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In the Aftermath of Katrina: What Can We Learn?

Another major hurricane has slammed into the United States. The devastation has shut down cities and left hundreds of thousands homeless. Is there a spiritual lesson to learn from this tragedy?

by Darris McNeely

I can't get her face out of my mind. She was a five-day-old baby, dehydrated and fevered. When I first looked, I saw no movement and thought, "the poor child is dead." The mother was desperate and did not know if her baby was alive. But then I saw the infant turn her head and move an arm. She was alive; there was hope.

Her mother had just walked up out of the fetid waters covering downtown New Orleans. She sat holding the baby in a canvas folding chair, crying and looking for help. Fortunately a news crew flagged down a passing police car, and the child and her mother were taken to a safe refuge, hopefully a hospital where help could be administered.

A devastated region

This was one poignant scene out of many thousands to arise in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The storm cut a deadly path through the southern U.S. Gulf Coast last month. It is being called the largest natural disaster ever to strike the country. As we go to press,



Reuters/Jason Reed

Thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors wait to be evacuated from the Superdome in New Orleans Sept. 2.

early estimates of the death toll run into the thousands, and the cost estimates are in the range of \$100 billion. As the storm approached the coast, everyone knew it would be big, but no one foresaw it would be as devastating as it was.

In a reference to the Asian tsunami of December 2004, one official called it "our tsunami." In New Orleans, a city that sits below sea level and needs a series of levees (which were breached

(See "KATRINA," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Restoring Moral Levees

New Orleans, Louisiana, survives because of a system of levees, earthen embankments and concrete-encased metal plates built to hold back the waters of Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. That "old man river" rolls its strongest as it passes the city at the end of its long journey through the heartland of America. The flooding that engulfed the city in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was caused in large part by three failures of the levees holding back the lake. Tragically, the city saw the collapse of another kind of "levee," the moral levee of civilization, as looting and violence broke out when thugs and unscrupulous people scrambled to take what they could from the wreckage.

This has been the nation's biggest tragedy since 9/11, and there are inevitable comparisons. The New Orleans disaster is citywide, whereas the devastation in New York was limited to the vicinity of the World Trade Center. People from other parts of the city could get to the site and offer aid. In New Orleans, the majority of the city was evacuated and suffered massive damage. Vital municipal services were cut off citywide. The city's poorest and most helpless were left to survive as best they could. Unfortunately, the worst elements came out to prey on the tragedy.

In a matter of hours New Orleans was reduced to a third world status. Toilets would not flush, sewage was everywhere and dead bodies floated by, untended because rescue workers had to prioritize their efforts to focus on the living. The city had the smell of death. It was a classic wartime triage situation. Americans are not used to seeing such sights at home, but only on television in far-off places. It has been more than 13 years since we have seen such scenes of rioting in an American city. We forget and have grown complacent—twin enemies of the thin veneer that covers any civilization.

In recent years American audiences have been watching survival-type reality shows on television. These contrived episodes seem hollow compared to the real-life survival drama on the U.S. Gulf Coast. Are we seeing how real people would react to the real breakdown of ordered society in the event of a countrywide catastrophe?

Perhaps it is time to read the words of the prophet Zephaniah. He foretold the breakdown of city life during a time of severe testing. "And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.' Therefore their goods shall become booty, and their houses a desolation; they shall build houses, but not inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine" (Zephaniah 1:12-13).

The prophet goes to the heart of the problem with this insight: "I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD" (verse 17). Like it or not, at some point every nation will have to face the reality of sin against the law of God. In His mercy God always gives ample warning and a call to change before the time of judgment. "Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger" (Zephaniah 2:1-3).

The city with its buildings can be rebuilt. In this case, it will take years to return to normal. The levees can be restored and made stronger, but without careful maintenance they could fail once again. It's the same for character and self-restraint. The type of character that can withstand deprivation and upheaval must be built and maintained one brick at a time over years of careful living. Right choices have to be made each day and at every fork in the road of life. The way of godly righteous character comes from choosing the road "less traveled by," as the poet Robert Frost put it. Only then will we have a community built upon foundations that insure complete and lasting restoration.

—Darris McNeely

“KATRINA,” (Continued from page 1)

in three places by the storm surge) and pumps to keep water out, 80 to 90 percent of the city was flooded.

Famous tourist spots such as Bourbon Street are under several feet of water. More than 10,000 people took shelter in the Superdome and were later evacuated when the failure of all essential services turned the facility into a squalid relief center. It will take weeks to turn on the water and electricity and begin the long task of cleaning up one of America’s major cities.

What is happening to our weather?

With the rising frequency of hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, there is the inevitable question of what is happening to our weather. The nation has seen other, even stronger, storms in its history. But it appears for now that the frequency of these storms is increasing. The debate about global warming and changes in the earth’s atmosphere continue and will get renewed attention from scientists. There is no doubt that warmer water temperatures generate more powerful storms such as Katrina, and the earth does go through changing weather cycles as a part of natural meteorological changes.

Nature’s forces know no political, ethnic, social, religious or racial bounds. To use the biblical phrase, it rains “on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). People speak of “Mother Nature” as if it were a living deity, perhaps to avoid acknowledging the Creator God.

It is not a theology of nature with which man should be concerned. Rather, it is the clear unmistakable message of God that is vital to hear.

Last December’s Asian tsunami was caused by a massive underwater earthquake. Seismic disturbances like this are not unknown in that region. Population increases along exposed coastal areas added to loss of life. Very often it is human development, population shifts and development in marginal coastal areas that add to the human cost when nature’s forces roar through.

Throughout the Bible we see that tragedies, both natural and human, are occasions for collective and personal



U.S. President George W. Bush tours the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans area with Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin Sept. 2. (Reuters/Larry Downing)

repentance. When asked what would be one of the signs of His second coming, Jesus said, “There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7).

Natural disasters rising in frequency are part of the times preceding the coming of Christ. There can be no doubt about the meaning of Christ’s words and the implications for society in the time of the end. As pointed out above, many factors within human control will aggravate and multiply the impact of earthquakes, hurricanes and other weather-related disasters.

Christ’s teaching

Notice how Christ used a well-known disaster in His day to urge His audience to repentance. In Luke 13:4 He referred to the collapse of the tower of Siloam. The tower fell and killed 18 people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Christ

asked, “Do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5).

Personal repentance is Christ’s advice in the face of suffering. A cold, hard look at your personal life is in order at such a time. How does it measure against the teaching of Christ and His Word? Christ deals with eternal life, and He is very serious about how people conduct their lives.

Jesus was always eager to help the suffering and attend to the immediate needs of people. He healed sicknesses, fed the hungry and gave encouragement to the emotionally distressed. He also encouraged us to examine our ways and change where needed to conform to the teachings of God.

On another occasion Jesus wept over Jerusalem, knowing its future fate. He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one

who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34).

People did not hear Christ's words when He walked Jerusalem's streets any more than they did when the prophets stood in the same quarters and pleaded with leaders and citizens to repent by acknowledging their sins and turning to God.

Jeremiah's message

More than 500 years before Jesus, the prophet Jeremiah stood in Jerusalem's streets and squares and gave a warning message to Judah. He saw that a time of trial, a judgment from God for sin, was coming in the form of a powerful nation, Babylon. Jeremiah's message was quite specific about what lay ahead for the nation if they did not change their ways. But Jeremiah did not just thunder a message without compassion. He was a patriotic citizen who loved his nation and its people.

He saw that a time of trial was not always an end in itself, but a means to an end. God desires fruit for His Kingdom. That fruit involves changed lives that lead to salvation and eternal life. He saw that one who experiences trials and chastening can learn from the despair. God is not against any group of people. He loves His creation and without partiality desires repentance and good works from all.

The 30th chapter of Jeremiah contains a message from God that applies specifically to the people of America, Australia, Britain and Canada today. It also applies to all nations as a lesson about why God allows the suffering of trials and disasters as part of the human condition. Verse 7 speaks to the "time of Jacob's trouble" (a period of national travail that lies yet ahead of us).

Nothing we have seen in this recent hurricane or any previous to it can compare with what lies ahead for the modern descendants of the patriarch Jacob. Yet even in this great trial God says, "He

shall be saved out of it." Verse 17 says, "For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds." Even when He is warning of impending trial, God is also giving the reason behind allowing the suffering and promising hope beyond it. He says He will bring back the people to the land promised to their fathers (verse 3).

Trials and suffering are an opportunity to examine our lives and change. They provide a time to learn from chastening and begin to look to God, knowing we are not sufficient of and by ourselves. The judgment of disaster is never the last word. There is time and space to repent in the aftermath.

We grieve for the suffering of those in the path of Hurricane Katrina. Support in many forms pours into the region. As lives and cities are rebuilt, the question will be whether we will stop to consider God's eternal message. Time is short and it's later than you think. God may be providing a wake-up call for your life. Use this opportunity to learn more about God's truth and His purpose for your life. Our booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* will give you a deeper analysis of this important question.

I still think about that little five-day-old baby. I pray she will live to hear her mother tell the story of the day they walked to safety out of the water-soaked streets of New Orleans. I also pray she will soon see the day when God wipes away the tears of suffering in the better world to come. ❖

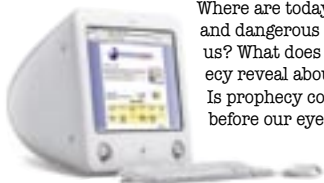
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The World's Number One Exporting Nation

The United States owes its historical dominance to being the world's biggest exporting nation. It no longer holds that position. The country that does is set to play a more dominant role in world affairs.

by Melvin Rhodes

My local newspaper, the *Lansing State Journal*, has been running a series of articles from Associated Press, under the collective heading “Drowning in Debt.” The articles have been looking at the massive amounts of debt in the United States, both personal and governmental.

No country in the history of the world has ever had so much debt. The potential consequences, as the articles show, are horrendous. It is difficult to see how America can remain the world's sole superpower with its finances in such disarray.

Debt has been a major contributory factor in the decline of other great powers in history. The question now is: Who will replace the United States as the dominant economic power?

Go back a couple of centuries and Great Britain was the “workshop of the world.” As the greatest exporter and investor, Britain was rapidly on the rise to world ascendancy. The British Empire, largely a mercantile empire, dominated the world for the best part of 200 years.

In the late 19th century it was clear that Britain's economy was in decline. A number of nations were growing more rapidly than it was. A century ago Germany and the United States were both rapidly challenging the United Kingdom for global economic dominance. Germany's rise was thwarted twice by two world wars in the first half of the 20th century.

At the end of the second global conflict, the United States emerged as the dominant economic power. The country was by far the biggest producer and exporter of goods, just as Britain had been before her. But the United States has been in relative decline ever since, gradually losing out to other nations that have annually taken a bigger piece of the global pie. Although the United States is still a big exporter, it exports very few manufactured goods—America's exports today are mostly high-technology items, food and entertainment.

Realizing that both Britain's and America's rise to global power and dominance owed much to their being, in turn, the world's biggest exporting nations, a reliable indicator of the identity of the next global superpower must be its record on exports.

With this in mind, most people would assume China must be the world's next superpower. China has become a major exporter in recent years, with Chinese goods for sale almost everywhere. But, surprisingly, China is not the world's biggest exporting nation! Nor is the United States.

That particular accolade belongs to Germany, which last year regained its status as the biggest single exporting nation in the world (“Germany's Surprising Economy,” *The Economist*, Aug. 20, 2005). Germany held this position a few years ago, but lost it as the country weathered the storms that followed the rise of the euro, making it harder for Europeans to export their products overseas.

But German manufacturers have a reputation for producing high-quality merchandise, and they have once again reached the number one position as the world's biggest exporter. With a population of just over 80 million, Germany exports more than America, with almost 300 million people.

What does this mean for the United States and other countries?

Global reach

Consider this: Germany is not just the world's biggest exporting nation. It is also the dominant nation of the 25-country European Union (EU). The EU is the world's biggest single market, bigger than the United States. It also accounts for more than half of all the world's trade. That gives the EU incredible clout around the world.

I was reminded of the EU's dominance in August when making a regular visit to the

With a population of just over 80 million, Germany exports more than America, with almost 300 million people. What does this mean for the United States and other countries?

African nation of Ghana. In August our churches there have their annual summer camp. Most of the teens who attend are Ghanaians, but there are also some from Nigeria and neighboring Togo, a French-speaking sliver of a country that lies to the east of Ghana.

Togo is one of 14 former French colonies in West Africa that share a common currency, the CFA (*Centrale Franque D’Afrique*). The currency is controlled by the Bank of Paris and was tied to the French franc. As the French franc no longer exists, it is effectively tied to the euro.

The English-speaking countries in the region have had major problems with paper money ever since independence almost 50 years ago. They are trying to start their own common currency. Inevitably, it must also be tied to the euro, for the very simple reason that most of their trade is with the EU, not the United States, even though English is their language of commerce.

Many American churches and aid organizations receive their support in dollars; but the goods they buy are from Europe, which means they are paying more out as the euro rises, but receiving less as the dollar declines. It’s quite a dilemma for poor countries.

It will become a lot worse if oil is priced in euros, an idea that has been proposed from time to time by different oil-exporting nations. It’s likely only a matter of time until this happens. When it does, America could have a sharp price hike to deal with, based on current exchange rates and the declining international demand for dollars that would follow. The United States will have to dramatically increase its exports if it is to deal with this.

As the series in my local newspaper has shown, it is difficult to see how America can maintain preeminence with the serious economic problems that are mounting. This means, inevitably, that just as Britain was replaced by the United States as the number one power, so America will, in turn, be replaced.

Could Germany be the next superpower? Considering that Germany is the engine that pulls the EU train, an EU led by Germany certainly has the potential to replace the United States as the dominant power.

Although the EU is the world’s biggest single market, the United States remains the world’s biggest single national economy with a greater GNP than any other. Japan is in second place. Often overlooked is the fact that the next four countries are all members of the EU—Germany, Britain, France and Italy, in that order. Canada is in seventh place.

It should also be pointed out that, apart from Britain, which does roughly as much trade with the United States as with Germany, all the other 23 nations of the EU count Germany as their number one trading partner. If this had been the case at the start of World War II, it’s likely the outcome of the conflict would

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have been quite different, since trade is a big factor in determining alliances. How can a nation oppose the country it depends on for most of its trade?

There’s an additional advantage that Germany has over the United States. Whereas Americans are heavily indebted, Germans are not. A recent article in the *Financial Times* highlighted the reluctance of Germans to use credit cards, which account for only 5 percent of purchases (“German Banks Count Cost of Life in a Credit-Free Zone,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2005).

Credit cards are a major reason for American indebtedness, encouraging people to spend between 12 to 18 percent more than they would if using cash, according to financial expert David Ramsey (*60 Minutes*, Aug. 28, 2005). Whereas the United States is the world’s biggest debtor nation, Germany is one of the top three creditor nations,

a good position to be in to weather any future economic upheaval such as a collapse of the U.S. financial system.

The coming economic Babylon

Many Bible students understand that, prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ, 10 kings (leaders) will unite to form the final revival of the Beast power system that features prominently in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation.

In Daniel 7 the vision the Old Testament prophet received showed the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires in rapid succession, each succeeding the other in time. Daniel received his vision in the sixth century B.C., but the prophesied gentile empires were to dominate the world through the centuries leading eventually to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The Roman Empire, which we believe to be the “fourth beast,” was prophesied to be “dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong . . .” (Daniel 7:7). It was to have “ten horns” (verse 7), revivals of the Roman Empire, which would continue down to Christ’s return, predicted in verse 9.

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, shows that the final revival of the Roman Empire will immediately precede the return of Jesus Christ. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with 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” (Revelation 17:12, 14).

It is impossible for any nation or group of nations to have this kind of power without first achieving economic superiority. Revelation 18 predicts that these nations will be the nucleus of an international financial system. When it, in turn, collapses, “the merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing” (verse 15).

The European Union is already the world’s biggest trading system, increasingly threatening America’s global interests. Germany is the dominant nation of the EU. Look for Germany to play an increasing role in world affairs in the years ahead. ❖

What Is Germany's Destiny?

For far too many German citizens, reunification in 1990 has meant 15 years of economic downturn, increasing unemployment and general deprivation. But encouraging signs of recovery are gradually beginning to emerge in the German economy. Prophetically speaking, what does reunification mean in the long run?

by John Ross Schroeder

The immediate results of reunification did not measure up to general expectations for both the former East and West Germany. As British columnist Bronwen Maddox stated, "Germany's decline from powerhouse to doubtful man of Europe has been much chronicled" (*The Times*, Aug. 23, 2005). The region that was East Germany has been plagued by high unemployment, and the wealthier western section of the country has grown somewhat weary of footing the bill for bringing the eastern section up to par economically.

Nonetheless, Germany invested heavily in bringing the railways and communications systems up to par, and the long-term results appear set to pay off in what was East Germany. Recent German figures show that "unemployment is at long last starting to fall." In addition, "Germany's big companies have restructured and cut their bloated cost base" and "unit labour costs have fallen sharply relative to other countries. In the past five years, Germany . . . has won a new competitive edge over France, Italy, the Netherlands and even Britain" (*The Economist*, Aug. 20, 2005).

The Economist is one of the most respected world affairs magazines. A special feature article in the Aug. 20 issue explains the progress already made in the German economy along with challenges and problems yet ahead (pp. 9, 62-64).

Meanwhile, the German stock market is pulling in investors from many European nations. As *The Sunday Times* reported, "Foreign investors are pumping billions into Germany as hopes rise that the country is turning the corner." Further: "German companies have become more competitive and are starting to reinvest their profits in the economy, and the unemployment rate, while still stuck above 10 per cent, dropped for the fourth successive month in July" (Aug. 28).

Germany has even regained the title of the biggest exporter of goods in Europe. Yet by now other nations have become so accustomed to hearing of its economic malaise that most have missed these emerging signs of revival. True, the number of Germans out of work still approaches 5 mil-

lion and consumer confidence has not yet revived. Still, much better statistics will surely follow if the German government and industry stay the course and even improve on the necessary, but painful, corrective measures already taken.

But there is more to the story than mere economics.

"A German pope on German soil"

In the waning years of the last century, few would have predicted there would be a German pope of the Catholic Church in 2005. Even though Germany, like much of the rest of Europe, is now very secular, do not underestimate the effects this could have on national optimism and patriotism. It could prove to be the proverbial "shot in the arm."

Like John Paul II before him who visited his native Poland *first*, Benedict XVI recently journeyed to his native land for a youth congress in Cologne. Naturally, this was the first foreign visit for the new pontiff. Although most of the 400,000 young people who attended were from other European nations and elsewhere, not German citizens, the new pope's visit produced a certain level of euphoria in the land. Altogether, 1 million Catholics converged on Cologne to greet the new pope.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and his political opponent in the upcoming national elections in September, Angela Merkel, were on hand in Cologne to greet Pope Benedict XVI. In Angela Merkel's words, "It was great to meet a German pope on German soil."

Overall, reunification has meant a much stronger Germany, fully capable of leading all of Europe. The enormous increase in land and population numbers is bound to have its long-term consequences, not to mention regaining the traditional capital city of Berlin, which has been undergoing a substantial program of rebuilding and renewal.

The delayed effect could prove deceptive to some and surprising to many others when reunification really comes into its own, bearing full fruit.

The German economy is showing signs of strong growth. But there is more to the story than mere economics.



During a triumphant visit to his German fatherland, Pope Benedict XVI arrives for a mass at the Marienfeld, near Cologne, Germany, Aug. 21. He reached out to other faiths and to young people. (Reuters/Michael Dalder)

tion. Progress is predicted to continue, regardless of who wins in the upcoming national elections.

Reunification in history and prophecy

A.J.P. Taylor was one of Britain's preeminent 20th-century historians in both the written and spoken word. Students could not get a seat at his lectures in Oxford unless they were on time. He studied and explored the subject of German unity and reunification both in detail and broad perspective.

In viewing the European continent as a whole, Professor Taylor stated that "throughout modern times Europe has been composed of independent states, some of them considerable powers. *One power has tended to predominate or at least to be stronger than the others*" (*Europe: Grandeur and Decline*, p. 7, emphasis added throughout). Germany was this one power for much of the 20th century.

Professor Taylor viewed Germany from the standpoint of a British citizen whose nation had gone to war with Berlin twice within a half century (1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945). That's 10 years of conflict with much economic deprivation and many lives lost on both sides.

So he concluded: "What is wrong with Germany is that there is too much

of it. There are too many Germans, and Germany is too strong, too well organized, too well equipped with industrial resources. This greater Germany is a very recent appearance, created overnight by Bismarck and completed only by Hitler" (*ibid.*, p. 121).

To Professor Taylor, "The German problem, past and present, is the problem of German unity." Writing in the mid '50s, well before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification that soon followed, this British historian firmly stated: "There are now no forces within Germany to resist the full programme of German unification, and the present partition rests solely on the occupying armies."

Again, writing from the point of view of a British citizen and historian by profession who had lived through two world wars with Britain and Germany on opposing sides, he minced no words in saying that "the harsh truth of German history is that the solution to the German question cannot be found within Germany. *Partition cannot be maintained as a permanent policy [it wasn't], yet a united Germany will keep Europe in apprehension*" (pp. 165-166).

A little earlier Professor Taylor had made this stark controversial prediction: "A Germany free from foreign control will seek to restore the United Greater Germany which Hitler achieved in 1938;

nor will democracy provide an automatic safeguard against a new German aggression" (p. 165).

At least on the surface, the bare facts today do not bear out Professor Taylor's statements. Clearly, Germany today is a fully functioning democracy and currently represents no visible or foreseeable danger to any nation. Its outlook since World War II has been far more pacifist than aggressive, and some measures have been taken by the German government to compensate for what happened during that war and before.

Germany's politicians today have no intention of posing any threat whatsoever to the world. That is the present reality. However, events do not always go as planned. In the political arena, events all too often get out of hand. Over such events a democratic government has little control. As a result of political and economic upheavals, it can be thrust out of power. Remember what happened to Germany's Weimar Republic in the early 1930s.

Membership in a united Europe

Many Western politicians (both in Germany and other nations) have long felt that membership in the European Union or its predecessors like the European Economic Community would restrain Germany from shedding its democratic rule and pursuing potential intentions of aggression. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, perhaps the chief architect of reunification, believed this almost as an article of faith.

Of course, the ultimate truth of the matter would depend on just how dominant in Europe Germany might eventually become in the long run. The most economically sound nation is bound to acquire a predominant position over other nations in a given area. Geography has placed Germany at the fulcrum of Europe (*Mittleuropa*).

Biblical prophecies in both the Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament book of Revelation indicate that the nations of central Europe will fulfill many national prophecies during the time of the end of this age.

To understand much more, please request our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy, The Book of Revelation Unveiled and Are We Living in the Time of the End?* ❖

Retreat From Gaza

Israel has completed its pullout from Gaza, a piece of territory it has controlled since 1967. Is this the start of a final road to peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis? Or will it be a futile gesture that leaves Israel vulnerable to further terrorist attacks?

by Darris McNeely

Last month the world watched the scenes of Israeli Defense Forces evacuating fellow Israelis from their homes in what is called the Gaza Strip, a narrow piece of land in southwest Israel bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

In February the Israeli government voted to implement Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan for unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The plan required the dismantling of all Israeli settlements there, and the removal of all Israeli settlers and military bases from the Strip.

What is even more remarkable is the fact that this pullout was engineered by Ariel Sharon, the former general who chased the Palestinians out of Lebanon in 1982 and who has been an adamant advocate of holding on to territory annexed through the years of war.

But time has changed his perspective. Sharon has made a calculated decision to withdraw from territory he knows is not defensible. There is no expectation of concessions from the Palestinians. The current Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, has nothing to offer in return for Gaza.

What Israel hopes to gain is a more manageable border, one with walls and security that will keep the terrorists out. They are prepared for a long wait, either for a Palestinian leader who sincerely wants peace to step forward, or for other nations to put pressure on the Arab world to accept Israel and decide to wage peace instead of war. It could be a long wait indeed.

Wars and peace

Since 1948 Israel has battled Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the Palestinians in four major wars. To the credit of President Anwar Sadat and King Hussein, peace treaties were concluded with Egypt and Jordan that at least have brought some breathing space. Syria has signed no treaty or set of accords with Israel.

The Palestinians have met Israel at the peace table (in 1993), but it has not brought about a lasting settlement. In 2000 at Camp David,

Yasser Arafat was offered more concessions than any previous Israeli government dared make, yet rejected all and took up arms in an *intifadah* that continues to this day. Now Israel has given back land at great cost to its citizens.

Already there are calls in the Western press for Israel to give up land on the West Bank, and even Jerusalem. But can Israel afford to give up any more land? Can Israel be expected to make further withdrawals if the message from the international community is that they are never enough? Can Palestine have any hope of becoming a functional and civilized state if no serious demands are made of it to reform its institutions and eliminate its culture of terrorism?

The problem with Palestine today isn't the absence of land, but the poverty of expectations as to what it ought to be and might become. Poor leadership has hindered the Arab cause. Gaza profited from the presence of Israeli settlement. Small factory jobs and agricultural farms provided better incomes and a possibility for the future, something no Palestinian government has done. When Yasser Arafat returned to Palestine in 1994, he radicalized the base, and hopes for a peaceful future were set back.

Now there is the problem of terrorist attacks from Gaza. There will be no Israeli forces present to stop the gathering and deployment of terrorist operations. The Arabs have rockets and will launch them against Israel. No wall built by Israel will stop these rockets. Israel will have to determine how they will meet this challenge.

The record of recent history shows the Palestinians will likely not honor the treaty commitments they have made before the world. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, no serious attempt to curb terrorist attacks has been made by the leadership of the Palestinian Authority. Columnist Charles Krauthammer tells what the last 12 years have wrought:

"Under Oslo, Israel made massive, near-suicidal concessions: bringing the PLO back to life, installing Yassir Arafat in power in the West Bank and Gaza, permitting him to arm

What Israel hopes to gain in the Gaza pullout is a more manageable border, one with walls and security that will keep the terrorists out. Will it work?



Opponents of Israel's disengagement from Gaza protest their forced evacuation from the rooftop of the synagogue, in the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in the southern Gaza Strip, Aug. 18. (Reuters/Paul Hanna)

militia after militia, and ultimately offering him (at Camp David 2000) the first Palestinian state in history, with a shared Jerusalem and total Israeli withdrawal from 95 percent of the formerly occupied territories (with Israel giving up some of its own territory to make the Palestinians whole). How were these concessions met? With a savage terror war that killed 1,000 Israelis and maimed thousands more" ("Israeli Withdrawal Is Correct and Necessary," Aug. 19, 2005).

A test of U.S. leadership

The Palestinian leadership is on record as saying "we will not rest until they leave from all our land." What they mean is all the land once governed by the British prior to 1948 when the formation of the State of Israel was declared. Leaders of this type usually say what they mean and mean what they say. It is a strange quirk of human nature that wants to ignore such statements and blissfully hope they forget or don't really mean what they say.

Who will promise the security of the Jews in Israel? America has been

Israel's biggest supporter in matters economic, political and diplomatic. This support has not been without cost. Much of the enmity in the Arab world toward the United States is due to its support of Israel. Other nations, China and Russia in particular, have been major supporters of Arab nations as a counterweight to American supremacy in the post World War II years.

The question is, will America continue to support Israel in the face of growing international pressure from Europe, Russia and China to provide a state for Palestine at all costs? America's role in the Middle East will come under increasing scrutiny in the coming months as the war in Iraq evolves to the next phase. The fledgling Iraqi government has been trying to put together a constitution while it battles a growing insurgency. Things are far from settled in that nation.

Iran has said it will restart its nuclear enrichment program against the objections of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This is a key step in the development of nuclear weapons, something the United States has said is not accept-

able for the region. Last month French President Jacques Chirac called on Iran to "suspend activities related to the production of fissile materials." A nuclear-armed Iran would radically change the balance of power in the Middle East.

And then there is oil. The price continues to climb as the world's energy needs accelerate. China is the world's second largest consumer of oil, behind the United States. Its daily intake is 3 million barrels and growing. Within 10 years its automobile population will be the second largest in the world.

China is making overtures in the Middle East to establish exclusive oil supply deals with such nations as Sudan and Iran. China is also seeking to expand its political influence within the region. This combination of national energy needs coupled with a desire of some Middle Eastern states to curb the American influence in the region could embolden China to assert itself on issues important to the region.

America cannot rely on its influence on the Arab states to cut off China from energy supplies or a role in political matters. The region is going through significant internal changes, and it is possible that America may see its role in the region altered.

Any number of other unexpected turns could arise in this volatile and critical region to create a new set of events. America can no longer take for granted its historic role as a key arbiter of relations between Israel and the Arab states. America and Israel could find themselves isolated, facing an alliance of states that seek a new balance of power.

It's doubtful that Israel will have the luxury of waiting behind its fortress for peace to break out. Israel has done things in recent weeks that no one could have imagined just a few years ago. In the strange and twisting arena of Middle East politics, sometimes the unimaginable becomes the reality.

If you have not read our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, we encourage you to do so. It is available online at www.ucg.org/booklets. It gives more of the background to this subject—background you need to have a complete grasp of this complex issue. ❖

Food Insecurity in a Hungry World

Starvation, malnutrition and consequent diseases are an all-too-familiar fixture in today's world. This article reports on the current situation and looks through the window of prophecy at the future. The present is bleak, but the future is fabulous!

by Cecil E. Maranville

You probably receive several ad flyers every week advertising the current bargains available at your abundantly stocked neighborhood supermarkets. The majority of the world's citizens do not yet enjoy such a blessing. Most of them are more concerned with finding something to eat at all.

Last month, we ran an article about the issue of whether the food supply is secure, "From Farm to Fork." This article is about another type of food security, the issue of securing food *for* your fork.

I want to start by focusing upon the children in the world who do not have enough to eat. We've all seen the heartrending pictures of malnourished children, likely from some sub-Saharan country.

One of my sons and I saw such graphic images on the news from a war-ravaged country in North Africa about 25 years ago. The horrifying images of infants with distended bellies and heads seemingly too large for their bodies—signs of severe malnutrition—were too much for my son. Tearfully, he asked, "Daddy, if they can get the TV camera there, why can't they get food to those kids?"

Ah, the innocence of a child. If only it were that simple. The government of the country was blocking international food aid for the starving, for they belonged to a tribe that opposed the government. The children were innocent, yet they likely died shortly after we saw their pictures.

The UN created UNICEF (the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) in 1946 to provide food, clothing and health care to European children after World War II. The UN extended its mandate indefinitely in 1953 to look after the well-being of the world's children.

An elementary school-sized population dies every two minutes

The world has not changed in the decades since my son and I saw that report. UNICEF

says 29,000 children under 5 die every day from hunger-related causes or about three children every second (*The State of the World's Children 2005*, p. 9). About the population of a good-sized elementary school perished in the time that it took you to read this far in the article.

Several thousand additional people (older children and adults) die daily from hunger-related conditions. TheHungerSite.com says that about 10 percent of these deaths are caused by wars and famines (often a consequence of war), and the other 90 percent are caused by chronic malnutrition or going hungry all the time.

Read these recent news blurbs on UNICEF's Web site:

Zimbabwe: "More than 200,000 children are homeless, without access to food, water or health care."

Ethiopia: "On average, 500,000 Ethiopian children die every year from preventable diseases and malnourishment. This year could be worse . . . In total, 7 million Ethiopian children suffer from some form of malnutrition every year, with serious consequences for their health and development."

Niger: "Under the best of circumstances, 40 percent of Niger's children—or one million—suffer some form of malnutrition. This number has increased dramatically because of the current food shortage. During Niger's 2004 agricultural season, swarms of desert locusts consumed nearly 100 per cent of the crops in some parts of the country. In other areas, insufficient rainfall resulted in poor harvest and dry pastures affecting both farmers and livestock breeders."

The sad consequences of undernourishment

Malnutrition causes a downward spiral of problems. Undernourished pregnant women are likely to give birth to low-birth-weight (LBW) babies. In fact, over 20 million LBW babies are

Today 852 million people are undernourished—815 million of them in developing countries. But there is hope on the horizon.

born in the developing world annually.

LBW babies are more likely to die in infancy. Those who survive infancy are likely to be stunted and have lower cog-



Hunger has stalked our planet throughout history.

nitive ability. They are more susceptible to disease and disability in adolescence. Those females who survive to become mothers themselves are more likely to give birth to LBW babies, continuing the cycle. And, LBW children who survive to old age are more likely to be disabled.

Today 852 million people are undernourished—815 million of them in developing countries. In descending order, these countries are in: sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and then, the Near East and North Africa (*The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004*, UN Food and Agriculture Organization). The cost? More than 220 million years of productive life and multiple billions of dollars in lost productivity and consumption—annually.

The world's developed nations and private citizens are generous in many ways, through both government and nongovernmental organizations. Much good has been accomplished. But the wars continue, as do the drought cycles; and as we have demonstrated here, the problem remains massive.

So where is the good news that I mentioned above? Written thousands of years ago, the Hebrew Scriptures are amazingly accurate for every concern

of today's world—hunger included. God certainly knew how crucial to the development of any community—or nation, which is merely a community grown large—adequate food would be. He framed His message to humanity in those terms.

Truly good news!

In ancient Scripture, we find a divine promise of abundant food production. It is part of a series of blessings that God promised the Israelites in the Promised Land—if they obeyed Him. Most likely, you have heard the description often used of this territory, a land filled with “milk and honey,” which was a symbolic way of portraying lush productivity.

God told Israel, “I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely” (Leviticus 26:4-5).

Rain—not too much, not too little and at just the right time—is as elementary as it gets. No matter how technologically advanced a nation is, its people need to eat. This fundamental blessing is as needed today as it ever was.

I wonder if most people in the developed world, those of us who choose from a wide selection of delicious foods in burgeoning supermarkets, stop to think very often about the miracle behind the bounty.

Included in the Leviticus promise was the fact that the crops would yield enough so that the storage bins would still have food on hand by the time the next planting season rolled around again. Every farmer and every rancher knows you must have not just enough of a crop for consumption, but also for seeding the next one.

The prophet Amos was stirred to write this luscious description of the future. “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it” (Amos 9:13).

Normally, there are a few months between the time the grain crop is har-

vested and the time the next crop is planted. In between harvest and seed time was the season for picking and processing the grapes.

What Amos describes—that the planters are literally chasing the harvesters out of the fields because the crops are so abundant and because they grow so quickly—doesn't happen in real life. The scene truly requires a miracle.

The New Living Translation puts it this way: “‘The time will come,’ says the LORD, ‘when the grain and grapes will grow faster than they can be harvested. Then the terraced vineyards on the hills of Israel will drip with sweet wine!’” Imagine the vineyards morphing into wine barrels with open spigots, pouring out an endless supply.

That's the image God gives us of the world He will create under the hand of Jesus Christ, along with the saints.

Annually, the United Church of God keeps a biblical festival that portrays this marvelous future, the Feast of Tabernacles. Few people today real-



The Bible predicts a future of abundant food production.

ize that God intended for His people throughout time to keep this forward looking festival—or that the first-century Church of God kept it.

To learn more of this good news—God's plan by which He will solve the terrible problems plaguing this world—request our booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. ❖



A Page on the World

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

The Faith of the American Soldier

By Stephen Mansfield, 2005, ISBN 1-58542-407-2

Reviewed by Cecil E. Maranville

Stephen Mansfield provides us with an interesting insight into the way today's American soldier understands and uses faith. He relates numerous interviews with field soldiers, as well as chaplains, and he contrasts the faith of today's soldiers with those in American armies of the past. "We have the most religious Army since the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War"—General Barry McCaffrey (p. 33).

Today's America, says Mansfield, is religiously in tension with itself, and that is affecting the soldier in the field. That is, the public is inclined to be religious, readily identifying with the nation's Christian roots. But a largely liberal judiciary is steadily separating government from any mention of religion.

The media reflects this liberal attitude, rarely if ever reporting the part that religion is playing on the battlefield, such as the fact that the marines who assaulted the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah held a prayer meeting to solicit God's blessing before launching their attack. Or that medics report having to push aside crowds from the wounded because so many men were trying to lay hands on the fallen to pray for their healing.

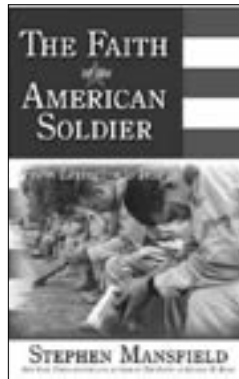
Mansfield tells of a band of young soldiers all less than 25 years of age, gathering to pray before battle. They have talked about the fact that the people of God in the Old Testament lost battles when they sinned. So they quote Psalm 51:1-4, 10 together. This is a psalm or prayer of repentance.

Mansfield says that one might not expect the "millennialists' army" to be religious. One quarter to one third of this generation comes from single parent homes. Nearly 50 percent were sexually active in their teen years. And, they reject traditional church doctrines and standards, finding that structured religion is not relevant to their lives—but they want God and they want His blessings on what they are doing. More than 80 percent describe their religious faith as very important and 75 percent say that they pray at least once a week.

A new religion

The American soldier is developing what some call "unchurched faith," that is, not the faith of a structured denomination. Perhaps the way one soldier described it to Mansfield says it best: "...one part Buddha, three parts Jesus, two parts fortune cookie, and three parts Oprah" (p. 37).

The younger soldiers gather in small groups to pray, and to read and memorize portions of the Old Testament that tell of God defeating Israel's enemies. They are deeply passionate about their faith. They write portions of various biblical Psalms on the walls of their tents. A dog-tag-like shield imprinted with a paraphrase of Joshua 1:9 is highly



popular. It reads: "I will be strong and courageous. I will not be terrified, or discouraged; for the Lord my God is with me wherever I go."

Mansfield adds, "Wiccans [witches], Neo-Pagans, Druids, and 'servants of the Goddess' are now as vibrant if not as numerous as the Baptists in the field." There are Native American powwows and New Age convergences, as well as Hindu offerings. Buddhism leads among major religions in new followers.

The army reflects what is happening back home. Young people reject lengthy analytical messages that bore them, but they love and are inspired by stories and images. Movies with a moral message like *Braveheart* and *The Last Samurai* are popular ways by which they define their faith.

Mansfield illustrates the power of a story with this one: A U.S. soldier rounded the corner of a building to come face-to-face with an enemy who had a 9-mm. pistol pointed right at him. He heard the shot but thought the weapon misfired, because he felt nothing. The astonished shooter promptly surrendered. Only later did the soldier realize that he was covered in blood. He went to the hospital to get checked out. The pistol had indeed fired. The bullet struck a tooth, knocking it out and lodging perfectly in its socket.

The story is told and retold throughout the field. Soldiers have the story written down on paper, which they fold and insert in their helmets when they go into battle.

The Faith of the American Soldier not only gives the reader a deep insight into a factor about the war on terror that the media by and large isn't providing, but it also gives the reader an insight into the thinking of American young people. Religion and mainstream churches do not have the answers to the questions they ask. Yet they think they have found divine guidance and protection by fashioning their own faith.

It is strangely reminiscent of the ancient Israelites of whom the modern soldiers read. In the multicultural society we read about in 2 Kings 17:24-41, suffering casualties, they sought to put together a self-made religion, mixing all sorts of ideologies, with the aim of "pleasing God" and garnering His protection.

The true God did not respond to their efforts, lamenting that they missed the straightforward covenant He made with them long before, when He gave them His faith in a simple straightforward code, the Ten Commandments. God's true faith is inspiring and fulfilling. Read about it in our booklet, *The Ten Commandments*. This booklet will also show why Christians today who take literally Christ's teachings expounding this code—including the commandment not to kill—do not work in jobs that might require the taking of human life or enlist in the military service. ❖

“TAKES ONE,” (Continued from page 16)

his visit with a 26-year-old marine sitting alone in a Camp Lejeune barracks. Maxwell relates how “the kid couldn’t use his arm. He’d seen his buddy killed. His family was in Florida. And he told me he felt so lonely and lost. I decided no Marine was going to be left all alone like that!”

He’s more sensitive now

Today, Maxwell is not the same man he was before he was wounded. A portion of his scalp had to be removed to alleviate brain swelling. Pictures showing his receiving a Purple Heart display scarlet bruises under both eyes and a surgical scar across his temple.

His wife, Shannon, relates how “at first, the doctors said he’d lost a lot of cognitive abilities and some of his personality. So he is really making progress. He has the same personality and energy, but he’s more sensitive now.”

They often visit as a team, and she fills in the holes that his memory can’t cover. She encourages him to be gentle and patient. This counters his self-proclaimed image as a “scary guy with a bad temper” as a battalion officer in Iraq.

A part of that sensitivity training comes through his own struggle with learning to find the words that are locked in his brain. Initially, he started with a third grade reading level and has advanced up to seventh grade reading. But it’s a struggle, as word retention is difficult.

Zucchini relates how the officer still struggles with his brain injuries at therapy sessions where he undergoes “confrontational naming” as he must match a name with a show card. At times, the pressure is so great he sweats through his uniform. He strains over little words like *bed*, *tree*, *book* and *pencil*. But he’s getting better—one word and one wounded soldier at a time.

Being alone is awful

Reporter Zucchini captures the last words that Maxwell shares with the young marine he had dropped by



We often hear of the nearly 2,000 U.S. personnel who have been killed in Iraq, but often we have not focused on the 14,000 men and women who have been wounded. Those who have been through it understand what they are going through.

to see. He asks the corporal whether he has talked with the other young man wounded in the same battle. The man said, “Yes.” Maxwell replied, “That’s critical. Keep talking to him. I’m glad you’ve got that going for you.” And then Maxwell, who knows what it is like to be separated from his unit, whispers to the young man, “Being alone sucks, huh?” And the young man looks up and says, “It’s awful.”

His enthusiasm has inspired others to join his “Wounded Warriors Team.” Even the government is beginning to make things happen for his cause. Men with arms and hands they affectionately call “claws” and soldiers with faces pockmarked by shrapnel have joined the cause.

They all realize that marines will not tell anyone except a fellow marine the details of their injuries, especially the psychological wounds. But as Staff Sgt. James Sturia, one of the members of Maxwell’s team, relates, “Once I tell them what happened to me, they open right up. There’s this huge release—they just talk and talk.”

Becoming a spirit of experience

But what does such a “release” have to do with you, the reading audience? Perhaps you’ve got enough on your own personal plate right now and you even wonder why you are reading this article. Perhaps you are the “walking wounded,” be it spiritually, emotionally or, yes, even physically. As the young corporal said, being alone is awful.

Have you ever considered that what you are going through, right now, most likely is enabling you to become a “spirit of experience”? Yes, so that you, too, might share your story with someone else one day—whether tomorrow, or at a future time when prophecy unfolds across this globe, leaving in its wake people who will need to talk and relate to someone who’s “been there and done that.”

Isn’t that why as Christians we relate to someone like Jesus Christ? Someone like us. Someone who took volunteer duty to come down and crawl into this foxhole called planet

earth to become flesh and live among us (John 1:14).

Yes, the same One who became “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Yes, the same One who has slogged out every foot of the human experience ahead of us, for us and with us, as we are reminded in Hebrews 4:15 that even now He can “sympathize with our weaknesses.”

Yes, He is the same One who has holes in His hands—holes by which we can understand that He would never jest at our plight, as He indeed has the scars and has felt the wounds and understands more than anyone else that being alone is awful.

And yet He did all that for you and me because He and His Father understand that when it’s all said and done, “it takes one to know one.” One who, now and in the future, can speak the prophetic utterance of “‘Comfort, yes, comfort My people!’ says your God. ‘Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned’” (Isaiah 40:1-2).

There is coming a time in the future when the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all the other cities of this earth will need comforting. Scriptures like Daniel 12:1 indicate, “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.”

As incredible as it may seem, the Bible indicates a time ahead for humanity that would make the highway to Baghdad airport seem like a joyride, in comparison to what is going to befall humanity for turning its collective back on God.

Who’s going to talk to them?

But they are going to come back. Humans who survive the Great Tribulation (the time of Satan’s wrath) and the Day of the Lord (the time of God’s judgment on man) are going to say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

Who is going to talk to them? Who’s going to greet them with a knowing “I understand”? Who’s

going to whisper in their ear, “Being alone is the pits, isn’t it? I know. I’ve been there”? Prophetic scripture in Revelation 5:10 indicates that Christ is right now preparing a team of priests to minister to those troubled souls who survive the challenging end times yet ahead.

Can you place whatever you are going through now into the context that you are in training to be there tomorrow for someone you haven’t even met yet? Can you see that your momentary loss, whatever it might be, is for someone else’s gain? That, like Jesus Christ, you, too, are becoming a “spirit of experience,” so that one day you can be a part of Christ’s team of redeemed saints giving hope to the hopeless?

*There is coming a
time in the future
when the inhabitants
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“I understand”?*

Today a scarred and battered warrior named Tim Maxwell is limping up and down hospital corridors making sense out of what could easily have remained one more senseless act of war.

In the future, it will be *you*.

Long ago, Isaiah the prophet wrote of such a time. He said there would be a voice that would say, “this is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

Will that be your voice? Will it be mine? It can be. God wants it to be. But before that happens, remember that its timbre will have to resonate with “it takes one to know one.” And the wounded will respond . . . *to you and me.* ❖

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by Robin Webber

Takes One to Know One

Nearly 400 years ago, William Shakespeare penned this line of wisdom: “He jests at scars that never felt the wounds.” The Bard understood the heartstrings of connection that bring together people who have experienced common woe in life’s experiences.

You can read about such things in books and intellectually understand pain, despair and sorrow, but there’s just something totally unique about sharing your own experience with someone who’s been there and back, or perhaps is still finding his way. Simply put—“it takes one to know one.”

Such understanding is introduced in an article titled “Marine to Marine” written by staff writer David Zucchini that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* of July 31, 2005.

We often hear of the nearly 2,000 U.S. personnel who have been killed in Iraq, but often we have not focused on the 14,000 men and women who have been wounded. There is one who is walking among them whose actions can guide us toward some profound biblical understanding and illuminate future prophetic events. Meet Lt. Col. Tim Maxwell.

The moment of pain meeting pain

Writer Zucchini introduces us to Lt. Col. Maxwell as he comes to the bed of a wounded marine. The young man tries to snap to attention as the officer walks into the hospital room. The young 22-year-old corporal, whose leg is shattered from combat, can barely get off a salute due to his excruciating pain. Zucchini captures

the conversation of two veterans who bare not only their wounds, but also their inner scars.

“Relax, relax,” Maxwell says as he rests his hand on the man’s shoulder. “Just wanted to see how you were doing.” The corporal looks up and says, “Doing good sir. How about you?” “I feel like I got no brain left,” Maxwell says. “My brain got whacked pretty good. I kind of have to fake it to get by.”

This moment of “pain meeting pain” has not come easily for Maxwell. Entering that room is a man with a faulty memory, a speech impediment registered by halting words and a foot that flops. Sometimes the words don’t even come or get hung up in his brain, but he is speaking volumes by his presence.

He’s been doing this since a few days after his own brain surgery at Bethesda Naval Hospital. His wife, Shannon, tells how he almost immediately started cruising through the wards in his wheelchair, looking for other fallen marines. The first thing he said upon recovery was “I want to be with wounded marines.”

The experience of combat creates intense bonds. Maxwell relates how every wounded marine he has met has described a deep emotional void that develops after being ripped from a tightly-knit unit. There is always the feeling of survivor’s guilt or of abandoning one’s buddies. Maxwell himself has felt the depression, the self-doubt and despair.

Early on, he was bitter and angry. Reporter Zucchini freeze-frames in our mind’s eye the moment when Maxwell’s mission further crystallized last May after

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