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Is the World Ready for a Prophet of God?

How old would people expect a prophet to be? How would they expect him to dress? What national background would they expect him to come from? What religion would they expect him to represent? Would they expect him to speak commandingly or with a more mellow tone?

by Cecil E. Maranville

Close your eyes, and imagine what a prophet of God would look like. Is he old, young, Middle Eastern, Western, Asian or African? What's he wearing? Is it a Western suit or, perhaps, a robe? Do you see him with some type of headgear—a turban perchance?

Now, picture your imaginary prophet giving a message to a crowd. What does he sound like? Is he announcing some plague's imminent arrival in a very loud voice? Or is he just speaking conversationally with the people?

Why did you picture what you did? Your imagination undoubtedly reflects your personal expectations and your religious training—or lack thereof.

Now, imagine a prophet that the world would recognize and accept. I mean *everyone* in the world from *every* nation, Western, Eastern and in between. I mean *every* person from *every* religious or philosophical persuasion, including those who do not believe in any God. I mean rich people, poor people, famous people and average folk. And I mean young and old.

Can you imagine such a prophet? It's difficult, isn't it?

Now, call to mind the name of a biblical prophet. Who did you think of? We'll come back to that later.

What is a prophet of God? The word means "someone who speaks before-

hand." A prophet of God speaks God's words before they happen. You might have said, "It's someone who foretells the future." That's true to a degree.

Do prophets even exist today? Many of you likely pictured a robed, bearded older man—likely white-haired, per-



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How do you imagine a prophet of God would look?

haps holding a walking stick. We place prophets in another time, another culture and another age—not in the computer/electronic age.

The world needs a prophet to visit it now

But we need a messenger for all nations—now.

(See "PROPHET," page 3)



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Editor: Don Ward

Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editor: Melvin Rhodes

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson, Cecil E. Maranville

Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

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

International addresses:

AFRICA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BAHAMAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas. Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 10-577, Nadi, Fiji. Phone: 723-678

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy. Phone: (+39) 035-58.21.40 Fax: (+39) 035-452.16.26 E-mail: redazione@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius. E-mail: mauritiuss@ucg.org

The NETHERLANDS: United Church of God Holland, P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63-82) 241-0150

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Forenade Kyrka, Mailbox 144, 111 73 Stockholm, Sweden

SOUTHERN AFRICA: United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694. E-mail: rsa@ucg.org

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 3393, Paulington, Mutare, Zimbabwe. Phone: 09 263 20 68102 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

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A Solution to Fear

While recently watching a documentary on the life of former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, I learned something I never realized about the man. I knew the famous line he gave at his first inaugural, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." This has gone down as the trademark slogan from his presidency. I also knew that polio struck him in the prime of life and that he never walked again.

What I didn't know about was the depression he struggled with while coping with his disability. I learned that he mastered his fear through this period of suffering. When he spoke those words to a nation in the grip of an economic and social depression in 1934, he spoke from an intense personal experience that defined his adult life. While fighting polio and rebuilding his life, he learned to overcome fear and increase courage.

America and other parts of the world need a dose of courage at this time in history as they face the fallout from terrorism and the efforts to combat world terror.

Recent weeks have brought out an unpleasant fact of American life. For several weeks two crazed snipers shot unsuspecting men and women around the suburbs of Washington, D.C. A fog of fear caught and held millions of people during the time when law enforcement officials were conducting one of the most intensive manhunts in the country's history. Civic activities were canceled and men, women and children altered their routines until the two killers were finally apprehended.

Top officials are also warning that the threat from al Qaeda terrorists is the highest it has been since the summer of 2001. A group of experts recently reported their shocking conclusion: A year after Sept. 11, 2001, America remains dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to a catastrophic attack on U.S. soil. In all likelihood, the next attack will result in greater casualties and widespread disruption to American lives and the economy. That's serious. For all the warning and security-related work done since 9/11, there is very little that has been done to really prepare for another attack.

Sadly, the recent round of political elections in America did nothing to lessen this feeling of fear. No one seems to stand out with the leadership qualities that can inspire and lead people through a time of uncertainty with visions of hope and courage. No single candidate articulated a vision or showed the path to achieving it.

Fear arises from confusion and uncertainty. It feeds on a lack of purpose, identity and commitment. Courage comes from faith in God to protect, defend and care for His people. He told ancient Israel He would send "an Angel" before them to keep them and bring them into the land of Canaan (Exodus 23:20). Verse 27 follows with a promise that fear would be the enemy's problem, not Israel's: "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you." The same promise is available to nations today if they would turn to God and obey His voice (verse 22). Nations like America and the United Kingdom must rely on something greater than their allied military might in solving the complexity of the war on terror.

A key to dealing with fear is found in 1 John 4:18. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." We can find the antidote to fear in the genuine love for God and His ways. Peace of mind comes from knowing God's great purpose and plan for life. When that knowledge guides our lives, it is part of God's unwavering plan to include us in the restoration of all good things to this world. —Darris McNeely

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

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

“PROPHET,” (Continued from page 1)

Why Does God Allow Suffering? is one of the booklets our readers request most out of all the ones we publish. It would be good if God sent us a man to tell us how to reverse the pandemic of AIDS, which is now in the process of engulfing China, Russia, India, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Papua New Guinea more devastatingly than it now ravages parts of Africa.

We need a messenger from God to explain how the nations of Latin America can avoid what appears to be an inevitable economic meltdown. The Middle Eastern nations need such a prophet to reveal the peace plan that will genuinely resolve their seemingly permanent international embitterment. The poverty-stricken nations of the world need that divine envoy to reveal how they can rise to the level of providing good food and water, comfortable shelter and profitable, honest work for all their citizens.

Paradoxically, the rich nations of the world need God’s messenger to explain how to enjoy riches without that wealth destroying its owners. How strange this world is with the poor sick for lack of essentials and the rich sick for indulging in the nonessentials.

With rogue nations and transnational terrorist groups like al Qaeda willing and able to use nuclear weapons in their distorted sense of correcting real and imagined wrongs, we need a prophet to stop them or to tell the rest of the world how to do it.

Prophets address personal problems

On a personal level, people need a prophet to reveal what to do to break free of addictions to alcohol, other drugs, pornography and nicotine. We need a prophet to show the way to stop the domino effect of abuse, violence and depression. We need a man with God’s words to direct people to the way off the merry-go-round of divorce, cohabitation and broken homes. We need a prophet to tell the person who has reached the bottom in his personal life how to return to health, the love of family and financial security.

Do prophets deliver these kinds of messages? Yes, they do.

Some people expect a prophet to be



A prophet of God is neither a revolutionary nor an entertainer.

a revolutionary, a man to lead the oppressed against the oppressors. Muhammad was that type of leader. While at first Jesus’ disciples, along with other Jews of the day, expected Him to fill that role, He did not.

Most expect a prophet to tell them what’s going to happen next, like previews of upcoming attractions that splash across the TV. Good news, bad news, disaster or miracle—wouldn’t people by the multiple millions tune their TVs to watch a prophet who would tell them what’s going to happen tomorrow? Such a forecaster would entertain a world that gorges on amusement. It would be the ultimate reality show.

But a prophet of God is neither a revolutionary nor an entertainer.

In spite of their need for him, people do not know today what a prophet of God is. The world would neither recognize nor accept him today, regardless of his age, accent, background or dress. They would not recognize him for what he is, whether he spoke sharply or softly, healed their sick or accurately predicted the next earthquake.

What a shame, because the world needs a prophet of God so desperately.

Let’s look at a real prophet

Now, let’s go back to what name you came up with for a biblical prophet. I’m guessing that many of you thought of Jeremiah, for he is one of the best

known. Yet Jeremiah defies the stereotypical older man image. He was young when God drafted him; commentaries estimate his age to have been around 20. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says the book he wrote shows “he was, by nature, gentle and tender in his feelings, and sympathetic” (1996, article “Jeremiah”).

Messages from prophets aren’t like television shows or movies that play out in a relatively short time. Jeremiah’s task spanned 40 years. People had a long time to consider what he told them.

You likely associate his name with “bad news.” Even his name is a cliché for “one who is pessimistic about the present and foresees a calamitous future” (2002, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). That’s an unfair and unjust characterization.

The message God gave Jeremiah was, “Return to the law of God. You ignored, disregarded and trampled it underfoot at every level of the nation—from king to commoner. Breaking the law brings its own disasters, but God promises to intensify those automatic penalties. He will do so in order to help you realize the seriousness of your wrong in time for you to turn around.”

So, within the bad news was good news or grace—the people *could* turn their lives around, seek and receive God’s forgiveness.

Jeremiah also confronted those reli-

gious teachers of his day who tried to soft-soap the facts about personal responsibility to keep God's law and the consequences for breaking it.

Prophets speak of the law

Prophets of God are strong on the law of God. That turns off many unperceiving Christians today who accept the antinomian (anti-law) messages of their churches, which is unfortunate. By allowing a prejudice against the law of



God's way of dealing with us is similar. He has reasonable "household rules" for us to obey, expressed in terms of His law. Being law-abiding in His household is a normal, healthy way to respond to His love. Further, it establishes a relationship that enables Him to give us all the benefits He would like us to have.

God's way of dealing with us is similar. He has reasonable "household rules" for us to obey, expressed in terms of His law. Being law-abiding in His household is a normal, healthy way to respond to His love. Further, it establishes a relationship that enables Him to give us all the benefits He would like us to have.

In society, people who disregard the law are criminals! By contrast, those who are law-abiding are good citizens. How sad that men who claim to represent God teach that it is wrong to be a law-abiding citizen of His Kingdom.

(For a full explanation on how the law of God guides the everyday life of a Christian, see our booklet *The Ten Commandments*. It provides you with God's perspective of the subject, from both the Old and the New Testament.)

A prophet for today

The famous Moses of antiquity told Israel, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Nearly 1,500 years later, in the formative days of the early New Testament Church of God, the apostle Peter identified that prophet as Jesus (Acts 3:22).

One subscriber to *The Good News* canceled his subscription because we mentioned in an article that Jesus was a prophet. The person assumed we meant that Jesus was *only* a prophet, not the divine Son of God. We clarified the misunderstanding. Jesus was both man and God, and as a man, He was a prophet.

Interestingly, the world needed a prophet when Jesus trod the earth just as much as today's world needs one. Biblical history tells us that sick people lined up by the thousands to see Him. History says up to half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves, which gives us an idea of the extent of poverty and the lack of personal freedom. The Roman Empire was in its infancy, because it began only a few decades before Christ appeared as the Son of Man. So there were wars and talk of wars, as it expanded.

People struggled in their own lives, to the extent that they were willing to

travel many miles and congregate by the thousands—going without food on occasion—just to be able to hear Jesus lecture on how to live.

The world needs but will not accept the prophet

There were corrupt leaders in business, politics and religion, so the world of A.D. 27 was ready for a prophet of God. By responding to His message, the world at that time could have spared itself so much grief and suffering. But it didn't recognize or accept Jesus or the message He brought.

It might be difficult for you to think of Jesus as a prophet. But remember that it takes nothing away from His divinity; it serves to explain His work and His message. A prophet doesn't create his message; he delivers God's. That's what Jesus did (John 5:30). Like Jeremiah and other prophets that Jesus sent, His prophetic message was, "Return to the law of God, because the time of reckoning is coming. The consequences of failing to do so will be disastrous personally and nationally" (see Mark 1:15).

Like that of other prophets, this Prophet's message was for the long term. We yet await the fulfillment of the final consequences for disobedience.

Of course, Jesus fills another role, that of our Savior. But, as in Jeremiah's time, forgiveness comes after one heeds and responds to the message of the prophet. That message reveals to individuals and nations alike how they can get themselves back in line with the way that brings peace and prosperity—the law of God. The prophet's message places responsibility on the individual. "Here are the facts. Now, you must decide what you will do about them. No one is going to force you to do what you should do, but you will suffer the consequences of a wrong decision."

The world is in need of a true prophet and the words God gives him. True ministers of God still declare Jesus' prophetic message—it's available. But this world is no more ready to recognize and accept it than it was when Jesus delivered it in person. The people of the world will yet go through stunning and devastating events on a massive scale, before they will be willing to hear and respond to that message. ❖

How sad that men who claim to represent God teach that it is wrong to be a law-abiding citizen of His Kingdom.

God, they cannot understand what a prophet of God does.

The typical false charge is that speaking of keeping the law is "legalistic." In brief, that means trying to ingratiate yourself with God by what you do, earning your spiritual salvation. But these opponents of God fail to perceive the enormous difference between being legalistic and being law-abiding.

Comparing God's family to a human family illustrates the hollowness of their reasoning. A healthy family has parents who establish and enforce boundaries or parameters for their children. Such boundaries are part of a good parent's unconditional love for the child. For their part, children respond in loving obedience. Obedience earns nothing, but it facilitates a good relationship between child and parent, enabling parents to give all of the ben-

A Reluctant Empire

America has fallen into the position of a world empire. No other nation today can stand on the same pedestal and claim the same status. This role was not consciously sought nor, perhaps, fully realized. How America handles itself on the world stage in coming months will have a lasting impact on world affairs.

by Darris McNeely

When Benjamin Franklin left the building in which he and other founding fathers framed the U.S. Constitution, someone asked what kind of government the country now had. “A republic, if we can keep it,” was his reply. The nation has indeed kept intact a republican form of government, but without intent or desire, it has in recent years grown to become an empire rivaling the great empires of history, such as the British and Roman.

Historians, columnists and leaders from across the political spectrum have been speaking clearly about this dramatic change in geopolitics. On June 29, 2002, *The Economist* published a survey, which led with the statement, “America again leads the world in all dimensions of power—military, economic, cultural, scientific—by a margin out of all proportion to its population” (“Present at the Creation,” p. 3).

Foreign Affairs in its July/August 2002 issue laid out the extent of American dominance in the standard measurements of power:

“In the military arena, the United States is poised to spend more on defense in 2003 than the next 15-20 biggest spenders combined. The United States has overwhelming nuclear superiority, the world’s dominant air force, the only truly blue-water navy, and unique capability to project power around the globe.

“No state in the modern history of international politics has come close to the military predominance these numbers suggest. America’s economic dominance—relative to either the next several richest powers or the rest of the world combined—surpasses that of any great power in modern history . . . The U.S. economy is currently twice as large as its closest rival, Japan” (“American Primacy in Perspective,” pp. 21-23).

America also leads the world technologically. Its expenditures in research and development of all technology sectors are close to equaling the next seven richest countries combined (ibid.).

America has bases or rights at 200 places in 40 countries around the world. It maintains 12 carrier task forces and the most sophisticated missile technology in the world. No other nation comes near to matching this kind of force.

It is significant that America leads in all these areas at the same time and in such a powerful manner. It is reminiscent of another great commercial and military power, Great Britain in the 19th century. The *Foreign Affairs* article goes so far as to say, “The United States has no rival in any critical dimension of power. There has never been a system of sovereign states that contained one state with this degree of dominance” (p. 23).

The cover of the summer 2002 issue of *The Wilson Quarterly* raised the question, “An American Empire?” No less than five essays sought to answer the question. One—titled “What Kind of Empire?”—adds that America “commands a predominant share of the world’s intellectual talent, through an array of outstanding graduate schools and institutes of advanced learning and research. Further, the United States has established a unique cultural predominance . . . through the seductive power of its entertainments and fashions, from movies to blue jeans to gangsta rap. Never before has there been anything quite like this American domination of the world” (pp. 37-38).

Conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer succinctly summarized the length, breadth and depth of the American empire:

“The fact is no country has been dominant culturally, economically, technologically and

Does America have the will to carry the burden that comes with superpower status? How long will this “empire” last? And most important, how long will God’s blessing continue on this nation?

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militarily in the history of the world since the Roman Empire. We maintain the stability of international commerce, the freedom of the seas, the flow of oil, regional balances of power (in the Pacific Rim, South Asia, the Middle East) and, ultimately, we provide protection against potentially rising hostile superpowers” (ibid., p. 43).

“He shall become a people...”

In the history of nations there has not been any single state to match America’s current commanding world role. This is the dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy made to Manasseh, the eldest son of the patriarch Joseph.

Genesis 48 contains the story of Joseph bringing his two sons to his father, Jacob, also known as Israel. Israel in his old age had been reunited with his favorite son and sought to pass to his grandchildren the divine blessing, which God passed to him from his grandfather, Abraham, through his father, Isaac.

“Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near him.

“Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the first-born. And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth’” (Genesis 48:14-16).

Joseph sought to intervene when he saw that Israel’s right hand was upon the younger son, Ephraim. Manasseh, being the eldest, should have received the dominant blessing. But God was guiding Israel despite the appearance of error. God had distinct roles for the descendants of these sons. Notice verse 19, “But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He [Manasseh]

also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

Manasseh was to become a great people while his brother Ephraim was to become a greater multitude of nations. Their modern descendants, America and Great Britain, have been the recipients of this promise of physical blessing given by God through the fathers. The amazing story of how these modern



Reuters/Chip East

America has bases or rights at 200 places in 40 countries around the world. It maintains 12 carrier task forces and the most sophisticated missile technology in the world. No other nation comes near to matching this kind of force.

nations inherited this promise is told in our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Importance to the world

Today America, as the modern descendant of Joseph’s son Manasseh, stands at the pinnacle of the fulfillment of this promise. What does this status mean for the rest of the world? Does America have the will to carry the burden that comes with superpower status? How long will this “empire” last? And most important, how long will God’s blessing continue on this nation? These are vital questions, as we seek to under-

stand events that are rapidly changing and shaping today’s world.

America in the past century has been a blessing for so many nations in the world. Its value for human life, freedom and opportunity led to decisive involvement in the great crises of recent years. It was American entry into two global conflicts, World Wars I and II, that turned back the wave of totalitarian anarchy, which threatened the world. In the aftermath of World War II, Marshall Plan dollars were instrumental in rebuilding the prostrate nations of Europe.

In an end-time prophecy about Joseph’s descendants, Genesis 49:22 states, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall.” American aid in the form of money and food continue to go to regions of the world where poverty and starvation are endemic. It has literally fed those who hate all that the nation stands for.

Recently deceased American historian Stephen Ambrose often pointed out that the sounds of American GIs entering cities like Paris, Lyon or Berlin meant liberation instead of oppression. America’s role as world superpower came not by a conscious plan for world domination. That is against the most basic American experience and values. America came into existence with anti-imperial ideas and continually resisted imperialist ambitions. Rather, it grew into the role by a combination of factors, not the least of which is God’s blessing and design, over many decades.

In an increasingly dangerous and anarchic world, its role is critical for peace and stability. A world without the United States would be a far different and potentially more hostile world than the one we see now. The scramble created by nations trying to get to the top of the heap could result in a chaotic world order.

Can it endure?

Many of the same thinkers who currently analyze America’s position also wonder whether she has the will to continue in the role. First there was the invasion of Afghanistan to rid the country of the Taliban and al Qaeda. Doing

(See “EMPIRE,” page 15)

The Coming Clash Between Europe and America

While the United States is focused on its war on terror and conflict with Iraq, new threats continue to emerge of which Americans are largely oblivious.

by Melvin Rhodes

An article in the November 2002 issue of the Boston-based *Atlantic Monthly*, titled "The Death of the West," warns: "The next clash of civilizations will be not between the West and the rest but between the United States and Europe—and Americans remain largely oblivious."

This stark warning was written by Charles Kupchan, a professor at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is also author of a new book, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century*.

Conventional wisdom off the mark

Kupchan's article begins by describing the popular perception of the United States: "The American era appears to be alive and well. The U.S. economy is more than twice the size of the next biggest—Japan's—and the United States spends more on defense than the world's other major powers combined. China is regularly identified as America's next challenger, but it is decades away from entering the top ranks.

"The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington certainly punctured the sense of security that arose from the end of the Cold War and the triumph of the West, but they have done little to compromise U.S. hegemony. Indeed, they have reawakened America's appetite for global engagement. At least for the foreseeable future, the United States will continue to enjoy primacy, taking on Islamic terrorism even as it keeps a watchful eye on China.

"That encapsulates the conventional wisdom—and it is woefully off the mark. Not only is American primacy far less durable than it appears, but it is already beginning to diminish. And the rising challenger is not China or the Islamic world but the European Union, an emerging polity that is in the process of mar-

shaling the impressive resources and historical ambitions of Europe's separate nation-states."

The rising European superpower

Updating Americans on developments in Europe, Dr. Kupchan continues: "The EU's annual economic output has reached about \$8 trillion, compared with America's \$10 trillion, and the euro will soon threaten the dollar's global dominance. Europe is strengthening its collective consciousness and character and forging a clearer sense of interests and values that are quite distinct from those of the United States. The EU's member states are debating the adoption of a Europe-wide constitution (a move favored by two thirds of the union's population), building armed forces capable of operating independently of the U.S. military, and striving to project a single voice in the diplomatic arena.

"As the EU fortifies its governmental institutions and takes in new members (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and at least four other countries are expected to join in 2004), it will become a formidable counterweight to the United States on the world stage. The transatlantic rivalry that has already begun will inevitably intensify. Centers of power by their nature compete for position, influence, and prestige.

"The coming clash between the United States and the European Union will doubtless bear little resemblance to the all-consuming standoff of the Cold War. Although military confrontation remains a remote prospect, however, U.S.-EU competition will extend far beyond the realm of trade.

"The U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank are destined to vie for control of the international monetary system. Washington and Brussels will just as likely lock horns over the Middle East. Europe will resist rather than backstop U.S. leadership, perhaps paralyzing the World Bank, the United Nations, and other institutions that since World

"The U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank are destined to vie for control of the international monetary system. Washington and Brussels will just as likely lock horns over the Middle East."

War II have relied on transatlantic cooperation to function effectively.

“An ascendant EU will surely test its muscle against America, especially if the unilateralist bent in U.S. foreign policy continues. A once united West appears well on its way to separating into competing halves.

“For the moment America remains largely oblivious to the challenges posed by a rising Europe” (pp. 42-44).

Since Dr. Kupchan wrote his article, only one fact has changed: 10 more nations, not seven, will be joining the EU in 2004, which begins only 14 months from now, bringing the total number of members to 25. The European Union, already the world’s biggest trading system, is well on the way to rivaling American economic dominance.

Growing anti-Americanism, lust for power

A driving force behind the push for European unity is anti-Americanism. Disillusionment with, even fear of, U.S. foreign policy, seen as increasingly unilateralist, with the American president often depicted by cartoonists as a cowboy, has fed a determination that Europe should be a superpower to rival the United States.

“Germany’s Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer . . . cautioned Washington that ‘alliance partners are not satellites.’ The *Berliner Zeitung* [newspaper] lamented that far from renouncing its go-it-alone ways [after 9/11], the United States had ‘used the opportunity to

attitudes toward the United States and its leadership.

Dr. Kupchan notes that European leaders also are increasingly calling for greater integration and more power to offset America’s long-held military and economic strength. “The French used to be alone in looking to the EU as a counterpoise to America, but the other members have now joined in,” he writes. “Tony Blair has asserted, ‘Whatever its origin, Europe today is no longer just about peace. It is about projecting collective power.’

“Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called ‘for a more integrated and enlarged Europe’ to offset U.S. hegemony. According to Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, the EU’s executive body, one of the chief goals of the union is to create ‘a superpower on the European continent that stands equal to the United States.’ Goran Persson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, a country that long ago renounced power politics, recently remarked that the EU is ‘one of the few institutions we can develop as a balance to U.S. world domination’” (p. 44).

Biblical predictions of a European superpower

Serious Bible students have known for a long time that the Bible prophesies the emergence of a new superpower that will dominate the world for a brief time just before the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

This European-centered “beast”

Revelation 17 gives us more details about this coming superpower: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [prophetically meaning a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings . . .” (verses 12-14).

While describing an end-time union of 10 leaders who will ally themselves with an even greater leader, also called “the beast,” this passage suggests that not all current members of the EU will be in the final political, economic and military union that will constitute this new superpower. Some apparently will simply not be allowed in for whatever reason; others may choose to opt out just as three of the present 15 members have opted out of the euro zone, at least for now.

The European Union has been a long time developing. After World War II the battered countries of Europe were determined that, after two European-centered world wars in less than 30 years, the nations of Europe would never again fight each other. Germany and France in particular were resolved to build a new Europe that would be different from the old.

Previous attempts at European union have always been by conquest. Hitler and Napoleon are examples of despots in the last two centuries who attempted to restore the continent’s unity, lost when Rome fell in A.D. 476. Conquering other nations against their will inevitably led to conflict. Having learned from the past, the various nations of Europe are now committed to *voluntary* union, a potentially far more powerful union than those that have preceded it.

Treaty of Rome: Foundation for a new Roman Empire

The Treaty of Rome was signed by the six original members of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 in what was once the capital city of the Roman Empire and is still the spiritual home of one of the world’s biggest religions. The six original members—Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg—

strengthen its selfish superpower position.’

“‘Never has a president of the United States been so foreign to us,’ the newspaper proclaimed in an editorial, ‘and never have German citizens been so skeptical about the policies of their most powerful of allies’” (p. 44).

The German justice minister in September compared George Bush to Adolf Hitler. While the comments soon led to her resignation, they nonetheless show the hardening of many Europeans’

power, as the Bible terms it, is the final resurrection of the Roman Empire, one of the four great gentile empires of Daniel’s vision (Daniel 7) that have largely dominated civilization through the centuries—and will again just before Christ’s return. All of these empires were to have a great impact on the 12 tribes of Israel. The resurrected Roman Empire will have a negative impact on their descendants today, among whom are the British and American peoples.

were joined by Britain, Ireland and Denmark in January 1973.

The EEC, now the EU, continued to add more members. Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Sweden and Finland

common currency, the euro. The present British government remains committed to the euro in principle but lacks the support necessary to win a promised referendum on the issue. There is even less

ment, meanwhile, is that Europe will stay on course with America. However, neither France nor Britain is likely to lead the new Europe, as the *Atlantic Monthly* article shows.

Dr. Kupchan states that “Germany’s growing comfort with leadership is strengthening the union’s political will. As part of its postwar policy of reassurance and reconciliation, Bonn for decades treaded lightly on diplomacy and defense. Since 1999, however, when the seat of government moved back to Berlin, symbolizing a renewed self-confidence, Germany has been actively guiding the EU’s evolution, marking out a pathway for building a federal Europe” (p. 44).

We should note that Germany has the biggest population in the EU and is by far the leading single economy. Within the EU, Germany is the biggest trading partner of each of the other member nations, giving the country a great deal of clout.

Growing differences with America

Differences between Europe and America are real and growing. Although Britain supports the United States over Iraq, many EU members are highly critical of America’s foreign policy in the Middle East. “Trade disputes are heating up, especially over steel and agriculture,” writes Dr. Kupchan. “Despite America’s defection from the Kyoto Protocol, the EU moved forward with more than a hundred countries participating, leaving Washington a lonely and, from all appearances, an environmentally irresponsible bystander. Last year EU member states took the lead in voting the United States off two UN commissions—payback for America’s unilateral ways” (p. 44).

The reality for the future, he says, is that “as the EU continues to rise, its economic and political interests are likely to collide frequently with those of the United States, intensifying the ill will.”

With America preoccupied with the war on terror and problems in the Middle East, its citizens and leaders are giving little attention to developments in Europe—developments that, in the course of time, may be of greater consequence to the United States than terrorism or Iraq. ❖

Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch



“Since 1999, however, when the seat of government moved back to Berlin, symbolizing a renewed self-confidence, Germany has been actively guiding the EU’s evolution, marking out a pathway for building a federal Europe.”

have since joined and now 10 new members—eight of them former communist countries in eastern Europe, plus Malta and Cyprus—are due to join in 2004. Others are trying to get in but have not yet qualified.

At first the British did not want to join. Five years later they were knocking at the door but were refused entry by France’s President Charles de Gaulle, who was no doubt remembering the words of his war-time ally Winston Churchill who told him that whenever Great Britain had to choose between Europe and the sea, it would “always choose the sea.”

De Gaulle questioned Britain’s commitment to the organization and felt that Britain’s entry would allow American influence to come in through the back door. His successor, Georges Pompidou, took a different line—he wanted Britain in as a further counterweight to Germany, which had become the dominant member of the club.

The British have long been ambivalent toward the EU, with many Britons still opposing membership. The British, together with Denmark and Sweden, remain outside of the new European

British enthusiasm for a political union of member countries.

Ironically, as Dr. Kupchan points out: “Britain’s decision to enhance its leadership role in Europe is moving the EU more quickly toward self-reliance. London for years kept its distance from the Continent, but Prime Minister Tony Blair has altered course, orchestrating the EU’s push on the defense front and working to take his country into the euro zone. ‘We must be wholehearted, not halfhearted, partners in Europe,’ Blair told Britons late last year, warning them that ‘Britain has no economic future outside Europe’” (pp. 43-44).

Britain even called in October for the peoples of Europe to directly elect a president for Europe.

Germany at the heart of Europe

Another motivating force behind European unity is fear of Germany, intensified since German reunification following the collapse of communism in the east. After suffering in three wars with Germany in 75 years, France in particular wants a European Union in which other member states will keep Germany in check. The British commit-

Do You Have a Biblical Worldview?

What will happen next in this chaotic world of enormously unpleasant surprises? Only a biblical worldview can give us sorely needed spiritual stability and security in an age marked by ambiguity and uncertainty.

by John Ross Schroeder

Our general inability to fashion a godly worldview and to reason biblically has reached the epidemic stage.

Day by day we live in a troubled world characterized by continuous outbreaks of terrorist violence of every stripe and kind. The current head of the CIA, George Tenet, recently stated: “The threatening environment we find ourselves in today is as bad as it was last summer—the summer before 9-11” (*Newsweek*, Oct. 28, 2002, Atlantic edition).

Wars, conflicts, terrorist attacks and domestic upheavals are raging at various points on the globe. No continent escapes. Everywhere we find mounting troubles. Truly, there is an “Axis of Evil” beyond that spoken of by President Bush, one that stretches from North Korea and Indonesia in Asia through Iraq and Palestine in the Mideast—branching north to Northern Ireland and south to several notorious hotspots in Africa and westwards to Colombia in South America. Russia just experienced a horrifying terrorist incident rooted in the ongoing war in Chechnya. Many lives were lost.

Multiple dangers lie ahead—one bitter awakening after another! How will we cope?

Author William Shawcross stated frankly, “There will be more [terrorist] attacks and they will get worse . . . Bali brought home the fact that we are all Americans now. We are vulnerable to the nihilistic madness of the bombers” (*Independent on Sunday*, Oct. 20, 2002). Or, we could fall prey to crazed snipers, as happened recently in the greater Washington, D.C., area.

The Economist speculated, “A second terrorist attack would probably change America even more than the first one did.”

A disconcerting world outlook

From a strictly human viewpoint, the world ahead does not look very promising. Nationally syndicated American columnist Mona Charen wrote: “The world does not and probably never will run on cooperation,

peaceful dispute resolution and friendship. Peace is maintained today as it always was—by armed force and balance of power” (*The Washington Times*, September/October 2002 weekly edition). What a damning indictment on humanity and all our efforts to govern ourselves! That is her worldview and, at least on the surface, it certainly appears all too true. This is the sad reality of our age.

The world’s counterintelligence organizations did not and cannot prevent highly damaging terrorist attacks that currently pockmark the globe. When they had credible advance warning in hand, Indonesian officials responsible for the protection of vulnerable spots like Bali apparently ignored them. Governmental authorities often mistrust covert intelligence, sometimes to their peril. We human beings are good at ignoring warnings. It is a failing of our nature. We invent reasons not to act and protect.

Yet various groups hone their survival skills, hoping to cope with whatever comes. If you happen to be a Jew, you would regard this present age as very dangerous to your worldwide community. Some call it the scariest time since the Holocaust. Anti-Semitism is on the increase, the nation of Israel is under daily, even hourly, threat and global Jewry is subject to constant stress from extremist elements in the Muslim world. This amounts to a very uncomfortable worldview.

If you are Muslim, you probably have been informed that America and Israel pose a serious threat to your life and well-being. In fact, personal prejudices distort almost all worldviews. And, all are misleading to the extent that they are not solidly based on the Word of God.

Life without a biblical worldview

Our general inability to fashion a godly worldview and to reason biblically has reached the epidemic stage. The Bible itself is

under attack as never before, even from some theologians supposedly in the business of supporting God's Word.

Problem solving has fallen more and more into a secular mode. The Bible is not even in the equation. Sadly, we put bandages on external problems without ever getting to the real root of our difficulties. We often ignore godly principles, good character and our nagging consciences. We forget that there is a cause for every effect and run from the fact that our blatant transgressions of invisible spiritual laws are chiefly responsible for much of what is wrong in our world.

Pauline Boss, a social scientist at the University of Minnesota-St. Paul, recently said: "We are a society that likes to know the answers, to have predictability. When we cannot have it, our stress levels go way up and we transfer that to our children" (*USA Today*, Oct. 28, 2002).

The only book that will really help us make sense of multiplying chaos around the earth is the Judeo-Christian Bible. When we see and reflect upon irrational acts of terrorism, we may well ask: "What on earth is God doing?" That's a very good question, and only the Bible has the answer.

Regardless of all the machinations of sinning humans and all the evils that men do, God still has a highly workable plan and program for the salvation of mankind. Living in "this present evil age," only those who truly comprehend God's plan can have real peace and a valid sense of divine purpose. Without the knowledge of God, we continue in darkness and cannot help but experience discouragement, disillusionment and despair.

But armed with that saving knowledge and the help of the Creator Himself, we can cope with whatever the days and months and years may bring.

The perspective the Bible brings

Even before the invention of weapons of mass destruction, the apostle Paul could still accurately describe his first-century world as "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). He wrote letters to early Christians living in a morally bankrupt Greek city named



Reuters

"There will be more [terrorist] attacks and they will get worse . . . Bali brought home the fact that we are all Americans now. We are vulnerable to the nihilistic madness of the bombers."

Corinth. His purpose was to help them to successfully deal with the difficulties of residing in an environment of sleazy immorality and idolatry. In that respect Corinth was not so different from many cities of our day.

Paul told those early Christians in Corinth: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being [spiritually] renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:16-17, NIV throughout).

The Church members in Corinth understood God's plan and it brought needed perspective to their lives as they struggled to avoid the ensnaring temptations so readily available in their immediate environment. Despite making many serious mistakes, they were gradually learning to submit to the biblical instruction advanced by the apostle Paul, and things were slowly coming right.

We can take a positive view of the fact that the Corinthian brethren had so many problems in the sense that these difficulties occasioned the revelation of some of the most important aspects

of basic Christian doctrine in the New Testament.

But the lesson of this particular passage is clear. God's Word brings the encouraging perspective of His purpose for humanity, helping us to avoid the temptation to be cynical about life. Cynicism only brings despair. Paul said: "We do not lose heart," in spite of difficult circumstances. We learn the correct standard of comparisons. Our ultimate goal of eternal life far outweighs our combined present sufferings.

Seeking the true biblical worldview

Paul continues: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (verse 18). Little by little the new Christian convert learns to focus his attention more and more on the future life with God and Christ in the age to come. The things that happen, good and bad, are made to fit into this new biblical worldview.

Not even physical death can prevent a Christian from attaining this incredible futuristic life. "Now we know that



God's Word brings the encouraging perspective of His purpose for humanity, helping us to avoid the temptation to be cynical about life . . . Our ultimate goal of eternal life far outweighs our combined present sufferings.

if the earthly tent [human body] we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in [that will come from] heaven not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Other scriptures show that at the first resurrection we can look forward to a brand-new spiritual body vastly superior to our present earthly body with all of its proverbial aches and pains (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Yet God understands that we have to live in this present evil world now, and He is there to help us endure any temporary sufferings. *"Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling [eternal spiritual body] . . . For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life"* (2 Corinthians 5:2-4). A Christian's ultimate quest is to attain immortality. That's one reason why Christ asked us to pray, "Your Kingdom come."

Real life has not even begun. What we have now is but a pale shadow of the fantastic life to come. "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand," wrote the prophet (Acts 2:30) and

psalmist King David (Psalm 16:11).

"God has made us for this very purpose"

Paul then comes to the specific purpose, the nucleus, of this long section. It is all too easy to read right over some of the most important single passages in the New Testament. We all do it from time to time.

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the [Holy] Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Corinthians 5:5). Mark that saying well! We were not put here simply to enjoy this human material life (though physical pleasures are not wrong in themselves as long as they accord with God's law). We have a far greater goal than merely passing the time, earning a living, watching TV and finally making our exit.

Many of our activities are not intrinsically wrong in themselves, but we often waste far too much time in their pursuit—time far better spent in praying and studying precious truths in the Word of God. Some things are far more important than others. We have to "prioritize" our lives to make sure that the things that make for eternal life get done.

We repeat this important biblical declaration: "God has made us for this

very purpose." Can we grasp the awesome meaning and intent of those inspired words once written by the apostle Paul? We were created by God to possess eternal life in a new spirit body that never grows old. It will be like Christ's glorious resurrection body. It will go through closed doors as though they were not there and be capable of speeds greater than that of light. It is this eternal body composed of spirit that will finally get us to the planets—and it won't take light-years either.

Developing God's character

But God requires that we develop the aspects of His righteous character first. One of the first things we should work on is godly self-control. Probably you have watched one of those TV talk shows in which the presenter walks around with a microphone in his hand and invited guests often launch verbal and even physical attacks upon one another. Whether real or staged, such is an example of people who apparently cannot or will not govern their actions, possessing precious little self-control. Quickly they react to others with uncontrolled anger, malice and hostility.

God wants us to be like Him—merciful, loving, long-suffering, slow to anger—the antithesis of the behavior of far too many living in our day.

In order to develop these godlike qualities of character, our Creator gives us the help of His Holy Spirit—the germ of eternal life. A down payment or earnest money illustrates it, for it is the guarantee that we will receive the full promised possession if faithful to God's terms and conditions.

Our worldview changes as we grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). We begin to see things as our Creator does. We gradually take on His view of world conditions. We look forward to a better world tomorrow, when we will assist Christ as He rules the nations during His coming millennial reign on earth. We long for the age to come when all the present problems, like terrorism and violence, will be put behind us.

Then the world will be characterized by love, cooperation, kindness, friendship and the peaceful resolution of disputes. God speed that day! ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

U.S. Versus EU

The United States and the European Union are increasingly in conflict with each other's policies. One recent area of controversy is the proposal of an International Criminal Court. The United States strenuously objects to the court having authority over its citizens, citing fears that American soldiers would be inappropriately subject to trial by such a court. President Bush warns the Europeans that pressing the United States on this issue could seriously damage the NATO partnership.

This is but one of many major policy differences between the United States and the European Union that are stressing their relationship. The others include:

- Trade. The United States is restricting imports of EU steel. At the same time, the European Union is pressing the United States to pay \$4 billion in punitive damages, alleging unfair subsidization of American businesses.
- Missile defense. The European Union objects to the U.S. proposal for a missile defense shield.
- Global warming. EU leaders are joining the chorus of environmentalists criticizing the U.S. failure to ratify the Kyoto treaty.
- The Balkans. To the chagrin of the Europeans, the current U.S. administration is signaling an intention to pull back its military from Bosnia and Kosovo.
- UN ban on military sales to Iraq. The Europeans' economic ties to the Middle East are strong. EU companies would like to continue lucrative trade in military items, while the Americans and British are sponsoring a UN resolution to tighten a ban on the sale of military products.
- Land mine treaties. Citing fear for the safety of their troops in South Korea, the United States opposes treaties to abolish land mines. There's strong support within the EU nations to abolish land mines entirely.

The major issue coming between the superpower and the superpower-in-the-making is the consideration of invading Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein. Because the United States so overwhelmingly dominates the entire world in terms of military power, European bristling will amount to nothing—for the present. If President Bush decides to order American forces to invade Iraq, the European Union will likely reluctantly come on board. Far more dependent upon Middle Eastern oil than the United States, the Europeans have more to lose in the event of a catastrophic failure of such a venture. Additionally, the European Union has many closer economic and political alliances with the Middle East than does the United States. Nonetheless, the European Union cannot go it alone . . . yet.

Sources: FOXNews, Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

Intelligence Sources Believe Al Qaeda Has Nuclear Capacity

The worst fears people hold about terrorists appear confirmed. A former Soviet military intelligence agent says he knows with certainty that al Qaeda possesses small atomic warheads. They're the suitcase-style weapons, obtained from Russia. A senior Western intelligence official verifies that the terrorists have nine of these suitcase weapons, purchased at a price of \$30 million and 2 tons of opium.

Russia receives much press for their suitcase bombs, but they are a U.S. invention. The U.S. military designed and developed portable nuclear weapons (Atomic Demolitions Munitions or "ADMs") during the Vietnam War. The ADMs' purpose was to take out targets like bridges and dams. Of course, the U.S. never detonated an ADM in Vietnam. But in the heat of the arms race, the then U.S.S.R. responded in kind by developing its own version in vast numbers. After the U.S.S.R. broke up, several of the bombs found their way onto the black market in a cash-poor Russia—then into the hands of terrorists.

How dangerous are the bombs? Estimates of the kill power of one ADM: 100,000 dead immediately; multiple hundreds of thousands more dying from radiation-caused cancers.

Intelligence analysts say the targets for terrorist ADMs will probably not be in the West. Their most probable target would be the oil industry in the Middle East, attempting to throw the Western economy into chaos. With only a few well-placed ADMs, terrorists could cripple both production and delivery facilities over a large area. In addition to the immediate damage, sand blown high into the air would help spread radioactive fallout. And, the blast would cause hydrostatic shock waves in the oil pipelines, multiplying the damage factor.

Of course, this would devastate the economies of several Muslim countries, perhaps hurting them more than Western countries that have been developing other sources to satiate their huge appetites for oil. The terrorists' challenge would be to make the West appear to be the guilty party for "making" the terrorists drive them out of Islamic lands.

With a strong anti-Western prejudice already present, al Qaeda and company may be successful in propagandizing a nuclear disaster. But it's more likely to backfire on them. Oil production is the heart of the economies of several Islamic states, and they desperately need the United States, Europe and Japan to continue buying from them.

So, if al Qaeda has nuclear bombs, and it rules out using them in the Middle East, where will it use them? That's a frightening question.

Source: *The Washington Times*.

Contributor: Cecil E. Maramville

“TWO MEN,” (Continued from page 16)

distance to a small army post. It struck me that the presence of this small fort says, “We are here; come no further.” On this small ragged bluff, 15 young men stand ready to thwart any incursion from neighboring Burma.

A young officer came out to see what the commotion was all about. Our Thai-speaking host asked the officer if we might walk up to the outskirts of the border outpost, which is lined with sand-bagged trenches and bunkers, and have a look. Before and below the one lone soldier on duty was a deep mountain ravine, and a couple of hundred yards across



Photos courtesy Robin Webber

Before and below the one lone soldier on duty was a deep mountain ravine, and a couple of hundred yards across the ravine was another fort with an identically situated young sentry . . . Something is terribly wrong here.

the ravine was another fort with an identically situated young sentry. Two nations, two forts, two men, one valley—all come together in tropical paradise.

Something is terribly wrong here.

As we look through a pair of military binoculars, we see a Burmese soldier staring at us through his binoculars. As close as we are, we remain worlds apart and unable to meet each other.

I began to think how often in a day, every day, every month, every year and every decade do the two solitary sentries of Burma and Thailand stand alone, occasionally observing one another through their binoculars.

They simply wait and stare

Do you suppose they ever consider what the other is thinking? Where he is from? Is he married? Does he have a family?

They arise to the same sun, breathe the same mountain air,

feel the chill of the morning and the same noontime warmth of tropical sun. They hear the same birds as they soar and dive into the valley before them. They get wet from the same thundercloud and see the same rainbows. But they only know one another by fixed stares through binoculars. Two men of Asia, alone, in a valley. They do not speak. They do not move forward. They simply wait and stare.

There are so many other valleys where other men face each other, standing guard. Valleys in Pakistan, India, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, as well as the urban canyons of Belfast, Medellin and Hebron.

In the aftermath of World War I, Erich Maria Remarque wrote an epic antiwar novel titled *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It is the story of young German lads who gladly go off to serve the Fatherland thinking that they will shortly return to finish school and life will go on just like it was before. But they soon come to understand the ever-so-true maxim of “war never leaves a nation where it found it.” They are about to meet the enemy in the close quarters of battle, and they find the enemy is the same as they are.

A man just like me

The pivotal point of the book is when the main character, young Paul Baumer, meets the other side. Pinned down in a foxhole with machine-gun bullets whizzing overhead, he sits and waits, hoping against hope that the enemy will pass by. In a brief but brutal hand-to-hand combat with an enemy soldier, Baumer mortally wounds him. His victim dies slowly, and the victor reflects on how much like himself the dying man is.

“If only he had run two yards farther to the left, he might now be sitting in the trench over there and writing a fresh letter to his wife . . . The silence spreads. I talk and must talk. So I speak to him and say to him: ‘Comrade, I did not want to kill you. If you jumped in here again, I would not do it, if you would be sensible too. But you were an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. It was that abstraction I stabbed. But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship.

“‘Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are just poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony—Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy? If we threw away these rifles and this uniform you could be my brother just like Kat and Albert. Take twenty years of my life, comrade and stand up—take more, for I do not know what I can even attempt to do with it now’” (1929, p. 227).

Remarque wrote this over 70 years ago, but it might as well be today.

The Sun of Righteousness shall arise

As we walk away from the bunkers and trenches, 15 of Thailand’s native sons slowly lower the Thai colors to the singing of the national anthem. It is getting darker by the second as I look over the forest to the sun going down over the

hills of Burma just yards away. I think to myself that the exact same ceremony is playing out just across the valley with another group of young men, another flag and another song. There is a greater shadow lurking here than that cast by the men guarding the sovereignty of two nations. It is the darkness of human nature left to its own devices.

Nearly 50 years ago, the Cold War statesman John Foster Dulles put it so well when he stated, "The world will never have lasting peace so long as men reserve for war the finest human qualities." We often equate peace as being "the absence of conflict," rather than the true peace that comes by the presence of workable solutions. As the Thai flag went down with the sun, I could not but sense the need for another light to arise and shine on these two men of Asia, and the humble village and the beautiful farming valley below.

Malachi's words came to mind: "But to you who fear my name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (4:2). The healing that Jesus Christ, the ultimate Light of this world, is going to bring is more than a temporary cessation of hostilities between age-old enemies. It is the way to permanent peace through God's Spirit. Only Christ's way will reverse mankind's shameless record of but 300 years of recorded peace in over 6,000 years of recorded history.

What enables the vision of Micah, cited in the beginning? In his words: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not raise sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (4:3). A change of heart makes it possible for this marvelous image to become reality.

Put down those binoculars

Sitting in the dark with my wife, as our host drove down the long and winding roads to the flatland below, I turned over again and again in my head how often I've been in the dark when it comes to what I can control. I'm not responsible for the Thai and Burmese people at this time. God will have to deal with them and the rest of the world.

But I, too, have so often maintained a "binocular mentality" of simply standing and staring at another person from a distance. There I stand as I wonder and ponder his every movement

over the same valley of bloodline, beliefs or shared experience. There I stand simply holding my ground, rather than putting down the binoculars to gain a wider perspective of what needs to happen. And what is needed is to "wage peace" with real answers, rather than war with all my good excuses.

Do you have binoculars like mine? Maybe it's time to put them down, and start walking down into the valley never walked before, towards that person who is really a lot like you. It is then we demonstrate the encouraging refrain found in Isaiah 30:21, "This is the way, walk in it." ❖



Smiling and curious children were seemingly everywhere . . . Immediately, we were "buddies," even though we couldn't speak a word of their tongue.

"EMPIRE," (Continued from page 6)

so necessitated a major U.S. presence in central Asian republics. American troops entered the Philippines to remove militant forces allied with al Qaeda.

Within weeks, it seems likely that American troops will enter Iraq to effect a regime change. As in Afghanistan, America will have to maintain a long-term presence to insure that a new government will have the chance to take root and grow. All this will require a commitment that will test the limits of the American political and social fabric.

A recent analysis by Stratfor raised this point. "The United States is taking control of countries throughout the world, bringing benefits and making threats. But the United States has no theory of empire. How can a democratic republic and an empire coincide? The issue is not whether this should happen. It is happening. The real issue, apart from how this plays out, is what effect it will have on the United States as a whole. A global empire whose center is unsure of its identity, its purposes and its moral justification is an empire with a center that might not hold" (www.Stratfor.com, "The American Empire," June 2002).

How long will this empire last? Will this generation be willing to pay the price and bear the burden to maintain the freedom and security it has come to expect? Already the wave of patriotism in the wake of 9/11 is waning. Another attack on American soil—certain to occur—will undoubtedly test the moral character of the country again.

The real question for America is how long God's blessing and sustaining hand will be with its efforts. How long will the presence of God remain behind the promise made to Abraham and his descendants?

The key to understanding America's position as world superpower is that its wealth and resources come directly from the hand of God. This key determines the future of the nation. America is rich and powerful because of God's blessing. It will continue as long as God upholds the agreement made long ago to forgotten ancestors.

It is not an eagle that watches over the republic described by Benjamin Franklin. An angel of God rides in the storm that swirls over the United States. As long as it remains in place, America will continue to exist as a benevolent empire. When, because of sins against God, He removes His protection, the whirlwind of tribulation will descend, and the empire will be no more. ❖



This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

Two Men and a Valley

In a world away and a lifetime apart from most of us, there lies a small and delicate valley tucked away into the steep and gorgeous hill country between Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). There above the jungle-clad slopes, punctuated with picturesque rice paddies filtering down to quaint tribal villages below, stand two young men of Asia who have never spoken to one another. In fact, they have never met. They merely know one another from afar.

This is their story. This is the story of so many young men who have put on the uniforms of their respective countries. And, it touches a truth in our lives.

Recently, my wife and I traveled to Thailand to take part in a Christian leadership training program for local leaders who serve tribal groups and refugee camps in northern Thailand and Burma. After the seminar was completed, we went about three hours north of Chiang Mai, Thailand, towards our intended destination, the Royal Agricultural Project, which hovers in the shadows of the Burmese border.

Here, nearly 30 years ago, the current monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, invested his royal prestige and influence in developing a project that would teach the highland people how to turn from the cash crop of opium to farming profitable long-term crops. This was quite an undertaking and transformation of an entire mind-set. These local residents had to overcome the very real pulls of “cashing” in on the profitable drug trade of exporting opium.

A cloud over Shangri-la

As we came over the horizon and looked down on the royal project, thoughts of “Shangri-la” flooded my mind.

The luscious green slopes eased down to neatly tended farmland of orchards, meticulously planted rows of vegetables and greenhouses full of produce. The locals seemed happy and content. It was a joy just meandering through such a renaissance atmosphere of transformation and renewal. I saw a small type of the biblical prophet Micah’s millennial vision: “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:4).

My mind snapped back to the present as our hosts then mentioned to us, “Burma is right there!” My eyes slowly traveled away from the valley floor up the slopes opposite where we had come. Suddenly a feeling of foreboding clambered through me. The Thai and Burmese people have been at loggerheads for centuries. Oftentimes, the border area is shut down due to political rivalries, ethnic tensions or military operations. Suddenly, Shangri-la had a cloud over it.

An hour later, we were in a quaint village of tribal hill people whose lifestyle remains the same as it has been for many centuries. Their village rests on a thin rim of mountain strand looking down on curving slopes streaming down to the flatlands below. Chickens strutted across the road and piglets scampered across the gravelly stretch in front of us in search of their next whimsical adventure. Smiling and curious children were seemingly everywhere, and we walked up and down the streets with them. Immediately, we were “buddies,” even though we couldn’t speak a word of their tongue.

We are here; come no further

The placidity melted, as we moved up the road a short
(See “TWO MEN,” page 14)