SEPTEMBER 2008

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

AMERICA'S "HOUSE OF CARDS"

If It Falls, What Comes Next?

THE
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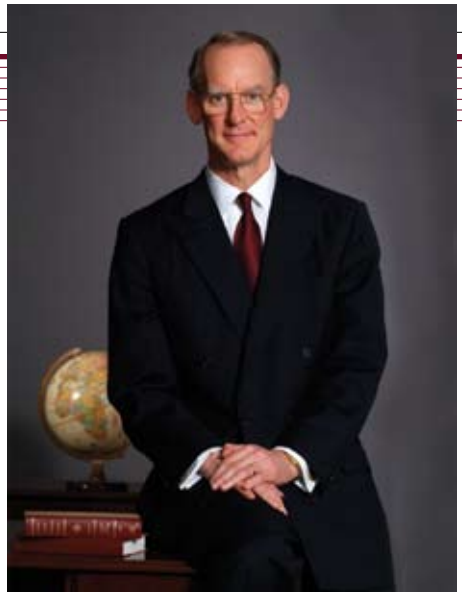

Life After Death?

IS *THIS* LIFE all that there is? Many religions profess to know what happens at death. Yet they do not agree. Why such confusion about the AFTERLIFE? Why such mystery—such disagreement?

This question of life after death has perplexed mankind throughout the ages. Thousands of years ago, the patriarch Job asked, *"If a man die, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14). This question remains today.

Most professing Christians believe that they possess an immortal soul. They have been taught that the dead go to either heaven or hell. Most ministers, evangelists and religionists freely speak of "when we all get to heaven." They declare this to be the Bible's teaching. But is this true?

We must not assume. Jesus said, "in VAIN do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*" (Mark 7:7-8). Men have their own *ideas*—their own *commandments*, their own *traditions*—invariably based on Bible assumptions. If the Bible is the Word of God, we must examine what it actually says, not what *people* say it says. Be willing to set aside cherished traditions and replace them with scripture.

Then be willing to believe God, not men.

The Moment of Death

Before answering the question "is there life *after* death?," let's examine what happens at the precise *moment of* death. Recall, Job asked, "shall he live again?" What did he mean "again"? If the dead are really permanently alive anyway, how can they live AGAIN?

The Wages of Sin

If you hold a job, you receive regular paychecks. They represent wages paid to you for work done. What about God? Does He ever pay wages? Notice Romans 6:23: "For the *wages* of sin is *death*; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here, eternal life is contrasted to DEATH—PERISHING! The wages of sin is *death*, not life. We will see that this understanding is not compatible with eternal torture in hell.

There is no mystery about the meaning of wages that an *employer* pays an employee for his work. Why should there be confusion over the meaning of wages *God* pays a sinner for his works? He pays the wicked a paycheck of *death*—not life in a place of torment. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. (Read our booklet *Bible Authority…Can It Be Proven?*)

Consider this! Perhaps the most familiar and often-quoted verse in the Bible is understood by almost no one. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life." Millions quote this verse while ignoring one of its key points.

Reread it. Notice that it exactly mirrors Romans 6:23! This time, eternal life is contrasted to PERISHING—DEATH.

The Greek word translated *perish* is *apollumi* and it means, "to *destroy* fully, to *die*, lose, perish." There is

no doubt what these words mean. "Perishable" items, such as fruits and vegetables, are those that rot—until they are "fully destroyed" or "lost." This is not hard to understand when we are talking about anything other than a human being. Those who receive salvation are promised that they "should not *perish*" but "have *everlasting life*"! If hell is a place of eternal LIFE. But the verse says, "should not *perish*," not "should not suffer eternal *life* in torment."

How does the word *perish* relate to the popular teaching about hell? Why did God inspire John to use this word if this is not what He really intended?

Do People Have Immortal Souls?

The idea of an ever-burning hell is inseparable from the idea that all human beings have *immortal souls*. Is this what God says? Prepare to be surprised!

Most people do not understand the relationship between physical men and souls. You were probably taught in Sunday school that all human beings are born with an immortal soul. The common belief is that upon death the souls of unrepentant sinners go to hell forever.

But if the wages of sin *is* death, how is it that the Bible could also teach that people have a soul that is immortal?

Genesis 2:7 states, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man BECAME a living soul." This verse does not say men HAVE souls. It states that they ARE souls. Adam BECAME a soul—he was not GIVEN a soul. Then, almost immediately, God warned him: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof *you* shall surely DIE" (vs. 16-17). The Hebrew word here also means "*destroy*." When placed together, these verses plainly state that men *are* souls and souls can *die*!

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to write (twice): "The soul that sins, it shall *die*" (18:4, 20). Death is the absence of life. It is the discontinuance—the cessation—of life. Death is not life in another place. It is not leaving "this *life*" for "another *life*"—the "next *life*."

In addition, consider Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him [God] which is *able to destroy* both *soul* and body *in hell*." The Bible says that souls can be DESTROYED! According to this verse, they can be destroyed just as much as *bodies* can. No one doubts that all bodies eventually die. When they do, they also decompose and are completely "destroyed" due to the process of natural corruption. Any undertaker recognizes this process. This verse introduces the fact that God does the *destroying* of souls IN HELL! Bodies can die and be destroyed in many different ways. However, souls are destroyed in hell by God.

Here is what the prophet Malachi wrote about the final state of the wicked who have been destroyed in hell: "For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, *shall be stubble*: and the day that comes shall *burn them up*, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 4:1-3). Obadiah 16 amplifies this with "…and they shall be as though they *had not been*." (Read our booklet *The Truth About Hell*, to learn much more.)

The dead will be so completely "dead and gone," it will be as though they had never existed. Surely, if they were roasting in hell forever with millions of others, and other millions "in heaven" witnessing it, this verse could hardly apply.

Are the Dead Conscious?

What about the precise moment of death? Exactly what happens?

Human minds are differentiated from animal brains by intelligent thought. Presumably, if the dead are *not* dead, but are really still alive, then they must be capable of some kind of intelligent *thought*. They must at least be *conscious* of their surroundings. Let's consider a series of scriptures.

First, notice Psalm 146:3-4: "Put not your trust…in the son of man… his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day *his thoughts perish*." When people die, their thoughts end immediately—"in that very day." That is what your Bible says.

This verse is also not compatible with the idea that the dead are either alive in heaven or consciously suffering in a place of torment. We could suppose that, if they were enjoying salvation, they would certainly *know* that they were! We could also suppose that if they were suffering, they would *know* that they were. Could the tormented somehow be unaware that they were suffering?

Ask yourself: What would be the point of their suffering, or of their enjoyment of salvation, if they could not *know* of it? Death (actually life) in hell would have to be as though they were in a coma—completely unaware of what is going on around them—while their sensory nervous system is feeling the excruciatingly

Please see ***PERSONAL****, page 23*

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The RUSSIAN BEAR AWAKENS!

Skirmishes between the Republic of Georgia and two of its breakaway provinces resulted in a cross-border conflict with the Russian Federation—an internal dispute that risks reviving the Cold War. After two decades of silence in world affairs, Russia has awakened, showing the world it is a formidable force.

BY H. CHRIS LOMAS

NOT LONG AFTER the fall of the Berlin wall came the collapse of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR). In subsequent years, Russia, being self-subsistent with energy resources, was pushed aside in a world frantically moving ahead, driven by energy demand and technological advances.

Over the next two decades, the world was lulled into thinking the "Red Bear" had permanently gone to sleep.

Yet the recent events in Georgia show that while the West thought Russia was eliminated from the world scene, it has become a key player in the formation of the European Union. The Georgian conflict shows that the Russian Federation will not hesitate to retaliate if challenged at its borders, and its reaction serves as a warning to any who threaten its interests.

The era of Perestroika (economic restructure) and Glasnost (openness) begun by Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s forced Russia into a period of restructure to adapt and become a partner in world affairs. This reform process was not as successful as expected, and was followed by the fall of the USSR. Subsequently, former Russian territories Poland, Ukraine and Georgia moved toward independence, preferring to become pro-West rather than continuing to pledge allegiance to Russia. The so-called "death of communism" brought an end to the Cold War and Russia watched its former satellite states move toward aligning with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces (NATO). At first, Russia isolated itself in the process of internal restructure and stood by while America set up missile defense systems at its front door. However, Russia remained focused on undoing what Perestroika initiated, and rebuilt a military powerhouse.

The August 2008 Georgian conflict has roused the Russian bear, which over the past two decades has become

■ **WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?:** Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (left) meets with presidents Eduard Kokoity of South Ossetia (right) and Sergei Bagapsh of Abkhazia (center) at the Kremlin in Moscow.

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

a key supplier of energy to Western Europe. Russia has now positioned itself to be virtually untouchable in any of its actions against its neighbors, as any response by the U.S. against Russia will be strongly condemned by the EU, which looks to Russia for its much needed supply of energy.

Brief History of Georgia

Georgia has been historically unstable from its beginning due to being a trade link between Europe and India. The Greeks colonized Georgia in the sixth century B.C. and was split into two regions: Colchis in the west and Iberia in the east.

In the fourth century B.C., the two regions were merged, with the capital being Mtskheta. Christianity was instated as the official state religion in A.D. 327 by Iberian King Mirian III.

The Persian and the Byzantine empires vied for control of the area until the seventh century, when Georgia was conquered by the Arabs. In the 11th century, the Seljuk Turks took control and Georgia was not reunited into a kingdom until the reign of King David "The Builder" in the 12th century. In the 1200s, the kingdom was overtaken by Mongolians. Thereafter, it remained in the control of Iran and the Ottoman Empire until the mid-1700s, when it once again was proclaimed a kingdom.

In 1783, Russia obtained control of Georgia's foreign affairs, and in 1801, when its king abdicated, Georgia became part of the Russian Empire.

From around 1800 to 1878, Russia waged numerous wars against Turkey and Iran, which resulted in several territories annexed to Georgia.

On May 26, 1918, in the midst of the Russian Civil War, Georgia declared its independence from Russia. But their independence was short lived. Just six years later, Russian rule was reestablished.

During World War II, 700,000 Georgians fought with the Red Army against Nazi Germany; it is estimated that up to 170,000 Georgians died in combat.

Shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia again declared its independence, and elected its first president, who was soon deposed in a bloody coup d'état. The country was caught up in a civil war, which lasted until 1995. That year, the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia became involved in a dispute that led to ethnic violence; some 250,000 Georgians were ethnically cleansed from Abkhazia.

Current Situation

On August 7, 2008, a conflict developed in which Georgia, the two unrecognized republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the Russian

■ **DEMONSTRATIONS IN GEORGIA:** Citizens protest against Russia's military action in Georgia, at a checkpoint near the village of Odzisi.

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

KEY LEADERS IN THE CONFLICT

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev

■ Former Chief of Staff for Vladimir Putin, President Medvedev is considered to be Russian Prime Minister Putin's heir apparent. The Russian President recently accused the Georgian Government of "unleashing an armed conflict victimizing innocent civilians," and called the Russian military action an attempt to "protect Russian citizens."

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili

■ Mr. Saakashvili stated he planned to rebuild his country's shattered army, even after its decisive defeat in the war for control of one of Georgia's breakaway provinces, he would continue to pursue a policy of uniting both under the Georgian flag: "It will stay the same. Now as ever."

South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity

■ The de facto president since 2001, Mr. Kokoity has taken a strong position against re-unification with Georgia. He maintains that the Georgian-Ossetian conflict is not an ethnic, but a political one. He stated the Ossetians dislike the habits of Western democracy overruling the traditional laws of the Caucus region.

Abkhazian President Sergei Bagapsh

■ Mr. Bagapsh acted as Prime Minister from 1997-1999 and also acted as Abkhazia's representative to Moscow. After years of conflict with Georgia, the president allowed the Russian military to move through Abkhazia and remove the remaining Georgian military presence in Abkhazia.

Source: *Pravda*; *The New York Times*; AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (Except Second Left, MCT)

Federation took part. The fighting started because Georgia began clamping down on Russian-linked separatists. The next day, fighting resulted in South Ossetians fleeing into Russia to escape the Georgian onslaught. During the week, sporadic fighting continued, including a sniper war.

Georgia's Interior Ministry said that South Ossetian artillery bombed Georgian populated villages. Georgia retaliated with a military offensive into South Ossetia, leading to the deaths of more than 1,600 civilians. During this offensive, Russia claimed that Georgia killed ten Russian soldiers and injured scores more. Russia responded by sending jets to bomb Georgian targets.

On August 11, after Georgian forces began to retreat, Russia claimed that its troops at Tskhinvali were still under fire and began to proceed into Georgia, in what was viewed as a move by Russia to overthrow the Georgian government. After many years of silence, Russia adamantly showed by means of force that it will not tolerate unrest on its border.

In doing so, Russia sent a strong message to the world.

American Response

As promoter of democracy worldwide, America chooses to support Georgia because it is one of the few governments in the region that has been democratically elected. It has also supported the United States in the Middle East by contributing troops to the war in Iraq. U.S. President George W. Bush, in response to the conflict, said that "Russia has invaded a sovereign neighboring state and threatens a democratic government elected by its people. Such an action is unacceptable in the 21st century."

Still, Western countries did not intervene in the conflict and only commented as to what actions should be taken in dealing with the situation. Outside interference in the Georgian conflict could have seriously affected the much needed oil supply flowing through its territory from Baku in Azerbaijan, through Georgia, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan in the Mediterranean. The pipeline of 1,100 miles provides 1.2 million barrels of oil to Western Europe and countries in the east. Closing this pipeline would drive up an already high oil price, and could soon affect the UK and other Western democracies.

Europe's Reaction

Reaction from the European Union was non-decisive and it was clear that

it was not going to stir in a situation that could undo the economic treaties being established with Moscow. In current world conditions, the EU cannot afford to go against Russia as it relies on its energy resources coming from Russia through the Balkan states. Rather than confront Russia on what seems the mundane issues of Georgia, Europe seeks better ties with the former Soviet Union in securing energy resources for the European Union. Meanwhile, Europe is also faced with Georgia seeking to become a member of NATO. The future will show which priorities will take precedence.

Nations in the region include various descendents of the Persian and Median empires, which (according to the world's bestselling book, the Bible) will play pivotal roles in the future. The ancient Medes in these modern times represent much of southern and central Russia. The discovery of oil in these countries 100 years ago began a rivalry between Britain and Russia for control of the region. By supporting the nation with weapons, Russia has won the battle of gaining Iran's support.

In a silent way, Russia has continued the Cold War by supporting those who pose a threat to Western democracies. Amid ongoing efforts by the West, Iran (with the help of Russia) is fast becoming a nuclear entity, posing a threat to world stability.

As the sleeping bear recovers from slumber, it, in alliance with Iran, could at the right time cripple the West by cutting off the much needed supply of oil.

Human Solutions

Over the past 6,000 years of history, man has been doing what he thought was right to solve his problems, but is unable to find the way that leads to peace. "There is a way which seems right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

The annals of history record war upon war as the only way man turns to in order to get peace. But this way has never brought lasting peace and only escalated the problem which today threatens to destroy all human life from the planet. "And except those days should be shortened," prophecy warns, "there should be no flesh saved [alive]; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22).

As man moves closer to the most terrible time in earth's history, he has lost sight of what is to happen due to his inability to govern himself.

The prophet Jeremiah gives a stern warning to today's leaders: "For the pastors [leaders] are become brutish [dull-hearted], and not sought the LORD…O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:21, 23).

Humanity is approaching the fulfillment of earth-changing prophecies about to occur, as foretold in Matthew 24. It will involve many players on the world scene—including the "Russian Bear." □

■ **REALITIES OF WAR:** Georgian policemen evacuate a Georgian soldier wounded in battle with South Ossetian separatists, in the town of Gori. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said the world will be "in trouble" if Russia gets away with its attacks in his country. "It's like the attack into Afghanistan, in 1979. It's like Czechoslovakia when Soviet and Russian tanks moved in," he told *CNN*.

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evolution Exposed

Part 4

Deconstructing False Science

From the smallest of cells to the largest of planets, evolution tries to prove everything, yet proves nothing. More holes are revealed.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

IS IT POSSIBLE for a rock to come to life? Could a chicken grow from a lump of coal? Such questions are silly. However, this is in essence what the theory of evolution teaches. It stands or falls on whether non-living matter can transform, through a series of random events, into organic—living—matter. This concept is called by many names and explained by many theories, but most of the time, it is referred to as "spontaneous generation," "chemical evolution," "abiogenesis" or "biopoiesis."

Do not allow evolutionists to dodge the "origin of matter" question. Many assert that the origin of life is in no way related to the appearance of living matter.

Renowned evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould stated, "Evolution is not the study of life's ultimate origin as a path toward discerning its deepest meaning. Evolution, in fact, is not the study of origins at all. Even the more restricted (and scientifically permissible) question of life's origin on our earth lies outside its domain…Evolution studies the pathways and mechanisms of organic change following the origin of life" ("Justice Scalia's Misunderstanding," *Bully for Brontosaurus*).

Should evolution be restricted to the study of organic matter? Allow noted geneticist and evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky to answer: "Evolution comprises all the states of development of the universe; the cosmic, biological, and human or cultural developments. Attempts to restrict the concept of evolution to biology are gratuitous. Life is a product of the evolution of inorganic matter, and man is a product of the evolution of life" ("Changing Man," *Science*, January 1967).

If evolutionists try to separate biological evolution from the origin of life (or even the origin of the universe), a towering question remains: If evolution applies only to plants and animals, what caused the appearance of the universe and life on earth? How can life evolve if it never existed? Evolution must encompass the whole process—from the

beginning of the universe to the diversity of plant, animal and human life today. No amount of scientific "spin" can change this.

Why would such a prominent evolutionist blur the facts?

Unbreakable Laws

At the heart of the "origin of life" debate is the fundamental scientific law of biogenesis. It is the process that *new* life can come only from *existing* life—that is, only living organisms produce other living organisms.

Simpson and Beck's biology textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology* is clear: "There is no serious doubt that biogenesis is the rule, that life comes only from other life, that a cell, the unit of life, is always and exclusively the product or offspring of another cell."

Also, Martin A. Moe, a writer for *Science Digest*, wrote, "A century of sensational discoveries in the biological science has taught us that life arises only from life..." ("Genes on Ice," December 1981).

Perhaps the most powerful statement is found as a footnote in the biology textbook, *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity*: "Some scientists call this a superlaw, or a law about laws. Regardless of terminology, biogenesis has the highest rank in these levels of generalization" (1974).

These are three plain, conclusive and irrefutable statements. How then do evolutionists bypass a linchpin of biology? Again, tossing aside the obvious, they are forced to separate the origin of life from the evolutionary process.

Do not be fooled by discussions of scientists being able to produce a synthetic version of the polio virus. Every honest and even basically trained biologist knows that viruses are *non-living* organisms, because they must have a living host to reproduce. Any biologist who says otherwise is either untrained or dishonest.

Even if it were true, it took decades of scientific research and advancement to facilitate a carefully planned process in order to create synthetic polio. Random, mindless events did not create it!

So how do evolutionists explain life on earth?

A Land Far, Far Away!

When one tries to prop up a shaky assertion, he must quickly change *focus* from obvious holes or weaknesses. So, the thinking goes, if abiogenesis cannot happen on earth, then perhaps it could happen in *space*.

What should be seen as illogical insanity is entertained as a valid postulate. This does not follow the scientific process. When a theory is disproven, it should be dispelled and another theory put forward. In this case, a new hypothesis is developed under the assumption that the original was true! Imagine if someone stated that the sky was purple. All those around could clearly look up and see the sky is not purple and disprove the theory. It would be preposterous for the theorist to retort, "Well, the sky is purple if you look at it from space." It would be seen as a desperate attempt to credit an obvious fallacy and would be quickly dismissed.

Evolution seems immune from basic logic. The hypothesis that the precursor chemicals for life came from space is gaining popularity in the scientific community. Note that all forms of living matter, but especially simple forms of life, are *highly unstable*. Plants, animals and people die and decompose, while rocks and minerals last for millennia.

These highly unstable, simple forms of life must survive being ejected from a faraway planet (usually by a catastrophic event or explosion), travel through the rigors of space (radiation, bitter cold, extreme heat, a vacuum, etc.), withstand the tremendous heat of penetrating earth's atmosphere and, finally, survive the severe surface impact. How ridiculous! One does not need a degree in science to see ludicrous nature of such a theory—yet, incredibly, it is discussed as a possibility!

Remember. This hypothesis is not meant to be a real theory. The attention had to be taken away from biogenesis. It is nothing more than a scientific "bait and switch." Instead of addressing the law of biogenesis, which evolutionists cannot get around, they attempt to appeal to the great unknown of space as the answer, thus avoiding the original problem.

Biogenesis is a UNIVERSAL law. Just as it applies on earth, it must apply *throughout* the universe. Moving the problem to outer space is silly—and dishonest!

So what is the solution proposed by evolutionists who are at least honest enough to admit no answer to biogenesis? They simply parrot a non-answer, and apply the *argument to future* logical fallacy (as covered in Part One of this series), claiming further scientific advances will reveal the origin for life on earth.

Evolutionists avoid the question and give no *real* answer—because they have no answer! Such fallacies and lack of evidence are the reasons Dr. Louis Bounoure, former Director of the Zoological Museum and Director of Research at the National Center of Scientific Research in France, stated, "Evolutionism is a fairy tale for grown-ups. This theory has helped nothing in the progress of science. It is useless."

The Law of Laws

For the next assumption, we can play the game of "let's suppose." Suppose the previous assumption was *not* false, and that at some future time we will discover the naturalistic method in which living matter came into existence.

Obviously, with the proof, logic and statements above, this is quite the supposition. But for the sake of argument, assume there was a time when only very simple organic compounds, such as amino acids, existed. We can even extend the game a few steps further and suppose these amino acids had already formed into enzymes. This is an overly generous leap, but it will serve to prove a point.

With this in mind, the most bedrock, central laws of science come into

play—the Laws of Thermodynamics. Albert Einstein called this the premier law of *all* sciences. Sir Arthur Eddington stated, "The second law of thermodynamics holds, I think, *the supreme position among the laws of Nature*…If it [a theory] is found to be contradicted by an observation—well, these experimentalists do bungle things sometimes. But if your theory is found to be against the second law of thermodynamics I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to *collapse in deepest humiliation*" (*The Nature of the Physical World*).

These are very strong words from two world-renowned scientists. Other writers have noted that the more one works with these laws, the more respect he gains for them.

The Laws of Thermodynamics are immutable and apply to *all* disciplines of science. To even be considered, evolution must function within the constraints of Thermodynamics. Most applicable to this assumption, it must follow the *second* law of thermodynamics.

Open or Closed—Still Impossible

Thermodynamics comes from two Greek words, *therme*, meaning "heat," and *dynamis*, meaning "power." In essence, thermodynamics is the study of "heat power." The second law of thermodynamics states that, in a system, all processes will result in increased entropy—the scientific term for "unusable energy."

The second law expresses that, over time, and ignoring certain variables, things tend to even out in an isolated system. And entropy is a measure of how stabilized—or evened out—a system has progressed.

Another way to look at it is best explained by world-famous science writer and scientist Isaac Asimov: "Another way of stating the second law then is 'The universe is constantly getting more disorderly!' Viewed that way we can see the second law all about us. We have to work hard to straighten a room, but left to itself it becomes a mess again very quickly and very easily. Even if we never enter it, it becomes dusty and musty. How difficult to maintain houses, and machinery, and our own bodies in perfect working order: How easy to let them deteriorate. In fact, all we have to do is nothing, and everything deteriorates, collapses, breaks down, wears out, all by itself—and that is what the second law is all about" ("In the Game of Energy and Thermodynamics You Can't Even Break Even," *Smithsonian Institute Journal*, June 1970).

This poses quite a challenge for a theory based on an increase of order, complexity and intricacy. But evolutionists have not given up!

In an attempt to make the theory work, a debate between "open" and "closed" systems has arisen. The difference between the two is quite simple. In a closed system, there is no interference from an external source, so the second law applies without any complications. The system becomes more disorderly, entropic and stable over time strictly in line with the second law. On the other hand, it is argued that in an open system, external sources of energy allow a process to have *more* sustained energy—*increase* in useable energy.

In the case of evolution, because our sun is supplying ample amounts of *extra* energy, earth is no longer a closed system and can become less entropic (have more usable energy). And, since the sun is winding down, effectively transferring energy, all of the Laws of Thermodynamics in a closed system (the universe) are satisfied.

Energy Alone Doth Not Evolution Make

Can simply applying raw, undirected energy to a system allow a lower level of entropy? Can it really be that simple? There are parameters to address the application of an external energy source on a closed system. Also, there are mathematical constructs demonstrating that the second law of thermodynamics applies in an open system.

While many evolutionists try to blur the correct application of an open thermodynamics system, there are some that are more honest. Charles J. Smith stated, "The thermodynamicist immediately clarifies the latter question by pointing out that the second law classically refers to isolated [closed] systems which exchange neither energy nor matter with the environment; biological systems are open and exchange both energy and matter. This explanation, however, *is not completely satisfying*, because it still leaves open the problem of how or why the ordering process has arisen (an apparent lowering of the entropy [an increase in useable energy]), and a number of scientists have wrestled with this issue. Bertalanffy called the relation between irreversible thermodynamics and information theory one of the *most fundamental unsolved problems* in biology" ("Problems with Entropy in Biology," *Biosystems*, Volume 1, 1975).

Decades ago it was understood there are "fundamental unsolved problems." Nothing has changed today.

Raw energy alone is not enough to reduce entropy! For this to happen, multiple conditions must be met. Three are summarized in another quote from *Life: An Introduction to Biology*: "But the simple *expenditure* of energy is not sufficient to develop and maintain order. A bull in a china shop performs work, but he neither creates nor maintains organization. The work needed is PARTICULAR WORK; it must follow SPECIFICATIONS; it requires INFORMATION on how to proceed" (emphasis ours).

"Particular work" is more than just raw energy; it is focused. Of course, there must be energy, but that energy must be *directed*. It cannot simply be a "bull in a china shop." Such uncontrolled, undirected energy will never build—it *always* and *only* destroys! The simple example of photographs left in sunlight demonstrates that, over time, undirected, raw energy deteriorates and destroys. There must also be a mechanism to convert energy into the form required for a specific application. Without a conversion, there is nothing more than raw, unbridled energy that destroys.

Consider the process at work in

plants, photosynthesis. The parallel is most interesting because the energy source is sunlight—the same energy source to which evolutionists point. This complex energy conversion system is the process used by plants to change sunlight into usable energy needed to grow. Because this is biological, we are dealing with the second law of thermodynamics in an *open* system. In such a case, raw energy is available in the form of sunlight. And because plants have information-rich DNA, there is a highly designed and detailed specification for this "particular work" to be carried out. *All* needed conditions are met and, in such a case, there is a lowering of entropy—an *increase* in usable energy.

There are also similar systems in our body—digestion, respiratory, etc. Yet in all cases, the three conditions are satisfied.

To perform specific work, there must be "information"—instructions—for the process to proceed, and a mechanism for those instructions to be carried out. This happens in the leaves of plants, as well as with the systems in the human body.

Highly specific work—evolution—is impossible by supplying energy from the sun and "hoping for the best." The work *must* be specific, there *must* be a conversion process and this *must* be supplemented with detailed instruction. No matter the argument, no matter how loud voices get or how intensely arms are waved, *no one* can circumvent thermodynamics.

Some scientists will admit that the theory of evolution and the second law of thermodynamics are completely incompatible: "Regarding the second law of thermodynamics (universally accepted scientific law which states that all things left to themselves will tend to run down) or the law of entropy, it is observed, 'It would hardly be possible to conceive of two more completely opposite principles than this principle of entropy increase and the principle of evolution. Each is precisely the converse of the other. As [Aldous] Huxley defined it, evolution involves a continual increase of order, of organization, of size, of complexity. It seems axiomatic that both cannot possibly be true. But there is no question whatever that the second law of thermodynamics is true'" (Henry Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution*, p. 35).

Evolution cannot account for the appearance of life on this or any other planet. Dishonest, yet clever, arguments cannot sidestep the laws of biogenesis or thermodynamics.

The fundaments of science are based on these laws. They are SURE! They are absolute and have existed since the beginning of our universe. These laws are *immutable*—and, as such, make evolution IMPOSSIBLE! □

READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

■ I look forward to learning as much as possible on *The Real Truth*."

ARGENTINA

■ I certainly appreciate the clear and direct approach you give…Thank you."

BANGLADESH

■ "I am frantically searching about man's ultimate destination, through studying science, while no reliable information is found in traditional religions. I want to know if God has had a hand in creating or running this universe." **Recommended literature:** *Does God Exist?* and *Evolution – Facts, Fallacies and Implications* (*thercg.org/books.html*)

CYPRUS

■ "I came across your site after searching for meanings in life and being very confused as to all the information out there. As a deep thinker, I have studied many philosophies, but turned away from the church some years ago due to effects of living in a Christian household, where in my eyes not much was being completed other than lip service and time-honored statements that made no sense. I found your site very interesting and informative in a practical down-to-earth manner, and decided to find out more. Thank you for your materials. I am certain they will be of great benefit to all who take the time to read them."

EGYPT

■ "I am a researcher in world peace."

ETHIOPIA

■ "I am reading the literature titled *The Truth About Healing* and I am really enjoying it."

GRENADA

■ "I used to be a *Plain Truth* reader."

INDIA

■ "What is *The Real Truth?*"

KENYA

■ "Your articles are a great source of knowledge."

KIRIBATI

■ "I can honestly tell you that God's Holy Sabbath is on Saturday." **Recommended literature:** *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?* (*thercg.org/books.html*)

NEPAL

■ "It would be good to…learn something from your magazine."

■ "[*The Real Truth*] is a great web site."

NIGERIA

■ "I was actually looking for articles on immorality in society and what role [religion] should be, when I discovered your site. I have taken a cursory look into your three-part series 'The Immorality Explosion!' and your steadfastness in alerting the world on how far we have decayed."

PHILIPPINES

■ "I am glad to have randomly bumped into your website. It's just what I have been searching for."

CHINA'S OLYMPIC SPECTACULAR

PHOTO: MCT

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

CHINA EMERGED on the other side of the 29th Olympic Games a changed nation, both in its self-perception and its image in the rest of the world.

In retrospect, these were two weeks of superlatives: Commentators, watching the eye-popping Opening Ceremony, opined that it was the most important night in modern Chinese history. The television audience may have been the largest ever for a single event.

Records fell in a number of sports, including high-profile swimming and track-and-field events. China's government spent more money on these games than in any previous Olympiad—$44 billion USD, by their official tally. And Beijing achieved clear skies, at least temporarily banishing the pervasive smog the city is known for.

The stunning, large-scale choreographed performances that bookended the games set a high standard for spectacle. As a result, hosts of upcoming ceremonies face a serious challenge in measuring up (the Winter Games will take place in Vancouver, Canada, in 2010, followed by the London Summer Games in 2012).

Despite Western criticism regarding human-rights issues and questions about China's forthrightness (the ages of its female gymnasts being the most nagging), the nation achieved its main objectives. Its athletes collected 51 gold medals, using a strategy of focusing on lesser-known events (the United States, while taking more total medals, settled for 36 gold).

More importantly, the nation made a powerful statement about its aspirations and capacity for achievement, letting the rest of the planet know that it has no plans to rest on its laurels as it strives toward first-world status. □

AMERICA'S "HOUSE OF CARDS"

If It Falls, What Comes Next?

The world is in the midst of great geopolitical change. Old superpowers are waning, new ones are rising, alliances are shifting—what lies ahead?

BY MARK P. DENEE

GENERALLY, human beings are wary of change—particularly change that is uncertain or negative. Such is the common sentiment among Americans in recent months. Several polls show that the vast majority of the U.S. population is unhappy, concerned and otherwise gloomy about the country's current and future status.

As journalist Fareed Zakaria wrote in *Newsweek*, "Americans see that a new world is coming into being, but fear it is one being shaped in distant lands and by foreign people."

Great geopolitical change is occurring; a "new world" is indeed emerging. Mr. Zakaria and others have referred to this as the "rise of the rest"—suggesting that the newfound wealth and might of China, India, Brazil and other nations will create a new balance between the West and "the rest."

Others suggest there is an increasing imbalance of power, particularly regarding energy-based wealth. Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, for example, referred to congressional testimony suggesting that OPEC nations could, with oil at $200 a barrel, "potentially buy Bank of America in one month worth of production, Apple

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DARNITRA D. MAIDEN

Computers in a week, and General Motors in just three days."

In recent years, many have considered the United States the world's only superpower. According to most definitions, they would be right, even today—while "the rest" are rising, the U.S. is still the only nation that can project its military power around the world.

Yet some suggest that America's military strength is waning, propped up by the country's economic "house of cards"—which could fall in a moment's notice. At the same time, other nations that have risen economically could almost just as quickly expand their military power.

Four World-Changing Events

Consider four important events in recent history that signified the beginnings of major change in the geopolitical world.

First was the 1990 reunification of Germany. This finally allowed Europe's largest country to integrate into the European Community (which later became the European Union).

This occurred at the same time as the second major event: the dissolution of the Soviet Union. With the significant loss of territory and economy due to the secession of several republics, the USSR had lost the Cold War with the West.

The third major event was the economic rise of China during the 1990s. Reforms from the 1970s had begun to be realized. Socio-political unrest during the 1980s had been addressed. Witnessing the fall of the fellow Communist USSR, the Chinese government took steps to consolidate political power. In a few short decades, China went from a poverty-stricken country to a major world power.

The fourth event was the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S.—which forced America to address the anti-U.S. ideology that was fermenting among various Islamic extremists, particularly the Taliban and al-Qaeda. For better or worse, the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have resulted in the deaths of thousands, but have also prevented (at least to date) any successful terrorist attack on American soil. While 9/11 has primarily been seen as a U.S. issue, it influenced other Western nations, especially certain European ones, to take various socio-religious steps that will be significant in the near future.

The Emergence of China

While change is often bad for some, it is usually good for others. This is certainly the case for China. The restructuring of its economy has resulted in a tenfold increase in the gross domestic product since 1978. On a purchasing power parity basis, China became the world's second-largest economy after the United States in 2007.

While its rural areas and population remain an economic challenge for the Chinese government, the amazing fiscal growth of the past 20 years has brought tremendous prosperity to a growing middle-class. Foreign visitors describe the old cities as "ultra-modern." As the industrial complex spreads across the country, the central government builds and connects entire new cities.

As is usually the case, increased economic prosperity brings increased nationalism. More than 90% of the 1.3 billion people are Han Chinese. Sharing a common culture, history and written language, they are the world's largest homogeneous ethnic group.

Mr. Zakaria described a conversation he had with a young Chinese executive. Though he looked and sounded markedly Western, when they discussed topics such as Taiwan, Japan and the United States, the executive responded with "passion, bellicosity, and intolerance. I felt as if I were in Germany in 1910, speaking to a young German professional, who would have been equally modern and yet also a staunch nationalist" (*Newsweek*).

The May 2008 cover of *The Economist*, which featured the article "Angry China," depicted a picture of a dark, fierce-looking dragon. This was in response to the crisis in Tibet and the ensuing Chinese fury expressed at the pro-Tibetan protests that shadowed the Olympic torch relay around the world. The article argued that with the Tibet issue as the starting point (and the alleged "anti-China" bias of the Western press), "China's defenders have gone on to denounce the entire edifice of Western liberal democracy as a sham. Using its tenets to criticise China is, they claim, sheer hypocrisy. They cite further evidence of double standards: having exported its dirtiest industries to China, the West wants the country to curb its carbon emissions, potentially impeding its growth and depriving newly well-off Chinese of their right to a motor car."

A month later, the *International Herald Tribune* reported on a Pew Global Attitudes Project survey, showing that people outside China worried about the nation's growing military power, its influence on affairs in other nations, and the harm it is causing the environment. "In Western Europe," the report stated, "majorities believe either that China has already replaced the United States as the world's leading superpower or that it will at some point replace the United States."

This is in contrast with most experts who suggest that while China's economic growth has been and will likely continue to be impressive, it will not eclipse the U.S. Writing in the *New York Times*, Josef Joffe, editor of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, calculated that even if China was able to sustain an indefinite growth of 7%, while the U.S. maintained its historical rate of 3.5%, China's GDP would total $12 trillion by 2028—far below the projected U.S. GDP of $28 trillion.

William Pfaff, in an article titled "China: the pretend superpower," made a similar argument. But he also pointed to the "massive, backward, impoverished and politically restless Chinese agricultural population, and the likelihood—I myself would say

the certainty—of a major and possibly revolutionary political crisis in China in the foreseeable future" (*The International Herald Tribune*).

David Rothkopf, a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment, suggests in his book *Superclass*, that the influence of the nation-state (and all the organizations based on it, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, etc.) is waning, and therefore a power void is being created.

A small group of players—"the superclass"—a new global elite, is filling the void. Some "are from business and finance," Mr. Rothkopf stated. "Some are members of a kind of shadow elite—criminals and terrorists. Some are masters of new or traditional media; some are religious leaders, and a few are top officials of those governments that do have the ability to project their influence globally."

The "superclass" theory may sound somewhat unconventional, and even a little conspiracy theory-esque. Yet it harkens back to a time when empires were not empowered entirely by a single nation-state and its government, but rather by a combination of political and socio-religious factors from several states, both "good" and "evil."

Europe—Still Some Growing Pains

Despite expanding by ten nations in 2004, and another two in 2007, the European Union has struggled politically. The Treaty of Nice, implemented in 2003, was to ensure that the enlarged 27-member union would continue to operate relatively efficiently. However, attempts at a European Constitution in 2004 failed to reach unanimous ratification, following French and Dutch referendums.

Since then, the Reform, or Lisbon, Treaty proposed to amend existing treaties instead of replacing them (as the Constitution would have). However, a June 2008 referendum in Ireland, which rejected Lisbon, has once again put most political progress in Europe on hold. Unless Ireland can be convinced to vote again (and respond with a "yes"), the Lisbon Treaty will die; the EU will continue to operate under the Treaty of Nice.

Meantime, with a total landmass slightly less than one-half the size of the United States, the European Union has a population of just under 500 million, and a GDP (purchasing power parity) in 2007 of $14.38 trillion—larger than that of the U.S., and more than twice that of China.

The Economist stated that Europe and China have several things in common. Many Europeans are "rather relaxed" about America losing its status as the world's lone superpower. It also points out that the EU is already China's largest trade partner, with the two-way flow topping $400 billion in 2007. In addition, both China and Europe do not see each other as a military threat.

European relations with Russia, however, are more challenging. While the EU has expanded to the east, often absorbing former Soviet-states as members, Russia has enjoyed its ability to divide Europe. Disputes regarding Ukraine, Serbia, Poland and others continue to be difficult, and Europe's

*Please see **CARDS**, page 19*

■ **CHINA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH:** Left, an elevated view of downtown Shanghai from the Shanghai World Financial Center, China's tallest building. The landmark building measures 492 meters (about 1,614 feet) and has 101 floors. Right, a shopper talks on a cellphone while standing outside a shopping mall with bags of goods she just bought in Chengdu, in China's southwestern province of Sichuan. China is facing challenges in maintaining stable and fast economic growth, but curbing inflation remains a priority, state media said.

PHOTOS: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

MOTHERS IN PRISON

Another Crumbling Brick in the Family's Foundation

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER AND STACEY L. PALM

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

DRIVING INTO THE large, nearly empty prison parking lot, a young boy is roused by his grandfather, after they had risen before dawn to make the four-and-a-half-hour drive.

Walking into the gray brick building, the two begin over an hour of processing, paper work and searches.

"Do you have anything in your hair?" a prison guard states firmly, his eyes sizing them up.

"Please pull out your pockets and turn around," the guard orders.

The grandfather complies and finally the boy, too, after some coaxing. They are then directed through a metal detector.

The young boy tensely walks through the detector, not relaxing until he is through; a few visits ago he had set it off with his belt buckle.

Next, the grandfather and boy are guided through a series of large metal doors. They soon find themselves in a small room, with tables that have board games, and the whir of vending machines lining the wall.

They wait.

Finally, a guard leads an inmate in who is wearing an orange jumpsuit. The boy's face explodes with joy. He leaps up and hugs the inmate around the waist.

"Mommy!" he cries.

Lasting Scars

The above scenario is a reality for many of the nearly two million U.S. children estimated to have a parent in prison.

Since mandatory sentencing began in the mid-1980s, the United States prison system has seen a dramatic upswing in incarceration rates. This includes an increase in the number of women, who now constitute the fastest growing segment of the prison population. Between 1995 and 2006, the Correctional Association of New York reported that "the number of women inmates in state and federal prisons nationwide increased by 64 percent."

Many of these law-breaking females are not only offenders, they are mothers, and most often it is their children who pay the highest price for their incarceration. Unlike fathers, it is estimated that 70% of women prisoners are primary caregivers.

Although children of incarcerated mothers are still able to cope—and overcome—the challenges set before them, there is always some residual emotional damage. Most experts agree

Editor's note: It is not the article's intent to advocate for leaner prison sentences or to critique the justice and penal systems. Rather, its purpose is to examine just one of many factors contributing to the deteriorating state of the family unit—and to the only way of life that will enable parents and children to attain success.

■ **IN PROTEST:** Women dressed as prisoners conduct a mock chain-gang march to the U.S. Embassy in London to highlight Amnesty International's claims of abuse of women prisoners in American prisons.

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

that crime, even when not perpetrated on or by children, can leave lasting scars on a child's life.

Of course, this is not the ideal way to rear a child—and having a mother in prison is an extreme, but very real, example of the high hurdles faced by many families in this age.

What are the effects on the development of children whose mothers enter the prison system—both now and long-term? How does a mother's role change after imprisonment—and how does this event upset the balance of the family system? How could one hope to successfully rear a child in such a situation?

> "The worst part of my mom being gone was that I didn't have anybody to talk to who really knew me."

Silent Casualties

Called "crime's invisible victims," children whose mothers are sent to prison can range anywhere in age, from several weeks to 18 years old. Even children as young as 14 months old may have vivid memories of visiting their mother in jail, or live out their childhood in the foster care system—without their birth mother at all.

Unlike those who grow up in a traditional nuclear family setting, these children may have no fond memories of baking cookies with their mothers or taking family vacations with her. Instead, "quality time" is spent talking to their mothers through bulletproof glass or watching as guards lead her into a metal cell.

The following are excerpts from two letters written by children of incarcerated women, taken from *www.womenandprison.org*, detailing the effects of the situation in their own words.

■ A 12-year-old boy described his feelings during his mother's prison term: "The worst part of my mom being gone was that I didn't have anybody to talk to who really knew me. I stayed with my grandmother. It was hard for her to understand what was happening with me.

"I did not get to visit my mom. Not having my mom in my life was very hard. I had no one to help me go through my problems. Me and my mom were very close before and now I had no one to talk to. I could talk to my grandma somewhat but not personally. My sister tried to help, but she missed our mother too."

"It made me feel pretty bad. I was mad at my mom for a while because I was afraid she would come out and then go right back again."

■ Another child, whose mother was in prison for six months, wrote, "I got to visit my mom every week when she was gone to jail. My dad took us. It was hard because I wanted to touch her but she was on the other side of

a glass wall. The visits weren't too long, we only had a certain amount of time before they told us it was time to leave. When the visit was over, I wanted to stay with her for a long time. I thought about it all day. I didn't cry but I felt really bad. It stayed with me for a while after I went.

"I didn't tell my friends where my mom was, I told them she moved away. I could talk to my grandmother and my dad about it, but it was hard for them too. I missed my mom a lot, I missed watching movies with her, bike riding with her and I missed telling jokes."

Children of incarcerated mothers grow up with the stigma of knowing that their mother's "home" is a place that society considers disgraceful. And instead of feeling proud to have a positive example to emulate, the child feels ashamed and rejected, angry and confused—alone in a world that has difficulty understanding their situation. Often, these children cannot understand why their mother would *want* to be away from them.

Similar to children of divorced parents, they often reason that it is somehow their fault she no longer wants to take care of them, even when told otherwise.

The effects on children of imprisoned mothers do not end even when their mothers are released. According to statistics, such children are *six times* more likely to end up in prison when one or both parents have been incarcerated. Thus, along with imprisoned mothers, children become figuratively "locked" behind the metal bars of the U.S. prison system, thrown into a cycle that is hard to stop—whose ripples extend far beyond just the crime committed.

Effects of Imprisonment

When a mother is arrested, an estimated 90% of children are sent to live with (1) their maternal grandparents, (2) paternal grandparents or (3) their father. The last 10% are taken care of by friends of the mother.

Amazingly, children are more likely to be sent to live with their grandfather before their own father! This means that hundreds of thousands—approximately 1.9 million children across the country—live without both their father *and* mother.

According to the Correctional Association of New York's most recent statistics, "as of June 2006, 203,100 women were in state or federal prisons or local jails, just under 10% of the total U.S. prison and jail population"—more than two million. In New York alone, as of January 2008, "2,821 women were incarcerated in New York's prisons—about 4.5% of the state's total prison population of 62,577."

In addition, these statistics reveal the following:

> "It ruins a child's sense of well-being and security that their parents are not in charge..."

- "More than 65 percent of women in state prisons and 55 percent of men in state prisons report being parents of children under 18."
- "About 64 percent of mothers in state prisons lived with their children before prison, compared to 44 percent of men."
- "About 40 percent of women in state prisons were employed fulltime prior to their arrest, compared with 60 percent of men."
- "Nearly 30 percent were receiving public assistance before arrest, compared to 8 percent of men. About 37 percent had incomes of less than $600 per month prior to arrest, compared to 28 percent of men."

Sabine Ferran Gerhardt, Assistant Professor at the University of Akron for Early Childhood Development, who runs a program through the local jail system that enables incarcerated mothers to interact with their children once a week, said, "…all children are at risk if a parent has been incarcerated."

"These are not the environments that children usually witness their moms being a part of," she said. "Mom usually isn't hanging out with such a diverse group of people. Mom isn't usually asking somebody's permission to do certain things. Mom isn't usually sharing a room, or even bunk beds, literally, with somebody she hasn't normally done that with."

Instead of preparing bag lunches, picking their child up after soccer practice, and being there to teach and guide their little boy or girl, mothers are removed for months, years or even decades—missing out on their child's developmental years altogether.

Ms. Gerhardt said one of the hardest things for children to see is the disempowerment of their mothers, who are no longer viewed as an authority figure in their child's life. When parents are disempowered, she said, children lose the sense of authority that their parent once maintained and the ability to trust in them to take care of them.

"It ruins a child's sense of well-being and security that their parents are not in charge," she said.

That consistency, Ms. Gerhardt said, is vital to a child's mental development.

"Children need to know what to expect," she said. "They need boundaries. They need to know what's coming, because in general they just don't know what's coming. As adults, we don't tend to explain to them how things are going to happen or when they are going to happen…And so they are pretty much living their lives constantly on edge."

This often carries into adulthood.

In prisons, Ms. Gerhardt said, there is a disconnect when children see their mothers because it is "public parenting." Mothers are less likely to be open with their children, and sometimes cannot hug or hold them

at all. This builds a sense of rejection in a child, who does not understand why he or she is being rejected. Often, she said, children who feel their world spinning out of control search for something they can control: drugs, alcohol and their eating patterns (which can lead to anorexia or bulimia).

Additionally, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to lash out at authority figures—especially police—in the future, whom they hold responsible for taking away their mothers.

Not surprisingly, Ms. Gerhardt said, this has caused the family system to careen toward disaster. Instead of the parent taking care of the child, the child now feels obligated to take care of the parent. Instead of worrying if the weather will be nice enough to play outside, children of incarcerated parents worry about what their mothers will eat and where they will sleep.

"The entire communication pattern between mother and child is upset," she said, stating later, "When that relationship starts to get strained, the entire family crumbles."

But are mothers and fathers at fault? Who is to blame for their inability to parent and be good examples for their children?

Although Ms. Gerhardt maintains that, while all parents have the capability to make mistakes, part of the problem is that most often the parents have not been properly instructed on how to care for children in advance.

"Parents are never trained to be parents," she said. "They just fall into that role, sometimes by choice, sometimes by accident…Unlike any other job where we give you training, where we give you an apprenticeship essentially, where we have a monitor there to help you through it…we're flying solo through that process."

Often lacking in parenting is the principle of cause and effect. In fact, many go through their entire lives not realizing this law applies to every situation they experience. The decisions of parents (the causes) can greatly affect and shape their children's future.

Parents who commit a crime cause a shockwave of effects. They are put in prison and parted from their children. Their families are torn apart, often making grandparents fill the role of mother and father. Children must deal with the emotional effects from their parent's decisions, often falling into crime and into the same cycle as their parents.

When these children grow and have families of their own, what will be taught?

But the effects do not stop there. They surge outward, affecting neighborhoods, cities, societies and entire nations. With each family—the building blocks of nations—torn apart, the fabric of society continues to shred.

And with each decision of parents, good or bad, the one most affected is their children.

The Family Pulled Apart

There is an oft-quoted proverb about parenting that states, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). But how are parents to know what "way he should go," even in optimum conditions, if they are not taught?

Often, new parents are left to "figure things out," with society believing that parenting is something that can be done by instinct.

Also, from the examples above, even if the parents in prison did have a stable home life during their own childhood, one only has to look at the offenses they committed that landed them in prison to see that they were not raising their children in an environment conducive to a proper upbringing: aggravated assault with a weapon, possession of narcotics, felony theft, first degree murder. Even if these parents did turn around their lives, where should they turn for answers?

For many this may seem to be a sad situation that cannot, does not, apply to them. They may "feel" for those in such situations and then go about their day. And, while this is a narrow example of how situations such as this have the capability to destroy individual lives and entire families, it is not as uncommon as it once was.

More than ever, the family unit is beset on every side by problems of every sort. This push-the-envelope-at-all-costs age in which we live threatens to tear children's lives and futures to pieces. How can parents arm themselves against such odds?

Society does not help! In a time with more books on the topic then ever before, families and their relationships fall apart—it is often looked upon as "merely part of life."

While most cannot see how deep-seated their problems are—the state of children with parents in prisons is, TRAGICALLY, only one of the many scenarios threatening every family.

Psychologists, religionists and experts of every sort cannot figure this out, or even to whom to ask the questions. They simply do not know where to begin. Book upon book is written, with every slant, every angle—and yet, problems continue to mount.

The answers come from the same place as the proverb mentioned before—the Bible—God's INSTRUCTION MANUAL for mankind.

No one teaches how to properly rear children, and no one is offering firm answers. Are we to believe that God would say there is a *way* to rear children and leave us in the dark as to how?

NO! Not only does God's Word tell parents to "train up your child in the way he should go," it details *how* this is to be done. Contained in its pages is a road map for parents who are prepared to admit they do not naturally know how to perform their parenting duties.

Readers are urged to read the book *Train Your Children God's Way*, posted at *thercg.org*. It does not offer the opinions or conjecture of the author; rather, it explains in detail WHY families are failing and reveals—through Scripture—how one should raise children to lead happy, productive lives—with purpose! □

Continued from page 14

reliance on Russian gas and oil is an ongoing issue.

In any case, Russian-German relations are a little more realistic, with leaders of each country being the first to visit each other after Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's recent election. The new president said during German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Moscow, "We highly appreciate your coming here and consider the visit as a continuation of the strategic cooperation and partnership that has traditionally existed between Russia and the Federative Republic of Germany" (*Xinhau*).

One outcome from the Lisbon failure is a possible two-speed Europe: a smaller, progressive core, with a larger group of "associate members," or partners. Political events, along with world events, will dictate whether this will become the avenue for Europe's continued rise.

Keep in mind also that, in recent years, the U.S. has been pushing the EU for an increased role in security/military issues globally. NATO and the United Kingdom have complicated this issue, but at some point, they will have to fade to the back.

A Lone Superpower?

For now, the United States remains the world's lone superpower. Despite the military reductions of the 1990s, it still has the most bases and personnel around the world. The U.S. Air Force and Navy are simply unrivalled, and the nation's annual military budget remains the largest in the world by far.

Yet America's global power and influence are quickly fading. With military strength at least somewhat based on economic power, and recent months showing that the U.S. economy is in a fragile state, America could one day find it is unable to fuel its jets or replenish its missile supply. How much longer can the federal government "bail out" various banks and mortgage companies, while spending tremendous amounts of money on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

London has (again) surpassed New York as the world's financial capital for stock listing. Global markets increasingly invest money in European banks instead of American ones. Persian Gulf oil exports are diversifying their currency holdings into Euros instead of U.S. dollars.

The article "Waving Goodbye to Hegemony" (*International Herald Tribune*) suggests that the "Second World" countries (those after China, the EU and the U.S., but above the Third World) are making plain they want a part of the "European dream"—not the American one. In addition, the Second World has increasing power, primarily based on foreign exchange reserves and their relative spending power. The article suggests that to understand them, one must think like them. It is no longer an "us vs. them" (like the Cold War) or "you're either with us, or against us" (like the early years of the "War on Terror") world. These Second World nations are looking after themselves first.

Throw Iran into the fray, and you have a country that has been successful at dividing the U.S. and Europe (by primarily using the sensitive "Israel card"), while establishing a strategic partnership with China, enabling the dragon to reach the Persian Gulf without relying on the narrow Straits of Malacca. A U.S.-led (or supported, if Israel took the lead) attack on Iran would likely have dire economic consequences, never mind diplomatic challenges from Russia and China.

Could the U.S. military even support a major attack against Iran? What would happen if the region broke out into a full-scale war (such as Syria/Hezbollah attacking Israel, possibly with Egypt drawn in)? Certainly, the current strain and stress on U.S. forces is an issue.

In any case, the U.S. has also had its military ability and technology in action and "on display" for the rest of the world during the last several years. No doubt, the Chinese, Germans and others have paid close attention, and gathered as much information as possible. They will use this information to their best advantage.

Three "Nations" in Prophecy

Believe it or not, the future of China, the European Union and the United States are primary components of Bible prophecy, providing a picture of what lies ahead for the world.

The European Union is foretold to transform into a military/economic juggernaut—a "United States of Europe" that will be a great socio-political world force, combining tremendous economic power (Rev. 18:18-19) with a powerful and convincing religion (Rev. 13:11-15).

China will also play a leading part on the world stage, aligning itself with Russia (Rev. 9:16) to challenge the European power initially.

Yes, the Bible reveals that Europe and China (allied with Russia) will influence and dominate foreign affairs. However, the United States and her sister nations—Britain, Australia, France, Canada and others—will suffer dramatic reversal.

To learn more, read David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*. □

By Whose Authority?

Discerning God's True Shepherds

This fall we will publish the most powerful, comprehensive and biblically accurate book ever written about the life of Jesus Christ. As proven from Scripture, combined with history and the social practices and customs of Palestine 2,000 years ago, the upcoming book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity* will lift the veil of mystery and religious confusion shrouding Jesus' life—and MAKE PLAIN the reasons for His birth and ministry. (The following is an abridged excerpt.)

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

THE NEW TESTAMENT records numerous accounts of Jesus Christ visiting Jerusalem's Temple. It was there where Joseph and Mary, observing Old Covenant statutes, presented the Christ Child after He had been circumcised, and offered a sacrifice (Luke 2:21-24). At age 12, Jesus was in the Temple asking religious scholars deeply probing questions. These "authorities" were taken aback by the boy's inquisitive nature and wisdom (vs. 46-47). Jesus also visited the Temple several times during His earthly ministry, amazing onlookers by His words and actions. Some concluded He was, indeed, the Messiah. Many others, on the other hand, conspired to take His life.

In the first year of His ministry, when Jesus and His disciples came to Jerusalem to observe the Passover season, they "found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting" (John 2:13-14).

Christ was LIVID at what He witnessed. The Temple was built as a religious center to worship the God of the universe—not for exchanging currency for personal profit!

So what did Jesus do? "And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He DROVE THEM ALL OUT of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and POURED OUT the changers' money, and OVERTHREW the tables" (vs. 15).

Why? "And said [He] unto them that sold doves, *Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise*. And His disciples remembered that it was written, *The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up*" (vs. 16-17). They remembered Psalm 69:9, a prophecy describing the zealous nature of a righteous Servant foretold to be consumed with doing the will of God.

This was just one of numerous Old Testament prophecies that the Christ was to fulfill, during both His earthly ministry and later at His triumphant Return to rule God's government across the earth.

Jesus Christ healed people. He made the blind see, the deaf hear, the mute speak and the lame walk. He fed thousands from only a handful of fish and bread. He walked on water, turned water into wine, released people from the bonds of demon possession and performed countless other miracles. Jesus Christ boldly preached the gospel, delivered prophetic warnings and taught tens of thousands about God's Law, spiritually magnifying its intent.

The apostle John wrote, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

Everything Christ said and did was with strength—boldness—power—and authority!

Some believed Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. Some were undecided, not sure what to make of Him and what He taught. Others—the religious powers of the day—felt threatened. They had no doubt that Jesus was a "teacher come from God" (John 3:2). They witnessed the mighty miracles He performed and were amazed by their effects. They admitted among themselves, "No man can do these…except God be with him" (same verse).

But the scribes and Pharisees refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ—that He had divine authority. They were righteous in their own eyes, measuring their righteousness by how well they observed minute, manmade laws and traditions, which unnecessar-

ily made the Way of God seem burdensome. Since Jesus did not "measure up" to *their* idea of righteousness, they concluded He could not have been Christ—and they were more than willing to lie against, slander, and falsely accuse Him, and even plot His murder!

Why? "For [Jesus] taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29).

By Old Testament Prophecies

Psalm 2:7 states, "I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You." Jesus was the Son of God. Of all people ever born, only He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). God the Father, using an angelic being to represent His voice, publicly confirmed that Jesus was His Son: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matt. 3:16-17).

Christ's birth was foretold throughout the Old Testament. Jesus was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23; Luke 2:7), in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-6), later called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15) and reared in Galilee.

He was born to become King over the government of God (Isa. 9:6-7)—a position for which He qualified to replace Satan as this world's ruler (Matt. 4:1-11). When Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king, Christ replied, "You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37).

Yet He also said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from here" (vs. 36). During His First Coming, Christ was also an ambassador, or representative, for God's kingdom. He was a divine Messenger who brought a message from heaven—good news—about the government He represented. At Christ's Second Coming He will replace the governments of men with the government of God (Dan. 2:34-36, 44-45).

Yet billions of professing Christians today mistakenly believe Jesus' message was about the Messenger!

As the Son of God, Jesus was foretold to be born from the seed of Abraham and through the line of King David (Psa. 132:11; Jer. 32:5). His genealogy was confirmed physically from the line of Mary, and legally through that of Joseph.

Christ was also a prophet "like unto" Moses (Deut. 18:15-18), of whom Peter declared, "And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you" (Acts 3:20-22).

Jesus Christ was a High Priest, not of Aaron, but of a priesthood that had no beginning or end, "after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:5-6; 6:20; ch. 7)

And, of course, He was, and is, mankind's Savior. Prophecy said Jesus would be hated and rejected, a stone of stumbling (Psa. 69:4; 118:22; Isa. 8:14)—betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9; 55:12-14) and sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13)—forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 13:7)—even forsaken by God (Psa. 22:1), as Jesus took on the penalty of death upon His sacrifice, becoming sin. God cannot dwell with sin (Isa. 59:2).

By the Sign of Jonah

The people witnessed Jesus' miracles. They heard His great understanding and wisdom, and saw that He spoke with great power and authority. And they watched as His followers changed their lives for the better.

Yet most, especially the religious leaders, were unconvinced. Their hearts were too hardened to believe Jesus was the Christ. Unbelievers pressed Him with questions, attempting to trip Him up, to somehow stump Him.

But Christ knew that miracles, the fruit of His ministry and the plain truth of His teachings did not matter to hardened hearts. So when the scribes and Pharisees demanded that Jesus produce a sign proving His authority, that He was the Messiah, He answered, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39-40).

Being dead, in the grave, for three days and night—not a minute more or less—and then being resurrected by God was the only sign Jesus Christ gave!

Amazingly, the "Christian" churches, denominations and organizations of today believe that Jesus was in the grave from Friday to Sunday morning—but this is NOT "three days and three nights." To cover their error, religionists of this world's traditional Christianity teach that Jesus meant He would be in the grave for *three parts* of day and night.

But Christ said His length of time in the grave would be "AS Jonah was three days and three nights." The word "as" means this is a comparison. Check the book of Jonah. Verse 17 of the first chapter states, "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights..." The original Hebrew says exactly what it means: three individual days and three individual nights—not "a combination of three parts."

By His Fruit

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's arrival (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; Luke 3:3-6), but John's short ministry ended upon His imprisonment. He knew his cousin Jesus was the prom-

ised Messiah, yet his faith temporarily wavered; he needed it to be strengthened. John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are You He that should come? Or look we for another?" (Luke 7:18-19).

Jesus' answer? "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (vs. 22). In other words, His FRUITS stood as evidence of His prophetic ministry (Matt. 7:18-20).

Even the scribes and Pharisees privately admitted among themselves that the awesome miracles Jesus performed could have been done only through the power of God (John 3:1-2)—yet publicly they accused Him of doing these through Satan's power (Luke 11:15)!

The Messiah was prophesied to work miracles (Isa. 35:5-6; Matt. 11:4-6; John 11:47)—to preach through parables (Psa. 78:2; Matt. 13:34-35)—to be filled with zeal for His "Father's business" (Luke 2:49; Psa. 69:9; John 2:17). The ministry of Jesus Christ, the Chief Apostle, bore fruit in the form of 12 original apostles, later joined by Paul and others. The first-century Church dramatically multiplied in membership because the brethren "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [teaching] and fellowship" (Acts 2:42). The apostles faithfully taught what the Chief Apostle had taught; they did not deviate from the truth. They instructed everyone, from lay member to minister, to "continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them" (II Tim. 3:14).

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd—the voice of truth (John 10:7-11, 14). His faithful and obedient shepherds—true ministers of God—speak with the same voice.

Discerning True Ministers From False Ones

Jesus Christ spoke and taught with authority of God. The fruit of His ministry, all the prophecies He fulfilled that applied to His First Coming, and the fact that He obeyed and pleased God, and did God's will, not His own, are evidence—PROOF—of Christ's authority and power.

And, just as Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, He authorized His faithful ministers to do the same (Matt. 28:19-20). They are to be found doing so right up to the final days just prior to His Return.

Yet who *are* Christ's ministers?

Jesus warned, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (vs. 4-5)—that many through the 2,000 years leading to His Return would claim to represent Christ's message, saying, "Jesus was the Messiah," yet preaching "*another* gospel," because they actually serve "*another* Jesus" (II Cor. 11:4).

But of those who preach "any other gospel"—a message other than the one Christ preached—Scripture pronounces a double curse! (Read Galatians 1:6-9.)

Jesus did not take authority to Himself—He received it from God, confirmed by fruit, miracles, the fulfillment of prophecies, His perfect obedience, and the truth He taught and lived by, all reflecting His Father's will.

Likewise, true ministers of Jesus Christ are faithful servants of God. They OBEY Him, teaching others to do the same. They preach the same gospel Christ preached, the very same message Jesus delivered and taught His disciples to "teach all nations…to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

A minister's "glowing personality" or awe-inspiring speaking and writing skills are not, by themselves, proof that Christ is working through him. A true minister of Christ teaches and conducts His personal life with the same voice of truth with which Jesus spoke.

It is up to the Bible student to follow the examples of the Bereans, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Jesus Christ was the Word; He always spoke and expressed the truth and will of God. The Bible—God's Word in written form—is truth (John 17:17). So is God's Law (Psa. 119:142). Any minister who preaches that the Law of God is "done away" or "done for you, so there's no need to keep it," or who preaches a gospel other than the kingdom of God, DOES NOT speak with the voice of truth!

They speak with "*another* spirit" (II Cor. 11:4)—their authority comes from "another Jesus," one who "is transformed into an angel of light." This great false "Jesus," identified in verse 14 as Satan, influences and uses "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ" (vs. 13). God did not send them—He did not authorize them to speak in His name. They authorized themselves!

God calls such false leaders "prophets" who "prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nothing, and the deceit of their heart" (Jer. 14:14); and "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (Jer. 23:21).

But amazingly, BILLIONS follow false ministers and other religious leaders on the basis of personality, appearance and speaking ability. They allow themselves to fall under the spell of rhetoric masquerading as "truth." Of such leaders, the Bible plainly states, "Therefore it is no great thing that his ministers"—speaking of Satan, God's adversary—"also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:15).

However, Christ's sheep "follow Him: for they know His voice" (John 10:4). Christ's shepherds—His true and faithful ministers—speak with the same "voice of truth." They and they only have the authority to teach and preach in Christ's name.

But as for false ministers, Jesus calls them "strangers." He did not authorize them. They speak with a voice *other* than the voice of truth. From such men, Jesus Christ expects His sheep to flee, "for they know not the voice of strangers" (vs. 5). □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

painful sensation of burning. How would this work?

Use the following analogy. Before someone undergoes major surgery, he is anesthetized—rendered *unconscious*—so he will *not* experience pain. Medical doctors understand this—why don't theologians and religionists? Why do they deny the plain statements of the Bible?

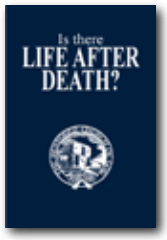
Some willingly ignore the message of scripture. They allege that only "mortal" thoughts perish, in the sense that the dead leave this earthly realm and experience some mysterious, different, new kind of "thought." Of course, this is ridiculous, and the Bible does not say it, but we ought to at least examine the idea. Let's now consider an even more direct verse.

Notice Ecclesiastes 9:5: "For the living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not anything*…" An honest reader cannot misunderstand this!

Solomon also recorded, "For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: *as the one dies, so dies the other*; yes, they have all one breath; so that *a man has no preeminence above a beast*…*All* go unto one place; *all* are of the dust, and *all* turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:19-20).

Now consider Psalm 115:17: "The dead praise not the LORD, neither *any* that go down *into silence*." Death means "silence." This certainly does not agree with the popular concepts of millions of the dead wailing and screaming in agony—or immediately receiving eternal life in heaven or anywhere else with millions of others supposedly conversing, singing, playing harps and praising God. Neither scene could possibly be described as SILENCE!

Psalm 6:5 further explains that the dead do not experience conscious memory: "For in death there is *no remembrance of You*: in the grave who shall give You thanks?" Could anyone seriously suggest that the dead, suffering in hell, could experience the normal range of human memories, *but not be aware of God*—not be able to "remember" Him? Would God put people in "hell" and then leave them there to suffer, forever wondering how it was that they got there—who it was that put them there—because they have no "remembrance" of anything related to God?



Applying the same question to those who received salvation is even more ridiculous. Could people "roll around heaven all day" and be *unaware* that they were in the presence of God or of even who He was?

No! When people die, they are DEAD!

So far we have not explained *everything* about life after death, but we know that further *life* does not immediately occur *at death*! We have established that when a person dies, he is dead! But then what happens?

(To learn more on this subject, read my booklet *Is There Life After Death?*) □

TERRORISM & SECURITY

PHILIPPINES: CLASHES STALL PEACE PROCESS

■ **ON THE MARCH:** Philippine Army troops using an armored vehicle roll into Camp Bilal, the Muslim rebel base in Poona Piagapo in Lanao del Norte Province, located in southern Philippines (Aug. 28, 2008).

PHOTO: STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The peace process is stalled indefinitely between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), as heavy fighting raged between the two groups in Datu Ampatuan and Datu Piang in southern Philippines. More than 100 MILF rebels have been killed in the conflicts that have driven 130,000 civilians from their homes.

The GRP blames the MILF for starting the hostilities, which have included torching houses, burning automobiles, looting stores and stealing animals of Christian settlers.

The recent fighting began when the GRP halted the implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain, or MOA-AD, that would have given the MILF full autonomy.

The government was forced to scrap the deal when Christian groups protested it upon learning that under the agreement, the MOA would also rule over them. Filipino Christians demanded consultation before any autonomy deal could be signed that would affect them.

The Bangsa Moro Juridical Entity would have governed the autonomous areas, granting the region the ability to:

- Write Islamic laws
- Operate police and internal security forces
- Organize banks or other financial institutions
- Sign free trade agreements with any sovereign nation
- Elect government officials
- Create civil services and public education

Vice Chairman Ghadzali Jaafar said, "As far as the MILF leadership is concerned, the MOA-AD is already a done deal." He added that the MILF would not renegotiate "even if it means indefinite postponement of the 11 year old peace process" (*AFP*).

Government soldiers overran more than 15 MILF strongholds while hunting two MILF commanders—Ameril Umbra Kato and Abdurahman Macapaar, who lead an estimated force of 500-1000 men—for their involvement in starting the attacks. The GRP administration may soon classify the two commanders as terrorists.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said in a speech, "So I say to the Filipinos; to the world; to our Muslim brothers in the South; to the OIC through our Kuwaiti friends, there is no all-out war. What we are doing, we are doing to have all-out peace in Mindanao. We wish for all insurgents to turn their swords into plowshares, their arms to farms."

Earlier, the president said that government peace efforts will focus on "authentic consultations with the people," not on "negotiations with armed groups" (*AFP*).

Some civilians have returned to their homes and are planning to arm themselves for self-defense.

An estimated five million Muslims (8% of the population) live in the nation. The 12,000-strong MILF has been fighting for 11 years for a separate Moro homeland in the natural-resource rich Mindanao region in southern Philippines. □

GEOPOLITICS

TIES INCREASE BETWEEN IRAN AND GERMANY

Iran continues to bolster its economic ties and increase its military capability, despite United Nations sanctions implemented to force the country to abandon its nuclear program.

Iran also announced it will manufacture a new unmanned submarine designed to launch missiles and torpedoes, further enhancing its threat to regional stability.

In spite of its progress on military and nuclear fronts, the nation's internal stability is hampered by a failing infrastructure due to mismanagement and corruption within the leading political party. With its energy demand growing at 8% per year and an existing backlog, Iran is looking to the West for partners to help with the crisis. Despite being the second-largest exporter of oil, Iran does not have sufficient refining capabilities and relies on gasoline imports for more than 50% of its usage.

Amid proposed sanction increases against Iran, trade between Germany and Iran is on the rise. In a report released by Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, it is calculated that German exports to Iran have increased by 18% in the first four months of the year; it is expected that trade between the two countries will exceed $5.9 billion in 2008.

New German investments in Iran have raised concerns as to Europe's commitment to stability in the Middle East. Germany is currently busy with a $147 billion deal in Iran to erect three gas liquefying refineries.

This news comes just weeks after German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Israel, which seemed to improve relations between the two nations.

However, with the recent Iranian trade move, Germany is accused of pandering to both sides in the region. Head of the German-Israeli parliamentary group, Jerzy Montag said, "The chancellor shouldn't put on airs in crowd-pleasing speeches in front of the Knesset if she isn't going to take action at the crucial moment."

Israel's Foreign Ministry also expressed disappointment in Germany's approach. "The German government's decision contravenes the spirit of sanctions handed down by members of the [UN] Security Council on Iran," the ministry said in a statement. "The fact that Germany, a member of the leading European group EU3, which includes France, Britain and Germany, is adopting a position that harms the international effort to considerably toughen sanctions against Iran over its continued nuclear program, is worrying."

Analysts have said that the mere fact that Germany is establishing trade relations with countries such as Russia and possibly Iran is an indication that the European Union can change its relationship from economic to being security integrated at any time. □

AMERICAS

U.S. POLITICS: HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Both the Democratic and Republican parties made history. U.S. Senator Barrack Obama (D-Illinois) became the first African-American to be nominated by a major political party to run for the presidency. And Alaskan governor Sarah Palin, selected by Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) to be his running mate, was the second woman in history to be selected as a vice-presidential candidate.

Before a record television audience of over 38 million, Mr. Obama accepted the nomination with a speech that set himself apart from his opponent and spelled out his plans for economically revitalizing the nation. He stated that by encouraging energy independence from the Middle East and aggressively seeking tax reforms that would help the lower economic classes, the U.S. could begin to prosper again—a change he promised to deliver if elected.

PHOTOS: MCT

SEN. OBAMA **GOV. PALIN**

He went on to address more divisive issues, such as homosexual marriage and illegal immigration, focusing on a shared "common purpose" that he said should unite all Americans.

The day after Mr. Obama's speech, Mr. McCain introduced Governor Palin as his running mate. Mrs. Palin has earned a reputation for being a staunch conservative, motivated and willing to walk her own road for what she believes is right, regardless of her party's line.

Nicknamed the "Frank Serpico" of Alaskan politics (*Time*), Sarah Palin has taken on corruption in the state's government, putting aside her own personal politics to focus on matters taking greater precedent. Prior to her tenure as governor, Mrs. Palin rooted out corruption by blowing the whistle on a fellow ethics committee member who had been inappropriately raising money for the state's Republican Party from energy companies he was assigned to regulate.

As governor, Mrs. Palin is said to strongly support traditional Christian values, at times holding a 90% approval rating.

Gov. Palin is respected as a savvy judge of the political climate, ready to take on the challenges of her state. She is known for her willingness to cross party lines to accomplish goals, which mirrors the reputation of her presidential running mate. □

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