

The feet of those who bring good news are not so beautiful these days

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good *things*, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Isa 52:8 Your watchmen shall lift up *their* voices, With their voices they shall sing together; For they shall see eye to eye When the LORD brings back Zion.

At times like ours, when the world is struck with tribulation after tribulation, nothing would be more 'beautiful' and welcomed than a dose of good news. Alas, that role is not ours, but our nemesis'. They can afford to give people what they want – good news even in the worst of times. We, however, must pass on God's messages, and these days they cannot be more menacing: repent from your exceedingly sinful ways or you will perish.

Our problem is that we are fighting a wall of opposition from all sides, but especially so from our nemesis who instead of crying aloud the sins of their people so as to save them from "utter destruction", as God says they should, they would rather fight us.

Isa 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins.

Isa 58:2 Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.

Isa 58:3 'Why have we fasted,' *they say*, 'and You have not seen? *Why* have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.

Isa 58:4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, To make your voice heard on high.

Isa 58:5 Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD?

Isa 58:6 "*Is this* not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?

Isa 58:7 *Is it* not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Isa 58:8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Isa 58:9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I *am*.' "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

Isa 58:10 *If* you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall *be* as the noonday.

Isa 58:11 The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Isa 58:12 Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

Isa 58:13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy *day* of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking *your own* words,

Isa 58:14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Isa 59:1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

Isa 59:3 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity.

Isa 59:4 No one calls for justice, Nor does *any* plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

Isa 59:5 They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And *from* that which is crushed a viper breaks out.

Isa 59:6 Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works *are* works of iniquity, And the act of violence *is* in their hands.

Isa 59:7 Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

Isa 59:8 The way of peace they have not known, And *there is* no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

These words, written down some eight centuries before Christ, have never been more appropriate for the world than they are now. Let us compare them with the words of Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, who received his prophecy four centuries before Christ.

Mal 4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

Mal 4:2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

Mal 4:3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 4:4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments.

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Mal 4:6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

Did you notice the connection? Although they lived four centuries apart, the similarity of their messages is undeniable. They both put emphasis on God's Commandments; they both spoke of good news for those who honour God and delight in his laws; and they both warned of dire consequences for those who are on the wrong side of God.

Some people may well say that these prophets spoke for Zion, ancient Israel, not for our world today. Those who think that way are grievously mistaken, because what the prophets of old had written was not so much for their people as for us.

1Pe 1:10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what,

1Pe 1:11 or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

1Pe 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

1Pe 1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1Pe 1:14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance;

1Pe 1:15 but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct,

1Pe 1:16 because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

Where then does our world stand in relation to these messages if they are meant for us? The world has just come out of the festivities associated with Christmas. Unfortunately Christmas of the year 2010 will be remembered for all the wrong reasons. Instead of spending time with their loved ones, thousands of people in Europe and North America spent it in airport lounges, in train and bus stations, even in snow bound cars and busses. The world has seldom seen such deep and widespread freezing conditions as in the northern winter of 2010. Even in India's northern states, where winters are mild by comparison, people died of freezing conditions. And, as if to prove that God is not respecter of persons, He sent disasters of a different kind to the southern hemisphere: Australia, Brazil, Ceylon, and others, endured floods of a magnitude never seen before.

Our nemeses have the habit of blaming the Devil for these calamities, absolving God of any responsibility for them. But what does God say?

Hab 2:13 Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain?

Amo 3:6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*?

Pro 16:4 The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.

Cardinal Pell of the Catholic Church can find silver linings even in the worst of disasters. Our readers may remember how for years he denied that there is any climate change and global warming until he could deny it no more. Then he said that these could be a boon for the world in that they would bring more rains and produce bumper harvests.

Well, Australia received a lot of rains in recent months, more so than at any time in the last century. And what did we have? Not increased harvests, but "one in a hundred years flood" that destroyed crops, animals, bridges, dams, roads, schools, supermarkets, mines, and thousands of homes! Not surprisingly, he found silver lining in this too.

"Greeting: Archbishop Cardinal George Pell"

"Christmas has again come upon us quickly, as we gather to celebrate the most popular feast and festival in the calendar. In the Eastern states the drought has broken after about ten years, as the rains started and continued to fall. We thank God for all the long term good the floods will do to the river systems and the countryside, while ruefully acknowledging the dashed hopes for a bumper harvest."

Instead of asking why God has sent this calamity upon the nation, he is telling Australians to thank God for "all the long term good the floods will do to the river systems and the countryside." He must be living in a cocoon not to know what these floods have done to the countryside. Crops to the value of six billion dollars have been wiped out in Queensland alone; and the damages from the floods in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, which are still ongoing, is yet to be established. And while the eastern states wallow in unprecedented floods, Western Australia had to cope with devastating fires.

Torrential rains and floods began in November, and continued long after Cardinal Pell delivered his message, however it was clear by then that this was not just an ordinary flood but one of 'biblical proportions' as some media have dubbed it. An area the size of France and Germany combined was under water. Dozens of people lost their lives, and thousands were left destitute and heart broken after seeing their life's work go down the river, literally.

It is nothing short of blasphemy to talk of the long term good of the flood in the midst of such devastation, and not consider the even longer term damage to the people, the country and the world. Australia is a large exporter of agricultural produce, and because crops were also damaged on a large scale in Russia and Pakistan, prices of food items increased dramatically on markets around the world. The world is quickly running out of food reserves, and moving towards a state of perennial food shortages.

Now just as the nation was mesmerised by the sight of an inland sea, where only the roofs of tall buildings in submerged towns could be seen, and lest people think that Cardinal Pell alone trivialises it, this is what another prominent Australian had to say.

Remember Haiti, even in the midst of floods

Australians glued to their televisions watching the dark tide of floodwaters sweeping through Queensland may remember the earthquake that flattened the capital of Haiti, Port au Prince, one year ago today and killed more than 200,000 people.

Both natural disasters have caused chaos and death and both are equally deserving of support and assistance. All natural disasters are tragedies.

In Australia we are lucky to have a strong and responsive government, access to financial support and effective emergency services that allow us to respond. The Queensland floods underscore the importance of what aid can do to help communities that do not have the resources, the wealth or the capacity to bounce back from the very brink of obliteration.

In Haiti, not only were many people killed in the earthquake, but government infrastructure and basic utilities were also destroyed, disabling much of the city's already inadequate water and sewerage facilities. Many of the government's staff who oversaw Haiti's complex land title and planning systems were also made homeless or even killed in the quake, making it difficult to rebuild people's homes.

The quake has had such a huge impact on Haiti that decisions such as how to clean up rubble from damaged and destroyed houses have remained unresolved. More than 10 million cubic metres or about six full MCGs [*Melbourne Cricked Ground stadium*] of broken concrete still clog the narrow streets of the Caribbean capital.

Donors around the world, including Australians, responded with incredible generosity to the quake in Haiti. The large humanitarian organisations working with the United Nations have since spent hundreds of millions of dollars to keep Haiti's vulnerable people alive. Rapid humanitarian efforts and generosity from donors meant that for most survivors there were - within weeks - at least a tarpaulin or tent and some food shared around to ensure communities did not succumb to the immediate threats. But repairing the country will be measured in decades, and will cost billions. In this instant generation, sometimes the time scales involved are hard to fathom.

Twelve months later, for the people of Haiti and for others who are watching its recovery keenly, there are legitimate questions about when things will return to normal. But no-one aspires to return to what was "normal" for Haiti before the quake. The stark reality is Haiti was already one of the world's poorest nations with appalling vital statistics. [*It is also the world capital of zombies and voodoo, the satanic religion brought by the slaves from Africa*]. Four out of five people did not have access to sewerage, and half of them even lacked access to clean water.

Haiti has a history of poor and sometimes brutal leadership. Even now its struggle for better governance continues: disputed results from the November 28 presidential election led to violence and rioting, throwing up another barrier to recovery efforts. Responding to an outbreak of deadly cholera - one of the contagious diseases that can be planned for after a disaster but rarely prevented - has become one of the most urgent needs, sidelining some of the more fundamental reforms and decisions desperately needed for substantial progress in this nation's recovery. More than 3000 people have died, and more than 50,000 hospitalised. (Tim Costello, Chief Executive World Vision Australia, *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 12, 2011)

There were 64 comments to this article. You will understand their tone from just this one.

While I agree with the thrust of your article Tim I do believe the timing to be completely inappropriate. What is happening in Qld and NSW is immediate and ongoing and I'm sure those being affected, indirectly and directly, have more immediate concerns than the shocking events in Haiti. Yes, Australia is blessed with a more solid economic and political bedrock than Haiti, but I'm sure the projected \$13 billion fiscal impact of the floods will be felt by all Australians in the near to medium term. Perhaps greater sensitivity to the plight of those being inundated with flood waters as I write might have been more appropriate. (MoTzu, January 12, 2011)

What this article and its comments do not reveal is that like Cardinal Pell, Tim Costello is also a man of the cloak. Before taking his position as Chief Executive of World Vision Australia, he was preacher and National President of the Baptist Union of Australia.

We did not give you the complete articles of either Cardinal Pell or of Tim Costello, but we assure you that neither had anything to say about the real reason for these “natural disasters”. Had they been politicians, businessmen, or men of some other worldly interests, there would be no problem, but from servants of God and ministers of Jesus Christ people expect a spiritual explanation, not run of the mill comments that are highly inappropriate.

There is nothing “natural” about the disasters that have befallen the world in recent times. Everything we see in the world is what Jesus Christ and the prophets have spoken about in conjunction with the end of this age. Biblical prophecies follow a timeline which correlates perfectly with what is happening in the world at present. This is why we began this work – to warn people that the world had entered the dangers of the end time.

But an end of this world is the last thing our nemeses will ever acknowledge. In his *Sunday Telegraph* column of January 16, Cardinal Pell said that this flood is merely “part of the history of Australia’s weather patterns”. He just could not bring himself to acknowledge that this “one in a century flood” is different from any other, or that the disasters around the world in recent times are in any way signs of the end time.

Scientists around the world have pointed out that nine of the hottest years on record occurred in the last decade, and the hottest year ever was 2010. Not surprisingly, Cardinal Pell had something to say about that too. In his *Sunday Telegraph* column of January 2, 2011, he went back to his old story of denying global warming by saying that 2010 could not have been the hottest year on record because air traffic was thrown into chaos in Europe and North America due to unusual freezing conditions. He forgets that those freezing conditions lasted about two weeks whereas a year is 52 weeks long, and that the world is much bigger than Europe and North America.

The idea that this world has an end is anathema to the Catholic Church. Rome would not be an ‘eternal city’ if that were the case. But an end this world will have, because God has determined so. He should read our article, “Humanity – wired to self-destruct in six thousand years” in *The Christian Herald No 21* to understand the plan of God.

A decade ago, we wrote the following article in the *Christian Herald No 11*.

The Curse of Our Leaders

“And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”(Rev 16:9)

In the year 2000, Australia dazzled the world with an Olympic spectacle the likes of which this world had never seen. Everything seemed to go right for this ‘lucky country’, but no sooner had the real Olympics closed, and preparations began for the so-called ‘Gay and Lesbian Olympics,’ which were to take place two years later, that things began to go sour. The country’s fortunes took a nosedive, and the nation found itself in the midst of the worst natural disaster in its history.

Ever since that time, Australia has been scorched by a devastating drought. Lives have been lost and hundreds of properties destroyed in uncontrollable fires that stretched on a scale that defied imagination. Yet our leaders, in their customary wisdom, started talking about solving this problem by impossible engineering feats – turning the rivers inland, instead of taking the most obvious and easiest of ways – turning to God who has the power to bless or punish any wayward nation.

History and prophecy have provided ample proofs that everything that happens in this world has a spiritual underlining and a predetermined consequence. But because we

live in a world of pervading cynicism and unbridled materialism, talk about spiritual matters renders one obsolete and out of touch with reality. Yet, without reference to our Creator God, and His divine laws that keep the universe turning and regulate our relationship with Him and with each other, life is a meaningless chain of unrelated events, fraught with pitfalls and difficulties for the unwary that choose the path of unbelief.

The term 'natural disaster' is actually a misnomer for this drought. First because even in a country that is used to dry spells there is nothing natural about a drought that covers almost an entire continent. NSW, the *gay* capital of the world, is the worst hit State. Second, because our Creator's handbook – the Bible – tells us that drought in agricultural areas is a consequence of national and personal sins.

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” (Isa 59:1-2).

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God: "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways." (Deu 28:1-7).

"The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. "So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. "Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

"The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish.

"And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed." (Deu 28:12-24).

Some people may wonder why we apply the warnings that God gave to ancient Israel to a Christian nation today. That is because the New Testament itself is telling us that the Old Testament had been written as an example, for our admonition and correction.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and *that Rock was Christ!* But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” “Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Cor 10:1 – 11).

These things happened to them as examples for us, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Are we anywhere near the end of this age? We are at the very door of it. If there ever was a generation upon whom the ends of the ages have come, surely this is the one. (*The Christian Herald No 11, p. 3*)

That draught which was then two years old lasted an entire decade. Now did our leaders learn anything from that? Hardly! Have a look at this.

US embracing gay marriage.

Los Angeles: US Vice-President Joe Biden, increasingly visible as a key presidential adviser on domestic issues, says the country is moving towards a growing acceptance of gay marriage. Speaking on ABC’s Good Morning America, Mr Biden compared the nation’s changing views on gay marriage to the same changes he has seen on the military’s acceptance of gays and lesbians serving openly.

“I think the country is evolving, and I think there is an inevitability for a national consensus on gay marriage” Mr Biden said. Same-sex marriages can be legally performed in five states as well as in Washington DC.

Mr Biden described how he had attended meetings during which President Barack Obama had sat down with military leaders to explain that the administration was going to push for repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

Under the 1993 law, gays and lesbians had to hide their sexual orientation or face dismissal from the military. Those meetings with military figures helped prepare for the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell”, Mr Biden said. [I saw] the same thing across the country in regard to the issue of marriage,” he said of the law that was repealed in the recently concluded congressional session and signed last week by the President. The military is now examining how to implement the policy.

Mr Biden said he agreed with Mr Obama, who said at a news conference last week that his position on gay marriage was evolving.

“At this point, what I’ve said is that my baseline is a strong civil union that provides them the protection and the legal rights that married couples have. And I think that’s the right thing to do,” Mr Obama said. (*Sunday Telegraph, Dec. 26, 2010*)

Now what does this have to do with Australia, some people may ask. Well, no sooner has the ink dried on those statements that Australia's Labour Government decided to discuss the question of gay marriage in this country too. Where America leads, other countries are sure to follow.

When Barack Obama became President of America, we defended him against accusations that he is the Antichrist. While we still believe that he could not be the Antichrist for the simple reason that that position has been occupied since ancient times by a certain "abomination of desolation", we can now see that Obama is turning out to be far worse for America, and the world, than we imagined.

America has been left undefended exactly when it needs God's protection most. God will never go out to battle with an army that sanctions unspeakable acts of homosexuality. And if God is not with you, you better stay home and raise the flag of unconditional surrender, for you will never win a war without God.

Many vultures are circling and ready to pounce if they see any signs of weakness in America. They will see plenty of them from now on. America now stands exposed and castrated by its own leaders.

Where are America's religious leaders and, for that matter, Australia's and the world's? Are they doing their job in the sight of God as they are supposed to? Instead of watching world developments and crying aloud the sins of their people, they are watching us and doing their best to nullify our message and derail our work.

The Christmas messages of our religious leaders received ample media attention. And what did they contain? Platitudes, inaccuracies, inappropriate and insensitive comments, and not a word about the real reasons for the deplorable state of the world! None told their people to mend their ways and return to God in prayer and repentance in order to allay the wrath of God and, perchance, avoid further calamities.

This is how Cardinal Pell concluded his Christmas message:

"The wonderful reception from almost the whole population to the canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop demonstrated once again, like World Youth Day, the respect and affection of majority Australia for Christianity.

It remains only for us as Christians to practise what we preach and for me to wish everyone, especially the sad and the sick, a happy and peaceful Christmas."

Practise what they preach indeed and none more so than Cardinal Pell himself.

Last year, Australian Catholics were greatly excited over the canonisation of their first 'saint'. Now Cardinal Pell assures us that Mary MacKillop is not merely a 'saint' for the Catholic Church, but for Australian Christianity.

Well, let us make one thing clear: she is not our saint and never will be. We follow the Scriptures, and in the Bible the term 'saint' is always applied to living people, and never to the dead. And something else: Christmas is not a Christian Holy Day. Jesus Christ was not born at Christmas, and the Apostles and the early Churches of God never celebrated it. Christmas became a Holy Day centuries after Christ, and only after the Romans imposed it on Christianity. Prior to that, it was called Saturnalia, from Saturn, the Devil, and it celebrated the birth of Mithra, an eastern pagan deity.

Christmas is not in the Bible. Not one of the Catholic Holy Days is in the Bible, and not one of the biblical Holy Days is observed by the Catholic Church, or by other mainstream Christian denominations for that matter. Those who wish to check out these facts for themselves do not need to study the whole Bible. We have done that work for them. All they need to do is go to our web site and read the articles on this topic.

When Mary MacKillop was declared 'saint' by Pope Benedict XVI in October 2010, Australian Catholics, and many others, said that they finally had someone to pray to. Well, it seems that they have not prayed hard enough, for within a month of that blasphemous act Australia went from the worst draught in its history to the worst floods.

Perhaps these Scriptures might tell them something.

Psa 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.

Psa 115:2 Why should the Gentiles say, "So where is their God?"

Psa 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Psa 115:4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, The work of men's hands.

Psa 115:5 They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;

Psa 115:6 They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell;

Psa 115:7 They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.

Psa 115:8 Those who make them are like them; *So is everyone who trusts in them.*

When will people learn that the Christian God is a God of the living, not of the dead, that praying to the dead is a grievous sin in His eyes, and that those who do so forfeit any chance of salvation? Those who pray to idols are like their idols – dead while alive.

It will not be long now before people learn of the unbelievable deception that has veiled this world, a deception which now threatens to destroy humanity.

2Co 4:3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

2Co 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

2Co 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

2Co 11:13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Mat 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Mat 24:10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

Mat 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Mat 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Preachers of all denominations have done their best to deny any connection between the prophecies about the end of this age and the times in which we live. And why do they find it so difficult to make this connection? Because they have lost the sense of biblical time! We will show you how both Jews and Christians have tampered with the chronology of the Bible, and how in so doing they have exposed humanity to the wiles of the Devil and allowed him to place a veil of deception upon the whole world.

Why Convert to a Dying Religion?

Jewish rabbis are engaged in a fierce debate about the validity of their soldiers' conversions to Judaism. Conservative rabbis want their soldiers to fight for their country, but not to receive full rights as Jews.

ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCE CONVERSIONS INVALID

Hareidi Ashkenazic Rabbinic leaders from the Lithuanian community and the Chabad-Hassidic community voiced opposition to the conversions to Judaism conducted in the IDF. Their statement of disapproval followed a ruling by Sephardi religious leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef who agreed with Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar's position that the conversions were valid and with support for the IDF rabbis from religious Zionist rabbinic figures.

Several months ago, Ashkenazi hareidi rabbis also caused a major uproar by declaring some of the conversions by religious Zionist courts, then under the supervision of the venerable Rabbi Chaim Druckman, head of the Ohr Etzion Hesder Yeshiva, invalid retroactively.

The hareidi rabbis who oppose IDF conversions said that they believe that in the IDF converts are allowed to proceed with their plans to convert even if they do not intend to attempt to keep a halakhic lifestyle. They wrote: "Everyone knows that these people did not plan to keep any of the major elements of religious observance, not the Sabbath, not kashrut [*religious dietary laws*], and not family purity". The letter was signed by several leading hareidi-religious rabbis, among them Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky. Their source for this generalization was not given.

Another letter, signed by a group of Chabad rabbis, warned that failing to hold would-be converts to a standard that includes observance of Jewish law harms both the converts and the Jewish people. Substandard conversions "pose a threat to the existence of the Jewish people, and show ingratitude toward those who seek to convert, by deceiving them in the name of welcoming them, and making their lives miserable by giving them a conversion certificate that has no basis in Jewish law."

The Chabad rabbis criticized the IDF's acclaimed Nativ pre-conversion program, claiming that teachers in the program had mixed Torah messages with those contradictory to Torah. "And the main thing: even the rabbis who performed the conversions themselves left out, downplayed, or belittled the essence of conversion, that is, the acceptance of the mitzvot [*commandments*] at the time of conversion and the intent to keep them for the rest of one's life!" The Rabbi of Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi, made his opposition to the Chabad rabbi's letter public, stating that the Lubavitcher Rebbe himself had said that conversions should be left to the Chief Rabbinate, which supports the IDF conversions.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a renowned Torah scholar and the spiritual leader of Shas, stated that the IDF conversions are valid.

President Shimon Peres praised Rabbi Yosef this week for his stance on the issue. His ruling "strengthens and unifies the Jewish people," Peres said. (Maryana Miskin, www.israelnationalnews.com, Jan. 28, 2011).

What these soldiers should ask themselves is why convert to a dying religion when they have a real choice. Righteousness according to the Old Testament dietary laws not only does not make one a real Jew, but takes him back to rules and doctrines that belonged to a bygone era, doctrines which under the New Covenant have become doctrines of demons.

- 1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,
1Ti 4:2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

1Ti 4:3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;
1Ti 4:5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh;

Rom 2:29 but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

Now if dietary laws and circumcision of the flesh do not make one a Jew, what does? The New Covenant, that's what, a fact confirmed by both the Old and the New Testaments.

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Jer 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

Jer 31:33 But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Rom 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

Rom 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Rom 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Rom 8:10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Rom 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

‘Sons of God?’ Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God! Does anyone remember why the Pharisaical Jews killed Jesus Christ?

Joh 19:4 Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him."

Joh 19:5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, "Behold the Man!"

Joh 19:6 Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify *Him*, crucify *Him*!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify *Him*, for I find no fault in Him."

Joh 19:7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

"He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God!" If the purveyors of the Old Covenant Judaism had their way they might kill another two billion people, all who call themselves Christian, or at least those who truly believe that they are the sons of God.

Shortly before they brought Jesus Christ before their Court of Law, He quoted to them their own Scriptures which point out that they too were sons of God.

Joh 10:23 And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.

Joh 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Joh 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

Joh 10:26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Joh 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Joh 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Joh 10:29 My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

Joh 10:30 I and *My* Father are one."

Joh 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

Joh 10:32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

Joh 10:33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I SAID, "YOU ARE GODS"?"

Joh 10:35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Joh 10:36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

The Scripture cannot be broken: we are all sons of God. Yet even after Jesus Christ made it clear to them that He did not regard Himself to be exclusively the only Son of God, and made them all sons of God, they did not accept His witness and still crucified Him.

Apostle Paul, however, made it clear that it is not good enough to be a son of God according to the flesh, according to the Old Testament, or the Old Covenant as the Scriptures refer to it, but one must become a son of God according to the Spirit if he is to ensure his salvation – everlasting life in the eternal Kingdom of God where there are pleasures forever more.

Psa 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me; Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Psa 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.
Psa 16:10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
Psa 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Now what do you think would happen if someone went to the Jewish leaders these days and told them that he is a witness and a son of God? They may not kill him, their nation's secular laws may not allow it, but they would certainly do their best to declare him mad and put him in a psychiatric ward. They tried to do that to me once.

For more than four decades, ever since the halcyon days of the late Herbert W Armstrong, head of the Worldwide Church of God, America's fundamentalist preachers have trod the road to Jerusalem, urging the Jewish leaders to rebuild their old Temple so that Jesus Christ can return to setup the Kingdom of God on this earth. And for two decades, ever since we began this work, we have been telling them that this will not happen.

How could the Jews be expected to build a Temple for the Man they crucified when they know that if He ever came back to this earth it will be the end of them?

Jewish rabbis hold on to their forefathers' doctrines therefore they too are guilty of their sins. How then are they expected to rebuild the Temple in order to facilitate the return of Jesus Christ when they make themselves guilty of His crucifixion?

Like their Christian counterparts, who have filled the world with false gospels, they know that if Jesus Christ returns to this earth in their life time they are finished, hence their reluctance to build, or rebuild, that Temple, in spite of the urging of their American friends.

The truth is that Jesus Christ does not need a Temple in order to return to this world. No Scripture, and no prophecy, makes such a connection; those who preach it either misquote the Scriptures or do not know what they are talking about.

Now here is a very important point about the sins of the fathers falling upon their children. This is a well established point in the Bible.

Exo 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

Exo 20:2 "I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Exo 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Exo 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that is in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;

Exo 20:5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exo 20:6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

When God says something, you can be sure that He keeps His word, for good or bad.

Dan 9:16 "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *are* a reproach to all *those* around us.

But as one might have expected, God gave children a way out of this predicament.

Eze 18:1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,

Eze 18:2 "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'?

Eze 18:3 "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.

Eze 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

Eze 18:5 But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right;

Eze 18:6 If he has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife, Nor approached a woman during her impurity;

Eze 18:7 If he has not oppressed anyone, *But* has restored to the debtor his pledge; Has robbed no one by violence, *But* has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;

Eze 18:8 If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, *But* has withdrawn his hand from iniquity *And* executed true judgment between man and man;

Eze 18:9 *If* he has walked in My statutes— And kept My judgments faithfully— He is just; He shall surely live!" Says the Lord GOD.

Eze 18:10 "If he begets a son *who* is a robber Or a shedder of blood, *Who* does any of these *things*

Eze 18:11 And does none of those *duties*, But has eaten on the mountains Or defiled his neighbor's wife;

Eze 18:12 If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, *Or* committed abomination;

Eze 18:13 If he has exacted usury Or taken increase— Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.

Eze 18:14 "*If*, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise;

Eze 18:15 *Who* has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife;

Eze 18:16 Has not oppressed anyone, Nor withheld a pledge, Nor robbed by violence, *But* has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;

Eze 18:17 *Who* has withdrawn his hand from the poor *And* not received usury or increase, But has executed My judgments And walked in My statutes He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live!

Eze 18:18 "*As for* his father, Because he cruelly oppressed, Robbed his brother by violence, And did what is not good among his people, Behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

Eze 18:19 "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live.

Eze 18:20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

Eze 18:21 "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Eze 18:22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.

Eze 18:23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "*and* not that he should turn from his ways and live?

Eze 18:24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

Eze 18:25 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?"

Eze 18:26 When a righteous *man* turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies.

Eze 18:27 Again, when a wicked *man* turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

Eze 18:28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Eze 18:29 Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?"

Eze 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

Eze 18:31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?"

Eze 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

When children turn to righteousness, the sins of their fathers no longer affect them. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

Now are the Jewish rabbis aware of this principle? If they are, why do they cling on to the sins of their fathers? Why are they frozen in a Covenant that has outlived its usefulness? And do you know what the link is between the Jewish rabbis and the fundamentalist preachers who urge them to rebuild the Temple? Doctrines of demons! Yes, you read it right, they all preach the Old Testament dietary laws which have become doctrines of demons under the New Covenant (See 1 Ti 4:1-5 quoted above).

Why have the dietary laws become doctrines of demons under the New Testament? Because their sole purpose was to bring us to Christ!

Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Gal 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Gal 3:4 Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?

Gal 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Gal 3:6 just as Abraham "BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Gal 3:7 Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

Gal 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."*

Gal 3:9 So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT CONTINUE IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO DO THEM."

Gal 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Gal 3:12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "THE MAN WHO DOES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

Gal 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"),

Gal 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Gal 3:15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "AND TO YOUR SEED," who is Christ.

Gal 3:17 And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

Gal 3:19 What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

Gal 3:20 Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one.

Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Gal 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Gal 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law Apostle Paul was talking about here is the law of animal sacrifices which incorporated dietary restrictions. Those who continue to preach these laws are simply asking for Jesus Christ to be crucified again. Their punishment will be commensurate with their willful ignorance. Now have a look at the rest of that chapter.

Gal 3:25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Here we have again, the statement that those who turn to Christ become spiritual sons of God. Moreover, according to these Scriptures, the New Testament makes both Jews and Gentiles fellow heirs of Abraham. That is anathema to the Jewish leaders, so much so that they killed Apostle Paul for it.

Act 22:17 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance

Act 22:18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

Act 22:19 So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

Act 22:20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'
Act 22:21 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'
Act 22:22 And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

Isn't it extraordinary that Christian preachers should ask the Jews, who have done so much harm to Jesus Christ and His disciples in the early days of Christianity, to build a Temple and prepare the ground for His return? Even these days, if a Jew turns to Christ he is virtually ostracized in Israel, and denied many of the citizen rights of that country.

And what does it tell you the fact that God put a Muslim Mosque on the very spot that the Jerusalem Temple used to stand?

Jews and fundamentalist preachers alike worship a god that could not make provision for a Temple that is supposed to play such an important role in the return of Jesus Christ, in the end of this age, and in the setting up of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

The truth is that no Temple is needed for the return of Jesus Christ, and no Kingdom of God will ever be setup upon this earth. This world was not designed to be transformed into the Kingdom of God, but to be destroyed after human beings have made a mess of it.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.
2Pe 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,
2Pe 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?
2Pe 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Just like the Jews and the fundamentalist preachers, the Apostles of Jesus Christ thought that Messiah would come to restore the "kingdom of Israel" on the patch of that congested and contested ground in the Middle East. And how did Jesus Christ reply to that?

Act 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
Act 1:2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,
Act 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.
Act 1:4 And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me;
Act 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
Act 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
Act 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Act 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

There are certain mysteries about the Kingdom of God that cannot be revealed to people who do not have the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ could not answer their question because they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, which they would receive a few weeks later on the day of Pentecost.

Here are some of the points of which He could not tell them about at that time.

One: His return would be a long way off into the future;

Two: He was not going to restore the "kingdom of Israel" as the Jews expected;

Three: He would not return to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth as fundamentalist preachers expect either;

Four: He would return to set up a thousand year Kingdom, also known as the Millennium Kingdom, which is a continuation of life on this earth as we know it for another thousand years after the devastation of the Great Tribulation. The difference being that Satan would not be around to tempt people anymore, until close to the very end of the world.

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.

But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the

Rev 20:8 earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

Rev 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Rev 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Rev 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."

Rev 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

It was only after the Apostles received the Holy Spirit that they understood the plan of God and the great hiatus between the Jewish expectations of the Messiah and the purpose for which He came into this world in the first place.

Unfortunately, Jewish leaders wallow in that ignorance to this very day.

2Co 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you?

2Co 3:2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

2Co 3:3 clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*,

2Co 3:4 of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

2Co 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,

2Co 3:6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the **NEW COVENANT**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2Co 3:7 But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away,

2Co 3:8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

2Co 3:9 For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

2Co 3:10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.

2Co 3:11 For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.

2Co 3:12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

2Co 3:13 unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

2Co 3:14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.

2Co 3:15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

2Co 3:16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2Co 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

2Co 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2Co 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not

2Co 4:2 lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2Co 4:3 But even **if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,**
 2Co 4:4 **whose minds the god of this age has blinded,** who do not believe, lest the
 light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine
 2Co 4:5 on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and
 ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
 2Co 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone
 in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face
 2Co 4:7 of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence
 of the power may be of God and not of us.
 2Co 4:8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but
 2Co 4:9 not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—
 2Co 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of
 Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
 2Co 4:11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of
 Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
 2Co 4:12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.
 2Co 4:13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I
 BELIEVED AND THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe and therefore speak,
 knowing that He who raised up
 2Co 4:14 the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you.
 2Co 4:15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many,
 may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
 2Co 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet
 the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.
 2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more
 exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,
 2Co 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are
 not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not
 seen *are* eternal.

The surprise solution to the world's refugee problem

The wall of refugees that clamor to reach Christian lands could not continue unchallenged for much longer, not the least because the two behemoths, India and China, have remained dormant so far. All we need is a crisis in these countries and the world will literally be swamped by refugees.

Aside from the problem with Islamic terrorism, India has a serious Maoist insurgency in its middle and northern states, and we all know what people do when they hear of communism. The world may think that this ideology has seen its nadir, but human beings have an unbounded ability to accommodate evil, especially when they think it is to their advantage to do so.

China, on the other hand, has the problem of the end of communism, at least the communism that we are familiar with. Its leaders and its neighbors dread the thought of the Chinese masses rising against their dictators and rushing towards their borders, as it happened when the Soviet Union collapsed. To this day, European Union leaders grapple with a mass of unwanted migrants from the eastern countries, in addition to the myriad of refugees from Africa and the Middle East.

Somewhat surprisingly, tiny Israel finds itself in a similar predicament. This much maligned country in the Middle East is being swamped by migrants from Africa. If proofs were needed of God's promise to Abraham that in his seed all the countries of the world will be blessed, this certainly is one of them; all the countries, that is except those that refuse to accept His plan and want to carve out their own destiny and be on top of the world too.

Gen 22:18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

The result is much too obvious: the world is sinking in a cesspool of misery, famine and travail. The solution to the refugee problem is offered, of all people, by one of Israel's rabbis.

RABBI'S DRASTIC MEASURES TO STOP AFRICAN INFILTRATORS

Rabbi Yisrael Rosen, head of Zomet Institute for Science and Torah, says Israel must build temporary refugee camps for the thousands of monthly African infiltrators.

We have gone nuts! Rabbi Rosen writes in his weekly column in the latest edition of the Shabbat B'Shabbato pamphlet. Noting that an average of 100 illegal African infiltrators, mainly from Sudan, sneak into Israel each night, for a total of 3,000 a month, Rabbi Rosen writes that they seek out Israel not because we represent the promised land of economic opportunity, but rather because [we have] an unending abundance of 'human rights' and humanitarianism.

The only place in the Middle East where organizations for human rights exist, the rabbi continues, is in Israel! The members and supporters of these groups are willing to accept national suicide as a sacrifice to the 'religion' of human rights. . . . Under the present circumstances, I am convinced that this is bringing about a national and existential disaster for the State of Israel.

I can already hear the cacophony of shouts accompanied by pointing fingers, Rabbi Rosen writes: A rabbi in Israel is heartless and lacks compassion! Where is his merciful Jewish heart? Jewish refugees in the Holocaust were also denied entry! Don't the Torah and Jewish Law require us to provide poor foreigners with a livelihood?

I close my eyes and try to imagine how a true Torah state of today would treat the Sudanese refugees; and my answer is clear: Though we know 'G-d has pity for all of his creatures' (Psalms 145), there is a [supplementary guiding] principle that states, 'The paupers of your own city take precedence over others' (Tractate Bava Metzia 71a). It is not only the economic considerations that force us to refuse to absorb this [onslaught] of refugees, but also, and perhaps mainly, the social and nationalist elements that are patently obvious. Following this halakhic [Jewish legal] analysis, Rabbi Rosen proceeds to offer some drastic measures: Not only the construction of well-guarded physical obstacles and barriers to block the infiltrators, but also the construction of temporary refugee camps. The occupants therein will be given minimal amounts of water, food, and medicine, in exchange for public labor under control of the government's newly formed 'Ministry for Non-Absorption of Migrants.'

The people in the detention camps will be categorized as law-breakers. The standard of living quarters and livelihood will be between minimal and sub-standard, mainly with the goal of reducing the incentive for this African immigration. . . . There will be a complete prohibition of any mobility outside the camps, and will be allowed to travel around the country only in organized transportation for work and for other vital reasons. This situation will be explicitly defined as temporary until they are deported under international agreements.

Rabbi Rosen admits that his idea has slim chances of implementation; and you know very well why this is so: We have too many 'enlightened' people in our country who will never let it happen - knights of human rights, at the expense of the country! (Hillel Fendel. (www.israelnationalnews.com, Jan.3, 2011).

It may surprise people to know this, but this is what God is about to do with people of the whole world who survive the impending Great Tribulation.

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.

Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.

Isa 13:11 "I will punish the world for *its* evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Isa 13:12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.

Isa 13:13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.

Isa 13:14 It shall be as the hunted gazelle, And as a sheep that no man takes up; Every man will turn to his own people, And everyone will flee to his own land.

People will have a better chance of surviving the terrible Day of the Lord by remaining within their own borders and turning to God now, than if they are found wandering and unsettled in various countries of the world, where they will be not only undefended but blamed for many of the local problems.

Only a blind person could not see that this is where the world is heading at present.

Humanity's Fateful Decade

Seldom in history has the world faced a decade with so much gloom and doom as the one we have just entered. National economies are in a mess and on a verge of collapsing into a greater meltdown than the one they have just come out of, global warming and climate change are wreaking havoc around the world, terrorism shows no signs of abating, pirates threaten to bring sea travel to the dark ages of the past, and lawlessness, immorality, and a relentless quest for pleasures of the flesh, have brought the world to where it was in the days before the Flood of Noah.

For every person who speaks of good times ahead, dozens more say that the world's problems are only just beginning. It cannot be otherwise, for the problems that have caused the financial meltdown of 2008 are still there, largely unresolved; green gas emissions that have induced global warming are still on the increase; and the battle with terrorists and pirates produces almost as many victims on our side as on theirs.

Governments around the world have pumped billions of dollars into their profligate banks in order to rescue them from bankruptcy only to find themselves on the verge of bankruptcy now, only that this time there is no one else to rescue them.

They all talk of getting out of trouble by reducing government spending and improving their balance of trade. But we have seen what people do when they are asked to tighten their belts: from Greece, to Spain, Ireland, France and others, people have taken to the streets in angry demonstrations. As for their trade balances, how can they improve on them when the countries to which they export are in the same precarious condition?

Have a look at the following statistics and see what they tell you.

"The World's Biggest Debtor Nations"

"Throughout the financial crisis, many national economies have looked to their government and foreign lenders for financial support, which translates to increased spending, borrowing and in most cases, growing national debt.

Deficit spending, government debt and private sector borrowing are the norm in most western countries, but due in part to the financial crisis, some nations and economies are in considerably worse debt positions than others.

External debt is a measure of a nation's foreign liabilities, capital plus interest that the government and institutions within a nation's borders must eventually pay. This number not only includes government debt, but also debt owed by corporations and individuals to entities outside their home country.

So, how does the US debt position compare to that of other countries? A useful measure of a country's debt position is by comparing gross external debt to GDP. By comparing a country's debt to what it produces, this ratio can be used to determine the likelihood that a country will be able to repay its debt. This report takes a look at the world's 75 largest economies to see which ones have the highest external debt to GDP ratio, calculated using the most recent numbers from the World Bank. We've listed the top twenty here. The rankings may surprise you!"

1. Ireland - External debt as % of GDP: 1,267%; External debt per capita: \$567,805. Gross external debt: \$2.386 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$188.4 billion
2. Switzerland - External debt as % of GDP: 422.7%. External debt per capita: \$176,045. Gross external debt: \$1.338 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$316.7 billion;
3. United Kingdom - External debt as % of GDP: 408.3%. External debt per capita: \$148,702. Gross external debt: \$9.087 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$2.226 trillion;
4. Netherlands - External debt as % of GDP: 365%. External debt per capita: \$146,703. Gross external debt: \$2.452 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$672 billion;
5. Belgium - External debt as % of GDP: 320.2%. External debt per capita: \$119,681. Gross external debt: \$1.246 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$389 billion;
6. Denmark - External debt as % of GDP: 298.3%. External debt per capita: \$110,422. Gross external debt: \$607.38 billion. 2008 GDP (est.): \$203.6 billion;
7. Austria - External debt as % of GDP: 252.6%. External debt per capita: \$101,387. Gross external debt: \$832.42 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$329.5 billion;
8. France - External debt as % of GDP: 236%. External debt per capita: \$78,387. Gross external debt: \$5.021 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$2.128 trillion;
9. Portugal - External debt as % of GDP: 214.4%. External debt per capita: \$47,348. Gross external debt: \$507 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$236.5 billion;
10. Hong Kong - External debt (as % of GDP): 205.8%. External debt per capita: \$89,457. Gross external debt: \$631.13 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$306.6 billion;
11. Norway - External debt as % of GDP: 199%. External debt per capita: \$117,604. Gross external debt: \$548.1 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$275.4 billion;
12. Sweden - External debt (as % of GDP): 194.3%. External debt per capita: \$73,854. Gross external debt: \$669.1 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$344.3 billion;
13. Finland - External debt as % of GDP: 188.5%. External debt per capita: \$69,491. Gross external debt: \$364.85 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$193.5 billion;
14. Germany - External debt as % of GDP: 178.5%. External debt per capita: \$63,263. Gross external debt: \$5.208 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$2.918 trillion;

15. Spain - External debt as % of GDP: 171.7%. External debt per capita: \$59,457. Gross external debt: \$2.409 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$1.403 trillion;

16. Greece - External debt as % of GDP: 161.1%. External debt per capita: \$51,483. Gross external debt: \$552.8 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$343 billion;

17. Italy - External debt as % of GDP: 126.7%. External debt per capita: \$39,741. Gross external debt: \$2.310 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$ 1.823 trillion;

18. Australia - External debt as % of GDP: 111.3%. External debt per capita: \$41,916. Gross external debt: \$891.26 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$800.2 billion;

19. Hungary - External debt as % of GDP: 105.7%. External debt per capita: \$20,990. Gross external debt: \$207.92 billion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$196.6 billion;

20. United States - External debt as % of GDP: 94.3%. External debt per capita: \$43,793. Gross external debt: \$13.454 trillion; 2008 GDP (est.): \$14.26 trillion."

(Paul Toscano, www.cnn.com, Oct. 28, 2009)

Since this article was published a little over a year ago, the condition of all these countries has worsened. America's debt has ballooned to \$16 trillion and growing. Even so, the surprise of this pack is not America, but Germany. For decades, until two years ago, when it was overtaken by China, Germany was consistently the greatest exporting nation in the world. Now if a country with such a good balance of trade finds itself among the countries with the worst external debt, what hope is there for other countries?

According to these statistics, Germany is in a worse condition than Greece, Spain and Italy, countries that are expected to be rescued by Germany. So instead of Greece going to Germany for help, it should be the other way around: Germany should go to Greece and ask: how did you manage to have a better external debt than us with all your intrinsic corruption, tax avoidance schemes, and lazy work attitude?

Greece would probably answer it is our beloved Orthodox Church that has instilled this culture on us, unlike your Lutheran religion which preaches nothing but work, work, work. You should see what Orthodoxy has done to our neighbors –Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Russia.

Now, through its efficient industry, Germany is able to service its debt, unlike Greece, Ireland and others, which clearly are bankrupt and cannot. The question is how long the German people will continue to bankroll the rest of Europe before they say enough is enough, to hell with the European Union. The recent electoral defeats in local elections of the Christian Democrats may be the harbinger of just such an outcome.

In the midst of all this debate, China jumped in and declared that it will take care of Greece's debt. Greece is now seen by China as one of its many Third World client states. This should come as no surprise for even the mighty United States of America has been its client state for decades. America is indebted to China to the tune of trillions of dollars.

It is an extraordinary twist of history that countries which have been at odds with each other for much of recent history, due to their different political systems and competing geopolitical aims, have seen their master/servant role reversed, and are now keeping the world in a precarious balance, not because their interests have converged, but because they are locked into a vicious cycle from which neither can escape without bringing the other and the world to their knees.

Until about three decades ago, the USA was the world's undisputed banker and economic engine. China, on the other hand, was hardly more than its Cinderella nation.

When America was at its zenith, it sought to lock the world into a system that would safeguard its leading position indefinitely. It has achieved anything but:

“The Bretton Woods Conference was a meeting that took place in the town of Bretton Woods, in New Hampshire, in 1944. It was originally known as the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, and essentially acted as a meeting among the Allied nations to decide how the global economy would function in the wake of World War II.

The Bretton Woods Conference took place at the Mount Washington Hotel, and lasted for three weeks, from the first of July to the twenty-second of July. At the end of the three weeks, a number of agreements were signed by the forty-four various nations present. The Bretton Woods Conference established many of the tools of modern international commerce, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which would later become the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the first of the five institutions that make up the World Bank Group.

One of the major accomplishments of the Bretton Woods Conference was establishing a fixed value to gold and other fairly tight currency regulations. In the wake of the Great Depression and the War, it was fresh in the minds of many nations that the ability to easily devalue currency to become more competitive in the international export economy was a profoundly dangerous situation. By controlling the value of currency, the Bretton Woods Conference agreements ensured that nations couldn't easily devalue their currency. This system endured until the early 1970s, when the United States bucked it in the face of a dollar glut.

Fundamentally, the Bretton Woods Conference largely marked the end of economic nationalism. The Great Depression had made it very clear to everyone that the world's economies were intricately linked, and that what affected one nation could quickly cascade to affect the entire world. As a result, the nations represented at the Bretton Woods Conference agreed to tight restrictions, in an attempt to stave off any future global catastrophe. In addition to the Western powers creating the rules that would come to govern the global economy in the future, they also agreed to take on responsibility for the global economy by themselves lowering trade barriers and allowing capital to flow freely from their countries.

In addition to setting up new institutions, the Bretton Woods Conference also acted in some ways as a coming-out party for the United States, fully taking the stage as the world's economic superpower. The mantle of responsibility was also stressed, and US President Franklin Roosevelt emphasized this point many times. Roosevelt opened the conference by stating that, “The economic health of every country is a proper matter of concern to all its neighbors, near and far.”

Two other fairly important institutions were proposed at the Bretton Woods Conference but ultimately were never agreed upon. One was the International Trade Organization (ITO), which would have set up rules to mediate international trade. The ITO was not created at the Bretton Woods Conference, but in 1995, the Uruguay Round of GATT finally reached agreement on an international trade body, the WTO. The other organization was an International Clearing Union (ICU), which would have acted essentially as a strictly regulated international bank. The ICU was proposed by noted economist John Maynard Keynes, but ultimately the United States was firmly opposed to the ICU, and it was replaced with the IMF, which gave enormous powers to the United States, as well as allowing developed nations unlimited credit, and giving the United States dollar a position of privilege to ensure the United States would never face an economic collapse as a result of debt.” (wikipedia)

Isn't this extraordinary? The Bretton Woods Conference, which was supposed to give “the United States dollar a position of privilege to ensure the United States would never face an economic collapse as a result of debt”, achieved the very opposite. Virtually all the aims of that Conference have failed to materialize.

- . Smooth running of the world economy.

The world is facing anything but a smooth running economy. Think of how many nations have requested outside intervention in order to stave off bankruptcy – Greece and Ireland being the most recent glaring examples. The truth is that even after receiving help, these countries cannot even pay the interest on their borrowed money let alone the principal. Many more countries are expected to follow suit.

- . Setting up tools for modern commerce - the IMF, GATT, World Bank, etc.

Many nations wish they had never heard of the IMF or the World Bank, particularly those in the Third World which say that their medicines are worse than the diseases they are supposed to cure.

- . Currency regulation through a fixed value of gold to national currencies.

This was designed to prevent nations from devaluing their currency in order to “become more competitive in the international export economy without creating a profoundly dangerous situation.” But this is exactly what Western nations are accusing China of creating. Through its system of centralized controlled economy, China has kept its currency undervalued, wreaked havoc with the concept of globalization, and swamped the world with products that other countries cannot compete against.

Few westerners complained about China as long as its products were of abysmally low quality, but when western companies, in their relentless quest for profits moved in to take advantage of its low wages, they opened a Pandora box that no one knows how to close anymore.

Quietly and almost imperceptibly, China transformed itself from a paper tiger into a mighty dragon that has to be reckoned with.

America’s stimulus measures designed to get its economy moving after the financial debacle of 2008 was achieved mainly with borrowed money from China and South-East Asian countries.

For years, it was feared that China was amassing American dollars in order to hold that nation to ransom in their battle for Taiwan. However, China is now discovering that things are not quite as simple as that. It cannot do that without diminishing its own treasury chest, causing chaos in its own and the world economy, and possibly stirring up a military conflict with unforeseen consequences.

The recent Korean Peninsula crisis provided an example in point. North Korea would never have dared bomb South Korea and scuttle one of its submarines without Chinese knowledge, approval, and likely encouragement. The Chinese simply wanted to know the size of America’s show of force, knowing full well that neither it nor South Korea would start a war over that. And how did the Americans react? They sent no less than four aircraft carriers into the China Sea.

Then came the surprise: China revealed that it had developed ballistic missiles that are propelled into out of space first before plunging back into the enemy aircraft carriers. That sent shivers through America’s military establishment, for there is no defense against such weapons.

America thought that it would send a message to China that it is still the one and only military superpower, to which China replied, easy buddy, there is a new boy in the neighborhood.

America should never forget the Shanghai Treaty either, which links China and Russia into a powerful military alliance. Russia and China may not be natural bedfellows: Russia looking with unease at the growing colossus on its southern flank, and China looking yearningly to the vast under-populated Siberian steeps, but for now they both consider America to be the greater threat.

President Bush (junior) once said that America was prepared to go to war with China over Taiwan, even using nuclear weapons. Was that because America was terribly in love with

Taiwan? No, it was because at that stage, Taiwan was far advanced of China in industrial technology and that would have given China a real boost in catching up with America's military might.

Well, China has achieved that even without Taiwan, and now is bypassing America in the very field that America thought it was impregnable.

Lenin once said, we will give the capitalists the rope by which they can hang themselves with. That rope, of course, is the capitalists' relentless quest for profits. Trouble is, his disciples made a mess of their ideal and got entangled in that rope before they could strangle the capitalists with it.

Communism, however, is not dead. It is very much alive in China, and revived in Putin's Russia. They call it a new communism, one with 'human face' they say, as if that evil atheist ideology could ever be tamed and humanized.

Anyone who thinks that the world is heading towards tranquil times ahead lives in a fool's paradise. It is not a mere coincidence that all these troubles converge upon the world at the exact time that the Bible says the world is in transition to a new world order that will involve neither rabid communists nor rampant capitalists.

Confucius says: 'may you live in interesting times'. We live in very interesting times; and very dangerous.

THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS FOR THE YEARS 2011 - 2013

		2011	2012	2013
The Passover (Pesah – Nissan 14) Unlike the Jews, who used to kill the Passover lamb "at the twilight" of Nissan 14 (meaning in the evening towards Nissan 15), we, Christians, observe the Passover when our "Lamb" – Jesus Christ – was sacrificed. That happened on the afternoon of Nissan 14, before the twilight of Nissan 14, meaning that we keep it a little earlier than the Jews. We commemorate His death, not His supper, which occurred the previous evening, as some churches do. The time when His body was broken, not when He broke the symbolic bread.		18 April	6 April	25 March
Days of Unleavened Bread (Nissan 15 – 21) On the first and seventh days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.		9 April – 25 April	7 April - 13 April	26 Mar. -1 April
Pentecost (Shavuot – Sivan 6)		8 June	27 May	15 May
Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah – Tishri 1)		29 Sept.	17 Sept.	5 Sept.
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur – Tishri 10)		8 Oct.	26 Sept.	14 Sept.
Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth – Tishri 15 – 22) On the first and the eighth days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.		13 Oct. – 20 Oct.	1 Oct. – 8 Oct.	19 Oct. - 26 Oct.

State of the World – 2011

Quality of Life Index

To produce this annual Index we consider nine categories: **Cost of Living, Culture and Leisure, Economy, Environment, Freedom, Health, Infrastructure, Safety and Risk, and Climate.** This involves a lot of number crunching from “official” sources, including government websites, the World Health Organization, and *The Economist*, to name but a few. We also take into account what our editors from all over the world have to say about our findings.

Below are the countries that win our top 10 in this year’s *Quality of Life Index* and the final scores for each country in every category.

1. France

For the fifth year running, France takes first in our annual Quality of Life Index. No surprise. Its tiresome bureaucracy and high taxes are outweighed by an unsurpassable quality of life, including the world’s best health care.

France always nets high scores in most categories. But you don’t need number-crunchers to tell you its *bon vivant* lifestyle is special. Step off a plane and you’ll experience it first-hand.

I always wish quality of life indicators could measure a country’s heart and soul. But it’s impossible to enumerate the joy of lingering for hours over dinner and a bottle of red wine in a Parisian brasserie. Or strolling beside the Seine on a spring morning, poking through the book vendors’ wares. Or buying buttery croissants in bohemian Montmartre...hearing Notre Dame’s bells...walking antique streets paved with poetry.

Romantic Paris offers the best of everything, but services don’t fall away in Alsace’s wine villages...in wild and lovely Corsica...in lavender-scented Provence. Or in the Languedoc of the troubadours, bathed in Mediterranean sunlight.

Provincial French properties are often keenly priced and lifestyles are less expensive than Paris. The Southwestern Midi-Pyrenees region is a particularly good hunting ground for village homes for less than \$100,000—and classic three-course lunches for \$14. Houses cascade with wisteria blossom; outdoor markets are everywhere. *Foie gras*, pink garlic, Armagnac, and crystallized violets aren’t gourmet fare for locals. Rather, just another day’s shopping.

2. Australia

They don’t call it the “*Lucky Country*” for nothing. Australia is famous for its large beaches and temperate climate. Across the continent, Aussies and those who’ve chosen to emigrate there have access to an active and healthy lifestyle. But urban dwellers will find plenty of great culture and excellent food in Sydney and Melbourne, and a cost of living below that of some of the world’s other great cities.

Australia’s economy has managed to weather the Global Financial Crisis better than any other Western country. For tourists and travelers, this means you’ll be dealing with a strong Aussie dollar, making your visit there more expensive. But if you plan to stay, you’ll find that few English-speaking countries with quality health care and good infrastructure will benefit as much as Australia from the economic booms in Asia and China.

The Australian economy is powered by agricultural, mineral, and energy exports that feed the voracious appetite of rapidly industrializing populations in Asia. Housing in Australia remains expensive by global standards. But there are plenty of jobs for skilled expats who can ride the Asian boom from the sandy, sunny, and safe beaches of the land Down Under.

3. Switzerland

For Harry Lime, in Graham Greene’s story *The Third Man*, all the Swiss have to show for five centuries of peaceful neutrality is the cuckoo clock. The rest of Europe, meanwhile, stumped on through rivers of blood to create art, history, and civilization.

This is rubbish. Switzerland is an award-winning country because it turned all its natural disadvantages to its own advantage, ending up as a super-efficient, high-tech society while still managing to play Alpine inn-keeper to the world. Moreover the cuckoo clock comes from the Black Forest in Germany.

Lacking natural frontiers or a unifying religion, and divided by five different languages, it sensibly decided that internationalism was its calling, quickly adding English to the French, German (two kinds), Italian, and Romansch (like ancient Latin) its people already speak so that foreigners of every linguistic persuasion could feel at home. Altruism followed from this and Geneva became home to the United Nations and the Red Cross.

Landlocked, mountainous, and without natural resources (except cheese), Switzerland still needed more than tourism to provide a living. So it developed secretive banks, whose potential clientele is numberless and efficient engineering and pharmaceutical industries whose appeal similarly knows no borders.

Such achievements reinforce each other. Tourists gladly clamber into Alpine cable cars because they trust their Swiss steel cables and electric motors. Jump on a Swiss train and you know you will arrive on time. Swallow a Swiss pill and you know it won’t poison you. Likewise, you know the bank will always be discreet and the hotel room spotless. You also know everyone will speak your language. The Swiss succeeded because they made everything work.

4. Germany

Some Americans (often ex-military) retire to Germany. One forum poster mentioned being thrilled that youth culture hasn't taken over. Techno-throb Berlin and numerous summer rock festivals refute that, but this is the land of Goethe and Beethoven. Theater, art, and classical music concerts aren't considered elitist.

Will your medical insurance fund a health spa stay? Probably not, but it happens here with a doctor's recommendation. Despite the global downturn, Germans have it pretty good. Along with 30 days paid annual holiday, the average employee earns €41,509 (\$61,433).

In Germany, everything works and works well. Its houses are built to last, and their legendary autobahns are still mostly without speed limits. If you enjoy sports, even small towns have numerous facilities. Some odd ones too—the Harz Mountains now has a specialist hiking trail for nudists. From spas to parks to North Sea beaches, Germany is arguably the world's most naturist-friendly country.

Romantics adore its Christmas markets and fairytale towns of half-timbered houses. Some favorites are Quedlinburg and Wernigerode in Saxony, and the Black Forest spa town of Baden-Baden. The latter has a posh reputation, but you could buy a 55-square-meter apartment for \$160,000. Or rent for \$673 monthly.

5. New Zealand

From Auckland's waterfront to the Southern Alps, English-speaking New Zealand boasts some of the most pristine landscapes on earth. Much of the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy was filmed here. For younger migrants with the right skills, it's a wonderful place to relocate and raise a family. There's huge emphasis on sports, beach-life, and healthy lifestyles.

New Zealand's immigration department sums up the attractions perfectly. "In many ways it's not what we have that's important to our quality of life—it's what we don't have. We don't have high crime rates, our police don't carry guns and instances of corruption are virtually unheard of. We don't have abject poverty or hunger and we don't have the pollution, congestion, health issues and cramped city living that we see elsewhere."

Unless you buy your way in as an investor, it's difficult for retirees to get permanent residency. But you could rent or purchase a home and live there part-time. Seasons are reversed, so it's possible to enjoy two summers a year. However, property prices are rebounding. Taken nationally, latest figures show the average home costs \$274,881.

6. Luxembourg

If we judged quality of life by a nation's Michelin-starred restaurants per square mile, the winner would be the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. A founder member of the EU, its national motto is *Mir wëlle bleiwe wat mir sin* (we want to remain what we are).

Only 51 miles long and 35 miles wide, landlocked Luxembourg is relatively unknown to Americans. Yet with per capita GDP of \$88,000, it's among the world's richest countries. Most apartments in its postcard-pretty capital—also called Luxembourg—cost at least \$7,400 per square meter. But they come with an operetta scene of medieval turrets, bridges, and flower-filled squares.

Ruled by a Grand Duke, a third of Luxembourg's 420,000 inhabitants were born elsewhere. Add cross-border workers, and foreigners account for 60% of its labor force. Although the official language is Lëtzebuergesch, English, French, and standard German are widely spoken—cosmopolitan Luxembourg is an international finance center and tax haven. However, its bank secrecy laws are now under scrutiny.

7. United States

From Florida's palm-lined coasts to Alaska's snow-covered crags...from the dazzle of New York to the big skies of Montana...the U.S. has, arguably, something to offer everyone. And no question: It is the land of convenience. No place else on Earth is it easier to get what you want, when you want it.

The U.S. is safe. It's comfortable. It can even be affordable. As readers will on occasion point out: It's possible to rent a place in central Nebraska for the same price you'll pay in Merida, Mexico. (Though that does beg the question: There amid the cornfields, can you see the opera, enjoy the café culture, or be at the beach in half an hour?)

It's hard to beat the day-to-day ease you enjoy in the U.S. You can buy eye drops at a pharmacy at 3 a.m. and have dinner delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less. We are efficient. (And, if you've ever tried to shop on a Sunday in France or get a driver's license in Italy in under 45 days, you appreciate the merits in that.) But—as our editors and readers living overseas are quick to point out—convenience (and the frenetic pace that comes with it) is often overrated.

8. Belgium

Divided into Flemish-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia, Belgium also boasts high scores. Since medieval times, its merchant cities have prospered. The capital, Brussels, grabs most attention, but Bruges and Antwerp (famed for diamond trading) also flaunt stepped-gable houses and splendid guildhalls.

Employing thousands of foreign staff, Brussels is the headquarters of the European Union and NATO. A dreary place of paper-shuffling bureaucrats? Not at all.

Ringed with parks, it's Europe's greenest capital. Along with many international schools, it delivers all an expat could desire: theater, English-language cinema, sports centers, great public transport, Trappist-brewed beers, numerous gourmet and ethnic restaurants, and fast trains to London, Paris, and Amsterdam. As they rarely plan to stay, most expats rent. In central Brussels, one-bedroom apartments start at \$740 monthly.

Like its delectable chocolates, Brussels has a soft-centered heart. The municipality not only sterilizes stray cats, it appoints someone to feed them. Its main library offers storytelling in sign language for deaf children. And disadvantaged citizens can attend cultural events at hefty discounts.

9. Canada

Stretching from the islands of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia in the east to Vancouver Island in the west and north to the Arctic Circle, Canada is a diverse country of incredible natural beauty and resources.

Health care and living standards are among the highest in the world. Canada's economy is based on vast natural resources, a robust financial industry, and innovative manufacturing including the renewable energy sector. Canada has remained resilient through the global financial crises. The banks are considered "more Swiss than the Swiss banks," and property markets are "on fire."

Canada's major cities (like Toronto and Vancouver) offer fantastic entertainment. Sports, theater, and concerts are widely accessible and affordable and there's a rich offering of free festivals.

Cost of living is affordable, although the strong currency has made it relatively more expensive in recent times. Canada's real attraction comes in the form of nature and outdoor activities. In summer, there's hiking, boating, golf, and fishing. Winter offers outdoor activities like skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing. Canadians are warm, welcoming, and fun, and the country still retains many of the charms brought by her early visitors from Europe.

10. Italy

What Italians don't know about *la dolce vita* (the sweet life) isn't worth knowing.

OK, trains are often *in ritardo* (late), workers frequently strike, corruption isn't unknown, and red tape comes in slow-moving triplicate. But balance that against Rome, Venice, and Florence...against mountains reflected in sapphire lakes...against golden beaches and hill towns cobbled with secrets.

Then throw in 60% of the world's art treasures. A national health care system rated second in the world by the WHO. Sunflowers, vineyards, and opera. And the best espresso, pizza, and ice cream you'll ever taste.

Admittedly, major cities and tourist hotspots are expensive. But the Mezzogiorno, Italy's deep south, is different. Although unemployment is high and incomes far less than in the north, it's just as colorful. As historic, too. Phoenicians, Greeks, and Saracens all left traces of their passing.

Southern winters are short and mild, summers are scorching hot, and jugs of wine cost \$6.50. On Sicily and in slow-paced regions like Puglia, Basilicata, and Campania, affordable homes abound. Even farmhouses with a couple of acres surface for \$60,000. Many village houses cost even less. Decent rentals start at \$550 monthly.

2010 Quality of Life Index for 194 countries

Our Western bias. Our sources, staff, and contributing editors are all influenced by a Western bias. We have definite, preconceived ideas about what constitutes a high or low standard of living, what constitutes culture and entertainment, and what climate is the most enjoyable.

Please also remember that statistics obtained from official government sources are not always current, accurate, or reliable. And some statistics are highly subjective. What someone else might consider a museum, you and I might think of as a garden shed. Other statistics may be estimated, outdated, or incorrect for any number of reasons.

Since the statistics we gathered don't always reflect our own experiences, we sometimes interject a subjective factor to make the numbers better reflect reality. This is most often necessary in the "Leisure and Culture" category.

Southern winters are short and mild, summers are scorching hot, and jugs of wine cost \$6.50. On Sicily and in slow-paced regions like Puglia, Basilicata, and Campania, affordable homes abound. Even farmhouses with a couple of acres surface for \$60,000. Many village houses cost even less.

	Cost of Living	Leisure Culture	Econ.	Environ.	Freedom	Health	Infra structure	Risk & Safety	Climate	Final Score
<u>France</u>	55	81	69	72	100	100	92	100	87	82
<u>Australia</u>	56	82	71	76	100	87	92	100	87	81
<u>Switzerla</u>	41	86	79	78	100	95	96	100	77	81
<u>Germany</u>	54	82	71	83	100	89	90	100	79	81
<u>New Zealand</u>	62	82	65	77	100	88	70	100	84	79
<u>Luxemb</u>	44	76	85	77	100	87	66	100	83	78
<u>United States</u>	56	79	67	62	92	78	100	100	84	78

<u>Belgium</u>	41	83	66	64	100	88	96	100	86	78
<u>Canada</u>	62	76	69	62	100	84	85	100	69	77
<u>Italy</u>	56	85	63	74	92	90	62	100	87	77
<u>Netherla</u>	48	71	69	67	100	87	92	100	75	77
<u>Norway</u>	39	60	89	76	100	90	89	100	60	77
<u>Austria</u>	41	86	68	87	100	85	68	100	76	77
<u>Liechten</u>	44	80	100	65	100	80	44	100	79	76
<u>Malta</u>	63	70	53	84	100	89	52	100	95	76
<u>Denmark</u>	33	88	69	84	100	86	72	100	78	76
<u>Spain</u>	56	68	63	75	100	90	65	100	79	76
<u>Finland</u>	39	93	66	68	100	81	76	100	76	75
<u>Uruguay</u>	60	72	52	72	100	76	64	100	93	75
<u>Hungary</u>	58	76	48	77	100	84	77	93	76	74
<u>Portugal</u>	55	72	52	74	100	86	56	100	83	73
<u>Lithuania</u>	63	68	48	81	100	80	56	100	79	73
<u>Andorra</u>	52	74	61	60	100	85	58	100	82	73
<u>Czech Republic</u>	48	78	52	74	100	82	78	100	67	73
<u>United Kingdom</u>	30	82	65	72	100	84	80	100	66	73
<u>Argenti</u>	61	67	52	71	83	82	56	100	91	72
<u>Slovenia</u>	53	69	56	74	100	72	56	100	83	72
<u>Greece</u>	52	64	58	70	92	84	64	100	79	72
<u>Monaco</u>	44	85	66	59	92	80	48	100	89	72
<u>Sweden</u>	0	94	68	75	100	82	92	100	68	71
<u>Chile</u>	60	67	54	71	100	73	73	100	59	71
<u>Estonia</u>	60	82	44	77	100	75	64	86	74	71
Costa Ri	62	64	53	78	100	78	48	93	79	71
<u>Panama</u>	62	63	52	77	92	72	74	93	69	71
<u>Poland</u>	51	74	52	72	100	80	64	86	76	71
<u>Japan</u>	24	92	51	71	92	89	64	100	84	70
<u>Croatia</u>	58	68	48	77	83	76	52	93	95	70
<u>Brazil</u>	64	58	65	71	83	73	59	83	82	70
<u>Ecuador</u>	72	60	45	93	75	69	45	86	96	70
<u>Latvia</u>	59	75	40	86	92	75	64	86	73	70
<u>Ireland</u>	28	81	60	70	100	79	72	100	65	70
Korea - South	39	82	56	68	92	81	52	93	83	69
<u>Slovakia</u>	48	60	52	71	100	79	68	86	77	69
<u>Bulgaria</u>	61	69	47	78	83	78	48	86	80	69
Cyprus (Greek)	48	65	58	62	100	85	36	100	76	68
<u>Mexico</u>	63	65	50	68	75	76	57	79	92	68
<u>Israel</u>	39	83	61	68	92	85	36	71	84	67
<u>Iceland</u>	36	85	40	74	100	86	48	86	74	67
<u>Bermuda</u>	25	57	89	41	92	73	64	100	66	66
Saint Ki	64	44	45	72	100	70	54	100	57	66
<u>South Africa</u>	59	60	45	75	83	57	44	86	98	66
<u>Dominica</u>	65	39	44	90	100	68	36	100	57	65
<u>Romania</u>	51	74	48	75	83	65	56	79	71	65
<u>Cayman Islands</u>	61	39	65	26	92	86	64	100	57	65
<u>Moldova</u>	69	86	45	75	50	67	56	71	70	65
<u>Colombia</u>	68	58	48	72	58	72	44	71	92	64
<u>Taiwan</u>	50	47	58	75	92	68	51	79	68	64
<u>Bolivia</u>	80	61	45	75	67	59	52	57	83	64
Macedoni	66	64	45	72	67	62	44	79	79	63

<u>Barbados</u>	35	78	48	72	100	62	40	100	57	63
<u>Mauritius</u>	65	61	47	74	92	72	32	93	42	63
<u>Namibia</u>	66	75	42	46	83	41	64	86	74	63
<u>Belize</u>	60	47	50	80	92	55	52	79	62	63
<u>Paraguay</u>	76	60	44	64	67	71	36	86	68	63
<u>Albania</u>	60	61	45	74	67	74	36	71	89	63
Bosnia-H	73	65	45	70	58	67	40	71	82	63
<u>Bahamas</u>	28	67	56	74	100	62	32	100	65	63
<u>Ukraine</u>	49	61	42	74	75	68	60	71	78	62
<u>Grenada</u>	55	53	44	75	92	66	48	86	57	62
Singapo	51	71	68	39	42	74	69	100	39	61
<u>Antigua Barbuda</u>	54	56	53	74	83	50	32	100	57	61
<u>Turkey</u>	49	60	45	68	67	76	40	86	73	61
<u>Dominic Republic</u>	58	47	45	81	83	69	40	79	57	61
Seychel	59	58	48	78	67	52	36	100	55	61
<u>Bhutan</u>	80	28	58	83	42	27	40	100	79	61
<u>Peru</u>	66	53	50	70	75	56	32	64	80	60
<u>Jamaica</u>	58	44	40	77	75	71	52	79	57	60
<u>Nicarag</u>	66	57	42	70	67	66	36	71	68	60
Botswan	70	40	45	78	83	35	44	79	65	60
Hondura	70	32	42	70	67	66	40	71	83	60
Surinam	65	44	47	78	83	59	59	64	39	60
Puerto Ri	55	43	45	42	100	72	36	100	45	59
<u>Tunisia</u>	63	61	45	68	17	73	36	86	85	59
<u>Brunei</u>	65	60	69	100	25	52	44	79	25	59
<u>Malaysia</u>	70	71	48	62	50	68	44	86	24	58
<u>El Salvad</u>	63	43	42	65	75	70	36	79	57	58
Guatemala	61	39	44	74	58	65	32	71	84	58
<u>India</u>	65	39	55	68	75	60	44	64	47	58
Venezue	54	67	48	84	50	66	32	71	52	58
<u>Cuba</u>	63	75	44	77	8	79	56	57	63	57
Trinid	30	36	53	78	83	63	32	100	57	57
<u>French Polynes</u>	44	56	45	33	92	60	44	100	55	57
<u>Guyana</u>	63	61	42	77	75	56	44	64	39	57
<u>Tonga</u>	70	25	40	65	50	66	36	100	63	57
<u>Mongolia</u>	68	60	47	70	83	56	52	64	14	57
<u>Nauru</u>	86	8	47	64	100	55	0	100	38	56
<u>China</u>	63	59	69	54	8	67	40	57	79	56
<u>Georgia</u>	56	38	40	80	50	62	48	57	79	56
<u>Ghana</u>	61	28	44	67	92	40	40	71	62	56
<u>Maldives</u>	63	63	45	36	50	66	32	100	49	56
<u>Armenia</u>	64	53	45	81	33	46	44	64	72	56
<u>Lesotho</u>	70	38	44	41	75	30	36	71	93	55
Martiniq	63	36	47	38	92	64	4	100	57	55
<u>Jordan</u>	56	60	45	59	33	80	28	71	68	55
Philippin	69	60	42	68	58	46	36	71	45	55
<u>Kuwait</u>	46	60	74	42	50	70	56	71	18	55
<u>Kiribati</u>	75	13	42	57	100	54	12	100	38	55
<u>French Guiana</u>	49	33	47	29	92	54	66	100	28	55
<u>Belarus</u>	65	44	50	75	8	51	52	64	77	54
<u>Thailand</u>	68	65	44	61	42	63	32	71	43	54
<u>Russia</u>	29	67	53	71	42	71	48	57	64	54
<u>Zambia</u>	56	43	44	71	67	19	40	64	89	54

Leban	68	56	50	65	42	85	36	21	61	54
Palau	59	47	48	70	100	52	8	86	18	54
Malawi	60	40	45	68	50	32	40	64	89	54
Morocco	43	35	44	67	42	63	36	93	78	54
Samoa Wester	55	22	39	68	83	68	46	79	35	54
Swazilan	56	51	42	81	17	27	40	86	91	54
Bahrain	59	67	61	64	33	43	32	86	30	54
Fiji	53	65	40	68	25	59	60	71	43	53
Sri Lanka	64	35	44	78	50	52	44	71	40	53
Madagas	61	28	44	59	58	37	40	64	87	53
Tuvalu	80	4	42	30	100	75	20	100	17	53
Syria	69	49	44	61	8	68	44	71	60	53
Vietnam	54	53	44	71	33	58	36	64	67	53
Comoros	61	36	37	74	58	36	36	100	40	53
Nepal	73	19	42	68	50	42	36	64	71	52
Qatar	54	63	92	54	25	47	24	79	13	52
Indonesi	46	44	47	74	75	52	32	57	47	52
Macau	46	43	62	0	50	61	24	100	79	52
Vanuat	54	36	45	33	83	51	40	79	49	52
Senegal	50	18	42	67	67	36	40	79	73	52
Solomon Islands	69	28	45	61	58	61	16	79	43	52
Tajikista	74	25	45	67	25	50	40	50	79	51
Egypt	55	49	47	65	25	76	36	79	32	51
Benin	60	24	42	64	83	37	36	64	51	51
Kenya	51	46	39	62	58	32	32	57	88	51
Kyrgyzst	59	42	45	70	42	58	32	64	47	51
Azerbaij	48	60	50	71	25	40	40	64	62	51
Korea- North	64	54	42	51	0	70	28	64	79	51
United Arab Emirate	49	53	76	16	25	76	58	79	10	50
Cape Verde	60	29	44	36	100	49	32	64	36	50
Marsha Islands	73	19	39	26	100	70	8	86	23	50
Tanzania	55	28	44	74	58	30	44	64	51	50
Banglade	65	30	42	62	50	36	52	57	49	50
Algeria	51	51	44	67	25	51	36	36	89	50
Uganda	54	33	44	61	42	33	36	64	80	50
Uzbekist	70	52	47	62	0	62	44	57	40	49
Cambodi	61	53	42	77	25	30	40	64	47	49
Iran	65	54	50	71	17	69	40	0	64	49
Mozamb	65	4	44	70	67	12	32	64	76	49
Gambia	61	10	44	61	42	39	44	71	60	48
Papua New Guinea	54	22	45	64	58	36	40	57	55	48
Mayotte	79	4	40	17	92	40	0	100	46	48
Kazakhst	50	43	44	65	25	60	52	64	27	48
Mali	61	13	42	62	75	25	32	64	50	48
Libya	29	50	52	51	0	71	44	71	67	48
Guinea -Bissau	65	21	40	64	50	31	36	64	47	47
Micrones	59	36	40	42	100	66	0	71	5	47
Togo	54	43	39	64	33	33	36	64	58	47

<u>Myanma (Burma)</u>	75	35	40	71	0	50	44	57	35	46
<u>Turkmen</u>	84	22	48	61	0	41	16	64	61	46
<u>Ethiopia</u>	55	11	48	67	33	13	40	57	86	46
<u>Congo-Republic</u>	53	39	44	61	25	28	40	64	62	46
<u>Rwanda</u>	55	21	47	68	25	31	36	64	62	46
<u>Nigeria</u>	45	29	44	62	42	27	44	64	58	46
<u>Gabon</u>	46	14	45	65	33	44	52	64	49	46
<u>Oman</u>	50	44	53	62	25	56	44	64	2	45
<u>Saudi Arabia</u>	60	68	53	51	8	71	28	36	22	45
<u>Iraq</u>	100	49	45	41	17	55	36	0	38	45
<u>Laos</u>	68	19	45	74	8	30	40	57	51	45
<u>Camero</u>	50	29	42	65	17	30	36	64	66	45
<u>Mauritan</u>	56	13	40	58	25	34	36	71	64	45
<u>Niger</u>	61	3	45	64	58	21	40	57	42	44
<u>Burkina Faso</u>	61	6	42	65	50	27	28	64	48	44
<u>Equatori Guinea</u>	41	46	58	75	0	28	36	50	55	44
<u>Burundi</u>	53	25	40	57	42	30	36	36	75	44
<u>Pakistan</u>	56	3	42	67	42	51	40	7	77	43
<u>Haiti</u>	60	19	39	61	42	39	36	36	53	43
<u>Zimbabwe</u>	33	58	0	77	8	37	44	57	100	43
<u>Central Afric Rep</u>	60	25	39	72	33	23	36	36	54	43
<u>Cote d'Ivoire</u>	55	25	40	67	25	37	32	43	55	43
<u>Liberia</u>	58	39	44	57	58	14	40	36	28	42
<u>Congo-Democ. Republi</u>	35	29	42	58	17	26	44	64	62	42
<u>Angola</u>	43	36	52	67	25	1	36	57	52	42
<u>Guinea</u>	66	14	42	61	17	35	40	57	22	41
<u>Eritrea</u>	61	24	39	29	8	28	36	57	73	40
<u>Djibouti</u>	53	13	44	65	33	34	44	57	8	40
<u>Sierra Leone</u>	63	7	42	62	67	9	36	21	24	38
<u>Afghanist</u>	88	7	40	77	8	0	32	0	58	37
<u>Chad</u>	45	10	37	68	8	14	36	36	50	34
<u>Sudan</u>	53	19	44	65	0	28	40	29	7	33
<u>Yemen</u>	58	21	40	19	33	38	52	21	0	33
<u>Somalia</u>	61	0	39	55	0	7	36	36	16	30

How to Greet in a Global Microcosm

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS — A Saudi, a Japanese and an Indian go to a bar. But this is not a joke. An eager American, late for his meeting with the three, arrives. They are in Milan. A problem presents itself: how does the American greet them?

President Obama shaking hands with China's Premier Wen Jiabao. He could kiss the Saudi, bow to the Japanese and press palms before the Indian; but that may be a bit much. He could play the American card and just shake their hands. He could do the Continental European air kiss, since they're in Italy. Or, like many others in this situation, he could just stand there awkwardly and hope that someone else knows the protocol.

It is difficult enough pivoting between the two, three or four kisses of France; between half-hugs and handshakes in America; between the semi-bows and 90-degree capitulations of East Asia. Around the world, at industry conferences, corporate retreats or fashion weeks, globalized souls meet in globalized environs and wonder whether to do it your way, my way or the local way.

President Barack Obama, a son of blackness and whiteness, of Kansas and Hawaii and Indonesia and Illinois and Kenya, illustrates the predicament. He fist-bumps his wife and the occasional American soldier; merely shakes hands with Republican rivals and with anti-American leaders like President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela; does the fraternity-style half-hug with some colleagues; bear-hugs the occasional citizen-voter; air-kisses Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and has stirred fury for allegedly bowing too low before British, Saudi and Japanese monarchs. So even the U.S. president cannot deploy a uniform greeting and expect others to conform. Even he must ask, Where am I? Who is this? What signal will it send? Whose standard, indeed, should prevail? There is arguably a bias in globalized gatherings toward the Western-style handshake. But it matters, even in such settings, whether you are in Okinawa or Oklahoma City, whether the bowers outnumber the shakers or vice versa, whether the firm is privately owned in one country or publicly listed and owned by the world. Perhaps it is best to do whatever the locals do, or to assume the least touchy greeting as the standard: if there are both huggers and shakers, just shake; if there are both shakers and bowers, just bow.

The Internet offers endless counsel on how to greet in different countries. But the advice is mostly on what to do here, or there. It all too rarely speaks to the dilemma that so many actually face: what to do when it is unclear what the relevant "here" is. One cost of confusion is unexpected intimacy. Some Europeans, entering into a double kiss, go for the left cheek first; but others go right, resulting in accidental lip contact.

The confusion also fosters inequity. At parties with diverse attendees, a newcomer may greet a cluster of people with as many greetings as there are members of the cluster: an air kiss for one, a hug for another, a handshake for a third and a mere smile for a fourth, a stranger. Perhaps, as in other fields — currency trade, the choice of language for treaties, the measurement of weight and distance — a common standard could be found: an International System of Greetings. What would we choose? The intimacy of the Arab and European kisses? A halfway solution in the American handshake-cum-hug? The touch-free Japanese bow or Indian pressed palms and utterance of "namaste"? Last year, during the swine flu scare, a French town called Guilvinec banned the "bise," the kiss of greeting, for teachers and students, asking them to exchange Valentine-like cards instead; several French schools and businesses followed the town's example. Meanwhile, the American painter Kimberly Brooks suggested that Americans ditch their own ritual: "The handshake is an obvious vestigial gesture left over from a time when hands needed to be shown free of weapons," she wrote in *The Huffington Post*. "It's time to lose the handshake once and for all and embrace Namasté as the new greeting."

Rather than destroy the beautiful diversity of greetings, we could turn to algorithms. Imagine the smartphone app that would ask your identity, the identity of the other greeter, where you both are and how many times you have greeted each other. It would then propose a compromise — a namaste followed by a handshake, perhaps, or a bow punctuated by a slap on the back. Another solution would be simply to untether greetings from their places of origin and let people choose from a global smorgasbord of them. Greeting protectionism would end, and the best greetings would seize greater global market share.

A Japanese septuagenarian whose back aches but whose heart brims with love might then elect to kiss instead. An Indian man with whom I once rode perilously on a motorcycle would gain the liberty merely to bow his head while he drives around — as opposed to his current practice of lifting his hands repeatedly to greet acquaintances in the ancient (not-designed-for-motorcyclists) Indian way. Or perhaps we leave things be. Perhaps being global requires not one standard, nor even knowing what to do each time, but acceptance of negotiation and compromise, of an awkward averaging-out, as the ethic of a tightening world. (Anand Giridharadas, *International Herald Tribune*, October 15, 2010)

The art of ageing gracefully

Getting on ... Ageing doesn't have to be negative.

WHEN did growing old become an illness and why are we so desperate to halt the sands of time? Today's society and media place immense pressure on us to stay young. We're bombarded with images of youthful, flawless models and reality TV shows where contestants are given extreme surgical

makeovers in the pursuit of youth. This fosters a disastrous image of old age, which can make it difficult for us to be accepting of the changes that occur as the years trot on - especially for women.

A 2006 global study conducted by Dove, entitled *Beauty Comes Of Age*, found that nearly six in 10 women believe that while men over 50 are viewed as distinguished, women over 50 are viewed as over the hill or past their prime. Somewhat paradoxically, 60 per cent of women said they were not concerned about the idea of ageing. So it would seem that it's society's perception of ageing, rather than the fact that we're getting older, that's bothering us. But can we shrug off these pressures placed upon us and embrace getting older instead of trying to hold on to our youth? Or does the answer lie somewhere in between?

Redefining ageing: "Women today are very rejecting of older norms and expectations of how women have to age," says US author Naomi Wolf. "We're redefining ageing. It's all about power."

Wolf wrote the international bestseller *The Beauty Myth* (Random House) in 1991, in which she argued that "beauty" as a normative value is entirely socially constructed. Now, almost 20 years later, she says the beauty myth has been deconstructed, with women rewriting the rules and making their own definitions of beauty and ageing. "Women are much more accepting of themselves now, but they are pushing back against middle age," says Wolf. "These are the women who sit around having a glass of wine with their friends, and when they see 20-year-old women walking by, they admire their beauty, but wouldn't want to trade places with them."

Keren Smedley, a professional coach and author of *Who's That Woman In The Mirror?* (Hachette Australia), says feeling sexy as an older woman is all about confidence and attitude.

"You can be any age and feel awful, and you can be any age and feel sexy," she says. "Feeling sexy is all in your head and, as an older woman, your brain still works pretty well! It's about focusing on what you have, not on what you don't have or what you used to have."

Ageing and attracting men: One aspect of ageing that many women find difficult is the prospect of becoming "invisible" – especially to men. Smedley says women often lament that they don't feel they're attracting men anymore. "The question you have to ask yourself is: 'Who do I want to attract?' If you're 50, do you really want to attract a 22-year-old man? Because you probably won't. And is that what you really want? As a 50-year-old woman, you will almost certainly be attracting men your own age."

But what if you do want to attract a 22-year-old? Well, it would seem that's not out of the question either, with the cougar now fast becoming the new cultural icon. From Courteney Cox's portrayal of a 40-something women dating 20-something men in *Cougar Town*, to cougar poster girl Demi Moore looking hotter than her much younger husband, Ashton Kutcher, cougars are being celebrated everywhere. "[As an older woman] 30 years ago, you'd be drinking martinis at home and wondering where your life went," says Wolf. "So it's very interesting that we're now seeing older women with trophy boyfriends 20 years younger than them."

Wolf adds that while she does have some reservations about the term "cougar", there's one huge positive we can take from it. "It's all about glamorising older women and celebrating them," she says. "Especially if they've been hurt in love before."

A little extra help as we can for as long as we can, and there's never been so many ways to maintain your youthful looks, from anti-ageing creams to Botox and beyond. In a 2002 study, Australia ranked seventh in the world in plastic surgery procedures per capita. But where do we draw the line?

"Women often ask: 'Where do you draw the line?'," says Wolf. "But I find it's almost uncomfortable to have lines, so let's get rid of the line-drawing if we can. "My goal is for every woman to get to decide what makes her feel good about herself and her body. It's all about why you're doing what you're doing. The problem is when women are being driven to hurt themselves, or when they're being duped by anti-ageing creams that don't deliver what they promise." Smedley agrees that you have to be sure that any steps you take are for the right reasons. "Cosmetic surgery by itself won't make you feel more loved or more popular," she says. "Are you feeling unattractive and finding it difficult to find a new relationship? Or do you worry you're not seen as sexy in an existing relationship? You need to ask yourself whether it's because you're a bit older or whether there are other things going on that could be the cause."

Work and play: In 1910, the life expectancy of an Australian woman was 58.8 years. Now, 100 years later, our life expectancy is 83.8 years, so we are living – and therefore working – longer than ever before.

"Women in their 40s are at the peak of their careers," says Wolf. "And there are so many role models, which is fantastic. We didn't have that 20 years ago."

Wolf cites author and teacher Erica Jong, fashion designer Donna Karan and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as examples of successful older women who display confidence and charisma in their fields.

"We are being habituated to seeing dynamic women in their 40s and 50s – there's a real allure that comes with age and experience." Smedley, who runs a coaching company for the over-50s, Experience Matters, says many of her clients are reinventing themselves. One of her clients, a woman in her 60s, sold her home and moved to Japan, where she and her husband have been volunteering for the past few years. "Their kids were grown up and they decided it was time for something new," she says. "You have to develop your own confidence and find a new way of doing things," Smedley says. "If you've always wanted to be a prima ballerina, obviously it's too late for that, but there's nothing to stop you becoming a salsa or ballroom dancer. If you want to dance, you'll find a way of doing it." (Nicola Conville, *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 25, 2010)

China's Internet 'Hijacking' Creates Worries for Security Experts

SUMMARY: An 18-minute diversion of Internet traffic through China has raised security concerns around the world -- especially for governments and people in critical infrastructure -- and raises new concerns for online shoppers just ahead of Cyber.

Transcript

JUDY WOODRUFF: As holiday shoppers flock to the Web to make purchases, new questions about Internet security are surfacing. Last week, a congressionally chartered commission released a report about what China's rise means for the U.S. economy and security. Included in the findings were the details of a little-known incident involving the hijacking of online data by a firm owned by the Chinese government.

RAY SUAREZ: At a communications company outside Washington, D.C., computer network engineers monitor Internet traffic. Normally, the Internet works by swiftly finding the shortest, most efficient trip between two computers anywhere on Earth.

Electronic routers direct the traffic flow, insuring the shortest path, like these green lines here. But, back in April, electronic communication looking for the shortest route was sent through China.

Watch the red line. For 18 minutes, the traffic on 35,000 to 50,000 computer networks elsewhere in the world began flowing toward China, before getting routed to their final destinations. China Telecom had created a massive detour.

But traffic didn't stop. The affected computer connections took just a tiny fraction of a second longer. Whether someone was logging into check a bank balance, sending a child's photo to grandma, or shopping online, the Net still worked.

However, at the computer operations center outside Washington, D.C., engineers noticed this Internet routing phenomenon immediately. Their computer screens lit up with red alerts.

RODNEY JOFFE, Neustar, Inc.: We noticed the sudden change. During the period, there were alarms that went off.

RAY SUAREZ: One of the architects of the modern Internet, Rodney Joffe, said this diversion was a very big deal. He says it was caused when computer routers in China belonging to China Telecom began signaling to other computer routers on the Internet that they could provide the quickest path between different computers.

RODNEY JOFFE: They, all of a sudden, began announcing the fact that they were an optimal path to about 15 percent of the destinations on the Internet, that, in fact, they were a way to get to a large number of destinations on the Internet, when, in fact, they were not. We have never seen that before on this scale ever.

RAY SUAREZ: Joffe is senior vice-president and senior technologist at Neustar, a global technology and communications company. He's also a computer security expert who consults for the U.S. government and industry.

RODNEY JOFFE: In the grand scheme of things, this was a seminal event. So, this wasn't a minor security event. This wasn't a hiccup -- 99.9 percent of the world didn't even think this could be done. Engineers didn't even think about it.

Every one of them is now thinking about it day and night, what the effects would be on their networks, and how they might use it, depending on whether they wear a white hat or a black hat.

RAY SUAREZ: Last week, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressionally chartered panel, issued a stinging report.

Its conclusion? That a state-owned Chinese communications firm, China Telecom -- quote -- "hijacked massive volumes of Internet traffic."

The Chinese government and China Telecom deny this. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said, "This report ignores the facts and is full of Cold War thinking and political bias."

When all the communications from tens of thousand of computer networks was routed to China, that included all the Web traffic, e-mail, and instant messages to and from dot.mil -- that's the Department of Defense -- and dot.gov -- those are U.S. governments departments. The U.S. Senate and NASA also had all their traffic diverted.

Companies like Dell, Yahoo!, Microsoft and IBM had their data diverted by China Telecom, too. On that day in April, officers logging into a Pentagon Web site ended up looking at an image that came to their screen via China.

It's not clear what China did with the Internet traffic routed through its computers, and it's not clear if the data that passed through China was saved to be examined later.

But Larry Wortzel, a member of the commission that investigated the incident, is worried.

COL. LARRY WORTZEL (RET.), United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission: The real concern is that it was intentional, and these communications were recorded, and that they will be exploited over time to create either penetrations or to create networked malicious viruses.

RODNEY JOFFE: Once traffic goes through Chinese routers or switchers, Chinese devices, it's possible for the traffic itself to be manipulated. It could either just be filtered and dropped, or, in fact, it can be read, so that a log could be made of the content of the traffic, or changes could be made.

So, for example, I could substitute one word for another or one e-mail for another, and the -- the users on both ends would have no idea that this has occurred.

RAY SUAREZ: Joffe says hijacking Internet traffic is consistent with previous Chinese activities.

RODNEY JOFFE: The Chinese government has made it clear, as early as six or seven years ago, publicly, that they can see that one of the next frontiers for conflict is going to be settled in cyberspace. This would seem to be something along the same lines.

RAY SUAREZ: Larry Wortzel came to the U.S.-China Commission after a career in Army intelligence. He served as a U.S. military attache in China.

COL. LARRY WORTZEL: I think it's important to understand that you can do an awful lot with 18 minutes of traffic. A good intelligence officer, for instance, could get 18 minutes of traffic from the whole Department of Defense, and -- and get the Internet address, let's say, to the military assistant or the executive officer to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and everyone he communicates with on certain issues, and their Internet addresses.

And then you could socially engineer an e-mail, and make it look like it came from one of those individuals in the network to all the others, and insert an attachment that contained a very malicious virus.

RAY SUAREZ: Wortzel says he's been the subject of these types of computer attacks.

COL. LARRY WORTZEL: About eight months ago, I got an e-mail that looked like it came from the Naval Warfare Systems Command that invited me to a meeting on a particular missile system, and asked me to open the attachment to get the agenda for the meeting.

Well, I knew very well that I had not communicated with anybody in the Navy for quite a long time on that issue. And I actually called the person that was purported to have sent the e-mail. And she said, "I didn't send you an e-mail."

So, we had the attachment checked, and it was a very malicious virus that it would have done exactly that. It would have permitted somebody to take over a computer.

RAY SUAREZ: Even with no evidence of mischief, tampering, or theft, Rodney Joffe says governments and business have to harden their security systems, have to make sure this so-called hijack is made harder in the future, and, just to be safe, assume this wasn't an accident.

RODNEY JOFFE: If, in fact, the traffic was being examined and your traffic passed through the network in China, your user I.D.s and passwords may have been compromised.

If I was a large enterprise or a large organization involved in critical infrastructure, if I was in government, I would be sweating bullets currently.

RAY SUAREZ: And Joffe says the mere example of this hijacking taking place has served as an inspiration to cyber-criminals around the world.

RODNEY JOFFE: We know that the criminals already have been discussing this. We have seen it for probably the last five or six months. It was a great event for them, because it's given them a vector that most of them had never thought of.

RAY SUAREZ: Joffe and Wortzel agree that the Internet has exploded into worldwide daily use in part because its daily operation is based on trust. Lose that trust, and home users, businesses, and governments will start to stay away, and begin the unraveling of a modern marvel. (PBS Newshour, Nov. 26, 2010)

Russia – “an Oligarchy run by the Secret Services”

PARIS — Since a low-key Christmas Eve announcement of a French sale of assault ships to Russia, high-level government deal makers have boasted about the multimillion-euro deal like it was a soccer game triumph. “France wins,” declares the Web site for the Élysée Palace.

But critics — particularly among Russia’s neighbors including Georgia, Estonia and Lithuania — are raising alarms that France may have pioneered the way for other Western countries to sell Russia whatever they have to offer, from high-technology military equipment to rights for oil pipelines. “It’s a scandal,” said André Glucksmann, a French philosopher and critic of the deal. He said in an interview on Tuesday that the announcement was timed for the busy Christmas season to bury the “dirty details.”

The boxy, 600-foot-long Mistral vessel is an advanced helicopter carrier equipped with a command center and hospital for military landing operations. It is the first major arms purchase by Russia abroad and the first sale by a NATO country, illustrating the shifting role of an alliance once conceived to counter Soviet military power. One of the sticking points in negotiations was whether the deal would include advanced naval weapons and defense systems. In the months leading to the deal, a series of French officials softened their stand, saying that France was willing to supply the technology without restrictions.

The French have said nothing in the last few days to spell out the level of technology the Russians will gain. But Russia’s neighbors are clearly worried. “It’s a little bit premature to take this step because it establishes a precedent,” said Rasa Jukneviene, the Lithuanian defense minister. In the past, she said, French officials assured Lithuania that sensitive technology would not be included. “But now we are getting information that it is included,” Ms. Jukneviene said.

The Baltic states have long raised concerns, keenly aware of the comments of Russia’s naval chief, Adm. Vladimir S. Vysotsky, who last year bluntly evaluated the potential benefits the equipment could have offered during the five-day Georgian war in 2008: “Everything that we did in the space of 26 hours at the time, this ship will do within 40 minutes.” Nino Kalandadze, Georgia’s deputy foreign minister, says that the ships can carry up to 16 helicopters and more than 450 troops, giving Moscow much greater command of its coastlines.

"We hope that Russia will use the ships according to international law as a self-defense mechanism," Ms. Kalandadze said. "But Russia's current leadership is not one that can always be trusted. It's known for its disregard for international laws."

Urmas Paet, the Estonian foreign minister, took a more muted view of the deal. "We do not see the sale of these two or possibly four ships as a major challenge for the security environment in the Baltic Sea region," he wrote in an e-mailed response to questions. "The possible impact is still something that we have to take into account in our long-term planning." Under the deal, two of the ships will be built in the French shipyards of St.-Nazaire on France's Atlantic coast and the next two will be built in St. Petersburg, Russia. The sale underlines Russia's rising military ambitions and the deterioration of its own arms industry. It is struggling, for example, to finish repairs to upgrade the Admiral Gorshkov, a heavy-aircraft carrier purchased by India. Some analysts predict that construction of a Mistral ship in Russia will also lag.

"In principle, Russia is capable, but it will take a lot longer because the productivity here is inferior. France is more technologically advanced and also, there is no experience building a ship like this in Russia," said Konstantin Makienko, deputy director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, a Russian research organization that analyzes the arms trade.

Much of the geopolitical wrangling about the deal emerged in secret American diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks. In February 2010, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates raised the issue with President Nicolas Sarkozy and France's defense minister at the time, Hervé Morin. According to the ambassador's report of the meeting, Mr. Gates noted that Russia failed to honor an armistice in Georgia brokered by Mr. Sarkozy. Mr. Gates also was scornful of the top deal makers: "Russian democracy has disappeared, and the government is an oligarchy run by the security services." (Doreen Carvajal, *New York Times*, December 28, 2010)

Gorbachev Says Putin Obstructs Democracy

Russia's leadership believes the country "needs authoritarianism," Mikhail S. Gorbachev said.

MOSCOW — Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who once supported Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin, is voicing growing frustration with Mr. Putin's leadership, saying that he had undermined Russia's fledgling democracy by crippling the opposition forces.

"He thinks that democracy stands in his way," Mr. Gorbachev said.

"I am afraid that they have been saddled with this idea that this unmanageable country needs authoritarianism," Mr. Gorbachev said, referring to Mr. Putin and his close ally, President Dmitri A. Medvedev. "They think they cannot do without it."

In an interview, Mr. Gorbachev even described Mr. Putin's governing party, United Russia, as a "a bad copy of the Soviet Communist Party." Mr. Gorbachev said party officials were concerned entirely with clinging to power and did not want Russians to take part in civic life.

Mr. Gorbachev was especially disparaging of Mr. Putin's decision in 2004, when he was president, to eliminate elections for regional governors and the mayors of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Those positions are now filled by Kremlin appointees. The impact of this change was illustrated in Mr. Medvedev's dismissal last month of Moscow's longtime mayor, who was replaced with a Putin loyalist.

"Democracy begins with elections," Mr. Gorbachev said. "Elections, accountability and turnover."

Mr. Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, was giving interviews this month to promote a benefit concert that his foundation is sponsoring in March in honor of his 80th birthday. The foundation runs a research center and has raised millions of dollars for charities for children with cancer.

Mr. Gorbachev's criticism of Mr. Putin, while not new, appears to have grown somewhat sharper recently, as if Mr. Gorbachev feels that he put Russia on the path toward being a functional democracy, only to have Mr. Putin block its progress. Neither Mr. Putin nor Mr. Medvedev has responded publicly to Mr. Gorbachev. Asked on Tuesday about Mr. Gorbachev's comments, Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, seemed to choose his words carefully. "We do feel the deepest respect toward Mikhail Gorbachev, and we certainly respect his point of view," Mr. Peskov said. "But that doesn't mean that we agree with it."

Mr. Peskov said opposition parties had failed to make gains in Russia because their leaders were unpopular and had not developed attractive platforms. "Neither Putin personally nor United Russia as a political party can be held responsible for the inability of other parties to produce anything promising for citizens of this country," he said. Nursing a sore throat, Mr. Gorbachev spoke with vigor and seemed hardly slowed by age. He met with reporters at his foundation headquarters in Moscow, which is filled with hundreds of photographs and other memorabilia that highlight his efforts to reform the Soviet Union. Still, nearly two decades after the Soviet collapse, Mr. Gorbachev occupies an awkward place in Russian society. He is arguably more respected abroad than at home, in part because some here blame him for ushering in the political and economic chaos of the 1990s. It is notable that the benefit concert for his foundation will take place at the Royal Albert Hall in London, not in Moscow. Mr. Gorbachev, who oversaw the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, offered his observations about the current NATO mission in that country, saying that success there was impossible for an occupier. "It would be necessary to exterminate people," he said, emphasizing that that was obviously not an option.

Mr. Gorbachev has recently dabbled in opposition politics. He is part owner of the country's leading opposition newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, several of whose reporters have been killed or wounded in attacks. He tried to help form a political party to compete in parliamentary elections next year, but gave up in the face of

daunting legal hurdles. "For those who want to change the country in order to advance these processes faster, advance democratic processes, the participation of people is needed," he said. "It is necessary to have parties. But go and try to register a party!" Mr. Gorbachev would not say whom he would endorse for president in 2012. Mr. Putin, who became prime minister in 2008 after he was barred from running for a third consecutive term as president, is thought to be weighing a return to the presidency.

"Russia has a long way to go to usher in a new system of values, to create and provide for the proper functioning of the institutions and mechanisms of democracy — the institutions of civil society," Mr. Gorbachev said. "All this is done through a major transformation in people's brains. And this, clearly, is changing very slowly." Clifford J. Levy, International Herald Tribune, Oct 26, 2010)

TOO MUCH OF A BAD THING: NEMTSOV'S ARREST

The authoritarian Russian government may have done too much of a bad thing when it arrested Liberal opposition leader Boris Nemtsov and sentenced him to 15 days in jail for "disobeying police orders." The Nemtsov arrest, coming shortly after the trumped up charges and kangaroo court proceedings against former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, now rubbed against an already raw nerve in the West, prompting the Economist to call for a serious response and even ejecting Russia from the G8.

If Putin and company could discount domestic and Western protest over the Khodorkovsky Case, given the public loathing for the oligarchs and their get obscenely rich quick schemes, Nemtsov is a different breed. A very young doctor of physics, he was catapulted into post-Soviet reform politics and twice reached the post of Deputy Prime Minister during the Yeltsin years. He didn't reach the top rung, but left with reputation intact.

Lately Nemtsov has been part of the opposition and has dutifully demonstrated every 31st of the month while adhering to the terms imposed by the police. The last day of the month is chosen to remind people of article 31 of the Russian Constitution that guarantees the right to free assembly. Lately, freedom of assembly is not doing that well in Russia. The opposition to Putin is down to its last legal loophole. Lone demonstrators holding a placard do not have to secure a permit. Putin supporters cannot even countenance the solitary demonstrators, and have adopted the tactic of sending one of their own to stand next to the protester thus transforming his quixotic gesture into an illegal demonstration.

Nemtsov was last arrested on August 22 when he carried a giant Russian flag in the capital to celebrate Flag Day. This was the day in 1991 that former Russian President Boris Yeltsin claimed his moment of glory by defying a hard-line Communist coup that sought to reverse the policy of Mikhail Gorbachev and backfired into triggering the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of the hammer and sickle and the revival of the old Russian flag. It has been part of Putin's policy to discredit everything that occurred in the 1990s and claim that historic progress began with his election in the year 2000.

The Obama Administration, that has been careful not to offend the Russians whose support it needs in Iran, Afghanistan and North Korea, was compelled to issue a mild complaint. The White House voiced its surprise over the arrests since demonstrations up to now had been allowed. Obama, the statement went on, had met with Nemtsov in Moscow in July 2009 and admired his work in promoting democratic developments in Russia. Such admiration will not shield Nemtsov from Putin. US Senators Joe Lieberman and John McCain felt less constrained. We are deeply disappointed by the arrest of former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov and other members of the opposition, and by the unjust prison sentences they have received. The treatment of Mr. Nemtsov and other members of the opposition should provide a stark warning to the rest of the world about the disregard for rule of law that has come to characterize contemporary Russia. The two senators' criticism produced instant response from Putin's supporters. members of the ruling United Russia Party. Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in Russia's upper house, the Federation Council, claimed that the senator's remarks were jeopardizing the restart in US-Russian relations that had found expression in the START Treaty recently passed by the U.S. Senate. Obama, noted Margelov, had promised not to repeat the mistakes of the Bush Administration by interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries and attempting to impose democracy. (Amiel Ungar, Israelnationalnews.com, Jan 8, 2011)

AL-ZAHAR: BRING EGYPTIAN ARMY BACK TO SINAI

Hamas chief Mahmoud al-Zahar said on Monday that while no one will ask Egypt to annul any agreements that were signed prior to the recent uprising and are "in the interest of the nation," he believes that there are issues that should be looked at again right now, including Egypt's military presence in the Sinai Peninsula as well as the sale of natural gas to Israel.

In an interview he gave to the Asharq Alawsat newspaper, al-Zahar said that Egypt can help Gaza with electricity and oil and should also position its forces in Sinai, despite it being against the agreements signed with Israel. Al-Zahar said that the biggest loser in the recent events in Egypt is Israel, citing as proof comments made by opposition leader Tzipi Livni at the Herzliya Conference last week, where she said that the Israelis are now worrying about what will happen next in Egypt.

Al-Zahar also expressed his hope that Egypt's new military leadership will open the Rafah crossing as soon as possible, as the passage has been closed for about two weeks. He noted that opening the crossing would be a way to renew the ties between Egypt and Gaza and added that from the viewpoint of the residents of Gaza, the closure of the Rafah border is a type of siege.

Al-Zahar's comments come following reports on Sunday that the uprising in Egypt has had adverse effects on Gaza's residents, including on patients living in Gaza who are slated for medical treatment in Egypt, and are unable to receive this treatment because the Rafah crossing is closed.

In response to the resignation of the PA cabinet and the decision by President Mahmoud Abbasso to hold elections in the Palestinian Authority before the month of September, al-Zahar said that it is impossible to hold elections in the wake of the "siege" imposed on Hamas in Judea and Samaria and when there is no reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah. He made it clear that elections that take place under these conditions will be considered fraudulent by Hamas.

On Sunday, al-Zahar spoke to reporter Aaron Klein on New York's WABC radio, and said that the U.S. empire is in decline and will fall, to be replaced by China and India as new world superpowers. During the interview, he also called the Muslim Brotherhood the "most moderate organization, the most democratic organization, even more than the Western people." (Elad Benari, www.israelnationalnews.com, Feb.15, 2011)

HAMAS TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR MERCAZ HARAV MASSACRE

Hamas revealed statistics on Saturday that contradicted predictions by supporters of the disengagement program in 2005 that the withdrawal from Gaza would lead to peace. Hamas also says it was behind the 2008 Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva massacre in Jerusalem. Abu Obadiah, spokesman for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam military wing of the Hamas terrorist organization, confirmed predictions by nationalists that the expulsion of 9,000 Jews from Gush Katif and the withdrawal of the IDF from the area would be followed by an escalation in missile attacks. He admitted for the first time that Hamas was responsible for the massacre of young men, most of them teenagers, at the yeshiva. The attack was carried out by a Jerusalem Arab.

Obadiah also said Hamas was responsible for the murder of seven other Jews in attacks in the Hebron area and Samaria. He warned Israel that Hamas will continue to attack Israelis, who he said have to choose between death and leaving Palestinian lands. He also called on Israeli Bedouins, many of whom have been involved in terrorist attacks and arms smuggling, to help carry out attacks against Israelis.

His statistics on the number of missiles, rockets and mortar shells fired at southern Israel since the expulsion in 2005 thoroughly contradicted claims by the Sharon government and supporters of the disengagement program that the withdrawal would lead to peace. Sixty-nine percent of nearly 11,000 mortar and missile attacks were executed after the expulsion, according to his figures. He also said that of the 1,808 Hamas terrorists killed since the founding of the terrorist group 23 years ago, 1,053 died after 2006, when Hamas won the first and only Palestinian Authority legislative elections.

The escalation of missile attacks on southern Israel after 2005, which brought the metropolitan Tel Aviv area within the range of attacks, surprised political leaders who had banked on the expulsion as the road to peace. I did not imagine that we would leave Gaza and they would fire Kassams from there, President Shimon Peres commented in July 2008. (Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu, www.israelnationalnews.com, 12/27/2010)

FRENCH MINISTER ATTACKED BY GAZA MOB

French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie was attacked by a mob in Gaza on Friday morning. Her attackers were enraged over statements she had allegedly made the day before supporting human rights for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Alliot-Marie was mobbed as she entered Gaza, with a crowd surrounding her car, pounding on its windows, and throwing shoes at the vehicle. One person jumped on the car. Two children were pushed in front of the first car in Alliot-Marie's convoy, forcing the convoy to a stop while the attack continued.

One sign at the rally had a picture of Alliot-Marie with a red cross over her face. Others called on the foreign minister to leave Gaza.

Hamas police eventually stopped the furious protest and allowed the convoy to continue. Hamas leaders expressed sympathy with the rioters, saying Alliot-Marie's comments regarding Shalit reflected a "total bias toward Israel." The kidnapped soldier, who Hamas claims to have in custody, holds French citizenship.

Alliot-Marie was not hurt in the attack. (Maayana Miskin www.israelnationalnews.com, Jan. 22, 2011)

HIZBULLAH OPERATING IN GAZA

Hizbullah agents have infiltrated Gaza and are teaching local terrorist groups more advanced tactics, Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe Yaalon warned Thursday. The Lebanon-based terrorist group even has a special unit that deals with terrorists in Gaza, Judea and Samaria, he said.

The Hizbullah presence in Gaza began after Israel's withdrawal in the 2005 "Disengagement," he said.

Yaalon, a former IDF Chief of Staff, said Hizbullah agents could enter Gaza "like the Iranian rockets are coming to Gaza." Rockets are smuggled into Gaza from Egypt via a system of tunnels under the border.

Terrorists can move from Lebanon to Sudan, then to Egypt, and from there to Gaza, he said.

Hamas denied Hizbullah involvement in Gaza. "All the factions in Gaza are Palestinians," said spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

Previously Israel has revealed that Hizbullah funds terrorist groups in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and helps train terrorists from those regions who make their way to Syria.

Hamas in Gaza in particular has used Hizbullah's strategy in recent years as opportunities to infiltrate Israel dwindle. Instead of focusing on suicide bombings as it once did, the group began putting its energy into rocket

attacks on civilians – Hizbullah's favored form of attack during the Second Lebanon War. (Maayana Miskin, www.israelnationalnews.com Friday, Jan. 28, 2011).

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS HITS RADAR

A recurrent theme of Christmas messages by senior church leaders was the beleaguered state of Christian communities in countries with Muslim majorities or Muslim populated regions. These concerns were further punctuated by attacks in Jos, a state in central Nigeria, scene of conflict between the Christian south and the Muslim north in that country. Christians were also attacked on Muslim populated Jolo island in the Philippines. The major concern has been Iraq, where the Christian population has declined from 1,400,000 on the eve of the 2003 invasion to 500,000 today. The October 31 attack on a Christian church, Our Lady of Salvation, in Baghdad by Al-Qaeda resulting in the massacre of 58 worshippers drew the attention of the Pope who said that those living in Iraq needed comfort from their pain after deadly attacks.

Even the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, who has been accused of being too conciliatory to Islam as in his 2008 remarks where he implied that Sharia law should have a place in the legal system, was on the same page. He specifically mentioned Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian who is facing the threat of a death sentence for blasphemy. Williams claimed that Christians who are suffering because of their beliefs would be helped through the knowledge they have not been forgotten.

The outrages go beyond attacks by Muslim fundamentalists. Christian groups currently charge that government collusion encourages these atrocities. The Christian Association of Nigeria said that for explosives to find their way into Jos despite the high security presence is suspect. That it went undetected means that there is some collusion between the security agents and the perpetrators . . . these explosions must be investigated and the culprits brought to book no matter how lowly or highly placed they may be. Similarly Christians in Iraq have claimed that it is not only Al-Qaeda and its offshoots who have targeted the Christians but also elements in the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government.

Lately the plight of Christians under Islam is getting noticed both by the media and political leaders. Stanford journalism professor and former New York Times correspondent Joel Brinkley authored an article on the sweeping Christianophobia summing up the contemporary persecution of Christianity. Tim Rutten wrote an article in the LA Times observing that what is currently being perpetrated upon Iraqi Christians was perpetrated previously against Iraqi Jews. This theme was taken up by the Orange County Register in an editorial on December 16.

Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), an Assyrian Christian member of Congress told The Hill that history is repeating itself; and the same persecutions that her grandparents spoke of were recurring. Eshoo and, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), want the administration to secure the welfare of Iraqi Christians prior to the planned American withdrawal from that country. Perhaps, suggests Wolf to The Hill, it can be done by carving out an autonomous region similar to Kurdistan where Christians will feel protected. President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek said it was time for the Iraqi government to make sure Christians in Iraq enjoy the same protection and status as Shiites and Sunnis.

The European Parliament is very concerned about these developments and is a strong defender of human rights, including freedom of religion, he said in his statement. We monitor the situation closely and have adopted a number of resolutions to try to draw international attention to the plight of Christian minorities. (Amiel Ungar, www.israelnationalnews.com, 12/27/2010)

Save Auschwitz so it can forever challenge our conscience

We recall the night that changed the face of Europe and the world. The night that, in its unprecedented barbarity, was one of the principal stages for the beginning of "the ultimate solution to the Jewish question". The dawn that followed found the crematoriums of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp filled with human ash.

Kristallnacht - "The Night of Broken Glass" - was unprecedented. Not because the Nazis brutally plundered thousands of shops, destroyed hundreds of synagogues, murdered dozens of people and arrested thousands of Jews in Germany and Austria in 1938. But because, through the use of perfidious propaganda, they created a situation where almost not a single voice dared defy this pogrom. Hitler knew that German society was dominated by Nazi ideology to the point that allowed him to embark on a path leading to the Holocaust. Today we stand beside the last Holocaust survivors. People who belong to two worlds: one that no longer exists, and ours, the postwar world. Soon, only the words of the survivors will remain, together with the authenticity of Auschwitz-Birkenau, preserved to this day as the enduring symbol of the Holocaust. The words of survivors capture our imagination in a dimension we hardly comprehend. Our sense of reason is unable to handle the writings of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Imre Kertesz so we require the authenticity of the memorial site of Auschwitz-Birkenau to reinforce our imagination in a tangible, authentic sense. The Holocaust happened there, in that very place. We have to listen carefully to every word the survivors found necessary to tell us. Each word conveys part of the truth of the Holocaust. We have to preserve every inch of the memorial sites. The largest and best-preserved is Auschwitz-Birkenau, a symbol of the cruelty of the 20th century.

The preservation of Auschwitz-Birkenau for future generations is not guaranteed. As years pass, it becomes increasingly difficult. That is why the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation was recently established, aiming to

establish an endowment that will enable long-term planning of conservation works, so that our children, grandchildren and their grandchildren will know the history the site represents.

We owe it to the survivors, but also to future generations. Auschwitz has become the heritage of the world. Preserving it is our common duty.

When we walk among the camp barracks and barbed-wired ruins, in the shadow of chimneys and watchtowers, we ask ourselves more questions than we can answer. Among them is the most persistent: why did the world do almost nothing to stop the Holocaust?

We cannot overlook the fact that moral authorities stayed silent, that underground fighters did not stop the transports, that the Allies did not bomb the Auschwitz-Birkenau crematoriums. There were too few of the Righteous Among The Nations. The measure of their courage are those who survived. These facts bother not only those who lived during those times, they bother us, today's generation, as well, as they should.

We should not compare tragedies or genocides but we ought to compare our passivity and silence in the face of other tragedies. Millions visit Holocaust memorial sites and museums. We read survivors' testimonies.

Yet, as we watch television and browse the internet, confronting genocides, we do not react, even though we can do so much more in today's global village. News circulates freely and the possibilities of taking action seem infinite, yet still we prefer to be bystanders.

It was for us that the Sonderkommando buried their diaries, along with the ash of those who perished; for us, the prisoners saved SS archives; for us, the escapees wrote reports.

We need to listen ever more carefully to those voices, to the voices of survivors, to the authenticity of the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Not only to remember. Not only to be aware of the lessons of this tragedy. But also to awaken the consciousness of our own responsibility for the world, today and tomorrow.

Only in this way will the echoes of Kristallnacht, of the whining train brakes and the opening doors of the cattle cars not fade. Only in this way will the echoes of the innocent screams of those who were murdered in the gas chambers not fade. Only in this way will our deeds and words carry the echoes of their words. And their voices will not fade. (Piotr Cywinski, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 10, 2010)

Dr Piotr Cywinski is director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Site, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and the International Auschwitz Council. This is an extract of a speech delivered last night at a Kristallnacht ceremony hosted by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Border collie's one smart learner

Washington: A lady called Chaser just might be the smartest pooch ever.

The border collie bitch has learned more than 1000 words, showing US researchers that her memory is not only better than theirs, but that she understands quite a bit about how language works.

Chaser learned the names for 1022 toys, so many that her handlers had to write on them so they wouldn't forget, said study co-author Alliston Reid, a psychology professor at Wofford College of South Carolina.

As a border collie, Chaser comes from a breed of herding dog known for its intelligence, energy and enthusiasm to work. Over the course of three years, in sessions of four to five hours a day, trainers found Chaser could identify every item in a growing pile of doggie toys. (*Sunday Telegraph*, Jan. 9, 2011).

Fish oil boosts memory in kids

Omega-3 fish oils can help boost brain function associated with memory in children, according to a study from University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in the US. A small group of 38 boys aged eight to 10 years were given daily capsules containing 400mg or 1200mg of DHA – the brain-boosting" omega-3 essential fatty acids – or a placebo for eight weeks. Both DHA doses were found to have given increased neural activation, while there was decreased activation noted within the placebo group.

Another recent study from Galaxy Research has found that nine out of 10 Australian schoolchildren are not consuming enough fish, which may be compromising brain function and development, says GP Dr Ginni Mansberg. (Nicola Conville, News Bites, *Sunday Telegraph*, Oct.17, 2010)

Bollywood applauds legalization of homosexuality

NEW DELHI: Bollywood which 'came out' of the closet with films like "My Brother Nikhil" and "Dostana" was unapologetic as it applauded the "historic" Delhi High Court ruling which legalized homosexuality.

"This is a defining moment in the history of free India. No state has the right to tell its citizens when or whom to love. The only 'queer' people are those who propagate hate," filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt said.

"It is a very important judgement, it sends the correct signals across. It was not an overnight change. People will now be able to live without any fear, fear of being blackmailed or anything," said filmmaker Onir whose "My Brother Nikhil" and "Bas Ek Pal" dealt with the concept of homosexuality.

The law was never a part of our culture, it should have gone away with colonialism. It only applies to Delhi jurisdiction, but I hope it has a greater impact. It is a step which the rest of the country should follow," Onir said.

Bollywood heartthrob John Abraham, who won over legions of gay fans with his film "Dostana", said, "I am personally very happy. I think everybody needs equal rights, irrespective of being homosexual or heterosexual. I think it's a positive step." (*The Times of India*, 2 July 2009).

Government sees 'reason' in High Courts' gay judgment

NEW DELHI: The view that the Delhi High Court judgment de-criminalising sex among consenting adults of the same sex is "reasonable and

well-balanced" has gained ground in the Manmohan Singh government, which is unlikely to oppose the order in the Supreme Court.

The government feels that the judgment touched but on a small part of Article 377 when it decriminalised sex between two consenting adults of the same sex in private, and that the alarmist interpretation that the law itself has been upturned should not guide the Centre's action.

There was no bone to pick with this as it was in keeping with the laws of most societies with stable democratic and judicial institutions, said a top government official.

To balance it, however, there is a view that the government may consider either amending the Section 377 or enacting a new law to signal its zero tolerance approach towards the abuse of minors and forced homosexual sex. Section 377 does provide a deterrent, but the view is that the Centre may look at the option of making it tougher and unambiguous by making the description of offence more elaborate. This can allay misgivings and help the Centre explain its position to those who have opposed the court judgment.

Although a final call will be taken only after the ministry of law gives its opinion, Union home minister P Chidambaram on Friday seemed to question the drastic interpretation of the order by saying that the High Court applied itself to only one aspect of the Section 377. Chidambaram was speaking to the media after discussing the issue with his colleagues health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and law minister M Veerappa Moily.

Sources also spoke of the possibility of bringing a legislation in case the law ministry advises so, though this was not likely to happen in the current Budget session. The report of the law ministry, which has been sought by the ministers who met on Friday to consider the verdict, will be studied by the government and the Congress leadership before a bill is brought, possibly in the winter session. The government feels it can wait till then as it has no differences with the high court's ruling on decriminalizing homosexuality. (*The Times of India*, July 5, 2009).