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# Britain Debates Life's Ultimate Question

*Especially in the last year, the reemergence of media coverage about aggressive atheism has helped focus British attention on that most crucial of all questions: Does God exist? Even scientists are arguing the question. In spite of a rather vigorous defense, atheism certainly appears to be gaining ground in Britain and Europe.*

by John Ross Schroeder

In the title of a feature article, columnist Gerard Baker of *The Times* recently called 2006 “a good year for religious conflict and atheism” (Dec. 22, 2006).

Many things have been and are being written about Oxford Professor Richard Dawkins’ disbelief in God. He is perhaps the world’s foremost apostle of atheism. John Preston, writing in *Seven* (the magazine supplement of *The Sunday Telegraph*), stated that Dawkins “is almost evangelical in telling Christians they are misguided in their faith” (Dec. 17, 2006, p. 8).

Even those who vehemently oppose his views generally acknowledge that Professor Dawkins “has caused a sensation this year with the runaway success of his anti-religious book, *The God Delusion*” (*The Sunday Times*, Dec. 24, 2006, p. 2). His book has headed the nonfiction best-seller list in Britain, and it stayed on *The New York Times* best-seller list for 14 weeks.

On a recent train and ferry trip from England to Northern Ireland, I saw at least two individuals reading *The God*



Photo courtesy Christopher G. Street

*Oxford Professor Richard Dawkins, author of The God Delusion and perhaps the world's foremost apostle of atheism.*

*Delusion* intently. In one case I sat down opposite a businessman, and a conversation about Professor Dawkins’ book soon ensued. It turned out to be a friendly discussion in which I pointed out some of the flaws in the author’s rationale.

### Education and religion

Richard Dawkins started his aggressive educational campaign with a two-  
(See “BRITAIN,” page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## The Watchman as Servant

**W**hile in Southern California for a *World News and Prophecy* seminar last month, I had a chance to visit San Diego and take in a view of the city from atop Point Loma.

There we visited the old lighthouse that for many years, from 1855 to 1891, was the beacon light for ships coming up the coast and into San Diego Harbor.

The lighthouse was decommissioned after it was determined that a new one was needed, lower on the coast. Because the old lighthouse sits 422 feet above the harbor, frequently it would be shrouded by fog and clouds, thus rendering its light undetectable to passing ships. Without its light, a lighthouse serves no purpose.

Looking out on the Pacific Ocean from this vantage point got me to thinking about the role of a watchman so often described in the Bible. Perhaps the best known reference to a watchman is in Ezekiel. While in captivity in Babylon, God told Ezekiel:

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

A watchman had multiple roles in the ancient world. Watchmen stayed in the fields for weeks at a time watching the crops as they matured so they would not be stolen. Watchers stood on the city walls observing the daily comings and goings within the city gates and about the walls.

You could imagine them as the early warning radar systems of the time, watching the weather, the roads and the business of everyday folk. A watchman was an observer who had a unique view of his small corner of the world.

The prophets of God were spiritual watchmen, charged by Him to warn Israel and Judah of their sins against Him and the need to repent and turn back to Him. Their message included a warning of captivity at the hands of Assyria or Babylon if they failed to listen and change. A spiritual watchman's job was to warn the people of their sins and the need to repent. The message to the citizenry was in essence a witness to which they had the responsibility to respond.

The role of a watchman is not limited to only speaking about the sins and problems of the society. The watchman was also charged with proclaiming good news about the paths of salvation. Notice this in Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD brings back Zion.

"Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:7-10).

While at the Point Loma lighthouse I noticed a quote about its purpose on display. The quote is from the playwright George Bernard Shaw and says, "I can think of no other edifice constructed by man as altruistic as a lighthouse. They were built only to serve. They weren't built for any other purpose."

That sums up the role of a watchman—to serve humanity from a selfless love by giving the message of the coming Kingdom of God, the only sure hope in a divided world. A watchman stands and delivers the message about the restoration of all things. Today all who hear have the same responsibility Israel and Judah had. Will they believe and respond to the advance notice?

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“BRITAIN” (Continued from page 1)

part television documentary titled *The Root of All Evil?*—referring to religion in general and Christianity in particular.

However, as Gerard Baker has astutely pointed out, “The two great global conflicts of the 20th century were not truly religious at all... It was twisted ethnic, rather than religious, ideology that principally animated the Nazis. And it is worth noting that the narrowly avoided conflict which would have trumped even these tragedies—a nuclear war with the Soviet Union—would have been launched and prosecuted in the name of militant atheism” (*The Times*, Dec. 22, 2006).

As British author Roger Scruton summed it up, “Richard Dawkins believes that faith is an infectious disease which spreads intolerance and conflict. In fact... it is our principal source of love and peace” (*The Spectator*, Jan. 14, 2006, p. 24).

Professor Dawkins has stated that “there is a strong correlation between religion and education: the more educated people are, the less religious” (*FT* magazine, Dec. 16/17, 2006, p. 16). It’s no surprise that secular-minded professors are “educating” students away from believing in God. But actually we would suggest that only those who have examined the overwhelming evidence and have come to believe in the reality of a personal God are truly educated.

Nonetheless, this exponent of atheism is not at all satisfied with education in even elementary schools that mostly emphasize secularism. A fairly recent report stated that “the Oxford professor and campaigning atheist is planning to take his fight against God into the classroom by flooding schools with anti-religious literature” (*The Sunday Times*, Nov. 19, 2006, p. 5). Dawkins plans to set up a charity that “will subsidize books, pamphlets and DVDs attacking the ‘educational scandal’ of theories such as creationism while promoting rational and scientific thought” (*ibid.*).

Far too many erroneously believe that religion is chiefly responsible for every human wrong in the world. Gerard Baker helps counter this false notion: “You don’t have to be religious to have a dangerous inclination to bend others to your own views. Professor Richard Dawkins

provided a timely reminder that belligerent intolerance of the beliefs of others is by no means the preserve of the faithful” (*The Times*, Dec. 22, 2006).

### Comparative national religious beliefs

Historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto recently assessed the current state of British religious interest in general terms. He stated: “Sermons are about society, not salvation. Alastair Campbell [Tony

According to Harvard professor and author Niall Ferguson, “the Gallup Millennium Survey of Religious Attitudes shows that barely 20 per cent of West Europeans attend church services at least once a week, compared with 47 per cent of North Americans and 82 per cent of West Africans. Less than half of Western Europeans say that God is a ‘very important’ part of their lives, as against 83 per cent of Americans and virtually all West Africans. And fully 15



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*Empty churches are the norm in Western Europe.*

Blair’s director of strategy and communications] spoke for England when he said *we don’t do God*. The British now respond to religion with the embarrassment once provoked only by sex” (*The Independent*, Dec. 24, 2006, emphasis added throughout).

British educational authorities like Chris Woodhead have indicated that “RE [Religious Education] lessons are badly taught and fail to instill faith and tolerance. They should be axed” (*The Sunday Times*, July 24, 2005, p. 11).

The Jewish community in Britain also has adherents in the atheist/agnostic camp, while still claiming to hold to some aspects of Judaism. For instance, one couple gave their twin sons “a faith-free” bar mitzvah. The two are quoted by *The Jewish Chronicle* as saying, “You can be Jewish without praying to a God you don’t believe in” (Dec. 22, 2006, p. 20).

per cent of Western Europeans deny that there is any kind of ‘spirit, God or life force’” (*The Daily Telegraph*, July 31, 2005).

### The other side of the debate

*Daily Mail* columnist and author Melanie Phillips has pointed out that “religion lies at the heart of our society’s greatest achievements because it enables the human spirit to soar... It was this Judeo-Christian heritage that has given us values that secularists prize, such as human rights and tolerance. Religion gives us a code to live by which helps make us better people... The value we in the West place on every individual *and on the principle of equality is based on our foundation religious doctrine that we are all created equal in the image of God*” (*Daily Mail*, Dec. 19, 2005).

Columnist Jeff Jacoby articulated

the fact that “without God the difference between good and evil becomes purely subjective” (*International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 15, 2006).



“He must be a blind soul indeed that cannot see that a great purpose is being worked out here below”— Sir Winston Churchill.

At least a few scientists also ask some searching questions relevant to life’s ultimate question. For instance, Martin Rees, president of the Royal Society, stated: “The pre-eminent mystery is why anything exists at all. What breathes life into the equations; and actualized them in a real cosmos. Such questions lie beyond science, however; they are the province of philosophers and theologians” (*The Sunday Times*, Dec. 24, 2006).

A cover article in *Time* magazine (international edition) stated: “The universe seems uncannily well suited to the existence of life. Could that really be an accident?” (Nov. 29, 2004, p. 58).

In yet another piece from *Time*, Francis Collins, director of the Human Genome Research Institute, states: “For me the fundamental answers about the meaning of life come not from science, but from a consideration of the origins of our uniquely human sense of right and wrong and from the historical record of Christ’s life on earth” (Aug. 15, 2005, p. 34).

### The testimony of a former atheist

It happens! About three years ago, “one of the most renowned atheists of

the past half century...changed his mind and decided that there is a God after all. Anthony Flew, emeritus professor of philosophy at Reading University, whose arguments for atheism have influenced scholars the world over, has been converted to the view that some sort of deity created the universe” (*The Sunday Times*, Dec. 12, 2004, Internet).

To quote this long-believing atheist directly, Professor Flew stated: “I have been persuaded that it is simply out of the question that the first living matter evolved out of dead matter and then developed into an extraordinary creature” (ibid.).

It is axiomatic that life comes from life! The question is: Who possessed life before the creation? The Bible tells us that both the Father and the Son have life within Themselves (John 5:26).

During the middle of the first century, the apostle Paul addressed academics in Athens, declaring the reality of the Creator God to the Greek philosophers of his day (see Acts 17:16-28). This aspect of the gospel is also a part of the teaching of the United Church of God today.

We have written in voluminous detail about the many reasons we believe there is a personal Creator God who has always existed. Please be sure to request (or download) our free booklets on this important subject—*Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*, *Who Is God?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* The rationale for these three booklets springs from the Bible and from the perspective and evidence of true science.

### Does it really matter what you believe?

There are two opposing worldviews at stake in this crucial battle for the minds of the British people. The first worldview argues that human beings are nothing but a cosmic accident, the result of millions of years of being gradually engineered by the evolutionary process, occasioned through the survival of the fittest. Thus the bottom line is that we should all look out for number one because this life is all there is.

This despairing outlook sums up the Darwinian worldview. In his weekly *Spectator* column, British author Paul Johnson has analyzed the results.

“Much of the blame lies with Richard Dawkins, head of the Darwinian funda-

mentalists in this country [Britain], who has (it seems) indissolubly linked Darwin to the more extreme forms of atheism, and projected on to our senses a dismal world in which life has no purpose or meaning and a human being has no more significance than a piece of rock, being subject to the blind process of pitiless, unfeeling, unthinking nature” (Aug. 27, 2005, p. 25).

Yet, as world statesman Sir Winston Churchill once articulated in a speech to both houses of the U.S. Congress: “He must be a blind soul indeed that cannot see that a great purpose is being worked out here below.”

The other worldview is firmly based on life having a great divine purpose. In the vernacular it says, “It’s not about me.” This life is not about human beings seeking to please the self, but instead, showing love to neighbor and striving to become more like the greatest Man who ever lived, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He showed us the ultimate example of love in giving His life for us so that we might eventually share the entire universe with Him (see Romans 8:16-23; Hebrews 2:5-11).

If you would like more information about this second and much more fruitful worldview, request or download our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* Why did God create human beings in the first place? Does the Bible reveal a great divine plan and purpose? Why has it been hidden from most of mankind? All these questions and more are answered in this publication, which you can read in just one sitting. ❖

### Recommended Reading

Can you really know if a Creator God exists? Can you prove it? If so, why did He create you and me? These are crucial questions, and never have the answers been more important.



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# Is America in Financial Decline?

*The turn of the year saw a rapid decline in the value of the American dollar as international confidence in the United States and its currency declined. What is the meaning of this for Americans, and what does it portend for the future?*

by Melvin Rhodes

Americans have long thought that they are the wealthiest nation on earth. Individually, Americans believe they are better off than they would be anywhere else.

But is this the case?

I have five brothers living in England. Four of them annually visit other countries, something that few Americans can afford to do. Three of them have visited the United States.

Additionally, they have all had HDTVs for some time, a quality of picture still lacking in my home. They and their families all eat out as much as people do on this side of the Atlantic. They also all seem to have the latest vehicles, albeit usually smaller than those in the United States, perhaps reflecting the fact that parking spaces are few and far between!

It's not difficult to see why they are doing so well. Just take a look at the currency markets: The dollar has fallen over 15 percent in a few weeks. It now takes two U.S. dollars to buy one British pound. In fact, with commission and charges, it will cost you more than that to convert greenbacks into British notes in any bank.

So now, in dollar terms, my brothers are getting almost twice as much value for their pounds as they did 20 years ago when the pound and the dollar were almost at par.

## **Inflation in real estate**

Another reason they are doing well is real estate inflation. With a much higher population density than the United States, and with limited space, house prices in the United Kingdom have shot up, so that now any British homeowner is among the richest people in the Western world.

We visited a couple of friends in London a couple of years ago. Their home was then worth 540,000 British pounds, at the time almost \$1 million. Yet it was a small dwelling with very cramped rooms and no garage. Also, the home was a terraced house, meaning it was in a street full of homes with no gaps (or garages) between them. Parking was a



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*Foreign exchange—ignored in the news?*

constant nightmare as everybody had to park on the street. Sometimes they had to park on another street! (No wonder people have smaller cars!) If this couple sold their home in London, they could move to the U.S. Midwest, buy a bigger home for \$150,000 and deposit the balance in the bank, living off the interest for the rest of their lives!

In 1984 my wife and I were living in the United Kingdom. We bought a home there for 38,000 pounds. At the time the pound was worth \$1.04, so the house cost \$39,500. I've recently been told that the home is now worth 400,000 British pounds, an increase of over 1,000 percent in 20 years. That's 1,000 percent in British pounds. In dollars, it's gone up twice as much, 2,000 percent or \$800,000! Unfortunately, we sold it less than a year after we bought it, when we were transferred.

It's not surprising that when British people retire, they sell their homes and often move to cheaper countries, living off the nontaxable proceeds!

The dollar's decline in value is one of the most significant developments of our time, yet goes

*The dollar's decline in value is one of the most significant developments of our time, yet goes barely reported in the United States. Most Americans remain oblivious. What does it mean?*

barely reported in the United States. Most Americans remain oblivious. Television programs and newspaper articles will boast that the U.S. economy is growing at a greater rate than many other countries, but if the currency is falling, America is still going backwards financially.

If, for example, in 2005, an American's salary was \$50,000 and, in 2006, he or she received a 5 percent increase, the salary would be \$52,500. However, a year ago that \$50,000 was worth 27,700 British pounds. Today, with the 5 percent increase, the salary has actually gone down to 26,250 pounds, courtesy of the dollar's decline. In comparison to the euro, the value has decreased even more.

This is also happening to the U.S. national economy. An annual growth rate of 5 percent means roughly 10 percent negative growth, because the dollar has declined internationally by 15 percent.

### **Does the dollar's decline matter?**

Clearly, if this is nonnews to most people in the media, it's not having much of an effect upon Americans. So should Americans worry?

The reason a decline in the value of the U.S. currency is having little effect at this time is due to two things that work in America's favor. The first is that the United States produces most of its own food, which keeps the price of food stable.

Secondly, oil and most commodities are priced in dollars—for now. There was a time when most commodities were priced in sterling, the British currency. But as sterling weakened and became an unpredictable currency (meaning it might not hold its value), individuals and nations switched to U.S. dollars.

Now they are gradually switching to euros, arguably today the world's most sought-after currency.

Does it matter?

The primary reason a currency falls in value against other currencies is a lack of confidence. Central bankers and eventually ordinary people will get rid of their dollars because they fear its value will decline. As more and more banks divest themselves of their dollar assets, even more people will want to get rid of theirs. This will drive the value down, in the same way that a glut of tomatoes will drive down the price.

There are a number of reasons inter-



Reuters

*United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan greets German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit Feb. 5, 2007. The UAE has shifted to holding more euros than dollars.*

national confidence in the U.S. currency has declined, some political and some financial.

### **Dollars to euros**

Amid growing talk of a U.S. defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan, confidence in the United States is declining. Robert J. Samuelson summed this up well: "With hindsight we may see 2006 as the end of Pax Americana. Ever since World War II, the United States has used its military and economic superiority to promote a stable world order that has, on the whole, kept the peace and spread prosperity. But the United States increasingly lacks both the power and the will to play this role" ("Farewell to Pax Americana," *Washington Post*, Dec. 14, 2006). Americans are increasingly turning inward, focusing on their internal problems, of which there are many.

Financially, the biggest global concern is of America's deficits, a record both in the United States and internationally. No other nation in history has ever accumulated so much debt.

There's the rapidly growing federal budget deficit, which the media frequently highlights if only to make political gains. But there's also the trade deficit as America buys more from the rest of the world than it is able to sell.

Most countries could not do this, as they must have dollars, euros or pounds to buy foreign goods. Because the United States, long the world's strongest economy, prints the dollars, other countries have taken the U.S. currency as payment for goods, without question.

That may change as the dollar declines. It could eventually become a "soft" currency, like most of the currencies in the world. A soft currency is one that is not easily convertible into other currencies. Nations with soft currencies must sell goods to receive "hard" (convertible) currencies before they can buy goods, including oil, from others. This could happen to the United States, meaning that the country would need euros to buy oil.

This would greatly impact the United States, as it would mean that it could not purchase anything from overseas unless it had the euros to make the purchase. The only way to come by those euros is to sell goods to Europeans, but U.S. manufacturing has declined greatly in recent years, which means that few euros are coming in.

The big crisis will come if oil is priced in euros (first crisis) and only euros are accepted (second and much bigger crisis). Some oil-producing nations have already called for this. Others have diversified

their foreign currency holdings, preferring to hold more euros in the bank than dollars. The United Arab Emirates, a major oil producer in the Persian Gulf, became the latest nation to announce diversification just before the end of the year.

Initially, if oil is priced in euros, price fluctuations at the pump will be even greater than they are now. Right now, those price changes reflect supply and demand on the international oil markets. If oil is priced in euros, currency fluctuations will also impact the price of gas at the American pump. As the dollar seems set for further decline, this would mean continuing significant price increases.

But the real crisis would come if the dollar is no longer accepted in international trade, something that hasn't happened since the American Civil War, when the country's future was uncertain. Most currencies are not accepted outside their own borders. Some are not even wanted within their own borders as they are deemed worthless. Reckless overspending and increased debt could result in the dollar suffering the same fate given time.

If this happened, the United States would have to earn the euros to buy the oil! America's leading role in the world would come rapidly to a close and Americans would be reduced to living a third world existence!

Is this possible? Certainly, it is. No nation can go on overspending as the United States has. Reckless overspending, increasing debt and expensive overseas military commitments have been three factors in the decline and fall of most of the major powers throughout history. The United States is simply repeating a pattern that goes back millennia.

### Seismic shift in global economy

In Daniel 2:21 we learn that God is behind the rise and fall of nations: "He removes kings and raises up kings."

We also see in the same chapter that one more superpower is going to dominate the world before the return of Jesus Christ (verse 44). This superpower will be a revival of the Roman Empire, the "fourth beast" mentioned in verse 40. It will be a union of 10 European nations, symbolized in this passage by "ten toes."

In Revelation 17 these 10 toes are "ten horns which ...are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they

receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast" (verses 12-13). This short-lived revival of the Roman Empire will be overthrown by the Kingdom of God: "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (verse 14).

Before this great military power can come together, the world must move from a U.S.-dominated economic system to one centered on Europe. This is what is now happening with the dollar's decline and the increasing role of the euro, although it could still be some time before the euro fully replaces the U.S. dollar.

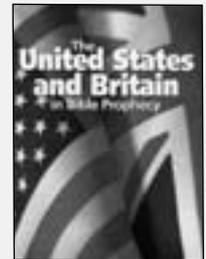
Revelation chapter 18 is a prophecy about the fall of the mighty economic system that lies behind the revived Roman Empire. Contrary to what some believe, it is not a prophecy about America's fall, as the United States has not been responsible for the "blood of prophets and saints" (verse 24). This responsibility lies with the

Roman Empire and its successors, both secular and spiritual, throughout history.

The decline of the dollar and the rise of the euro are symptomatic of a gradual change in the world's economic power structure, which is leading us inexorably toward the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. ❖

## Recommended Reading

The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future?



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# How Can You Make Sense of the News?

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**S**o much is happening in the world, and so quickly, that it's almost impossible to see it all out.

Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? Is prophecy coming to pass before our eyes? How can you know the answers?

You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy.

This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective

of God's Word, the Bible. Here's some of what you'll find:

- Articles analyzing world news in the light of Bible prophecy.
- An online blog discussing the latest news and trends.
- Audio discussion (podcasts) of what's happening in the world around us.
- Links to significant news items from hundreds of news sources around the world.
- Free booklets to help you better understand Bible prophecy.

To understand the meaning behind the news and where the world is headed, visit us at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org) today!

# Generation Debt

*How Americans are selling their souls into debt slavery at ever-younger ages, and what you need to learn about how to avoid it wherever you live on earth.*

by Howard Davis

**“**I owe, I owe, so off to work I go.” If you are under 35 years old in the English-speaking world, the cynical lyrics set to the Disney tune from the fairy tale *Snow White* are now more reality than fantasy. The majority of young adults in America, Britain, Canada and Australia have enmeshed themselves in a dependency to debt so vast their futures will likely be more defined by bondage than freedom.

The story of the financial debt of Americans in general, and its young adults in particular, is so vast, it is like the beginning of the biblical epic of Israelite slaves in Egypt. And its workings are characterized by the language of the book of Revelation—a global economic bondage to a developing “Babylon the great.”

Let’s start the story at the top of the world’s economic pyramid.

America’s colleges and universities are considered the world’s higher education gold standard, but its graduates are being reduced to serfs of debt. The process decimates the economic logic behind the “get ahead” goals of the nation’s financially best and brightest youth.

Between 1995 and 2005, total college student debt tripled. Two thirds of four-year college students graduate with loan debt. The Collegiate Funding Services 2004 survey of 668 recent graduates says the average college loan debt is \$23,735. In addition, the typical student carries thousands in unsecured credit card debt.

Nellie Mae, the U.S. government’s lender for student loans, reported the results of a May 2005 survey that showed 76 percent of all undergraduate students carry credit cards, 72 percent reported using credit cards for food, 72 percent for textbooks, 68 percent for clothing and 24 percent for some tuition.

*Seventy-nine percent don’t pay the card off each month.*

The typical starting salary for today’s college graduate is \$28,000. By comparison, when I graduated from five years of college and university at age 22 in 1972, I had \$1,500 in student loan debt and a salary of \$7,500.

These college debtors today are the best and brightest of America’s economic players in terms of earning potential. What about the non-college youth sociologists call “the forgotten majority”? According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 25 percent of American young adults become college educated, and they will make on average twice the wages (over their lifetimes) of those with only a high school diploma: \$51,194 per year for college graduates, compared to \$27,280 annually for high school graduates.

Sixty percent of jobs in the United States require at least some college education, up from 28 percent in the 1970s.

Yet since the 1970s, high school graduation has declined, so that only 67 percent even get a high school diploma. The approximately 30 percent of young Americans without even a high school education will be stuck in the bargain basement for wages, benefits and financial opportunity.

But all classes are subject to the same logic of predatory lending. When shackled with debt, you limit your freedom and your future.

The ancient biblical observation remains forever true: “The borrower is slave [bond servant] to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7). In America, when the “slaves” can’t take any more, they go bankrupt. Tragically, college educated or not, the under-25-year-olds are a fast-growing segment in bankruptcy statistics in the United States.

They have been conditioned to be the biggest debtors in history in a nation of debtors. In 1970 the average credit card holder owed \$185. Now the figure is \$7,500. The average American household is in debt worth 118 percent of its annual income.

## Generation debt

In a sad tale repeated in tens of millions of young adults’ lives, young men and women of the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia have unconsciously slid into a burden of debt that they are clueless about how to overcome. All English-speaking nations are in the same

*In a sad tale repeated in tens of millions of young adults’ lives, young men and women of the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia have unconsciously slid into a burden of debt that they are clueless about how to overcome.*

boat of comparable personal debt—and sinking deeper. Why?

In her book *Generation Debt: Why Now Is a Terrible Time to Be Young* (2006), Anya Kamenetz begins the first chapter quoting a Harvard professor: “The next generation is starting their economic race 50 yards behind the starting line.”

This 24-year-old graduate of Yale University has already won a Pulitzer Prize in journalism, the world’s finest award in her profession. She writes for *New York* magazine, *The Washington Post* and *The Nation*.

With all this apparent success already, she started her preface to the book: “What would you do if you grew up and realized that everything America has always promised its children no longer holds true for you?

“...I was born into a broke generation. Born into a century of unimaginable prosperity, in the richest country in the world, those of us between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five have somehow been cheated out of our inheritance.”

### How slaves feel

The debt burden has all the signs of an abusive addiction. It acts like a drug pushed by powerful drug lords of debt, with the complicity of a system full of unethical players. The users are exploited by the world’s richest and most powerful merchants and financiers, with their marketing machines and political enablers.

You may think I use hyperbole to make the writing more interesting. Unfortunately, this is the language insightful young Americans use in describing their feelings.

Carmen Wong Ulrich, another young author of another recently published book called *Gener@tion Debt*, has strong words for “those dastardly baby boomers and their dividend tax cuts, outsourcing drama, looming retirement, and cheating CEOs. They’ve stolen the country’s economic spotlight for too long... Because America, we’re in trouble.”

“Shhhh...” she says. “You hear that? That’s the sound of millions of eighteen to thirty-four-year-olds getting sucked in, pulled down, and held under by debt.”

Regrettably, other young adults are not nearly as articulate or analytical.

Consider a scene repeated thousands of times over. In tribute to the ultimate annual festival to debt, this sad but true tale here in Portland, Oregon, occurred a few days before Christmas 2006.

A 20-something shopper handed the cashier her Visa credit card for the mound of Christmas gifts she brought to the counter of an upscale department store in the lavish Washington Square Mall.

“I’m sorry, your card was declined,” said the clerk.

The shopper said, “Okay, here is another card.”

The next card was scanned. “It’s declined,” said the cashier.

“Oh, that’s so sad,” said the shopper as she pulled another out of her purse. “Try this one.”

“I’m so sorry, that’s declined too.”

“Oh dear... What can I do?” Bewildered, the young woman stared innocently at her pile of gifts and then at the clerk.

The clerk smoothly broke the embarrassing moment. Like a calm rescue worker, she intoned, “Do you have a [store credit] card?” with the wonderful warmth of a smile.

The shopper shook her head no.

The clerk told the young woman, “I’ll fix you up. Just get [our credit] card. It is so easy. It will take just a minute.”

Saved by this wonderfully “helpful,” well-dressed saleswoman, the young shopper beamed. A few minutes later and voilà!

“Saved” by debt, she is going to have to wrestle in servitude with four cards. Millions of such transactions multiply across the wealthy English-speaking world.

Debt slavery is not pleasant, but it does condition the younger generation to increasing bondage.

Jerrold Mundis examines the experience in his book, *How to Get Out of Debt, Stay Out of Debt and Live Prosperously*: “We walk a tightrope and live in apprehension of impending disaster... This fear exerts ever more pressure on us. It begins to disrupt our lives and personal relationships. It sucks the joy and pleasure out of our days... We come to feel defeated and hopeless. We grow depressed.”

Personal finance expert and former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Lynnette Khalfani says, “Debt is the single worst four-letter word in the English language.” Debt is a profound motivator of behavior and negative emotions. Many psychologists connect the dots between increasing debt and the state of emotional instability that both leads it and feeds it.

It is bondage, says Khalfani. “Debt is the longest-lasting economic curse, the most heinous financial plague, and the least recognized form of modern slavery afflicting Americans this millennium” (*Zero Debt: The Ultimate Guide to Financial Freedom*, 2004, introduction).

In a \$12 trillion-a-year U.S. economy, the largest and most dynamic in history, why do so many young people face financial ruin where they don’t own their own future? How did this happen across the affluent world? Who is to blame and what do you need to do about it?

The Statue of Liberty used to be a symbol of the gateway to freedom and opportunity, to a promised land where you could get a job, own a house, send your children to the best public schools on earth, spend a lifetime making more, having more, saving more.

Now it is the gateway to the greatest nation of debtors in history—living temporarily on the wealth of the world, borrowed from its dependent friends and enemies.

Can they escape the full effects of this bondage? Who will help them out? What will happen if the trend is not reversed?

Surprisingly, the answers are spiritual, and the only way out is biblical, both for the English-speaking world as a whole and for its citizens.

We show the spiritual reasons and the solutions in our publications *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *Managing Your Finances*. Learn why the English-speaking world, the most prosperous civilization in history, is headed toward bankruptcy and far worse if it doesn’t reverse its debtor status.

In the meantime, wherever you are, get out of debt as soon as possible, and stay out! Avoid being under its power. ❖

# Make Up Your Mind, America!

*Is America a diverse culture of numerous religions that all worship the same God? Is it a secular or a Christian nation? Keith Ellison ignited an explosion of controversy by choosing the Koran as the book to hold during his ceremonial swearing in to the 110th U.S. Congress. There is an underlying issue involved that you will not read of in the mainstream media: America doesn't know its identity!*

by Cecil E. Maranville

Americans “on the whole [are] ill-bred, provincial, sullen and frightened. They are...susceptible to mere rhetoric and responsive to arguably bogus appeals to values, no matter what the facts” (Clark Judge, “Words That Work,” *OpinionJournal.com*, Jan. 23, 2007, citing Frank Luntz’s book by that name).

He wasn’t speaking of America’s reaction to Keith Ellison’s swearing in, but these brutally frank words apply to the controversy swirling around this first Muslim member of the U.S. Congress.

Ellison’s announcement that he wished to be sworn in with a copy of the Koran spawned a heated debate in the country about whether that was appropriate or even legal.

Actually, what Ellison was talking about was only a ceremonial act, as the official swearing in occurs as a group in the House Chamber. Congressional representatives who wish to pose for photographs may do so in a later reenactment, and there is no law prohibiting the use of the Koran for this.

Nonetheless, it is an unusual time in American history to want to be sworn in to a government office on a Koran! Why would Ellison do this? “It is...to send a message to the American people,” opined columnist and radio host Dennis Prager (“A Response to My Critics—and a Solution,” *Townhall.com*, Dec. 5, 2006).

If that is true, people are hearing different messages. Some see it as an affront to America, whereas others see it as an affirmation of American diversity.

*World News and Prophecy* has an entirely different take on the issue—that it shows that Americans do not know who they are.

Ellison appeared to sidestep some controversy by choosing a unique copy of the Koran, one that had been owned by Thomas Jefferson, which the former president initialed. The picture of Ellison being sworn in on this Koran by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi drew more media than any similar photo op in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Was it a “PR masterstroke,” as some called it, or did choosing Jefferson’s copy of the Koran only obscure significant questions?

## **“It’s diversity,” say some**

Supporting Ellison’s decision, Democratic Congressman Jim Moran said that it underscored the fact that Muslim Americans are “...an integral part of American society. Our country is a melting pot of different cultures and beliefs. This diversity is a strength, not a weakness” (Askia Muhammed, “Rep. Keith Ellison: First Muslim in Congress,” *Finalcall.com*, Jan. 20, 2007).

James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute (and brother of pollster John Zogby) echoed the diversity concept, taking a swipe at the congressman’s critics: “America’s founders had a more profound respect for religious diversity than many of their latter-day disciples.”

Zogby also praised Ellison’s election to Congress and his choice of the Koran for the ceremonial swearing in. “An African American, descended of slaves, was sworn into the 110th Congress using Thomas Jefferson’s own Qur’an. That, if anything, is a *great American story*. It deserves to be celebrated. It is now part of our nation’s history” (“Ellison and the Qur’an—a Great American Story,” [www.middle-east-online.com](http://www.middle-east-online.com), Jan. 17, 2007, emphasis added).

## **“It’s a Muslim Trojan horse,” say others**

Not everyone is celebrating. Opposing views range from calling for Ellison to be barred from the Congress altogether (Judge Roy Moore) to a chorus of warnings that his Muslim beliefs will conflict with the congressman’s duties to the United States. Those who researched Ellison’s background report that the idea to use Jefferson’s Koran wasn’t the congressman’s. It was the idea of Madhi Bray, executive director of the Muslim American Society, which is the American operation of the radical terrorist Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.

WorldNet Daily reported on Dec. 6 that

*Was Keith Ellison’s decision to pose after the swearing in ceremony with Jefferson’s copy of the Koran a “PR masterstroke,” as some called it, or did it only obscure significant questions?*

“...within days of being elected, Ellison held a workshop on politics for [yet another] group closely affiliated with a radical Islamic school that preaches no Muslim can pledge loyalty to the [U.S.] Constitution or make laws outside the laws of the Quran, which the school’s leaders assert is the ‘supreme law’ of the land, trumping all man-made laws including the U.S. Constitution” (“Doubts Grow Over Muslim Lawmaker’s Loyalty,” p. 1).

Ellison met with the group’s leader, Omar Ahmad Shahin, later the same day. Shahin lectures at the American Open University, which is known to law enforcement as “Wahhabi Online” (ibid.).

Lastly, the article reported a pattern of Ellison’s disregard for U.S. laws, including failure to pay taxes and over 40 parking and traffic tickets. In addition, he’s been fined heavily for violating campaign finance regulations.

Zogby slammed those who dare to raise these questions, calling them “ignorant of our nation’s history.” In fact, Zogby may be the ignorant one, for the reason Jefferson had a Koran wasn’t to celebrate diversity. See the inset article, “Jefferson Studies Koran to Fight War on Muslim Terrorists.”

However, there truly is a “great American story” behind this issue—although not in the way that James Zogby claims.

### **“My people,” says the Creator God**

There is an intriguing parable in Isaiah’s prophecy: “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider” (Isaiah 1:3). A domestic animal knows its way home to where it is sheltered and fed. However, God said through the prophet, “My people” don’t have the sense that a “dumb” animal does! They do not know their owner, that is, their Creator.

Who are God’s people in this prophecy? The prophet’s message mentioned the Israel of the time, several hundred years before Christ, but it is an end-time prophecy. Who today are included in “My people”? Are Americans among them?

The “celebrate American diversity”



Reuters/Jim Young

*U.S. Representative Keith Ellison places his hand on an English translation of the Koran once owned by Thomas Jefferson as he poses after being sworn in as the first Muslim member of Congress by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.*

crowd would howl in protest at the suggestion, decrying it as too provincial and prejudicial. It excludes many ethnic groups, rather than includes all, which is “the American way.”

Yet, that ignores the fact that God Himself narrows matters down by referring to “My people.”

“All the great religions worship the same God,” continues this diversity reasoning. James Zogby included in his rebuke of Keith Ellison’s critics, “If they had taken the time to read this book [the Koran], they would have found, for example, that the God of the Qur’an is the same as the God of the Old and New Testaments” (op. cit., Zogby).

He’s wrong! If the same God inspired the Bible and the Koran, the books would be in perfect agreement, rather than forming the basis for a centuries-long conflict that is now sharper than ever!

Nonreligious Americans would take the middle ground, saying the question of whether they are part of “My people” is immaterial, for they do not take religion literally. In spite of the fact that a majority of Americans profess Christianity, this “don’t-take-religion-literally” per-

spective describes most of them.

### **The “religious view” is wrong**

On the other hand, many religious people would say that Americans are part of “My people,” because the nation is Christian. If you are a believer, this might sound correct to you, but there is a major flaw in this thinking.

It’s viewing “God’s people” in a spiritual sense alone. Indeed, God draws people from all ethnic backgrounds into His spiritual Church today, and they are then His people. The apostle Peter verifies this: “But you...who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

However, God is working on two tracks, the first with the spiritual “people of God” and the second with specific physical nations that are also “His people.” Most readers will react by saying, “Yeah, that’s the Jews, the state of Israel.” However, they would be only partially right, for Jews constitute only a fraction of those who are Israel today.

The Jews are the descendants of the ancient Israelite tribe of Judah, which

was only one of 12 tribes. For several decades, the 12 tribes were a single kingdom under three monarchs, including the famous biblical David. Yet they split shortly after the reign of another famous king, Solomon, into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. One large tribe, Joseph, became two (Ephraim and Manasseh), making 13 tribes. Three tribes combined to comprise Judah; 10 combined to become the new kingdom of Israel.

The kingdom of Israel was eventually carried into captivity in the Assyrian Empire—coincidentally, encompassing some of the territory that is modern Iraq. Over the centuries, they migrated across Europe, known to history partly as Scythians. Two of the 10 tribes that wandered eventually became a community or commonwealth of nations and a single, powerful nation. Those unique nations today are the former British Empire (Great Britain and its Commonwealth) and the United States.

### **Americans need to learn who they are**

Think closely about the people Isaiah described. These aren't the godly people later spoken of by Peter, for they don't know God! They are scoundrels, spiritual rogues! The context of that Isaiah prophecy speaks not of people whose hearts and minds are devout, but rather rebellious, corrupt, breaking the divine laws, instead of obeying them.

"Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward" (Isaiah 1:4).

The purpose of the prophecy is to warn these people that they have forgotten their identity—and with it, their responsibility to their Creator.

Are Americans included in the "My people" of Isaiah 1:3-4? Yes, they are, but not because of a converted heart.

Americans are indeed ignorant of their history, but the lack of knowledge goes far beyond the politically tainted debate of the multicultural left and the religious right. They need to investigate their roots, much as adults who discover they were adopted as children search out their birth parents. They need to embrace

their identity and the awesome responsibility it entails.

Trace those roots for yourself, both

from the Bible and from history, using our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

## **Jefferson Studies Koran to Fight War on Muslim Terrorists**

It's true that Thomas Jefferson owned a Koran, but his reason for studying it went beyond a desire to understand another religion. He was preparing to lead the nation in war with Muslim terrorists! At the time of his presidency, one sixth of American wheat and flour exports traversed the Mediterranean Sea, as well as one fourth of its pickled and dried fish exports.

These products represented a sizable portion of the young American country's trade. The commodities, as well as the crews that transported them, were being attacked by Muslims.

From the late 1500s, shipping in the Mediterranean faced a constant threat from Muslim pirates who viciously attacked commercial vessels as much for their crews as for their cargoes. These were the infamous Barbary pirates, named after the states of the Barbary Coast, modern Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The pirates were state-sponsored, backed by the Ottoman Empire.

They enslaved crews that they captured, using them to man the oars on the pirate vessels. Any women taken were shipped to markets to be sold as concubines. Captured young boys were mutilated to create eunuchs, who would bring higher prices in the slave markets.

Until the American Revolution, the British Royal Navy protected ships from the colonies that sailed the Mediterranean. During the war, an alliance with France brought the American vessels under its protection, but after winning independence, the United States had to fend for itself. European nations at the time attempted to lessen the threat from the pirates by paying them "tribute money," essentially a protection racket. In exchange for the bribes, the pirates would not attack.

However, the agreements were flimsy and often broken. When the pirates took captives, they would demand ransom money from the crew's home nation. Initially, the fledgling American Congress followed the European model, paying tributes and ransoms, until the amounts reached a staggering 20 percent of America's national revenue by 1800!

Jefferson's first encounters with the Barbary pirates stemmed from his service as ambassador to France in 1786. From the beginning, he opposed paying anything to the pirates. He asked Tripoli's ambassador to Britain why the Barbary States were so hostile to America.

The frank reply: "It was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in the Koran, that all nations who [sic] should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as Prisoners, and that every Musselman who should be slain in Battle was sure to go to Paradise" (Joshua E. London, "America's Earliest Terrorists," *National Review Online*, Dec. 16, 2006).

We should note that this was over 160 years before the formation of the state of Israel, so this Muslim antagonism against America cannot be written off as caused by American support for Israel.

When Jefferson assumed the presidency in 1801, he ordered the U.S. Navy to the Mediterranean, refusing to pay either tribute or ransom any longer. The U.S. Marines pounded the Barbary positions from the sea, and a small expedition actually went overland to help some rival Muslim forces take Tripoli, giving inspiration to the line in the Marine hymn, "from the halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli..." ❖

# In Brief...

## World News Review

### What Harm Could Iran Do?

As rhetorical saber rattling continues out of Tehran, Westerners, especially Americans, seem to give little thought to any pending threat from the Islamic republic. Isn't any potential danger in the distant future? Wouldn't it take many years of development before Iran's nuclear capability could strike American soil?

That's true. Israel is the one immediately threatened by an Iranian nuclear weapon. But what could Iran do by cutting off its oil—or the other oil that travels through the Persian Gulf? Considering Western emergency oil reserves and the effect on its own economy should give Iran pause before closing the valves.

However, oil isn't the Iranians' sole weapon. Islamic radicals have perfected the terror weapon, having recruited and trained thousands of operatives capable of raising funds, procuring weapons or using themselves as suicide bombers.

Last summer, Mojtaba Bigdeli, Hezbollah's Iranian spokesman, announced a capability to carry out attacks globally. "We have 2,000 volunteers who have registered since last year. They have been trained and they can become fully armed. We are ready to dispatch them to every corner of the world to jeopardize Israel and America's interests. We are only waiting for the Supreme Leader's green light to take action. If America wants to ignite World War Three... we welcome it" ("Iran's Hezbollah Says Ready to Attack US, Israel," Reuters, July 18, 2006). "Supreme Leader" refers to the chief cleric of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei.

Hezbollah's terrorist attacks have killed more Americans than any other group, except for al-Qaeda. That Hezbollah is Iran's proxy is common knowledge. Not commonly known is the fact that Hezbollah has sleeper cells operating in at least 10 U.S. cities.

"In May [2006] the *New York Post* reported on Hezbollah's plans to activate sleeper cells in New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Detroit as the nuclear showdown with Iran heats up. One focal point: 'the Iranian Mission to the United Nations, where there have already been three episodes in the last four years in which diplomats and security guards have been expelled for casing and photographing New York City subways and other potential targets.'

"Heightened alert comes in the wake of reports that Iranian crackpot president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad met with Hezbollah leaders in Syria earlier this year" (Michelle Malkin, "Hezbollah Is Here," WorldNetDaily, July 19, 2006).

### Chinese Star Wars

They are the early-warning systems for approaching storms. They are the key link in a chain of telecommunications that allow us to talk to someone around the world as if we were in the same town. They allow military operations in Iraq to be planned, executed and monitored in a command room in Florida. They are satellites—technological wonders that make possible many modern

miracles. America has had a technological superiority in this field for many years. But the field is changing. An emerging power is marking its territory in this critical area.

In January China revealed it had destroyed one of its old satellites with a missile designed specifically for that purpose. China now has demonstrated the ability to knock out any space satellite, thus taking out the eyes and ears of a military opponent in warfare. The implications for America are serious.

Should China, or any other nation, decide it is in its national interest to preempt American hegemony in its part of the world, then taking out key communication satellites would quickly level the playing field. Without these orbiting birds "seeing" the globe and transmitting vital data to commanders, the American military would be limited if not crippled. American troops and ships would be vulnerable. Missiles could not be tracked to targets. America's military advantages would be neutralized.

Writing in the *Washington Times* (Feb. 4, 2007) Arnaud de Borchgrave shows this has long been a part of Chinese planning:

"To offset America's enormous strategic military superiority, the Chinese military concluded in the 1990s that information warfare—or cyberwarfare—could give China an 'asymmetric' advantage over the United States. In 1998, the PLA newspaper *Jiefangjun Bao* said priority should be given 'to learning how to launch an electronic attack on an enemy...to ensure electromagnetic control in an area and at a time favorable to us.'

"How to take down the computer-driven sinews of a modern industrialized state quickly became a top priority...

"The 1990-91 Desert Shield and Desert Storm and the 2003 invasion of Iraq (when 50 military-specific satellites and numerous commercial birds were used) showed the Chinese how utterly dependent the U.S. had become on 'satcoms.' In 1998, the failure of a single satellite disabled 80 percent of the pagers in the U.S....

"The...Commission to Assess U.S. National Security Space Management said the U.S. 'is an attractive candidate for a space Pearl Harbor—or a surprise attack on U.S. space assets aimed at crippling U.S. war-fighting and other capabilities'" ([www.wash-times.com/commentary/20070203-101750-1057r.htm](http://www.wash-times.com/commentary/20070203-101750-1057r.htm)).

De Borchgrave concludes China's bold move is a result of two factors. First is the distraction with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan that has polarized and dominated American political discourse.

Second is the real perception in the world that America is weakened by this and can no longer exercise its will among the nations. This is a growing perception that history shows can lead to geopolitical adventuring by nations wishing to assert their interest.

Bible prophecy shows in the end time large forces will assemble in the "east" as part of those gathered for the final battle called "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:12-16). What happens in China today is critical to the future.

*Contributors: Cecil E. Maranville and Darris McNeely*

“VERSE,” (Continued from page 16)

whirling lights and screeching sirens and long limos whisking through the night. It was not what the office brought to the man, but what the man brought to the office and, for that matter, to life itself.

Simply put: He brought himself. He understood what he had to give; what he was and what he was not. He accepted that and refused cheap imitation. He did what he could, and at the end of the day, he stayed himself.

Being unelected by the people, Mr. Ford recognized that Mt. Rushmore was already overcrowded with the craggy busts of great men and that his head was not destined to rest among the luminaries. There was no need for another “Father of our Country,” “Great Emancipator,” “Father of the Declaration of Independence” or hero of San Juan Hill. But, there would be room in history’s long pages of addendums for what common people with the common touch can add.

### **Twin challenges**

I remember 1974 and 1975. Perhaps you do too. The nation was torn between the twin challenges of Watergate and winding down the war in Vietnam. You and I were not in the driver’s seat, but Gerald Ford was!

And then he did what was considered the unthinkable to many—he pardoned the disgraced president who had selected him to be his unelected vice president. Washington politics! Deal making! He notoriously became “the man who pardoned Richard Nixon.” All the good will and high hopes for this nice guy went out the window and down the drain.

And Vietnam? Who alive at that time can ever forget that helicopter with the long rope hovering over the U.S. embassy in the chaos of a fallen Saigon? President Ford didn’t start it, but the tragic exit is recorded in his part of the almanac.

But the times we live in are not always the best judge of character. Our character must rise to our moment. We can’t always choose our battles, but we can choose how to battle. As is so often the case, it is only in retrospect that people can



Reuters/Kevin Lamarque; page 15, Reuters

*The casket of former U.S. President Gerald Ford is carried past his family during his state funeral at the National Cathedral in Washington Jan. 2, 2007, as U.S. President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush watch.*

make sense of the times they have experienced.

Imagine 33 years after Watergate for Democrats and Republicans, alike, to call the man who had been so viciously pilloried by so many the “Healer in Chief.” “Healer in Chief”? Not bad, not bad at all!

I stopped and was reminded that not all the pages of history are yet written nor all the adulatory nicknames of presidents yet inscribed in stone.

### **Can’t always choose our battles**

It made me think about a Christian’s calling to fulfill the prophetic reality of Revelation 5:10, which describes the destiny of saints to become “kings and priests to our God.”

I remember as a young boy hearing about the coming Kingdom of God. Sometimes it seemed as if all the “kings and priests” jobs had already been spoken for. It seemed that all

those golden nameplates on the office doors of the Kingdom were signed, sealed and taken, though not yet delivered.

Abraham, David, Daniel, Paul and Joseph all had seemingly secure job assignments. It seemed as if all the organizational boxes were filled up in some people’s minds and that all the titles had already been granted.

So, as a young boy, I thought for a moment. Why even move forward if everything was already ordained from on high? What incentive was there for me to step out, step up to God and meet the challenges of my time? What about the common man who in his time might face uncommon problems, and yet through it all glorify God?

Well, I thought about this for only a moment, and then I smiled. I smiled because early on in life I came to recognize that some people look at God as filling up boxes on an “org-chart,” and it makes them comfortable filling

in times, places, dates and personalities.

And then there are other folk who view God as being the One who opens up windows on eternity and countless possibilities. Did you know that when you open up windows, it lets a lot of fresh air come in? It makes you breathe better. It makes you want to do something.

I smiled as I realized there was going to be a whole lot of living yet to occur with all sorts of people to populate those times along the way. And in their time and in their way they would have to step through the panic of their times and find the answers on the other side.



*President Gerald Ford is awarded the "Bob Hope Five-Star Award for Distinguished Service to America" May 22, 1997.*

### The story isn't over

Oh yes, there will always be a "Father of the Faithful" like Abraham and a king over all of Israel in the future like David, but God is not finished writing His story. Not all the titles, not all the positions and, most importantly, not all the room in God's heart and the hearts of His saints are so filled that there isn't room for your contribution.

What I do know by opening the pages of the Bible is that God doesn't start with marble or granite in creating those who will successfully circum-

navigate the news events and prophecies that unfold in their time. He starts with something as common as muddy clay and says, "Look what I am going to do. Nothing so grand has ever been done with so little, but I will turn it into my glory!"

God likes doing that a lot. He really does! Abraham Lincoln caught on to that notion when He said, "God must like the common man, because he made so many of them."

### You may contribute a verse

Gerald Ford, the common man's president, was faced with gigantic challenges in his time. As president, he didn't have the luxury of passing

difficult decisions up the chain of command.

It's interesting that as God's elect (1 Peter 1:2), we were never voted into this office of discipleship by one human vote cast in our favor. Our mandate and support come from Him. And ultimately, it is not even history or our fellow man that judges us, but only God.

Perhaps it is in the words of the American sage, Walt Whitman, that we discover the role of the common man and think of the contribution yet to be made in God's story.

"O me! Oh life! Of

the questions of these recurring;

"Of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities filled with the foolish...

"What good amid these, O me, O life?

"Answer. That you are here—that life exists and identity;

"That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse."

It reminds me of the clarion call of "this is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). ❖



Robin Webber

### How to Contact Us

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by Robin Webber

## Contributing a Verse

**G**erald Ford made me stop twice in life. He never even knew it. He didn't even know I existed, but nonetheless, stop me he did! Once as a young man and one more time in the autumn of life.

Over 30 years ago, I was coming home from a long day's work in Pasadena, California. My normal routine drive was suddenly ground to a halt.

The traffic lights were flashing, sirens were wailing, swarms of motorcycle patrolmen came sweeping through in front of me, and several just planted themselves at each corner of the intersection as the others moved forward.

A train of long, sleek black limos came swooshing by my little blue '73 Pinto, and then finally came one with the flags of the United States on it surrounded by even more officers.

My head kept on going back and forth as this spectacle unfolded before me. It dawned on me, “Oh yeah, the president is in town and he must be going down to spend the night at the Huntington Sheraton Hotel.”

And then, just as quickly as the presidential entourage had come upon me, it was gone. Here on a little street, alone in the dark, I had a front-row seat to witness the symbolism and, yes, reality of raw earthly authority passing before me. And I didn't even have to pay admission. I must say it was quite impressive.

### Halting in the road of life

The second stop came just a few weeks ago as a “veteran pol” closed his eyes for the last time. Again, I came to a halt in the road of life as much of the nation

reviewed the legacy of the man from Grand Rapids, Michigan. What were we to make of this seemingly common man who by the sweep of unparalleled events was ushered into the oval office as its only unelected chief executive?

All of a sudden every corner of America seemed to want to reach out and honor this “accidental president.” A march of honor was carved out from the palm-lined streets of Rancho Mirage to the national capital's rotunda to Michigan's version of Main Street, U.S.A. All of us began to ask ourselves what made this most common of presidents so uncommon in this most exclusive fraternity on earth—the U.S. presidency.

Perhaps it was all the more poignant that it was over that same weekend that Saddam Hussein was executed. The clashing contrast between two lives could not be more stark.

Here, on one hand, was a man who spent his whole life seizing power, stealing office and demanding slavish adoration for everything he did, only to die the death of a common criminal, despised by the many.

Then, on the other hand, another man who never sought absolute power, but was forced by events beyond his control to wield the greatest powers on earth. And with history revisited in death, he was appreciated by the many from all walks of life.

### What we bring to life!

So what did I learn on my second stop caused by this man? It was more than simply the trappings of power of

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