out, had more divisions than the communists!

Pope John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, all played a role in bringing down the communist system that divided Europe for over four decades. Tributes to the pope by world leaders made it clear that the division of Europe likely would still be a reality if John Paul had not been elected pope in 1978.

But it wasn't just his political achievements that were remembered at his funeral. The man himself was greatly loved and respected by hundreds of millions of people around the world, by non-Catholics as well as members of his own church. Even the irreligious had respect for the man and his firm refusal to compromise on his beliefs. There's a lesson there for churches that have watered down their traditional beliefs and values.

Many of those in Rome to mourn the pope commented on how he was a very loving man. Having started out as a parish priest in his native Poland, the pope learned the



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Not all popes have been as beloved as John Paul II. Pope Pius XII (1939-58) was famously aloof and arrogant.

importance of serving people. Not all popes have been this way. A famous predecessor, Pope Pius XII (1939-58) was famously aloof and arrogant. Catholic historian John Cornwell noted in his book on Pius XII, *Hitler's Pope*, that popes who rose up through the pastoral priesthood were the best popes throughout history; while those whose career was in the Vatican bureaucracy were the bad popes, the most political, the most self-serving. Serving as a priest or pastor in a parish, working with the lay members of the church in their daily struggles, is a humbling experience. Perhaps there's another lesson there for all churches.

As *U.S. News & World Report* put it: "As a pastor and bishop in Krakow for many years, he came to Rome with a passion for ministry and little interest in the administra-

Tributes to the pope by world leaders made it clear that the division of Europe likely would still be a reality if John Paul had not been elected pope in 1978.



U.S. President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush are joined by former U.S. presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton to pay their respects to Pope John Paul II, inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, April 6. President Bush was the first U.S. president to attend a pope's funeral (photo by Reuters/Larry Downing).

tive chores required of a pope. Unlike two of his 20th century predecessors, Paul VI and Pius XII—both of whom immersed themselves in the managerial details of running the Vatican state—John Paul II devoted his energy to travel and diplomacy and to teaching and praying for his flock. ‘He saw himself as a pastor to the world,’ said the head of the Jesuit order” (April 11, 2005, p. 29.)

An age of celebrity

A third observation while watching the funeral and the weeklong events that preceded it, was in the memories that it brought back of another funeral, just a few years ago. Media attention following the death of Princess Diana was as pervasive as it was following the death of Pope John Paul II. The media all over the world covered both their funerals in minute detail. The world needs heroes, role models, people to look up to. Princess Diana and the pope were very different people, but hundreds of millions looked up to them. In an age of celebrity, they were two at the top.

A few days before the pope's death, *Boston Globe* editor Stephen Heuser was standing in St. Peter's Square on Easter Sunday, along with 70,000 others. Writing a Vatican City diary for *The New Republic* magazine, Mr. Heuser observed: “All around me, people craned for a look at the 84-year-old man with Parkinson's at the center of the whole thing. Theologically, this seemed troubling. It's true that Christianity promises redemption at the hands of one suffering, dying man, but that man is not supposed to be the Pope” (“Final Curtain,” April 11, 2005, p. 38).

Later, in the same article, Mr. Heuser asks the question: “Should the Pope have tried to rein in his own celebrity? Is this need for adulation a human flaw in the Pope, or is it in us? . . . Of course, as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, with about one billion adherents worldwide, the Pope is perhaps fated to be a popular icon. Nevertheless, I have the sense that the increasingly kinetic power of fame is something the Church will

have to wrestle with after John Paul II's successor takes the stage in St. Peter's Square.”

The 19th-century British cardinal, John Henry Newman, observed: “It is not good for a pope to live twenty years . . . he becomes a god, has no one to contradict him, does not know facts and does cruel things without meaning it” (quoted in *Hitler's Pope*, p. 3).

Television contributes to this cult of celebrity, encouraging people to look up to and even worship those promoted on the small screen. This was true of both Diana and the pope. The pope used television to reach masses of people around the world. As *Newsweek* columnist Eleanor Clift put it on PBS's *McLaughlin Group*, “The Pope was one of those people who believed that if it didn't happen on television, it hadn't really happened” (April 10, 2005).

A Catholic bishop interviewed outside St. Peter's shortly after the announcement of the pope's death remarked that this particular pope had gone a long way to restoring the power and prestige of the papacy, an institution which has certainly had its ups and downs throughout history. The church took such a battering in the 19th century that cardinals had the pope declared infallible in 1870, giving the papacy even greater power and authority than it had previously enjoyed.

More recently, following World War II, the papacy was at another low point as people around the world accused Pope Pius XII of collaborating with the Nazis and acquiescing in the Holocaust.

In the aftermath of World War II, atheistic communism had also taken control of half of Europe, resulting in the church losing control over millions of people's lives. A few years later, the church took a further battering with the sexual revolution of the '60s. Most Catholics in the Western world rather hypocritically looked up to John Paul II, while rejecting his conservative views on sex and morality.

“Papal prestige today is very
(See “POPE,” page 13)



A Page on the World

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

Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century

Mark Leonard makes the case for a Europe that few Americans will regard as reality.

Reviewed by John Ross Schroeder

Why does *World News and Prophecy* publish so much material about Europe? Kirsty Milne, a British expatriate living in Boston and teaching at Harvard, recently observed: “It is astonishing how little Americans know or care about the European Union . . . The brutal truth is that most Americans do not think about Europe very much at all” (*Scotland on Sunday*, April 24, 2005). Yet our regular readers will understand that Bible prophecy shows that European affairs should be of the greatest concern to all Americans, not to mention the rest of the world. We hope to spread this vital message to as many readers as possible.

Mark Leonard, author of a new paperback, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, is director of foreign policy at the Centre for European Reform, where he covers transatlantic relations, the Mideast and the relationship between China and the European Union. He paints a completely different futuristic picture of Europe from that of the biblical book of Revelation.

A new kind of power

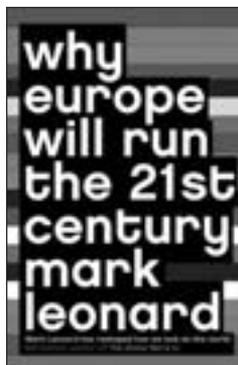
He writes: “We can see a new kind of power [in the EU] has evolved that cannot be measured in terms of military budgets or smart missile technology. It works in the long term, and is about reshaping the world rather than winning short-term tussles [an oblique reference to the war in Iraq]” (p. 5).

This book sees each EU nation as subservient to the sovereignty of Brussels. For instance, “The British House of Commons, the British law courts and British civil servants are still there, *but they have all become agents of the European Union*” (p. 6, emphasis added throughout review). This is a frightening thought for those Britons who really understand the origins and prophetic destiny of the English-speaking peoples.

Further, the new European century is almost pictured as a coming utopia. “Imagine a world of peace, prosperity and democracy. A world where small countries are as sovereign as large ones, a world where what matters is that you obey the law—rather than whether you are with us or against us” (pp. 7-8).

From the point of view of biblical prophecy, this paperback draws deceptive conclusions like the following: “No one fears a rising Germany or France because all the countries of Europe have formed themselves into a network that is bound together by laws and regulations” (p. 27). (See the booklets advertised below.)

Trouble is, when an enormous crisis emerges in a key European country, the practical effectiveness of all these laws can virtually disappear almost overnight. All the democratic countries



surrounding Nazi Germany could not stop Hitler from swallowing up Europe in the 1930s.

Still, Mr. Leonard insists that “the European project is based on a desire to move beyond a world of power politics, where ‘might makes right,’ to a community based on the rule of law” (p. 41). More utopianism!

Critical of the United States

The European agenda is constantly contrasted with the foreign policy of the United States. “The Bush Doctrine” comes under continuous criticism.

According to Mr. Leonard, Europe seeks to escape from the shadow of American military doctrine. “*Europe will never need to fight against the American military machine,*” he says. “Europeans can build peace through military interventions without mimicking the American way of war” (p. 66). How can one be so sure?

According to this author, we are entering a “post-American world.” He writes: “American hegemony contains the seeds of its own destruction, and is already driving its own retreat” (p. 131). He further asserts: “The country most damaged by anti-Europeanism is America itself. Its need for Europe has never been greater: in Afghanistan the mission is under French command; in Iran, it is the Europeans who are leading the talks on WMD” (p. 132). There is an appendix (pp. 145-146) that shows the 109 countries the author considers to be part of the “Eurosphere”—meaning those nations already influenced to some degree by the EU.

Mark Leonard does not consider himself anti-American, but sees the United States as inevitably being “sucked into the process of integration” (p. 143), led by a new Euro World Order—heralding the emergence of a “New European Century.”

This is not the only book published in the last few years espousing these views. Another one, *Free World* by noted British writer Timothy Garton Ash, is much less radical in approach, but still sees Europe as the answer to the world’s problems. Still another one, written by an American, is as critical of the United States as Mr. Leonard’s paperback.

These efforts to unify and exalt Europe among the nations—and to extend the influence of the EU far beyond its borders—will inevitably lead to a place where today’s European intelligentsia would not go. To understand further, please request or download our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

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In Brief...

World News Review

Is Your Little Girl Taking Steroids?

That's right, your little girl may be using "roids" or "juice," as anabolic steroids are known on the street. The Associated Press is reporting that steroid use is up among young girls—some as young as 8 to 10. The report says that up to 5 percent of middle school girls and 7 percent of high school girls have tried steroids at least once. And that number represents a steadily increasing trend for over a decade.

Isn't that what the professional athletes have been taking to gain body weight? Indeed it is, and some female athletes are looking for the same type of additional strength that men seek. But steroids cause different reactions in the female metabolism, and it's to obtain these effects that girls are taking them.

Steroids can give girls a slightly muscular appearance and reduce body

fat and overall weight. All of these looks are "in" these days. Of course, girls could obtain the same result by following a disciplined program of weight lifting and exercise, but in these days of pill popping for a quick fix, they are opting for steroids. The same girls who are prone to eating disorders, bulimia and anorexia are susceptible to steroid abuse.

Like so many fads, this one is dangerous. If girls took the time to investigate *all* of the effects of steroid use, they would undoubtedly run screaming the other way.

"The scientific name for this class of drugs is anabolic-androgenic steroids. *Anabolic* refers to muscle-building. *Androgenic* refers to increased male characteristics" (The National Institute on Drug Abuse, http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_ster1.asp).

Unwanted side effects include "severe acne, smaller breasts, deeper voice, irregular periods, excess facial and body hair, depression, paranoia and the fits of anger dubbed 'roid rage.' Steroids also carry higher risks of heart attack, stroke and some forms of cancer" ("Girls Are Abusing Steroids Too," Associated Press, April 25, 2005).

Curiously, steroids cause a kind of hormone mix-up. They can cause breasts to grow and shrink testicles in males. Steroids can also cause one's hair to fall out and they can stunt one's height—in both males and females.

Even if everything looks good on the outside of the body, terrible things can be happening inside the body. "The potential exists for

increase[d] blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease, blood clotting, cysts in the liver and various tumors—and those are permanent," according to Dr. Linn Goldberg of the Oregon Health and Science University (Kim Trobee, "Steroid Use Up Among Teen Girls," www.family.org, April 20, 2005).

Where are girls getting steroids? Some get the drugs from the black market or from strangers at commercial gyms, but many get them from friends and family members (even parents!) as well as from their coaches. Ask your middle and high school-age children if they know if steroids are available at their schools. Prepare to be shocked at how prevalent they are.

Dr. Eric Small, the chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' committee on sports medicine, advises adults to gently ask their youngsters about possible steroid use. Soberly, he says that parents need to start the discussion with their children when they are in the third grade. "If you wait till the ninth grade, it's too late" ("Girls Are Abusing Steroids Too," Associated Press).

5-Year-Olds Dieting

In a related story, London's *Telegraph* (online edition) reported in March that girls as young as 5 do not like their body shape and want to be thinner. The British government is making a concerted effort to put the word out that obesity is harmful. And some children are getting the message. Researchers report that British children feel paranoid about their weight.

But it's not only the government's antiobesity campaign that is affecting little girls' view of themselves. Also contributing is the powerful media image of superslim supermodels.



Some girls are using steroids today to change their looks. They could obtain the same result by following a disciplined program of weight lifting and exercise . . . without all the dangerous and unwanted side effects of steroids.

Flinders University conducted a study of 81 girls. "Almost half (46.9 percent) wanted to be thinner, and 45.7 percent said that they would go on a diet if they gained weight . . . About 71 percent of girls aged seven said they wanted to be thinner" (Sarah Womack, "Now Girls as Young as This Five-Year-Old Think They Have to Be Slim to Be Popular," March 8, 2005).

The same report found that youngsters formed their opinions on dieting and dissatisfaction with their bodies in



Photos © 2005 www.photos.com

A report found that youngsters formed their opinions on dieting and dissatisfaction with their bodies in their first two years of school.

their first two years of school. They thought that they'd be more likable if they were thin.

Strangely, the girls in the study had not discussed their body size openly with friends, leading the researchers to conclude that the children were picking up their impressions from casual comments made when trying on clothes, as well as from watching popular television characters.

So, another discussion parents need to have with their daughters is about weight and dieting. Parents need to counteract the powerful negative self-impressions that their children are assuming from media and peers.

Contributor: Cecil Maranville

"POPE," (Continued from page 10)

high," wrote Peter de Rosa in his 1988 book *Vicars of Christ*, adding: "In this century [the 20th], pontiffs have achieved world renown" (p. 29). Looking back at history, he observes: "Not all popes have been saints; many were hardly Christians. Until Pius IX lost the Papal States in 1870, popes were seldom even liked. They were often hated and feared" (p. 30). The Papal States were composed of a large territory in Italy that was ruled like any other European nation.

De Rosa is honest about the history of the Vatican when he says: "The greatest of the papacy's sins, the source of most others, was the abuse of its immense power. It is strange to think that the person from whom it was allegedly derived lived and died without any power at all" (p. 30).

What future for the church?

The combination of a more powerful papacy and the contemporary cult of celebrity could be very dangerous. History shows that not all popes have been like John Paul II. As Peter de Rosa observed:

"Among the popes were a large number of married men, some of whom gave up their wives and children in exchange for the papal office. Many were sons of priests, bishops and popes; some were bastards; one was a widower, another an ex-slave; several were murderers, some unbelievers; some were hermits, sadists and sodomites; many became popes by buying the papacy (simony), and continued their days selling holy things to rake in the money; one at least was a Satan-worshipper; some fathered illegitimate children, some were fornicators and adulterers on a grand scale; some were astonishingly old, some even more astonishingly young; some were poisoned, others strangled; worst of all were those who worshipped a granite God. As well as these, many were good, holy and selfless popes, and a few martyrs" (p. 30).

When asked by His disciples what would be the sign of His coming, Jesus Christ warned them to beware

of false religious leaders. "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5).

The apostle Paul warned the people in his second epistle to the Thessalonians: "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Jesus Christ warned that this leader and others like Him could even

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

deceive those following the true Christian faith. "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

A false prophet at the end of time will have "worked signs in [the] presence" of the Beast, the leader of an alliance of European countries that were a part of the original Roman Empire (Revelation 19:20). Revelation 13:8 says, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

This false religious leader will be universally looked up to and worshipped.

The events surrounding the funeral of Pope John Paul II help us to understand the impact of television in focusing on celebrity, in building up somebody to be the recipient of public adulation and even worship.

We should be very careful not to be deceived by any man, but rather to follow only Jesus Christ. ❖

“UP CLOSE,” (Continued from page 16)

begins simply but profoundly with the words, “We serve God by serving others.” Embedded within the chapter is the line, “If you only serve when it’s convenient for you, you’re not a real servant. Real servants do what’s needed, even when inconvenient. Are you available to God anytime? Can he mess up your plans without you becoming resentful? As a servant you don’t get to choose when and where you will serve.”

The chapter continues to talk about what you think your purpose in life is all about. What are you—what are your talents?

A not so pretty life

Smith continues talking to him through the night, always striving to gain his trust. She shares her story, which isn’t pretty. A troubled teen, she had had several problems and run-ins with the law. She had married a man who was a hard worker, but who liked hanging out with “the good old boys”—perhaps some of whom were responsible for his stabbing death several years before. Afterwards, she went to live with her mom, and left Paige to be raised by her aunt.

Now, things are getting a little bit better. She has finished a medical assistance course and she is seeing Paige once a week. She even shares her husband’s autopsy report. She tells Nichols, “That’s what a lot of people will have to go through now, because of what you have done. You need to turn yourself in. No one else needs to die, and you’re going to die if you don’t.”

Nichols looks at Smith’s family pictures and asks if he can hold them. He says, “Can I stay here a few days? I just want to eat some real food and watch some TV and sleep and just do normal things that normal people do.”

Early in the morning, Smith fixes the hungry man some pancakes. This leaves him overwhelmed—“real pancakes, with butter.”

You are here for a reason

But the conversation turns from syrup and butter, back to God and



Reuters/Tami Chappell

Ashley Smith, who was held hostage by Atlanta murder suspect Brian Nichols, smiles after receiving reward from Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue.

purpose and a reason for being. Smith confronts Nichols with the overpowering question: “Do you believe in miracles? You are in my apartment house for some reason.” She continues, “You know, your miracle could be that you need to be caught for this. You need to go to prison and you need to share the word of God with them, with all the prisoners there.”

It is now 9 a.m. Nichols asks, “What time do you have to leave?” Smith replies, “I need to be there by 10. So I need to leave at 9:30.” Smith appeals to him to turn himself in. But he replies, “Is there anything I can do while you’re gone—like hang your curtains or something?”

With that, Smith leaves her apartment, gets into her car and at 9:30 a.m. makes a cell phone call to the police. Shortly thereafter, Nichols surrenders peacefully.

Today, Ashley Smith is in high demand. Not for making pancakes, but for telling how she lived through an incredible hostage situation. Movies are in the making, books are

being written, and her technique for talking to assailants is being analyzed by professionals who deal with hostage crises.

Man or monster?

What exactly did she do? First of all, she looked at Nichols as a man, not a monster. What Smith seemed to do was break through fear and indignity by asserting both her and Nichols’ humanity and identity. Here were two “lonelies.” One life of pain with a purpose met another life of pain going down a dead-end road and said, “Hey stop, and take a look. There truly is something going on here with you.”

Smith recognized a man who needed a meal and someone to talk to. She incorporated the principles of the Sermon on the Mount described in Matthew 5:39-44:

“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have

your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

The story is a reaffirmation that there is no perfect time or perfect person with whom to share God's grace. We are reminded that so often God uses broken things to point the way to wholeness. Have you ever considered, as Vance Havner so eloquently put in words, that "it takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength"? Yes, God allows broken people, ordinary persons like Ashley Smith, to see the man through the monster.

Long ago, Jesus commented about a man from Samaria who made a difference. He took care of a stranger. The story reminds us that he was in a dangerous neighborhood (the thief-infested road to Jericho), just like Ashley Smith. We are not acquainted with his background other than the fact that he was a foreigner. Jesus chose to mention nothing of his religious pedigree or understanding, but simply commented on his thoroughness and care for the unfortunate.

The man acted upon what he knew, and it is that for which Christ holds each responsible. What did the Samaritan do with the rest of his life? Did the injured man, once healed, go foolishly up the same road he had come down? We don't know. That isn't the point of the story. Yet the world goes away reading the story and calling "good" the man only identified as "the Samaritan."

"We have heard that God is with you"

What will Ashley Smith do with her newfound fame? Time will tell. What will Brian Nichols do in

prison? Time will tell. But for the moment it is a story with a lesson. A story of coming to understand life's great purpose. A story as old as the Psalmist musing, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4). A story about the great purpose being worked out here below in this bit of mud called man.

Ashley Smith learned a bit about living life with a purpose. One day she, Brian Nichols and all the world will learn the full dimension of God's purpose for creating life on earth. It is a story not fully told nor understood in today's world.

It reminds me of a prophecy found in Zechariah 8:23 that speaks of inquiry and renewal when all nations and peoples will recognize a need to change and go a different way. The prophet tells us, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

Yes, there is a time yet ahead when people are going to want to get up close and personal with godly people who are under the direction of Jesus Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God on this previously troubled planet.

It will be a time when all humanity will be shown the fullness of God's way directly out of the Scriptures. The depth of God's love, mercy and abiding commandments will be spread to one and all. God declares in Isaiah 11:9 that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

But just a thought here for all of us when opportunity comes: Before over-analyzing people and their problems with all our good answers and quick solutions, we may simply want to talk, share a meal with them and give them some food for thought. Right now a lot of people are "grabbing the sleeve" of a lady in Georgia. Why? Because perhaps Ashley Smith best echoed the sentiment of "this is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21) when she simply reminded Brian Nichols—"you are here for a reason." ❖

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by Robin Webber

Up Close and Personal

It's mid-March in Atlanta, Georgia. The city is experiencing a massive dragnet for an escaped convict. Hours before, something had gone terribly wrong. During a court appearance, a man being held on a rape charge had overpowered the attending deputy and shot her dead. The man would shoot and kill three more times. The largest manhunt in Georgia's history is on. He is still on the loose!

As Atlanta goes to sleep, the city is on edge. But the rest of the story is about to begin in the still of the night. It is here that two people will meet. Their close encounter of seven hours will be up close and personal. What transpires will change lives. It will save lives. Perhaps, even now, it will affect your life.

It's 2 a.m. and Ashley Smith is up. She needs to go to the store. She is out of smokes. This isn't a real noble start to a feel-good story. Nonetheless, here's a lady with a bad habit that needs satisfying. Little does she realize she has a rendezvous with purpose. She is about to meet Brian Nichols.

Do you know who I am?

As Ashley returns from the store to the front of her apartment, she feels a gun being stuck into her ribs. It is the calling card of Brian Nichols—"the man on the run."

Nichols is restless. He tells Smith, "I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to hurt anybody else. So please don't do anything that's going to hurt you." He then securely ties her up with an extension cord, masking tape and a blanket and places her in the bathroom. It

seems as if her world is closing in, but she continues to gently reply to every request of the intruder.

As they continue to talk, Nichols seemingly becomes more relaxed and comfortable with Smith. Finally, he unties her and lets her remain with him in the bathroom away from the front area of her apartment. As they continue to chat, Smith tells him she is supposed to see her little girl, Paige, in the morning and asks if she can go see her. The answer comes back, "No!"

She begins to share her personal story a little more deeply. She shares how her husband had been stabbed several years ago and had died in her arms. Smith explains that if something happened to her, Paige, her 5-year-old daughter, wouldn't have a mommy or daddy. She tells him how upset the child would be if she weren't let go. It is then that Smith begins to see a change in Nichols. He comes back with, "Maybe, maybe, I'll let you go. We'll see how things go."

We serve God by serving others

Again, feeling more comfortable, they both go back into the bedroom. Smith asks if she might be able to read. He says, "Sure. What do you want to read?" Smith reaches for her Bible and the current best-selling book titled *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren. She turns to chapter 33, which is her study lesson for the day.

As Smith reads the first paragraph out loud, Nichols says, "Stop! Will you read it again?" The chapter

(See "UP CLOSE," page 14)