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Praying More Than Ever, "Thy Kingdom Come"

In this Nov. 22 letter E-mailed to United Church of God elders, Roy Holladay, president of the United Church of God, discussed many issues that we feel would benefit our subscribers.

by Roy Holladay

It has been more than a year since the world, and especially the United States, received the rude awakening that we now simply call "9/11." While there were political, military and economic tensions before the events of that day, the collapse of the World Trade Center towers and the attack on the Pentagon provoked a new level of unrest, changing passive confrontation between Western nations and supporters of terrorism into active conflict.

As we watch world affairs (Matthew 16:1-3) and maintain a sober vigilance of our spiritual condition (Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:35-40), it is important that we realize the impact of such events and what they could mean for the future, in light of biblical prophecy.

The price for the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, has been high—and it continues to rise. Here are some of the costs of this one event:

- The estimated losses for New York City in 2002 will be \$1.6 billion.
- The estimated losses for the state of New York in 2002 will also be \$1.6 billion.
- Combined estimated losses for the city and state in 2003 will be approximately \$5.8 billion.
- Airlines have absorbed billions of dollars in losses during the past 14 months.
- A newly released report estimates that the cost to the U.S. national econo-

my of these terrorist attacks will reach \$639.3 billion, with a loss of two million



Reuters/Peter Morgan

The price for the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, has been high—and it continues to rise.

jobs. Financial damage will be at least twice that of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the previous most costly U.S. disaster.

All of this from the precisely targeted terrorist attacks of 9/11! What would be the results if several more coordinat-

(See "PRAYING," page 3)



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Will One Good Man Stand Up?

As we build toward what seems an inevitable war with Iraq, there is one thought which still bothers me. Must the innocent die with the guilty? Saddam Hussein's malicious reign of terror has been well documented. He has gassed his own people to stay in power. Tens of thousands died during his ill-fated war with Iran. This brutal dictator has even killed members of his family to maintain power.

But what about the many Iraqis who suffered and continue to suffer under this tyrant? Indications are that the majority of people aren't like Saddam and his henchmen, but are powerless to do anything. It is certain that any level of war to come will kill and wound many thousands of innocents who would rather live their lives productively, in peace. Are there not 10 good Iraqis who will stand up and reveal what the West is searching for, the weapons of mass destruction? How about one person?

A recent column by *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman speculates that it would take only a small number of well-informed Iraqis to reveal locations of weapons targeted by the United Nations weapons inspectors currently in the country. With that knowledge, Friedman speculates, a less expensive and less bloody solution could be achieved in Iraq.

The column cited Middle East expert Stephen P. Cohen, who said, "In the past year we've seen Arab extremists risking their lives to attack others—is there one Arab democrat willing to risk his life to save his own country?"

It's like when God told Abraham He would not destroy Sodom if He could find just 10 good men there. "Are there 10 Iraqi refuseniks who dare to say, 'Enough is enough,' and will whisper to [Hans] Blix the truth? Is there one?"

When Abraham learned God was to destroy Sodom, he openly questioned God about the seeming injustice of the action. "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). In the case of Sodom, not even 10 righteous men could be found to spare the city. In the end, God destroyed it by fire.

God's justice has been questioned many times since Sodom. Does God stand idly by while the innocent are ground into the dust by the wicked? Where is justice in Iraq? God is a righteous judge. For the sake of even one righteous person, He will make every effort to show mercy and pardon. At another time in another place, another man, Noah, stood out as righteous in the midst of universal unrighteousness. In the days of Noah, when the earth was filled with wickedness, the Bible says that Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). Eight people, all members of Noah's family, survived this cataclysm. Sometimes all it takes is one.

Christ showed that at yet another time and place—this one in the future—He will spare mankind again for the sake of a few righteous. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). The elect are the people of God, who are called, chosen and faithful to the truth. For their sakes, He says He will not annihilate humanity.

Perhaps a few good people could avert the looming crisis in Iraq. We pray to God that would happen. Regardless of whether an Iraqi war occurs, lasting peace will not exist until Christ intervenes to restore universal justice among the nations. Then we will see the blessing of the work of one good Man upon the entire world.

—Darris McNeely

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“PRAYING,” (Continued from page 1)

ed attacks occurred at key military and financial locations?

The Bible warns us that times will certainly become worse before we see a turnaround with the return of Christ. Jesus stated in Matthew 24:6-8, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” Paul wrote Timothy that “perilous” or stressful times would come (2 Timothy 3:1).

The sniper attacks in the Washington, D.C., area also had their negative effects in creating an environment of fear and panic in that area. Again, what would happen if there were coordinated sniper attacks in many big cities, airports, schools and public buildings? Air traffic would shut down. Schools would close. People would be afraid to go about their daily business. The possible economic effects would be staggering.

Daniel foretold a time of trouble “such as never was since there was a nation” (Daniel 12:1). In Jeremiah 30:4-7 we read of Jacob’s trouble, that there will never be a time like it. Modern-day Israel—primarily the United States and Britain but also all the descendants of the scattered tribes—are heading to a time of increasing calamity. Perhaps in the events of recent months we are beginning to get a clearer picture of how that might take place. We may be seeing the beginning of Jacob’s trouble.

Leviticus 26 remains an important chapter of the Bible to consider as we observe world events. In this chapter, God lists the blessings that Israel would receive for obeying Him—and the curses if it did not. The blessings are generous, and we in the United States and other Western countries have been the recipients of the promises to Abraham.

Verses 3-4, 6 and 8 read as follows: “If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit . . . I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid . . . Five of



Sniper search: Officers search car in which John Allen Muhammad and John Lee Malvo were found Oct. 24, ending weeks of fear and panic. What would happen if there were more coordinated sniper attacks? (Reuters/Brendan McDermid)

you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.”

Prosperity comes when a nation follows God. We will reap what we have sown.

In the United States, we recently celebrated the national holiday of Thanksgiving. The early settlers realized that the bounty and blessings they were able to enjoy were because of God’s hand. This observance is an annual reminder that every good thing comes from God. Of course, we as Christians know we need to thank God on a regular basis, remembering His mercy and gifts to us. As our ways please Him, those blessings will continue—individually and nationally. An important part of us remembering God is to thank Him for what He has given us personally and collectively as a nation.

We also have much to be grateful for spiritually. Certainly the promise of the Kingdom gives us reassurance and a confident outlook, despite the troubling times in which we live. The Kingdom of God will eventually replace all kings and national governments (Daniel 2:31-45; 7:13-18, 22, 26-27) and we will be direct-

ly involved in that Kingdom! In the meantime, we have the privilege (Mark 16:15-16) of bringing hope to others that—despite the current traumas—a better time is coming, and will last for eternity.

Continuing in Leviticus 26, we read that curses follow disobedience. We read the following later in the chapter: “But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments . . . I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you . . .

“I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:14, 16-17, 19-20).

In areas of health, economics, weather and military strength, people will suffer if not obedient to God. As we have seen with the events of Sept. 11, 2001, a

catastrophe in one area can produce domino effects in other areas.

Let us consider for a moment the phrase, “You shall flee when no one pursues you.” We may have asked ourselves in the past how this could happen—especially in the United States with the strongest military in the world. The terrorist and sniper attacks in the past months have given us a possible answer. Even though no army was threatening America’s borders, people in America’s capital were afraid to do their normal travel for a period of time. Again—what would happen with multiple attacks in sensitive areas?

There are a couple of other aspects that we as Christians need to be aware of from such events. One is the fragility of our society. For all of the economic might of the Western world, it is also fragile. Just a few events could send our economy into a tailspin. It would not take much for the world to experience a full-blown economic and military crisis.

Another is how quickly major changes can come. “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Literally within minutes on Sept. 11, the world became a different place. It behooves us to always be watchful and ready (verses 4-8).

Other headlines underline the fact that we are living in times of stress, and that any number of events could trigger a major crisis on the world scene. Some recent ones are:

- “FBI Warns of Risk of al-Qaida Attack.”
- “U.S. Braces for Execution Reprisals.”
- “Europeans Warn of Terror Attacks.”
- “Russia Says Nuclear Material Missing.”

Another trend to be aware of in these events is religious tension. Fanatical fervor in the name of Islam has been behind most of the terrorist activity. These include the events of Sept. 11, the later attempt to blow up a U.S. airliner, the shootings at the Los Angeles airport, the hostage crisis in a Moscow theater, the bombing of a French tanker and the bombing of a nightclub in Bali.

Obviously these were extremists, per-

forming radical acts. However, conflicts between Jews, Christians and Muslims have a long history that has been more or less active in the 20th century. With the Middle East, especially Jerusalem, home to some of the most sacred sites of all three beliefs, we can expect to continue to see strife and violence in the name of religion.

In our lifetime, most religious armed conflict in the Middle East has not directly involved Christianity. Is that trend in the process of changing? On Oct. 18, 2002, the Charisma News Service reported that a leading Muslim cleric from Iran had called for the death of Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham and Pat Robertson.

The *Catholic World News* reported on Nov. 11, 2002: “Vatican officials point out, however, that there were credible threats of an assassination against the [pope] in 1995, when he visited the Philippines for World Youth Day. Officials acknowledge that U.S. intelligence agents warned of an al-Qaida plan directed by Osama bin Laden, prompting tight security precautions.” How would Europe, South America and other heavily Catholic countries react if such an attempt were ever successful?

Speaking of Europe, the terrorist events of the last several months have widened the philosophical gap between America and its (for now) European allies. Europe, especially Germany, is nervous about America’s desire to remove Saddam Hussein with force. In fact, in recent German national elections, Chancellor Schröder made it his election platform that Germany would not support an invasion of Iraq.

In the November 2002 *World News and Prophecy*, Melvin Rhodes wrote an insightful article titled “The Coming Clash Between Europe and America.” Mr. Rhodes highlighted key facts in current U.S.-European relations, including Europe’s distrust of America’s foreign policy, trade disputes and Europe’s criticism of America’s environmental practices. Many Europeans chafe over the military and economic might of the United States, realizing that there is not much they can do about it.

All of these are just initial indicators of stress between these two powers. We read in Revelation 17:12-14 about a coming beast-power, and nations giving their

power to the beast. We don’t know when that will occur in its final form, but clearly, the foundation is taking shape.

What does all of this mean for you and me? The Scriptures give us direction as we head into these unsettling times (emphasis added throughout).

- Revelation 3:10-11: “Because you have kept My command to *persevere*, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*”

- Luke 21:34-36: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *that Day come on you unexpectedly*. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. *Watch therefore, and pray always* that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and *to stand before the Son of Man.*”

- Matthew 24:32-33, 44, 46: “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, *when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors!* . . . Therefore you also *be ready*, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect . . . Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, *will find so doing.*”

Above all, we need to be close to our Heavenly Father in prayer. We need to pray that His Kingdom will come soon (Matthew 6:10). We need to pray that we will be able to do the work of the Church in peace, for as long as He wills (1 Timothy 2:1-4). We need to pray for the strength and perseverance to endure the times that are coming upon this world. God has promised us protection, and we will receive that deliverance by remaining dedicated to Him and seeking first His Kingdom.

The great news, of course, that we always emphasize is that after these terrible events, Jesus Christ will return to rule the earth! That is the only real hope for mankind, and that is our confidence and joy as we observe world events. May God speed the day of Christ’s coming and the establishment of His government on earth. ❖

Bin Laden's Letter Offers Insight Into Islamic Fundamentalism

Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America" emphasizes the role religion plays in the growing conflict between Islam and Western secularism.

by Melvin Rhodes

A discussion on National Public Radio's (NPR) *Diane Rehm Show* (Nov. 26, 2002) included a remarkable comment that the conflicts in the Middle East had nothing to do with religion. The speaker went on to say that not even Osama bin Laden has brought religion into it.

Perhaps he should have read the full text of Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America" before contributing to the program. The full text in English, translated from the original Arabic, could have been downloaded from *The London Observer* newspaper's Web site two days earlier, Sunday, Nov. 24.

Why this has not been read out in full on U.S. television or radio stations is a mystery, as it is likely to impact Americans more than any other news item of the year. Ironically, the previous day's *Diane Rehm Show* focused on media shortcomings and the declining standards in covering "hard news," with most news programs offering confrontational news-based programs (described as "entertainment" by one participant on the show) rather than a more serious analysis of the major issues.

Bin Laden's letter makes for chilling reading. If the threats contained in it are carried out, then America is set for more 9/11s. It says in part, "If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall and economic bankruptcy."

The letter makes it absolutely clear that the grievances of Islamic fundamentalists have a great deal to do with religion. In fact, the word *religion* is mentioned 17 times. In addition, there are multiple references to Islam, Islamic Sharia law and Allah, the Islamic name for God.

Some of the statements made are inaccurate. The United States is blamed for starting the AIDS



Reuters

Bin Laden's letter makes for chilling reading. If the threats contained in it are carried out, then America is set for more 9/11s.

epidemic, which most likely began in Africa. America is charged with supporting "Russian atrocities . . . in Chechnya, the Indian oppression against [Muslims] in Kashmir . . ." The Israelis are accused of aiming to destroy the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

But other points made are correct: "You separate religion from your policies." Not only does the Bush administration do this, but clearly, contributors to NPR do too. In truth, this statement gets to the crux of the whole dispute—religion in the West is very much a private affair. Most peoples' religious observance is confined to an hour on Sunday mornings and a few popular annual

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holidays. In stark contrast, religion plays a major role in Islamic countries. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Islam and Western secular liberalism are incompatible. If there have been any doubts about this, Osama bin Laden's letter makes it clear—except that so little attention has been given to it!

“Why are we fighting you?”

Two questions are directed at Americans. “Why are we fighting and opposing you?” is the first. The second follows: “What are we calling you to do, and what do we want from you?”

The answer to the first question is: “Because you attacked us and continue to attack us.” Explaining, bin Laden adds: “You attacked us in Palestine. Palestine, which has sunk under military occupation for 80 years.” This is a reference to the occupation of Palestine by British troops in December 1917 after four centuries of rule by the Ottoman Turks. Although not

yet tired of repeating your fabricated lies that the Jews have a historical right to Palestine, as it was promised to them in the Torah. Anyone who disputes with them on this alleged fact is accused of anti-Semitism. This is one of the most fallacious, widely-circulated fabrications in history. The people of Palestine are pure Arabs and original Semites. It is the Muslims who are the inheritors of Moses (peace be upon him) and the inheritors of the real Torah that has not been changed . . . If the followers of Moses have been promised a right to Palestine in the Torah, then the Muslims are the most worthy nation of this.”

Clearly, in the mind of Osama bin Laden and other Islamic fundamentalists, the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict goes right back to Abraham's two sons, Isaac (ancestor of the Israelites) and Ishmael (ancestor of the Arabs). The background to this is recorded in the book of Genesis, chapters 16 to 21. History from

Bin Laden's demands are clear. All Americans must convert to Islam if there is to be peace. Israel must also cease to exist. Americans must change their entire way of life, ending their dependency on cheap oil and their over-consumption of it.

Arabs, the Turks were Muslims, which made their rule more acceptable. The presence of Westerners in Palestine is offensive to Muslims. The Israelis are seen as Western colonizers continuing the British, French and American occupations of the Middle East.

Continuing: “The British handed over Palestine, with your help and your support, to the Jews, who have occupied it for more than 50 years; years overflowing with oppression, tyranny, crimes, killing, expulsion, destruction and devastation. The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you are the leaders of its criminals. And of course there is no need to explain and prove the degree of American support for Israel. The creation of Israel is a crime which must be erased. Each and every person whose hands have become polluted in the contribution towards this crime must pay its price, and pay for it heavily.”

Bin Laden continues with an interesting perspective on history. “It brings us laughter and tears to see that you have not

4,000 years ago directly affects us today.

Criticisms of the United States

While there is insufficient space to quote all of the criticisms directed at the United States, the following are highlights:

“You steal our wealth and oil at paltry prices because of your international influence and military threats. This theft is indeed the biggest theft ever witnessed by mankind in the history of the world.

“Your forces occupy our countries; you spread your military bases throughout them; you corrupt our lands and you besiege our sanctities, to protect the security of the Jews and to ensure the continuity of your pillage of our treasures.

“You have starved the Muslims of Iraq, where children die every day. It is a wonder that more than 1.5 million Iraqi children have died as a result of your sanctions, and you did not show concern. Yet when 3,000 of your people died, the entire world rises and has not sat down.”

Bin Laden then warns Americans of the consequences.

Threatens all American citizens

At this point, it should also be made clear that bin Laden says the blame for all this does not lie with the U.S. government, but rather with the people. Reasoning that America is a democracy whose government is chosen by the people, bin Laden concludes that the American people are responsible.

“Therefore, the American people are the ones who choose their government by way of their own free will; a choice which stems from their agreement to its policies . . . The American people are the ones who pay the taxes which fund the planes that bomb us in Afghanistan, the tanks that strike and destroy our homes in Palestine, the armies which occupy our lands in the Arabian Gulf, and the fleets which ensure the blockade of Iraq . . . Also the American army is part of the American people . . .”

“If we are attacked, then we have the right to fight back. Whoever has destroyed our villages and towns, then we have the right to destroy their villages and towns. Whoever has stolen our wealth, then we have the right to destroy their economy. And whoever has killed our civilians, then we have the right to kill theirs.”

Osama then comes to the second question: “What are we calling you to do, and what do we want from you?”

Wants Americans to convert to Islam

Answer number 1? “The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam.” Why is it that so few in the West see the religious dimension here? “It is to this religion that we call you; the seal of all the previous religions . . .” And if Americans refuse to convert to Islam? Islam, states bin Laden, “is the religion of Jihad (holy war) in the way of Allah so that Allah's word and religion reign Supreme . . .”

Bin Laden's demands are clear. Americans, all Americans, must convert to Islam if there is to be peace. Israel must also cease to exist. Additionally, Americans must change their entire way of life, ending their dependency on cheap oil and their over-consumption of it.

America's catalog of sins

The “Letter to America” then catalogs the sins of the American people, as perceived by Islamic fundamentalists. Is this

(See “BIN LADEN,” page 9)

Troubling Times for Three British Institutions!

“Even I never dreamed of a moment in history when the Tory [Conservative] Party, the Monarchy, and the Church would be locked in internecine battles at the same time” (Joan Smith, Independent on Sunday columnist).

by John Ross Schroeder

A nation’s fabric is made up of its major institutions—religious, political, governmental and cultural. Human institutions help keep order and foster needed cohesion in any country. They are essential to the structural framework of any significant political/geographical entity.

Yet in 2002, Britain has been rocked by highly questionable behavior in three of its most venerated national institutions: the Anglican Church, the Conservative Party and the British Royal House of Windsor. In this article, we will examine and analyze the decline of these three major institutions with a view to what the future may portend.

Sharp divisions within the Anglican Church

The Times is one of the three or four best newspapers in Britain. Its roots reach back into the late 18th century. Ruth Gledhill is its respected religion correspondent. She wrote in a major feature article: “The Church of England is in ‘meltdown’ with thousands of churches facing closure and many dioceses disappearing by 2030, according to a report by Anglican researchers published today” (Oct. 30, 2002).

Ms. Gledhill further depicted the plight of the Anglican Church as a “demographic time bomb.” While adult attendance is in marked decline, child attendance may be described as in free fall. She strongly stated that “the Church must urgently formulate a strategy to counter the decline if it is to survive.”

All institutions are composed of fallible human beings, subject to the vagaries of human nature. We understand that. Division is a natural trait and must be actively countered by bold leadership and sound decision making. Currently, the most divisive issue in the Anglican Church is its ambiguous position on homosexuality.

As *The Economist* (Sept. 21, 2002) reported: “The new Archbishop of Canterbury takes a soft

line on homosexuality that also infuriates traditionalists. This week the outgoing Archbishop, George Carey, warned of a split in the Church if Mr. Williams continues to support reforms that would, for example, allow the ordination of openly gay men to the priesthood, or the blessing of homosexual marriages.”

Over the last two months the situation has worsened. *The Sunday Times* (Nov. 24, 2002) reported that “Rowan Williams, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, believes that there could be a place for practicing gay priests in the Church of England . . . Williams has stated that the Church should reconsider its ban on the ordination of active homosexuals.” Moreover, he recently said, “The question of the Church approving of active gay relationships has to be an open question . . . There are ways of looking at the Bible which allow the question to be raised.”

Is homosexuality wrong?

According to this same article, “He believes Christian morality does not necessarily lay down that same-sex relationships are sin for priests.” It gets worse! In spite of the current ban on gay ordinations, this *Sunday Times* feature article said: “As many as 1,000 of the Church’s full-time clergy are thought to be gay, sometimes describing their companions as ‘lodgers.’”

Years ago this reporter had occasion to interview a member of the Anglican priesthood by telephone and this particular priest admitted he was a practicing homosexual without even being asked about it. Further, although forbidden by canon law, hundreds of same-sex relationships between lay members have been quietly blessed by some vicars (see *Sunday Telegraph* article, “Church Law Defied as Vicars Bless Hundreds of Gay Couples a Year,” Oct. 20, 2002).

To his credit, Richard Chartres, bishop of London, recently warned gay clergy in his diocese to cease their homosexual relationships

Some of the major institutions that helped build Britain find themselves in very serious straits, simultaneously.

or face disciplinary action. Also, William Taylor, rector of Bishopsgate in the city of London said, “Dr. Williams’ views were immoral and divisive” (*The Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 14, 2002).

Sadly, still another article in *The Sunday Times* (Nov. 3, 2002) reported: “Williams recently reiterated his belief that he could find nothing in the Bible to support the idea that homosexuality was sinful.”

Ironically, the secular *Economist* has a much clearer view of this aberrant behavior.

It said: “The real difficulty for the Church [of England] is that *homosexuality*, like all sex outside marriage, is *explicitly condemned in the Bible*. For many believers, abandoning that position for something more pragmatic seems a painful retreat into uncertainty” (Sept.

ters. So far, various efforts at recovery have been thwarted.

After John Major succeeded Mrs. Thatcher as prime minister for several years, shadow party leadership passed to William Hague in 1997. And although he tried his level best, he was eventually hounded from the post. His replacement,

big time, producing fresh calls for his removal from leadership.

Regardless of motive, from a biblical point of view, this shadow Conservative Party leader deserves praise for upholding traditional family values by objecting to unmarrieds and gays adopting children. Yet much of the British press roundly condemned him for his politically incorrect views.

The Economist summed up the present and perhaps future plight of the Conservatives: “The real problem facing the Tory Party is not that it will lose its relevance—there remains in Britain a large centre-right constituency that cannot be redefined or represented by New Labour [presently in power], let alone by the Liberal Democrats. Instead, the danger is that it will lose its talent and its will to live. The signs of that happening are already there” (ibid.).

The Royal House of Windsor

Most are well aware of the tragic troubles that have plagued the British royal family for the last 12 years. Many of these stubborn difficulties revolved around Diana, former princess of Wales (1961-1997). More than five years after



Big Ben and Parliament

Iain Duncan Smith, fared no better. In fact, *The Economist* recently described him “as the most isolated leader of the party ever.”

Mr. Duncan Smith is torn between “modernizers” who criticize him continually for not being much more progressive and traditionalists who want him to hold firmly to the values of the past. Interestingly enough, homosexuality became a factor in the latest crisis. *The Economist* tells how he was recently ambushed over a “politically insignificant bill to allow unmarried couples, including homosexuals, to adopt children” (Nov. 9, 2002).

In trying to persuade his fellow Conservative MPs (using perhaps the most extreme form of Commons’ party discipline) to vote against this controversial measure, Duncan Smith thought he would be backed for demonstrating his support for traditional Tory values. It backfired! Many Conservative MPs either voted for the bill or abstained.

Mr. Duncan Smith swiftly reacted by calling a press conference attacking “party plotters” for rebelling against his leadership, warning that the Tory Party could either “unite or die.” This move backfired



Gates of Buckingham Palace

her untimely death, her residual presence still haunts the House of Windsor. After a promising eight months marked by very successful jubilee celebrations, 2002 has proved to be yet another *annus horribilis* for the queen.

The Wall Street Journal Europe summed up the latest crisis to beset the British monarchy: “It is dizzying keeping track of all the axes grinding away both upstairs and downstairs, inside the royal

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Canterbury Cathedral

21, 2002, emphasis added).

The Anglican Church is troubled by many other problems, but abandoning the obvious biblical injunctions against homosexuality remains potentially the most damaging to reputation, clergy and congregation—and may possibly cause a major split.

The beleaguered Conservative Party

Ever since the party elite ousted Margaret Thatcher in 1990, the Conservatives (or Tories) have been troubled by serious leadership problems. Their one-sided defeats in the last two national elections (perhaps due in no small measure to the Tory Party’s growing reputation during the 1990s for embarrassing financial and sexual scandals among Tory members of Parliament [MPs]) were so overwhelming in numbers as to leave this historic party in tat-

palace and outside” (Nov. 13, 2002). Diana’s former butler transported many of the princess’s personal effects to his own home. When found out, a very expensive litigation soon followed. But the queen bailed the butler out in dramatic fashion, explaining that he had informed her of his intentions to preserve and protect Diana’s mementos. The prosecution’s case collapsed and the revelation halted the trial in its tracks.

The immediate spin-off has proved highly damaging to the royal image and media tabloids are having a field day. In addition to allegations of irregular handling of corporate gifts and other ethics violations, homosexuality entered the picture. A male rape among royal manservants was alleged, and although the accused said the incident was consensual, the presence of homosexuality in the royal palace seems undisputed.

Reacting to the current royal crisis, *The Economist* stated, “The feeling that the monarchy has degenerated into a loosely plotted soap-opera is growing. If the viewers get tired or irritated, they may switch off” (Nov. 9, 2002).

Three venerable British institutions

As well it might, *The Economist* observed, “There is an interesting but superficial comparison between Windsor’s plight and that of other similarly venerable but mismanaged outfits—the Tory Party, Oxford University and the Church of England” (Nov. 16, 2002). In light of today’s realities, the comparison is not so superficial. Some of the major institutions that helped build Britain find themselves in very serious straits, *simultaneously*.

To comprehend the significance of what is now happening to Britain and why, you need to understand the intriguing history of the grand old British race. The United Church of God publishes a free, full-color brochure that explains the interesting origins of Britain—why God uniquely blessed the nation with past glories and also why He is allowing deep troubles for the country now. After experiencing some troublous times, the nation will yet have a glorious future.

Please request a free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

“BIN LADEN,” (Continued from page 6)

a minority opinion among Muslims? “If you go around the Muslim world, you will find the vast majority of people will support Osama bin Laden,” said the Saudi ambassador to London in an interview given to the British *Spectator* magazine (Sept. 7, 2002). Ghazi Algosaiibi said of Britain: “Has it not occurred to you that what goes on in this country is abhorrent to Muslims?” The same could be said of the United States as bin Laden’s letter makes clear.

Here are some of the charges the letter makes against America:

“You . . . choose to invent your own laws as you will and desire [instead of the law of Islam, Sharia]. You separate religion from your policies, contradicting the pure nature which affirms Absolute Authority to the Lord and your Creator . . .

“You are a nation that permits the production, trading and usage of intoxicants. You also permit drugs, and only forbid the trade of them, even though your nation is the largest consumer of them . . .

“You are a nation that permits acts of immorality, and you consider them to be pillars of personal freedom . . . Who can forget your President Clinton’s immoral acts committed in the Oval Office? After that you did not even bring him to account, other than that ‘he made a mistake,’ after which everything passed with no punishment. Is there a worse kind of event for which your name will go down in history and be remembered by nations?

“You are a nation that permits gambling in all forms . . .

“You are a nation that exploits women like consumer products . . . You then rant that you support the liberation of women.

“You are a nation that practices the trade of sex in all its forms, directly and indirectly . . .

“Your law is the law of the rich and wealthy people, who hold sway in their political parties, and fund their election campaigns with their gifts.”

A new America—no longer under God

Interestingly, most of the above criticisms of America could not have been made 50 years ago, before the secular, lib-

eral reforms of the 1960s and ’70s. Prior to that time, the laws of the United States of America were based on the Ten Commandments, the law of God given to the Israelites through Moses. At that time, America was highly respected in the world and was looked to as a nation of hope in a world of darkness. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Osama bin Laden’s letter should help Americans to understand contributory factors that have led to international hatred and disrespect for the United States. Perhaps this explains why America’s overwhelmingly liberal media have chosen not to highlight this letter, which shows the consequences of all the liberal reforms of the last four decades.

The creation of the nation of Israel in 1948 was certainly a major turning point in relations between the nations of the region and the Western democracies. U.S. support for Israel is the primary reason for the seeming universal hatred of America throughout the Islamic world. U.S. cultural hegemony is another. American movies, television and music portray a decadent culture that has rejected God. Although many Americans themselves are critical of these developments, all Americans are paying a price. God’s Word shows that this would be the case.

In Deuteronomy chapter 28 we read of prophesied blessings and curses that would come upon the peoples of Israel (among whom are the American and British peoples) as a consequence of obedience or disobedience to God’s laws. “It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (verse 15).

Subsequent verses show that one of the consequences of rejecting God’s laws will be increased violence on an horrific scale. “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country . . . Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out” (verses 16 and 19).

Islamic fundamentalists are declaring themselves ready and able to administer those curses. Is it God’s time to allow them to happen? ❖

Excerpts From *Good News Radio*: The Great Disappointment

In American history it's known as "The Great Disappointment." In 1844 tens of thousands of people thought that Jesus Christ was returning to the earth in visible glory. Jesus didn't arrive and thousands were left disillusioned. Over the years many have proclaimed Christ's return. Does the Bible teach that Jesus is coming back to this earth?

by Gary Petty

The movement began in the late 1820s when William Miller, a Vermont farmer, began telling his neighbors that Jesus was arriving in 1843. After Miller shared his prophetic interpretations at a local church in 1831, his fame began to spread. In 1838 he published *Evidence From Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1843*. The Adventist movement was born.

William Miller lectured across New England where he met Joshua V. Hines, a Baptist minister and a whiz at publicity. He constructed prophetic charts outlining Miller's Advent calculations. Hines sponsored Millerite tent meetings throughout the Northeast and edited two religious magazines—the *Midnight Cry* in New York and *Signs of the Times* in Boston. Soon ministers, lay people and entire congregations were attracted to the hope of Christ's imminent return. By some estimates, more than 50,000 people became Adventists while as many as a million others showed interest in the second coming.

Eventually, William Miller claimed that Christ's second coming would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Needless to say, that period was an exciting and anxious time for the Adventists. Some people sold all their possessions. Others secluded themselves and spent their time preparing for Christ's coming.

The prophesied time came and Jesus didn't. In April 1844 Miller announced that he had made a mistake in calculating prophecy. Some Adventists reckoned new dates. They searched the Scriptures and concluded that Adventists were to "tarry," or wait, until Oct. 22, 1844. When that date also failed, many Adventists became disillusioned.

Over 150 years have passed since the "Great Disappointment." The people who knew William Miller and longed for their Savior's return have passed into history. The question that motivated them still remains: What does the Bible reveal about Christ's second coming?

Is Christ's second coming visible?

One of the most important prophecies is the outline Christ gave on the Mount of Olives in which He outlines the events preceding His return (Matthew 24:29-31).

Notice that Jesus says, "all the tribes of the earth . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds." Christ's second coming isn't secret or a figure of speech, meaning He comes into people's hearts. In verses 23 to 27 Jesus warns His followers against false claims that His return will be a hidden event. Clearly, all humanity will witness the wonder.

Where will Christ return?

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah was inspired to write, "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming . . . And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives" (Zechariah 14:1-4). Not only does the prophet show where Christ returns, but also that the world will fight the Messiah, instead of welcoming Him. "I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem," says the prophecy (verse 2).

After Jesus' resurrection He spent 40 days with His disciples. At the end of that time, He gathered them together to witness another miraculous event in salvation history. Two powerful angels appeared to them, telling them that Christ is going to visibly return to earth just as He visibly ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-12).

What His disciples witnessed pales in comparison to the glory and splendor of His second coming! And where were the disciples when Jesus ascended into heaven? In verse 12 Luke writes, "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem."

What is the reward of the saints?

In the Olivet Prophecy Jesus teaches that His return will be visible, and audible, accompanied with "a great sound of a trumpet" (Matthew 24:31).

Anyone who waits for the return of Christ, looking in the wrong place or at the wrong time, can suffer his or her own "Great Disappointment." But the Bible is clear about the fact that Christ is returning to set up His Father's Kingdom on the earth!

The apostle Paul writes about this trumpet sound in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, showing that God will resurrect the righteous dead and change the living Christians to spirit at the instant of the trumpet blast.

One of the most important tenets of Christianity is that Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, rose from the dead. Paul says, “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (verse 14). This resurrection at Christ’s return is the hope of those who accept Jesus as the Messiah.

The trumpet sound of Jesus’ Olivet Prophecy, and of Paul’s letter to the church at Thessalonica, corresponds with the last of the seven trumpet events foretold in the book of Revelation, which culminate in Christ’s return.

In Revelation 20:1-6 the apostle John was inspired to write of pivotal end-time events. This passage clearly shows that at the return of Christ, God resurrects the saints, binds Satan and the Messiah then rules on earth for 1,000 years. This prophetic time is often called the Millennium.

Where is the Messiah’s capital?

In the section of the Bible often called the Minor Prophets, the prophet Micah writes about the time when Christ establishes His Father’s government on earth, “Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [in Hebrew poetry, mountains and hills are symbols for kingdoms and nations], to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

Jesus will establish His capital in the city of Jerusalem, the city that has been the center of so much conflict and suffering over the centuries.

Micah continues, “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (verses 3-4).

Jesus Christ will begin to teach all peoples the way of peace and the law of God. Fear of crime, hunger and disease, and the scourge of war will begin to disappear from human experience. Using the nature of animals as an illustration, God inspired the prophet Isaiah to predict a world in which natural enemies live in peace with each other (Isaiah 11:6-9).

What will happen to Israel?

It wasn’t just William Miller’s establishment of dates that created such a commotion when he preached Christ’s imminent return in the 1840s. His concept of Christ’s return *before* the establishment of a millennial kingdom on the earth disagreed with the most common teaching of his day—amillennialism.

This interpretation views the Church as the Kingdom of God on earth with Christ ruling from heaven. Amillennialism promotes the idea that the 1,000 years of Revelation is a symbolic reference to the period of Satan’s influence on humanity and God’s work in the Church. When the Church finishes its work, Christ returns, the Kingdom of God is perfected, the resurrection occurs and the judgment takes place.

This interpretation tries to analogize some clear declarations of the Bible, especially the prophecies concerning Israel. According to amillennialism, the end-time prophecies concerning Israel are not literal, but rather apply to the New Testament Church.

Believing this idea requires that we believe that God was less than honest with the promises He made to the ancient Israelites. God inspired Ezekiel to write of a time when Judah and the lost tribes of Israel will reunite as one people.

God commanded Ezekiel to take two sticks and tie them together so that they became one. He was then to proclaim, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again’” (Ezekiel 37:21-22).

The passage goes on to explain that

this event will take place when David is king over Israel and all the world recognizes them as a special people of God. King David had been dead for many years at the time of Ezekiel.

In understanding biblical prophecy, it is important to determine when the passage is to be taken literally and when it is symbolic. In Ezekiel 37 the “sticks” are symbolic; Israel and Judah are the literal descendants of the ancient Israelites. Israel and Judah have not yet been united under the rulership of King David, who is in the grave awaiting the resurrection (Acts 2:29, 34).

The biblical return of Christ

What have we clearly been able to determine about Christ’s second coming from Scripture?

- Christ is going to visibly return to the Mount of Olives.
- There will be human resistance to Christ.
- The saints will be resurrected at His coming and rule with Him for 1,000 years.
- Satan will be bound.
- Physical people will still exist on the earth after His return. All nations will convert to the worship of the true God, and Christ’s reign will bring healing to the physical creation, peace and prosperity.
- Judah and Israel will be reunited under the reign of King David.

Anyone who waits for the return of Christ, looking in the wrong place or at the wrong time, can suffer his or her own “Great Disappointment.” The stresses and evil of the present world can cloud the biblical vision of God’s Kingdom.

Make no mistake about it! The Bible is clear about the fact that Christ is returning to set up His Father’s Kingdom on the earth! Christians must keep that hope alive, living every day with His return as the ultimate goal! With that hope deep in our hearts, no matter when He returns, we will be ready to meet Him when He appears in the clouds. ❖

The United Church of God broadcasts the Good News radio program on stations across the United States. For an Internet listing of stations and times or to download radio programs, go to www.ucg.org/radio. While on-line you can also order the booklet offered on this program, The Book of Revelation Unveiled.

In Brief...

World News Review

A United States of Europe?

According to a recent report, “The European Union could be renamed the United States of Europe . . . Without suggesting a preference, M. Giscard d’Estaing’s report said the union could be called the European Community, the European Union, United Europe or the United States of Europe” (*The Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 29, 2002). Apparently this suggestion was part of the first draft of a new constitution for the EU.

“Christopher Booker’s Notebook,” a regular column in *The Daily Telegraph*, headlined a recent article with the provocative title—“A Superstate Half a Century in the Making.”

Mr. Booker pointed out that “this constitution was planned more than 50 years ago, as the concluding move in a secretive process intended to take decades. Only now is it emerging just how carefully planned this project has been; and how deliberately its instigators decided to pretend that it was concerned only with economic co-operation, until their political agenda could be brought into the open. Drawing on thousands of published and unpublished documentary sources, Dr. Richard North, a research director with the European Parliament, has been assembling evidence for a ‘secret history’ of the European Union” (Nov. 3, 2002).

The need for such a constitution was first mentioned by a young Italian Communist in 1944. He believed that “the project would have to be put into place gradually, without the peoples of Europe realising what was afoot until they were presented with a constitution as the end of the process.” Christopher Booker concluded his column with the simple statement that “everything is unfolding according to plan.”

Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Daily Telegraph*.

Echoes of an Old German Nightmare: the Weimar Republic

Niall Ferguson, professor of Political and Financial History at Oxford University, set out a chilling scenario in Britain’s *Sunday Times* (Nov. 24, 2002). His opening words were: “As Chancellor Schröder grapples with a seriously sick economy, he is making the same mistakes which led to the 1930s crisis that opened the door for Hitler.”

Just how bad are Berlin’s economic woes? In the last decade only Switzerland and Japan had poorer performing economies in the developed world. Further, German unemployment is 8.3 percent of the work force and is predicted to reach one in 10. As an overall assessment *The World in 2003* said this: “Germany, once the country of the post-war

economic miracle, is acquiring a reputation as the sick man of Europe, with low growth, high unemployment and an unwillingness to contemplate the sort of changes that might get it out of its current difficulties” (published by *The Economist*).

Comparisons with Germany’s old financially disastrous Weimar Republic are rife in the British and European media. “Hidden jobless takes Germany back to the level of the Weimar era,” writes Tony Paterson for *The Sunday Telegraph* from the German capital city (Nov. 24, 2002). He reported that “public fury has spilled into the streets of Berlin with demonstrations of health workers, teachers, builders and lorry [truck] drivers.”

Bild (a German newspaper) ran a headline that simply said, “We’ve Had Enough,” expressing the frayed emotions of the unemployed. Part of the problem is high wages. Actually, “Britain’s hourly labour costs are 30% lower than they are in Germany” (*The World in 2003*).

The Guardian’s correspondent in Berlin reported that the “German tax rise evokes Weimar comparison.” Another *Guardian* headline tells us that “Europe’s Most Powerful Banking Sector Is on Red Alert—German Money Machine Grinds to a Halt.” *The Mail on Sunday* also calls Germany the “sick man of Europe”—talking of “debts, dole queues [lines] and industry in crisis.”

In reality, conditions are nowhere near as bad as the skyrocketing inflation that plagued the Weimar Republic in the late 1920s and early 1930s when the proverbial wheelbarrow full of marks would not buy so much as a pound of butter. Nonetheless, the Germany economy bears close watching. Hitler’s Third Reich emerged out of very grave economic frustrations.

Sources: *The Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The World in 2003*, *The Guardian*, *The Mail on Sunday* [all London].

Iran’s Latest Long-Range Missiles

Israel’s prime minister, Ariel Sharon, has strongly suggested that after Iraq, the United States should turn its attention to Iran. And since the Iraqi story tends to dominate the news, many are not aware of the activities of Iran, a Mideast state that is clearly a part of the “axis of evil.”

Philip Sherwell is the foreign affairs correspondent of *The Sunday Telegraph*. He has not neglected Iranian affairs. His recent feature article tells us that “Iran has been supplied by Russia with powerful new technology and parts for long-range missiles that will put Israel and the whole of the Middle East—including British and US forces in the



region—within its reach.” Africa and parts of southern Europe will also be reachable.

Successful desert test firings were held this past summer with Russian and North Korean scientists in attendance. Western and Israeli intelligence have also established that China is making a crucial contribution to the Iranian missile

program. We don’t live in a world of friendly nations.

Much of end-time biblical prophecy will find its fulfillment in the Middle East. Predicts Dudley Fishburn, editor of *The World in 2003*: “With Saddam Hussein gone by the end of 2003, the Middle East will become a sharply better place.” Yet in his general assessment, he writes that “the year’s [2003] headlines will be dominated by war, the Middle East and recession.”

Frankly, the Mideast is destined to host Armageddon—an area that will be replete with armies and weapons of the deadliest kind—culminating in a great battle that will bring Jesus Christ back to this earth before we destroy ourselves (see Revelation 16:14-16; Matthew 24:21-22).

The United Church of God has published several booklets about what the Bible says concerning these future events. Why not write for our free brochures, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The World in 2003*.

Famine Stalks Africa

Clearly world hunger is rising again, much of it afflicting the African continent, especially the sub-Saharan area. But more generally, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, “Every year about six million children under the age of 5 die as a result of hunger and malnutrition, says a UN study released Tuesday. That’s as if all of California’s children in that age group—more than twice over—starved to death” (Oct. 16, 2002).

This increase in world hunger is due primarily to a combination of wars, droughts, floods and shortfall in donations from the developed nations. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) “puts the number of undernourished people at 840 million—roughly 15% of the world’s people. After some progress in the 1990s, the rate has returned to levels of a decade ago” (*Los Angeles Times*).

The Independent on Sunday’s environment editor, Geoffrey Lean, further explained that “this year’s total world harvest will fall for the fifth year in succession, while the global population continues to grow” (Oct. 27, 2002).

More specifically, famine has returned to Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Nearly six million people are in desperate need of emergency food supplies in order to avert starvation. Perhaps another million require immediate help in Eritrea. Also Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and other African nations are experiencing severe food shortages.

Lesotho is another case in point. Too much rain devastated crops and people are dying. Poor mountainous roads are a difficult barrier to getting aid supplies through to the population. A *Times* (London) feature article stated that “crop production has declined sharply over the past three decades and is expected to cease altogether over large swaths of arable land because of soil erosion and declining soil fertility” (Nov. 9, 2002.). Also, a 31 percent HIV-AIDS infection rate complicates matters even further.

Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. The book of Revelation clearly reveals the identity of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The black horse symbolizes hunger and famine (Revelation 6:5-6). It is already riding in Africa.

Sources: *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Times* (both London), *Los Angeles Times*.

Affairs Becoming More Commonplace

Sarah Womack, social affairs correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, stated that “divorce rates [in England and Wales] rose last year for the first time in five years, leaving an additional 147,000 children with a single parent” (Nov. 6, 2002). Selfish adults often don’t think of them.

Let’s face it. Although there can be many reasons for divorce, the main one is and has always been infidelity—unfaithfulness to a marriage partner. Current Western attitudes toward adultery are not that encouraging.

A major feature article in *The Sunday Times* revealed that “up to 55% of people have an affair at some time in their lives . . . One in 10 men admit to an affair in the past five years . . . For men in London the average number of sexual partners over a lifetime has jumped from 12.2 in 1990 to 15.5 in 2000.” Statistics about women showed a similar increase.

Of course, affairs don’t always result in divorce. The article stated, “New research suggests people are becoming more tolerant of straying spouses and brief affairs. What matters more they say, is ‘emotional infidelity.’” Genuine repentance by the offender followed by true forgiveness on the part of the offended is commendable. But in the long run, so-called tolerance (mutual or otherwise) of adulterous behavior can only lead to more misery and unhappiness.

Perhaps the most disturbing statement in the entire article was: “American studies have shown that religious people disapprove of affairs more strongly than others—but have just as many of them.” Talk about shame and embarrassment! The apostle Paul wrote, “Awake to righteousness, and do not sin;

(See “NEWS,” page 15)

“MY HEAD,” (Continued from page 16)

Angeles will have almost twice as many homicides as New York City though it has half the population.

Jeff Gottlieb and Anthony McCartney, *Los Angeles Times* staff writers, offer a somber depiction of this urban war zone in an article titled, “As Killings Ebb and Flow, Fear Keeps Its Grip on South L.A.,” which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* of Nov. 25, 2002.

Unlike the residents of my town, the reporters depict a far different scenario of a citizenry who must be cognizant of “where they go, what they wear, what they say, how loudly they play their car stereo; all are infused with—and circumscribed by—fear of an unexpected bullet. On peaceful looking, palm-lined streets, residents hurry inside when the light fades. They try not to draw attention. This is the way it is and has been for years.”



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The first commandment of day-by-day living

They quote a lady who only gives her name as Cheryl B. She describes the first commandment of day-by-day living as, “Don’t leave the house at night unless mandatory, unless you just can’t prevent it.” She then added, “I like to just stay

planted or stationary.” She goes on to say, “It’s a way of life—paranoia, fear! I was here before the gang violence, the red and the blue. This used to be a good town. Now it’s like a lot of people who came from the South or back East, they’re going back home.”

Gottlieb and McCartney caught a feel of the environment in the experience of Sofia Giza as she shared how she had recently gone to a market at night to buy bottled water. The reporters tell how gunfire crackled and she did what South Central residents do when they hear such sounds. She dropped to the floor! When she began to get up, her brother asked her in an incredulous tone, “What are you doing? When the shooting stops, they are reloading!” Interestingly, Sofia is now considering moving to West Africa. Why? It’s part of a dream, but also for her, it’s safety.

Gottlieb and McCartney interviewed Timothy Watkins, Sr., a local community youth coordinator, who expressed the abiding sentiment of “every day someone down here—a

child, a child’s parent, a child’s sibling—is losing their life. We should be besides ourselves over it.” He agrees with newly appointed Police Chief William J. Bratton that the people of Los Angeles should get angry about the killings. “But,” Watkins continues, “the propensity and frequency of killings is numbing to the collective psyche of Los Angeles. It’s like it is something that we have just decided to live with.”

The greatest care, simply not enough

So how are people living? How do you cope in this urban battleground? Gottlieb and McCartney interviewed a couple of teenagers named Michael Pye and John Wilson.

The teens recommend a rigid dress code—not to be cool, but to avoid being shot. Pye’s recommendations are “don’t wear blue or red [differing gang colors], but rather wear black, gray or neutral colors that won’t attract attention. If you wear loud yellow, you had better be going to someplace very secure or with lots of people.” Wilson added some street smarts, stating, “Jewelry or attention-grabbing sneakers are also no-nos.”

They both instructed that “once out the door, know where you are going, avoid side streets, stick to main thoroughfares and don’t look tough. You can’t look too hard at anyone.” As each person interviewed pointed out, if you are to survive in such an environment, your steps must be detailed to the letter. But even the greatest care simply is not enough sometimes, as the daily headlines show.

Why? Perhaps Cheryl B. placed the right diagnosis on the general malady by stating, “You got so many kids out here acting crazy, wanting to flex some muscle. They don’t have respect for life.” What we have here is the sad reality of kids killing kids, and killing those who get in between their wild abandonment and intended victims. The sociologists and politicians all have their angles, “fixes,” sure cures and ready answers. More police, more schools, more jobs, more investment into the area by every level of government and private enterprise, and the list goes on. Could it help? Sure. Will it help? Time will tell.

The reality for the moment is a tremendous disconnect between social and moral responsibility for others and the law of the streets. This disconnect comes after generations of discrimination and institutionalized segregation of people, failed government social-engineering policies of the welfare state, a wretched historic pattern of separated family structure, and the wholesale removal of religious moral training from the fabric of our schools and society. Here gangs have replaced failed or seemingly irrelevant social institutions like family, country and church.

For them—the other shoe has dropped

Since 9/11 Americans have been walking on a tightrope of emotional unease regarding terrorism. Many people, in truthful moments, wonder and ask one another, “When will the other shoe drop?” Recently, the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area was virtually held hostage for several weeks as two snipers went on a killing spree. People in the suburban world of Virginia and Maryland began to have a “South-Central state of mind.” Their every move became

deliberate and calculated, not knowing what the next moment might bring. But, just like in South-Central L.A., at times being careful was simply not enough.

But now the alleged snipers have been apprehended, and life in those suburbs has gone back to normal—streets buzzing with people, children running in parks and lovers strolling hand in hand down cozy lanes.

But not “30 miles away.” Because for South-Central L.A., the other shoe isn’t about to drop. It has dropped. They continue living under the horrendous and dizzying weight of terror every day.

But you and I don’t think about it. It’s not a part of our experience. If it isn’t a shocking or horrific “Kodak moment” of the mind—like viewing jets ramming into skyscrapers or nighttime air raids over Baghdad or an Israeli bus looking like so much scrap metal—our minds tend to gently ease it away to the far margins of our memory banks. In today’s world, seemingly if it isn’t on the nightly news, these heart-wrenching and wretched scenarios must not be happening or are not deemed bad enough to merit our attention. But it is happening, just 30 miles away.

Perhaps a morning ago, as I was transfixed with the beautiful smallness and ever-so-neat-and-clean packaging of my windowpane suburban Americana, God was trying to tell me something. It’s not what is happening three continents away or three time zones away or even three states away. It’s what’s happening right where you live, and it may not be even 30 miles away. And it should stimulate us to offer the prayer of “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Perhaps I needed to realize more than ever that God is not coming back simply to solve the great and looming problems of the prophetic “beast power” of the king of the North, or the king of the South, or the false prophet, or the next-in-line current run of self-exalted military dictators like Saddam Hussein, or the lunatic fringe of Islam that is wreaking such havoc. All of these are big events that so easily capture our time and

imagination, yet can blind us to today’s reality only “30 miles away.”

Shaping your heart

The staff of *World News and Prophecy* is not here simply to share times, places, events and scriptures to shape your outlook of world events, but hopefully to shape your heart towards the utter need for the literal return of Jesus Christ. His return will not only deal with the great cities of the earth, but ultimately every town, neighborhood, block, home and back alley.

Ezekiel 9:4 speaks of God separating to Himself a people “who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” Christ picks up this thought during His earthly ministry when He comments in Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

How much do we sigh? How much do we care? How much do we grieve for those outside our own comfort zone? Coming to grips with what lies 30 miles away is of no value unless we turn those cares into prayers for God’s Kingdom to come. God’s Kingdom is not going to offer only urban renewal; it will also offer a renewal of the heart.

Ezekiel 36:26 speaks of a time in which God says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” Remember how Cheryl B. said the hoodlums in her neighborhood “don’t have a respect for life”? That essential respect for life is going to be renewed.

Just a morning ago, I was searching in all the wrong places for what I needed to think and write about. I thought in writing the next article I needed to apply the analytical side of my brain, but God was telling me I needed to use more of the emotional side—my heart. I had three interesting articles in my hands, but I had one article I couldn’t get out of my head or my heart.

It is when God led me to switch to my heart—to sigh and to mourn—that I was able to walk that walk mentioned in Isaiah 30:21: “This is the way, walk you in it.” I hope you won’t be able to get this article out of your head, because that’s a good way to reach your heart. ❖

“NEWS,” (Continued from page 13)

for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:34). Please write for our free booklet, *The Ten Commandments*.

Sources: *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*.

Australia Now a “Prime Target”

Australia is a key target in a new wave of attacks being planned by al Qaeda, with Australian intelligence agencies warning that the Bali investigation had caught only the “footsoldiers” in a global terror network. An Australian official said that key people are still out there and they are dangerous.

Recent intelligence reports suggest that al Qaeda has advanced plans for strikes that involve a series of linked attacks in Australia, Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

Based on the new information, the Australian government made its dramatic revelation about credible evidence of a possible terrorist attack within the next few months. It indicates that Australia and its interests abroad are now primary targets—along with the United States and Israel—of al Qaeda and its regional subsidiary, Jemaah Islamiyah.

The alert is believed to have been based on information from regional telecommunications surveillance and supporting intelligence by the United States and Britain.

That warning has been strengthened by the most recent audiotape, attributed to Osama bin Laden, which declared: “We had warned Australia about its participation in Afghanistan. It ignored the warning until it woke up to the sound of explosions in Bali.”

“The information is generic but it is sufficiently credible to give us real concerns,” a senior regional security official said. “There are even time frames being talked about.

“There is significant activity being monitored internationally and there is a possibility of groups and individuals linking up. It’s not just a regional thing.”

Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Contributors: John Ross Schroeder and Jim Tuck



This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

Couldn't Get It Out of My Head

Yesterday was a blustery autumn day in my hometown of Monrovia, California. "Fall-like" weather comes late to Southern California. But it comes! I had gone down to our town library to do some research for my next column. I nestled in to a quiet corner of the already hushed world of library life and peered out from my window on the world and happily gazed on the rites of autumn unfolding before me.

Colorful and dashing leaves were marching back and forth on the surrounding grounds of Library Park and the town folk were bustling and cheerful with the gleeful feel of the approaching American Thanksgiving holiday. Parents and grandparents with their young ones were running around the adjacent park enjoying every moment. No one seemed to have a care in the world. The ever-present mountains, which hover over my town, were so crystal clear that you could count every pine tree to the top of each peak. It was just simply one of those days when you say, "Life is good."

In the midst of all of this autumnal splendor, my mind drifted back to the job at hand. I poured over various periodicals that spotlighted the recent big headline issues of Afghanistan, the war on terror, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the recent hostage-taking assault in Moscow, the oil tanker spill off the coast of Spain and on and on. The various covers of the national and international magazines had all the familiar faces on them: President Bush, Saddam Hussein, Hans Blix or a sea gull mired in oil.

Yes, there was much I could write about. More than enough to consider in the light of biblical directives for understanding the principle of "*this is the way.*" But my

head and heart were somewhere else. While my need to write seemingly was drawing me to issues with global impact, my heart's prompting came back to something much closer at hand. I simply couldn't get it out of my head.

Just 30 miles away

Just 30 miles from me is a world drastically different from "my corner" of the megalopolis known as Los Angeles. Los Angeles has often been described as 80 cities looking for a center. In Los Angeles, we merge together on the freeways and huddle together to cheer our hometown teams, but then return to our residential enclaves. Los Angeles is not really a homogeneous environment. Television often gives you this one-dimensional view of "L.A.," as if whatever happens is occurring to all of us out here at once—be it mudslides, canyon fires, earthquakes, breathing smog or drive-by shootings. Not so.

Just 30 miles away from me a war is going on. No, not the war on terror, though terror is involved. No, not the war that is to come on Iraq. No, not the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

You see, there is a killing spree going on in South-Central L.A. In the last 10 days over 21 people have been gunned down. Most of them were innocent bystanders or local residents minding their own business who got caught in the cross fire of thugs with guns out to guard their turf.

Los Angeles, after a lull, is once again soaring to the dubious title of "Murder Capital of the World." This year 612 people have been murdered. If the trend continues, Los

(See "**MY HEAD**," page 14)