

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

February 1999

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The Euro Is Here!

But will it last?

by Paul Kieffer

In what some European analysts described as Europe's financial milestone of the 20th century, the new European currency, the euro, was officially introduced on January 1, 1999.

In a special meeting held the previous afternoon of December 31, 1998, the finance ministers of the eleven European Union countries participating in the euro—Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain—met to officially set the final exchange rates among their currencies. With only minor adjustments, the final exchange rates were those of the European Monetary System (EMS) with its “currency,” the European Currency Unit, more commonly known as the ECU. In contrast to the ECU with its floating exchange rate, the exchange rates set on December 31 may no longer be changed, thereby forming the basis for the

euro as the common currency for the European Monetary Union.

Although the turn of the year was the official start for Europe's new currency, many observers view December 3, 1998, as the unofficial launch date for the euro. Acting in unison, the national banks of the eleven euro countries adjusted their key lending rates to achieve a uniform Euro-Zone interest rate of 3 percent. Since the prior interest rates within the Euro-Zone had varied in some cases by more than two percent, economists had expected a series of gradual shifts to standardize rates by the end of the year.

The speed and decisiveness of the decision caught bankers and stock markets by surprise. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the interest rate decision was that it represented the final major decision of those national banks, which have now been replaced by the European Central Bank.

Official currency trading with the euro did not begin until Monday, January 4, 1999. European banks and institutions made full use of the long holiday weekend to complete adjustments to their systems. Those adjustments could not be made until the final exchange rates had been announced on the last day of 1998. The Deutsche Bank AG, Germany's largest commercial bank, and also the largest bank within the new Euro-Zone, had more than two thousand computer programmers and technicians working in continuous eight-hour shifts over the weekend to reprogram its approximately 1,300 software modules with the final exchange rates. Other institutions did the same to



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Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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The United Church of God provides *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) as an educational service for interested persons. The purpose of WNP is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of current events in the light of Bible prophecy. Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis, and Bible commentary, WNP is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

“EURO,” (Continued from page 1)

meet the Sunday night deadline in Europe when stock and currency markets in the Far East would open on Monday local time.

The first day of trading was a complete success, with the *euro* trading one cent higher to the U.S. dollar than the rate established by the Euro-Zone finance ministers. Having been closed the last day of 1998 to work on the conversion of their systems, the Frankfurt stock exchange and other Euro-Zone bourses reopened on January 4, now quoting all stocks traded only in *euros*. And within one week the new automotive giant Daimler-Chrysler became the first major company to announce that by the end of January prices of its cars at all dealerships within the Euro-Zone would be quoted in the new currency.

With bank transactions now being cited in *euros* and simultaneously in the still-existing local currencies, many Europeans wonder why they have to wait until January 2002 to begin using the real currency—the *euro* bills and coins that will be introduced only then. Popular pressure for an earlier start for the paper money had become so noticeable that Euro-Zone finance ministers, meeting during the third week of January, discussed a proposal to revise the *euro* timetable. The proposal was quickly tabled, but it reflected the seemingly unstoppable momentum generated by the historic step of introducing a common currency within Europe.

Will the *Euro* Succeed? Opinions Vary

Predicting the future success of the *euro* has revealed stark contrasts. When asked about the *euro* on May 2, 1997, Alan Greenspan, U.S. Federal Reserve board chairman and arguably the most influential person in world financial markets today, commented that “the *euro* is coming, but it won’t last long.” Only three months earlier, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Rubin, suggested during the annual finance symposium held in Davos, Switzerland, that for the first time since World War II the new *euro* had the potential to give the U.S. dollar strong competition as the world’s leading currency. However, last summer, U.S. deputy Treasury secretary Larry Summers appeared to contradict Secretary Rubin. In a speech he commented that “the dollar will remain the primary reserve currency for the foreseeable future.... We expect the impact of the *euro* on the monetary system to be quite limited initially and to occur only gradually.”

Within Europe opinions varied, too. In June 1998 former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, widely respected for his financial expertise, concurred with Secretary Rubin’s opinion. (Chancellor Schmidt and his French counterpart, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, were the ones to propose the forerunner of the current European Monetary Union, the European Monetary System, during meetings held on July 6–7, 1978.) Most banks and large multi-national companies were vocal supporters of the new currency. For them a common currency means simplified accounting and considerable savings by avoiding currency exchange fees. On the other hand, opinion polls revealed the public’s reluctance to embrace the *euro*, largely the result of fear. An estimated 60 percent of Germans consistently voiced wariness in surveys, and a new political party—“pro-DM” (deutsch mark)—ran in last September’s

national election in a failed attempt to overturn Germany’s participation in the *euro*.

Questions about the stability of the new currency were asked frequently by Germans reluctant to give up the German mark, which has been one of the world’s strongest currencies in recent years. In this century Germans have experienced economic disaster and rampant inflation, making them especially sensitive to any perceived challenge to Germany’s economy. Their concerns about the stability of the *euro* are understandable in view of the divergent national economies represented within the Euro-Zone. Countries like Portugal and Spain have much lower wage levels than in northern Europe, and generally southern European currencies—the Italian lira is a good example—have been known for inflation and higher interest rates.

What does Bible prophecy say about the new European currency? As surprising as it might seem, the end-time prophecies of God’s word do not even mention the euro.

German politicians of all parties and the chairman of the German Bundesbank, Horst Tietmeyer, have reassured Germans that the *euro* will be as solid as the German mark has been. All European Monetary Union member countries had to meet strict economic requirements to qualify for membership, including a maximum of three percent deficit spending by national governments relative to each country’s GNP. The new European Central Bank chairman, Wim Duisenberg, from the Netherlands, has repeatedly stated his priority of currency stability instead of using interest rate mechanisms to promote economic growth. This policy is basically identical to the one pursued previously by the Bundesbank. With the debt criteria fulfilled and an inflation rate of only 0.9 percent within the new Euro-Zone during 1998—and virtually no inflation in Germany—the start-up conditions for *euro* stability appear to be excellent.

The *Euro* and Bible Prophecy

In view of the conflicting predictions for the *euro*’s success, what does Bible prophecy say about the new European currency? As surprising as it might seem, the end-time prophecies of God’s word do *not* even mention the *euro*. However, this does not mean that we cannot attempt to predict the success of the *euro* from prophecy. Bible prophecy is similar to a road map that gives the general direction and an overview, but does not list all the details and sites along the way. What we do learn about the end-time power described in the book of Revelation allows us to venture a prediction.

The final resurrection of the Roman empire, the fourth beast of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in Daniel 2, will be a religious, political and economic system. This great economic system is “eulo-

(See **“EURO,”** page 6)

The Euro—Implications for England and America

The strengthening push for full political union, following monetary union.

by Melvin Rhodes

Due to the sudden and unexpected death of my father, I spent the first few days of January in England. It had only been four months since my previous visit, which included a tour of central Europe, which I wrote about in two recent articles for *WNP*. Harold Wilson, a British Prime Minister in the 1960s, once said that “a week is a long time in politics;” meaning that things can change dramatically in a very short time. Four months is even longer.

On my previous visit, many people in England and on the continent seemed unaware of the *euro*. You would have to be a hermit today not to have heard of it. The media is dominated by news of the euro, its launch, exchange rates with other currencies, the implications for those involved and for those who are deciding on future involvement, how the growing world recession may impact euro member countries, the strengthening push for full political union following monetary union, and Europe’s relationship with the world’s main trading currency, the American dollar.

Newsweek’s “Euroland” special issue introduced the subject in the following way: “In January, the world will start getting used to a new currency. Whether you love the euro or hate it, know this: nothing so big has ever happened before.” The euro may not be the main issue on American television news, but its impact on America could be far greater than any issue currently being widely discussed, including President Clinton’s trial. In order to understand this, we need to focus on two main areas, economic and political.

The Economic Euro

Before World War II the British pound sterling was the dominant currency of world trade. Prices of goods traded

between nations that had nothing to do with Great Britain were often quoted in pounds because businessmen the world over knew the value of the pound. The pound was printed by the Bank of England.

A famous saying during the last century and for much of the current one was: “It’s as safe as the Bank of England” (I’ve heard the expression in different countries around the world). After World War II, the American dollar became the major trading currency but the British pound continued as a reserve currency and was the principal monetary unit of trade between nations of the British Commonwealth (one quarter of the world’s countries), and some others that had close ties to Britain.

By the early 1970s, sterling was no longer able to carry the burden of being a major international trading currency. The country was too vulnerable to international currency speculation, pressures that built up whenever there was uncertainty over Britain’s economy. The American dollar from that point was on its own.

Today, the dollar is used all over the world. It is not the legal currency in other nations, but it is a currency that nations use when trading with other countries and that individuals will hoard when their own nation’s money is unsettled. High rates of inflation in South America, Russia, many parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, have led people all over the world to trust the U.S. currency more than their own.

Additionally, the dollar is the preferred currency of international drug dealing, now the world’s biggest business. Because the U.S. dollar is so readily accepted around the world, it has enabled America, and Americans, to overspend, a situation exacerbated in recent months by the collapse of American export markets in Asia. The latest *monthly* trade deficit was over *\$15 billion*. This means that America spent over 15 billion dollars

“Whether you love the euro or hate it, know this: nothing so big has ever happened before.”



more on foreign goods than it sold—in just one month.

This situation means that over half the dollars in circulation are *outside* the United States. This makes America very vulnerable today, just as Britain was in the 25 years following World War II. If there is a sudden international loss of confidence in America (the result of uncertainty over the presidency, protracted conflict in the Persian Gulf, financial set-back on Wall Street, Y2K problems, or a pre-Y2K panic?), billions of dollars will suddenly be “dumped,” forcing the value of the dollar down against all other currencies. This would result in higher prices for American consumers. Enter the euro.

The fledgling European currency is the only credible alternative to the dollar. Euroland’s economic output is almost as great as America’s. If the economies of European nations considering joining the euro are included, it is greater. More importantly, the currencies of the eleven countries that now constitute the euro have been more stable than the American dollar during the last few years. This little known fact was first realized by international currency speculator George Soros, who transferred billions of dollars into European currencies in September 1998. Mr. Soros was blamed for Russia’s economic collapse a few days earlier when he pulled the plug on the country. Even Japan, now the third largest economy in the world, has been selling U.S. Treasury bonds to put more assets into euro-based economies.

Other developments have included one Gulf leader suggesting that the world price of oil should be fixed in euros, not dollars, a decision that would increase gas prices at American pumps should the dollar fall in value. It’s early days yet, but any uncertainty about America could trigger major changes on world currency markets. Remember: “a week is a long time in politics.”

The biggest international currency market is in London. “The City” (London’s financial district) dominates world financial trading. This could change if Britain stays out of the euro. The fear is that Frankfurt, headquarters of the new European Central Bank, could gradually oust London from its preeminent role. This fear is behind the pressure from many

British bankers and businessmen for Britain to join the euro as soon as possible. If a decision were made to enter the single currency, Britain could be ready in as little as eight months.

Britain is faced with a dilemma. If it does not switch to the euro it risks economic decline on the periphery of the European Union. But if it does adopt the euro it will also risk economic decline on the periphery of Europe. Yes, you did read that right. Joining could be as detrimental as not joining. Euro members will soon be harmonizing rates of taxation so that no country will have an advantage over any other (something that not even Washington has tried to force on the fifty states). This would mean higher taxes on British businesses, taking away their competitive edge.

“If Britain especially is subsumed within a common European defense policy, the United States will lose its only truly reliable European ally.”

The Political Euro

The New Republic (1/25/99) has become the first American magazine to warn of the dangers of the euro to both Britain and the U.S. “The pragmatic British, as ever, remain wallflowers at the continental dance. But the British see something close up that the Americans would do well to understand from afar. The reason that the French in particular are prepared to countenance such risks is that they seek to convert a united Europe into an alternative world power to the United States. The economic union of Europe is, in Paris’s eyes, a mere prelude to political union. And the point of political union is to lessen American influence and involvement on the continent, and



elsewhere, by means of an eventual attempt to construct a defense and foreign policy that may well be antagonistic to American interests. The more honest europhiles are not coy about this. Nor should they be. But neither should Americans be complacent. If Britain especially is subsumed within a common European defense policy, the United States will lose its only truly reliable European ally.”

The push for full political union has now intensified following the very real accomplishment of economic union. Note the following comment from London’s *Daily Telegraph* dated January 13, 1999: “We should be grateful to Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, for pressing the cause of European federalism with an honesty that puts British ministers to shame. In an impassioned speech to the European Parliament yesterday, he warned that the European Union would suffer ‘an institutional heart attack’ unless it moved rapidly to full political integration. The launch of the euro, he said, had set up a ‘dynamic’ that would inevitably sweep aside the current political arrangements of Europe. ‘The introduction of the single currency is not primarily an economic but rather a sovereign and thus eminently political act’ he said, adding: ‘political union must be our lodestar from now on.’”

In the December, 1998 issue of *WNP*, I showed that Europe is like a citadel, a fortress, which is being built slowly but surely, to last. That’s why the European dream of unity has taken so long to be achieved. In the past, all attempts to unify Europe have been through force. This time it is being accomplished peacefully. It takes time, as the sensitivities and concerns of many countries have to be taken into account.

It is understandable that many Americans yawn at talk of European unity. Remembering how quickly the Continental Congress was able to bring the original thirteen colonies together, they feel that if Europeans were really going to unite they would have done it long ago. This failure to understand the difference between Europe and America caused problems in the church as many anticipated the imminent fulfillment of biblical prophecy and then lost faith when it didn’t happen within their time-

frame. Europeans have a long history. If it takes a few decades to unite, so what? They have been working on it for fifty years, and now they are in the final stages. The roof is finally being put on the citadel!

In the light of recent developments in Europe, it is interesting to speculate on Revelation 17:12. "And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." The euro was put together slowly and systematically. It has taken over forty years to get to this point, since the EEC was founded in 1957.

It was the Maastricht Treaty earlier this decade that pledged the member countries to form a single currency, which is now well on its way. Many nations needed to discuss it first. Also, France and Denmark put it to a referendum, allowing the people to decide directly. For some years, each country wanting to join had to adopt economic policies that would enable it to qualify. It was a carefully orchestrated, well-planned project. One mistake and the whole thing might have collapsed.

Rev 17:12 suggests this could also be the means of achieving full political union. Ten kings (or small groups of nations?) will decide on full political union. From the wording of this verse and looking at the euro precedent, it seems possible that a group of nations could simultaneously hold elections to decide on the issue of full European political union and to choose the new governments that will take them into a United States of Europe. This group of nations would change their leaders at the same time, with the intent that these leaders would then choose a federal leader.

Only after this is accomplished would Europe change into the aggressive beast power prophesied in the Scriptures, perhaps due to external threats that a democratic system cannot handle. The *New Republic* is right: Americans should not be complacent. New power blocs are taking shape in the world which will alter the careful balance shaped by two centuries of dominance by America and England. ❖

"EURO," (Continued from page 3)

gized" in a lamentation found in Revelation 18. The description of this end-time power reveals an economic powerhouse renowned for its influence on world trade: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.... For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and *the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies*" (verses 2–3).

In this chapter the thrust of the lamentation is not for the religious deception and other evils that this system will have perpetrated. Instead, the "merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her," because their ability to trade their wares will be negatively impacted by end-time Babylon's fall (verse 11). Those merchants will have become rich through the trade promoted by Babylon (verse 15). Not only merchants, but also the merchant marine will have benefited from her trade: "And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!" (Revelation 18:17–19).

It is remarkable that the final resurrection of this historic empire is described—among other things—in terms of its economic impact on the world. Earlier revivals of this system are not described in the same way, which could imply a special attribute of the final revival that did not apply to earlier ones. We know that Satan will be this system's real "power behind the throne." Interestingly enough, some kind of trading system appears to have been involved in Satan's original departure from God's way: "Through your *widespread trade* you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.... By your many sins and *dishonest trade* you have desecrated your sanctuaries" (Ezekiel 28:16, 18; emphasis added throughout). End-time Babylon's trading renown appears to be a final culmination of Satan's warped approach to economics.

If the European Monetary Union eventually includes all 15 European Union countries, Euro-Zone will then become the world's largest economy.

We also know from prophecy that this end-time union will be a multi-national effort (Revelation 17:12–14). We do not yet understand how the ten kings of this prophecy are to be viewed, but we do know that a king in the Bible is often synonymous or interchangeable with a kingdom or some kind of national entity. The final end-time union of kings was also part of Nebuchadnezzar's vision interpreted by Daniel: "And *in the days of these kings* [symbolized by the ten toes of the image, cf. verses 41–42] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

Benefits of the Euro for Europe's Trade

The 11 countries of the Euro-Zone currently have a combined gross domestic product of 6,300 billion [6.3 trillion] U.S. dollars compared with the U.S.A.'s 8,100 billion [8.1 trillion]. The Euro-Zone is now the world's largest importer and exporter, even excluding intra-E.U. trade. Euro-Zone exports are 25 percent higher than U.S. exports and twice those of Japan. The single currency bloc has the largest population of the three major trading areas: 291 million people compared with 269 million in the U.S.A. and 126 million in

Japan. If the European Monetary Union eventually includes all 15 European Union countries, Euro-Zone will then become the world's largest economy.

The introduction of the *euro* will lead to economies of scale for Euro-Zone and foreign companies. A German company exporting within the Euro-Zone can now maintain its bookkeeping records in the *euro*, with all billing and payments made in the new currency without foreign exchange losses or fees. Foreign companies exporting to the Euro-Zone can also use the new currency to denominate their trade. Like its German counterpart, a Japanese company can denominate its exports to the Euro-Zone in the *euro*, rather than using individual currencies or the U.S. dollar, as might have been the case in the past.

The single currency will make price comparisons within the Euro-Zone readily transparent and will result in increased competition for goods and services. There will be some negative effects of this transparency, such as the possibility of production being moved from higher to lower wage areas within the Euro-Zone. However, the benefits in reduced transaction costs and greater capital mobility are expected to offset any temporary setbacks caused by increased competition across national borders.

We can now propose an inference from Bible prophecy about the future success of the *euro*. It is reasonable to assume that the economic power of the prophetic end-time Babylon will only be enhanced by having the "ten kings" use a common currency, as was the case, by the way, within the Roman empire. For this reason the author is convinced that the *euro* will be a success, even if there are some setbacks during the initial adjustment period.

The Euro as a Competitor to the Dollar

Could the *euro* become a competitor to the U.S. dollar as some have predicted? Could shifting economic preferences eventually lead to conflict between the powers behind the dollar and the *euro*? The Bible shows that economic considerations—desiring to have, not being able to obtain—can lead to strife: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures"(James 4:1-3).

The U.S. dollar has been the leading currency in the world for more than half a century. Neither the Japanese yen nor the German mark have had much effect on the dollar's leading role. The use of the dollar far exceeds the approximately 25 percent U.S. share of world industrial output. For example, the dollar is involved in more than 80 percent of all foreign exchange transactions and accounts for more than half the world's foreign exchange reserves. Why should the *euro* have any impact on the dollar's leading role?

As mentioned above, the Euro-Zone area is already the world's largest importer and exporter, and a common currency will only serve to facilitate the region's trade with the rest of the world. The *euro* is also likely to be widely used in eastern Europe and in northern Africa. Former French colonies in Africa, whose local currencies were already tied to the French franc by fixed exchange rates, are now pegged directly to the *euro* by a fixed exchange rate, in effect making them a subset of the *euro*.

The currency denomination of international trade is also an important influence in the strength of currency. Currency transactions between Japan and Europe, for example, are almost always referenced through the dollar, while most exports from

Asia to Europe are also invoiced in the U.S. currency. Any shift towards using the *euro*

in trade will have a positive impact of the desirability of holding the *euro* as a reserve currency. It is reasonable to assume that the Euro-Zone will have more and more of its trade with the rest of the world denominated in its own common currency,

leading to increased demand for the *euro*. What if the world's central banks respond by switching a portion of their dollar reserve holdings to the *euro*?

Most economists believe that it is only a matter of time before the *euro* achieves status as an international currency. The question is when. It is true that any number of economists—especially in the United States—would agree with Martin Brookes, international economist at Goldman Sachs, who thinks that "it will take a very long time before there is a big shift to the *euro*." This type of thinking was reflected in last October's economic outlook issued by the International Monetary Fund, a dollar-predominant lending facility. The IMF report predicted that the *euro* would achieve international status only "in the medium to longer-term" time frame.

The minority view is that the significant decrease in currency transaction costs for trade with the Euro-Zone will lead to the rapid acceptance of the *euro* worldwide. At any rate, based on the current predominance of the U.S. dollar and the prophetic indications of a European trade powerhouse, the exchange rate between the dollar and the *euro* will become the most important exchange rate in the world in the years to come. Any increase in the *euro's* value relative to the dollar will likely impact U.S. domestic interest rates, the price of goods imported by the U.S. and the cost of U.S. goods exported to Europe.

The *euro* is here, and if Bible prophecy gives us any indication, it is here "to stay" and "succeed" until the return of Jesus Christ to this earth becomes a reality. ❖

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A Gathering Storm

America could be caught asleep and find itself awakened and staring into the gun of a hostile power.

by Darris McNeely

The price of distraction can be high—higher than expected. America has been distracted for a long time by the scandals of the Clinton presidency which have resulted in his impeachment and Senate trial. In the meantime, the world has been continuing on a dangerous course. The consequences for America could be serious.

Last July, a report was issued by a select committee of former military, intelligence, and government officials. Called “The Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States,” the committee was chaired by Donald Rumsfeld, a former United States Secretary of Defense. The mandate of the Commission was to “assess the nature and magnitude of the existing and emerging ballistic missile threat to the United States.”

The Commission examined the potential of several modern nations to launch missiles and weapons of mass destruction upon America. Also studied was the ability of nations to acquire needed technology from other nations to launch such weapons. Biological and chemical weapons and the means of delivering them were also studied. What the panel concluded carries staggering consequences for the U.S.

The nine member committee was unanimous in concluding the following points:

1. Concerted efforts by a number of overtly or potentially hostile nations to acquire ballistic missiles with biological or nuclear payloads poses a growing threat to the United States, its deployed forces, and its friends and allies. These newer, developing threats in North Korea, Iran and Iraq are in addition to those still posed by the existing ballistic missile arsenals of

Russia and China, nations with which we are not now in conflict but which remain in uncertain transitions.

The newer ballistic missile-equipped nations’ capabilities will not match those of U.S. systems for accuracy or reliability. However, they would be able to inflict major destruction on the U.S. within about five years of a decision to acquire such a capability (10 years in the case of Iraq). During several of those years, the U.S. might not be aware that such a decision had been made.

The warning times the U.S. can expect of new, threatening ballistic missile deployments are being reduced.

2. The threat to the U.S. posed by these emerging capabilities is broader, more mature and evolving more rapidly than has been reported in estimates and reports by the Intelligence Community.
3. The Intelligence Community’s ability to provide timely and accurate estimates of ballistic missile threats to the U.S. is eroding. This erosion has roots both within and beyond the intelligence process itself. The Community’s capabilities in this area need to be strengthened in terms of both resources and methodology.
4. The warning times the U.S. can expect of new, threatening ballistic missile deployments are being reduced. Under some plausible scenarios—including re-basing or transfer of operational mis-

siles, sea- and air-launch options, shortened development programs that might include testing in a third country, or some combination of these, the U.S. might well have little or no warning before operational deployment (Executive Summary of the Report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, July 15, 1998).

America Asleep

The commission recommended that the practices, analysis and policies that depend on extended advance warning of hostile threats be reviewed and changed to reflect a changed environment. In other words, America could be caught asleep and find itself awakened and staring into the gun of a hostile power.

Of the nations mentioned in the report, China is one to watch closely. It is the dominant Asian power whose future contains many uncertainties. Although its relations with the U.S. have improved, there are a number of potential conflicts which could have serious implications. In 1996, China fired missiles near Taiwan in what some perceived as a form of intimidation during that country’s presidential elections. The U.S. has long backed the independence of Taiwan despite the mainland’s desire to absorb the island back into the larger China orbit. China’s desire to exercise a regional influence in Asia sometimes brings out sharp protests toward other powers (such as the U.S.), which still have the means to influence other nations like Korea or Japan. China’s ultimate role in the Asian financial crisis is also undetermined.

China is a significant exporter of the type of weapons addressed in this report.

(See “STORM,” page 15)

Atheism and Secularism Grow:

Religion Wanes In Britain and Europe

by John R. Schroeder

Author Ludovic Kennedy has been a shaper of British opinion for many years. But, until fairly recently, he has not blatantly trumpeted his atheistic position to the general public. Now he is making up for lost time by authoring a major book titled “All in the Mind,” as well as writing feature articles for national newspapers.

Kennedy concluded a recent two-page article directing the following words to the British public: “Surely, as a people, we no longer feel a need to acknowledge and pay tribute to a god that may have been real enough to our ancestors, but which for most of us today exists only as an archaic, atavistic idea.

“No one has put it better,” continued Kennedy, “than German scholar Feuerbach, who said: ‘Religion is a dream of the human mind which projects on to an *illusory god* the highest dreams and aspirations’” (emphasis ours). Note that Kennedy says, “for most of us.” He assumes that his circle of colleagues feels the same way. Clearly he is not the only one of his kind here in Britain. *The Sunday Telegraph* regularly features a column called “Me and My God.” One contributor said that he “feels a better person without religion.” Others have used this column to confess their atheism.

Ludovic Kennedy’s atheistic beliefs go back to his youth. Commented *The Daily Mail*: “Ever since he was a young boy Ludovic Kennedy has held an abiding distrust of God.... The distinguished writer argues that faith is just a dream and there is greater spirituality in nature and art.” Of course, many Britons and Europeans would not necessarily hold to such extreme beliefs, but their continuing and growing presence is a definite sign of the times.

Christianity and Biblical Knowledge Ebb

Here in Europe Christianity and biblical knowledge are on the wane. Despite impressive instances of spiritual interest here and there, the overall downward trend has continued unabated in the last 20 years or so. In that time almost every branch of Christianity has acknowledged this fact. The latest to do so are the Jesuits. The following quote is from Jan Kerkhofs, Professor of Divinity, at the Catholic University at Leuven, Belgium—and a member of the Jesuit order.

“The EVS [European Values Study] also reveals that only 31 per cent of Europeans believe in [a] resurrection and only 35 per cent in a personal God. In Western Europe only about one in five in the 18–24 age group believes in the Resurrection.... Believing Christians, particularly those under 50, have become a minority” (*The European Magazine*, May 1–7, 1997).

Further, a shocking headline in *The Sunday Times* predicted that Muslims would soon outnumber Anglicans in terms of church attendance here in England. “A study by a research charity shows there will be 4,000 more regular worshippers of Islam than there are Christians attending Church of England services by the year 2002.”

The task of educating the people in Britain and Europe in biblical knowledge is truly daunting. The ignorance as to what the Bible actually says is enormous. The area is replete with “New Age” thinkers and writers who will say almost anything about the holy Scriptures. We have been told variously that Judas Iscariot is innocent of Christ’s blood,

(See “ATHEISM,” page 13)

This is the age of biblical disinformation. Generally speaking, people here in Europe won’t and don’t read the Bible itself. Many are content to accept the views and opinions of so-called experts.

The Falkland Islands:

One of Great Britain's last colonial possessions

by Fred Nance

A brief war was fought in 1982 between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands. Located in the South Atlantic, the islands have been a possession of Great Britain since British occupation in 1833. Argentina claims the islands as its territory and lately has been making strong diplomatic moves to try to reclaim the property known to Argentinians as "Las Malvinas." However, before the recent attempts to reclaim the islands diplomatically, the first move was by force.

The start of the 1980s found the economy of Argentina in shambles, and the military regime in power was accused of political arrests, murders, and disappearances of some 30,000 people. It was against this chaotic backdrop that the government of General Leopoldo Galtieri rallied the country behind it in April 1982 by forcibly occupying the British-held Falkland Islands. The intent was to strike a chord of national pride with its people. After two months of war Great Britain recaptured the islands in June 1982.

More than a thousand Argentine lives were lost and the war remains a bitter memory. The issue of Falklands sovereignty has been a source of irritation to the British. But to the Argentines it is a matter of reclaiming lost territory. Since the war, a relationship of goodwill has prevailed between the two countries. As reported in *The Economist* of October 30, 1998, both parties agreed in 1989 that matters concerning the islands could be handled in a practical manner without affecting either country's claim to sovereignty.

Seeking Help

The two countries cooperate in international affairs, and both are allies of the United States. Carlos Menem became the

first Argentine president to visit Britain since the 1960s this past October. The visit was one of reconciliation for both sides. However, Mr. Menem raised the issue of sovereignty of the islands to deaf ears among the British.

The next stop for President Menem was a visit with President Clinton of the United States on January 11, 1999. Before leaving for the U.S. he said, "Of course the subject that we are not going to elude...is the Malvinas." In *La Nacion* it was reported that President Menem asked President Clinton to intervene. Mr. Clinton responded that he would like to see both countries (Great Britain and Argentina), whom he considers friends, come to a solution, adding, "I am going to call Prime Minister Blair."

To complicate matters, a recent BBC revelation was released of Great Britain's "intent" to return sovereignty of the Falklands to Argentina 30 years ago. The Daily Express of London broke the 1969 secret, reporting that Great Britain was acceding to Argentinian claims. However, the islanders themselves obstructed the path of negotiations between the two countries. After elections in 1970 and a change in the British government the negotiations were tabled. The Falklands remained British territory.

Bible prophecy reveals that a "company of nations," or a group or commonwealth of nations, was to arise from the descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Genesis 35:10,11): "And God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.' So he called his name Israel. Also God said to him: 'I am God almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall proceed from your body.'"

(See "FALKLANDS," page 13)

Both parties agreed in 1989 that matters concerning the islands could be handled in a practical manner without affecting either country's claim to sovereignty.

In Brief...

World News Review

The Jordanian Throne

“Uneasy lies the head” is a phrase often used to describe the reign of the late king of Jordan. After surviving more than 20 assassination attempts, the king died this month after a long battle with cancer. With the king’s death a new chapter in Mideast relations begins. Last month he stunned his countrymen by replacing his designated heir and brother, Crown Prince Hassan, with his 37-year-old son, Prince Abdullah. Hassan, described as a capable and competent administrator, had been groomed for leadership since 1965.

A “Cub From the Lion King”

A report in the *International Herald Tribune* had this to say: “But even as Jordanians worried about their long-serving monarch, they also began turning their attention to Prince Abdullah who, after a bitter split in the royal family, was named crown prince only Monday. Papers printed full-page pictures of the country’s ‘cub from the lion king.’ Though the king, in an unusually blunt public letter, had criticized his brother’s leadership during the six months that he was at the Mayo Clinic, Prince Hassan appeared to have set that rebuke aside, and was among the first to hug and congratulate the new heir after a formal swearing-in ceremony Wednesday.

“While the shift caused controversy here and was criticized by those who felt the more-experienced Prince Hassan should have been left in charge, diplomats and local analysts also said that, as the king’s eldest son and a respected army officer, Prince Abdullah will wield authority. He will turn 37 on Friday. The loyalty and support of Jordanian tribal leaders will be automatic, they said, and the new heir can count on support from his extended Hashemite family, a clan whose unchallenged legitimacy here stems from its direct descent from the Muslim prophet Mohammed.

“In addition, as a career soldier and head of the Jordanian Special Forces, the crown prince will have the support of another key pillar of this society: the military, an institution important to political stability but one with which Prince Hassan never had close ties.

“One diplomat said that despite his youth, Jordanian tribal, military and other leaders loyal to King Hussein would rally around Prince Abdullah, making any instability inside the country unlikely. They also would help guard against mistakes in his initial dealings with regional and international leaders. What’s more uncertain, and perhaps more important to Jordan in the long run, is his stand on issues like economic reform and democratization. Few Jordanians have ever known any other king, and most ordinary people here say they cannot imagine how anyone could fill the shoes of King Hussein” (*International Herald Tribune*, January 28, 1999).

A Major Player

King Hussein was the only leader most Jordanians have ever known. He came to the throne in 1952 after the assassination in Jerusalem of his grandfather, King Abdullah. Harry Truman was the American president, the Soviet Union still existed, and no one had ever heard of the Internet. A lot has changed since then but one constant remains—there is still no lasting peace agreement among the Arab and Israelis.

Hussein’s last major diplomatic effort was last fall during the Wye Plantation Agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinians. In a tribute to the king’s stature, President Bill Clinton called the king from his treatments in Minnesota to help broker the agreement. The absence of the king in the Mideast relations will leave a vacuum that someone will have to fill.

A recent special documentary on America’s Public Broadcasting Network, titled “The Fifty Year War Between the Arabs and Israelis,” highlighted the special focus that Jordan has played in the region. When Israel took

control of a divided Jerusalem in 1967 it was Jordan which lost its hold on the holy sites of the Temple Mount. The Palestinian Liberation Organization’s roots are in the dispossessed inhabitants of Jordan. More than half its population are Palestinians. King Hussein was only the second Arab leader, behind Anwar Sadat, to have negotiated a peace agreement with Israel. Having survived internal uprisings, and the constant intrigues of Mideast religion and politics, Hussein showed himself to be an adroit and nimble survivor.

It appears the king’s final decision was to change his desig-



At left, King Hussein’s brother, Hassan, with new heir to the throne, 37-year-old Prince Abdullah.

nated heir. Will this move be like that of Shakespeare's King Lear, who tried to control his succession and met disastrous results? The implications of this decision will have far reaching effects on the Mideast situation.

Forecast 1999— Stratfor News Services

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- Russia will begin the process of recreating old Soviet empire in 1999.
- Russia and China will be moving into a closer, primarily anti-American alliance in 1999.
- Asian economies will not recover in 1999. Japan will see further deterioration. So will China.
- Asia will attempt to protect itself from U.S. economic and political pressures. Asian economic institutions, like an Asian Monetary Fund, will emerge in 1999.
- The main question in Europe will be Germany's reaction to the new Russia. The Germans will try to avoid answering that question for most of the year.

Forecast

The Post-Cold War world quietly ended in 1998. A new era will emerge. 1999 will see a more conventional world, in which other great powers in the world will unite to try to block American power. In 1998 the United States worried about Serbia, Iraq, and North Korea. In 1999, the United States will be much more concerned with Russia, China, and Japan. The world will not yet be a truly dangerous place, but it will begin the long descent toward the inevitable struggle between great powers.

Two forces are converging to create this world. The first is the recoil of Russia from its experiment in liberalism. The other is the descent of Asia into an ongoing and insoluble malaise that will last for a generation and reshape the internal and external politics of the region. In a broader sense, this means that the Eurasian heartland is undergoing terrific stress. This will increase tensions within the region. It will also draw Eurasian powers together into a coalition designed to resist the overwhelming power of the world's only superpower, the United States. Put differently, if the United States is currently the center of gravity of the international system, then other nations, seeking increased control over their own destinies, will join together to resist the United States.

The die has been cast in Russia. We wrote in our STRATFOR SERVICES 1998 Forecast: "Whether or not Yeltsin survives politically or personally is immaterial. The promise of 1991 has become an untenable nightmare for the mass of Russians. The fall of Communism ushered in a massive depression in the Russian economy while simultaneously robbing it of its global influence."

In 1998 we saw the consequences of this. The reformers in Russia were systematically forced out of power. Power seeped out of Yeltsin's hands.

A restoration of sorts is well under way in Russia. As so many times before in Russian history, the pendulum is moving from adoration of the West to suspicion and contempt.

Russian politics has searched for a center of gravity ever since the reformists began to lose credibility. In December 1998, that center of gravity emerged in the form of Russian chauvinism and anti-Americanism. When the United States bombed Iraq without even consulting the Russians, the lid suddenly came off the pent up anger Russians felt at their loss of great power standing.

The United States has treated Russia as if it were a third world country, subjecting it to continual humiliation. All of this has tapped into a deep vein of Russian chauvinism and xenophobia. In a country that has become virtually ungovernable, this powerful nationalism is now the only means of uniting the country. No one can govern Russia any longer except on a powerful, nationalist platform.

The situation in Russia reminds us of the last days of Weimar Germany. Unable to provide either prosperity or national security, Weimar Germany was replaced by a regime that used national security issues as a means to unite Germany and revive the economy through military spending.

Where Germany focused on the Rhineland, Sudetenland and the Danzig Corridor, Russia will focus on the Baltics, Ukraine and Central Asia. We expect to see massive increases in defense spending, intended both to increase Russian power and stimulate the Russian economy.

Russia will not represent a global threat, but it will challenge U.S. power along its periphery, in a contest that will begin in 1999.

Asia cannot solve its problems. It is therefore caught in a process of mitigation, keeping things from becoming unacceptably bad. In order to do this, Asia must seek to insulate itself from the United States in particular and the global economy in general. It appears to us that the Asian solution will be to create Asian institutions to supplant the global institutions within which Asian economies are increasingly uncompetitive. We expect to see increased resistance to American demands for trade. Asia's efforts to work around its fundamentally insoluble economic malaise will lead to increased friction with the United States on all levels. Most important immediately, we see the reemergence of a Moscow-Beijing axis designed to block unilateral American actions in Eurasia.

Furthermore, this relationship will both insulate Russia and China from U.S. political and military pressure, and create politico-military counter-pressure on the United States designed to elicit greater economic cooperation. 1999 will be the year in which this alliance will take full shape.

There will be outriders to this alignment. Japan is increasingly at odds with the United States over economic policy. Japan will not join in the Russo-Chinese alliance, but it will use it to attempt to extract concessions from the United States.

The question is what pressure it will put on the new Europe.

Germany is deeply torn. The political instincts of the new government, forged in the 1960s, reflect a profound uneasiness with the United States and its leadership. Fear of Russia is a visceral feeling in Germany, and mismanagement there could quickly destabilize the government. With Russian troops on the Polish

frontier, the old German nightmare, the Polish question, is about to arise.

Germany is now in the process of defining an identity and a policy for the 21st century. It is simply unclear to anyone, including the Germans, what this identity will be.

Then there is the United States. We are in a world increasingly resistant to the one superpower. There is no second superpower, but there are several great powers. These great powers are in the process of cobbling together an alliance that, taken together, may not fully counterbalance the United States, but will serve to limit American freedom of action.

1999 is the first of many years of increasing tension and conflict involving not only minor players, but also the world's great powers. It is the beginning of what will prove to be a tense first decade in the 21st century.

Heart Disease Still a Big Killer

Obesity is becoming a bigger and bigger problem in our Anglo-American nations, and one by-product of being overweight is greater vulnerability to heart disease.

In a recent report from Dallas published in *The American* (A U.K. based newspaper for ex patriates), these startling facts were presented: "The cost of heart disease is expected to cost the nation billions of dollars this year as more and more people become fat. Heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases will cost the nation \$274.2 billion, up six per cent from \$259.1 billion in 1997, the American Heart Association reported.

"Heart disease is the nation's number one cause of death.... Overweight or obese people are more likely to develop heart attacks and strokes even if they have no other risk factors.... In 1995, the most recent year for which figures are available, 960,592 people died of cardiovascular diseases in the United States, an increase of nearly 11,000 from 1994" (January 9, 1999, emphasis ours).

Heart disease is also plaguing Britain. Wrote Jenny Hope, Medical Correspondent for *The Daily Mail*: "Heart disease remains Britain's biggest killer, accounting for half of all deaths and costing £10 billion a year.... Half of those deaths could be prevented by a healthier lifestyle—such as cutting out smoking, eating more fruits and vegetables and less fat, and taking more exercise" (November 3, 1998).

However, in spite of the enormous threat to health from heart disease in Britain, nearly five times as much money is spent on trying to prevent AIDS.

Contributors:

Darris McNeely, David Palmer,
John Schroeder

"ATHEISM," (Continued from page 9)

that shoplifting is not a biblical sin, that Jesus' parables are morally disastrous, that He studied Yoga in the Far East, that Paul is the real founder of Christianity, ad infinitum.

This is the age of biblical disinformation. Generally speaking, people here in Europe won't and don't read the Bible itself. Many are content to accept the views and opinions of so-called experts.

In Britain a survey asked people to name the books that had influenced them most. "The Bible was relegated to thirty-fifth place in the list of 50" (*The Times*, April 23, 1997). This is a very sad reality in secular England. Although some trends in North America may be similar, still there appears to be a far better awareness of biblical background knowledge, sorely missing in Europe.

Clearly there is a dichotomy between Europe and the rest of the world. Anglican Clergyman David L. Edwards wrote in his book on "The Futures of Christianity," that our secular situation here in Europe is unique in the world. "Secularization on the European scale is without precedent or parallel" (page 285). In an evening class I attended at the London School of Economics, one professor referred to the area between Stockholm, Sweden, and London, England, as "the North German Plain of Irreligion."

Booklets printed by UCGIA, like *Is the Bible True?*, are truly invaluable in this area of the world. If you don't have a copy, please write to the address of our United office nearest you. ❖

"FALKLANDS," (Continued from page 10)

A Peaceful Separation?

At the greatest extent of its power, Great Britain controlled vast land areas such as India, Canada and Australia. Strategic sea gates and passages (Genesis 22:16–18), like the Suez Canal, the Straits of Gibraltar and Hong Kong, were hers. The last half of the twentieth century has seen a global retreat from her once dominate geographic reach.

Interestingly enough, Prince Charles, heir to the throne of Great Britain, will visit Argentina in March of this year. He will head a delegation of British veterans ready to commemorate, with their Argentine comrades, the 17th anniversary of the Falklands war. It will be the first time in more than a half century that an heir to the British throne has visited Argentina. Prince Charles' visit will be the culmination of the political reconciliation initiated by both countries since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in 1990. In Argentine diplomatic circles, an optimistic prediction speaks of a possible visit from Queen Elizabeth sometime after the year 2000.

Whether Britain considers releasing the islands from its possession may depend on the desires of the islanders who live there. The constitution of Argentina calls for advancing its claims of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands by peaceful means. The problem is Argentine impatience and an unwillingness to back down on the issue. One hopes that a peaceful resolution, like that achieved with Hong Kong, can be found. ❖

• Fred Nance is a United Church of God member in Lansing, Michigan.

“FIRST?” (Continued from page 16)

sharing parts of the above mentioned work which horrifically cites: “There were eugenic efforts spurred by German physicians brought about by a series of official ‘edicts,’ the 1933 law requiring sterilization of men and women with mental and physical handicaps; the 1939 registration of all malformed children; and Hitler’s decree in the same year authorizing physicians to kill the incurably ill. Between 1934 and 1945, an estimated one percent of Germany’s childbearing population was sterilized, nearly half of whom were inmates of asylums. The euthanasia of people with disabilities was officially halted in 1942...but it continued surreptitiously until at least the end of the war.” The last comment that LaGanga utilizes in quoting from Gallagher’s work and others is: “The shower gas chamber, later used in the mass murder of Jews, was created for and perfected on people with disabilities at German hospitals in the 1930s.”

Major Questions Before Mankind

So what do 6,000,000 and 300,000 have in common? Everything! But, why should we be concerned today as we are about to turn the year 2000? Serious students of Bible prophecy realize that human nature has not changed, nor have the socio-economic and population dynamics that can give rise to such inhuman political regimes that perpetrates crimes against humanity. Every human generation must face them. It is telling on a society as to how it treats those who are physically, emotionally and mentally impaired. Today, tremendous questions face all nations, cultures and families as we ponder euthanasia, abortion, cloning, and how to care for the physically and mentally challenged. What does it even mean to be “challenged” or “impaired?” Are those even fair terms to use? Who creates the definitions? Who makes the rules? Who makes the final determinations to live or die? Who determines the quality of life? So, who goes first? These are all powerful questions which a future society may choose to decide.

As more and more people dwell on this planet the law of “supply and demand” will squarely face humanity. Will there be a will to care? Will there be an untapped capacity of understanding yet to be displayed? Is it possible that with the advent of cloning we will marginalize the need for compassion in a perfect world with perfect people? What will that do to the human spirit? A careful study of history would say otherwise, but the Word of God gives us hope. In fact, it reveals that the ultimate ruler of the world to come will have been One who was considered among the “despised ones.”

What Did Christ Do?

When it comes to the question of “who goes first?”, Jesus Christ approached the disabled as some of the first recipients of his attention. One of his opening declarations is found in Luke 4:18–20 in which he proclaims, “Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of

sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18–20).

During His earthly ministry, Christ continually focused on this segment of the population which was left uncomfortably at the margins of everyday human society. He came into immediate contact with the woman of Matthew 9:20 who had the issue of blood (that would have made him ceremoniously unclean), yet cared for her. At other times he came into contact with individuals who were troubled with demons, had multiple personalities, and mental disorders and problems—and yet, did not shun them but loved them and worked with them (Matthew 7:24–30, Matthew 12:22). When we think of Mary Magdalene, we do not think of extinction, but expansion of a human being! Such is the message and motion of the gospel as shared by Christ. Imagine if you will for a moment, the fate of Mary Magdalene if she had lived in another time and another place—a Jewish woman with a troubled existence! How lacking the color and the flavor of the Bible might be without Christ’s meaningful contact with her!

What did Christ say when asked about His agenda and His priorities? Let’s notice His reply to John’s disciples in Luke 7:20–23. “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” Is it possible people were offended at Christ for His seemingly disproportionate amount of time spent with individuals that society and their families had written off? What might be our personal reaction today if we were allowed to look over His shoulder?

Why the keen interest by Jesus Christ towards the disadvantaged? Shakespeare once said, “He jests at scars that never felt the wounds.” Christ, in that sense, was in solidarity with the “castoffs” of yesteryear and today. Isaiah 53:3–4 vividly describes how “He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.” A fascinating thought to ponder is where would Jesus have wound up under the Third Reich?

God’s Final Solution

For anyone to marginalize or extinguish the human spirit, any human spirit, because it is disadvantaged, simply does not uphold the message or solution that Christ brought. Michael Green in his book titled “Acts for Today,” says on page 31— “Another striking characteristic of this Man is His care for disadvantaged people. When quoting Isaiah 40:3, to which all the gospel writers refer, Luke alone gives the last part of the quotation, ‘and all flesh shall see the salvation of God’ (Luke 3:6). Luke alone tells us that ‘the son of man has come to seek and to save the lost’ (Luke 19:10). Those two hints give us an insight into Luke’s concern for ‘left over people,’ a concern which he displays constantly throughout his two books.”

Perhaps, that is why Luke records powerfully in Acts 3 the

story of the lame man and his healing. The beggar at the gate of the Temple “who was a certain lame man from his mother’s womb.” The same lame man who was marginalized at the Temple gate—most likely normally unnoticed, other times walked over, pushed around or just spat on. But then Peter and John came upon him and it says in Act 3:4. “fixing his eyes on him” (as if this was not normally done)...and saying, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you...rise up and walk.” What a different solution from that offered 60 years ago to the disabled of Europe.

Prophecy Is...

What does this have to do with prophecy? Prophecy is not just about dates, imagery, beasts, false prophets and innumerable armies. It’s about people who have been forgotten by society. It’s about people who have not known why they were created. Prophecy is the good news of how God is going to meet the very real needs of humanity.

His Ultimate Solution is so different from Hitler’s Final Solution. God speaks of a different kind of “round up” of the suffering and less fortunate people in the book of Jeremiah. “Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there” (Jeremiah 31:8).

What can they expect? What will be God’s Ultimate Solution? “Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, ‘Be strong, do not fear!’ behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you” (Isaiah 35:3–6). What a totally different form of attention is offered to these people than what their predecessors received at the hands of the beast-like kingdoms of man. Humanity will witness one miracle after another. Verse 5 and following verses develop an incredible picture. “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” The Ultimate Solution—lest we forget—is the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical healing of humanity. This is the *big picture!* But, that picture can only be filled by those who “fasten their eyes” on the realities of history and strive not to repeat them.

Those Who Went First

The Jewish Community is coming to realize their incredible plight is part of a greater circle of suffering by people who couldn’t speak, hear, walk or think. Increasingly, Jewish organizations are expanding their time of remembrance and reflection on this “quiet extermination” of the human spirit of 300,000—those who went first.

Remembrance of the past is a proper footpath to the future. Mr. Wolinsky’s challenging work appropriately echoes the voice of those who could not speak for themselves or for that matter even defend their lives. They were the first to die in a human cataclysm of immense proportions. God holds all humanity to the same rule—“in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” (Matthew 25:45). Mr. Wolinsky’s care and concern for those unable to speak for themselves certainly reflects the millennial refrain of “This is the way, walk you in it.” ❖

“STORM,” (Continued from page 8)

It has transferred nuclear technology to Iran and Pakistan. There is no reason to expect the sale of such technology to cease in the future.

Why would a nation sell such destructive technology to another where there is no obvious control over how it will be used? The answer is because it meets the strategic interests of a nation. Often, much is gained in return but in the end it is done to seek to control and influence the balance of power. If one nation lacks technology needed to protect itself against its neighbor, then the acquisition of such weapons evens the playing field and supposedly acts as a deterrent. Experience and history show, however, that once weapons are deployed they inevitably are used.

No Early Warning

The biggest problem facing the U.S. is the erosion of an early warning of the peril from one of these nations. Intelligence systems are limited in what they can detect, and when combined with efforts to conceal missile activity, the advance notice needed to take defensive action may not be available.

Consider this scenario: Iraq invades Saudi Arabia, seizing control of the vital oil fields and cutting off supplies to the west. America responds with diplomatic and military action, but before retaliation can occur Iraq sends notification that weapons of mass destruction are on board a ship off the eastern coast of the United States. New York, Boston and Washington are targeted. They are willing to trade Baghdad for any one of the three.

America’s ability to deploy a missile defense against any such threat is negligible at this time. The nine members of this select committee concluded that within as little as three years several potentially hostile nations could have the capability of holding the country hostage and crippling its security. Once again, the price of distraction can be very high.

The Watchman and the Coming Sword

The prophet Ezekiel was made a watchman to Israel to trumpet a message of warning when a sword was seen coming upon the land. “Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head’” (Ezekiel 33:2-4).

Today, these warnings of peril upon the land are coming from secular leaders who have stood on the city walls and peered into the horizon. What they see approaching is cause for a lifting of a trumpet and the sounding of a call to action. Whether the current U.S. leadership can respond is yet to be seen. ❖

This Is the Way... So, Who Goes First?

by Robin Webber

Many people around the world are acquainted with the numerical figure of 6,000,000. If someone were to pose the hypothetical question of “what comes to mind when I say six million?” many would simply state that this was the devastating total of European Jewry exterminated during World War II under the auspices of the Third Reich. But, if someone were to ask you, “what does the figure 300,000 signify to you?” many of us would be stumped! We might respond in various fashions with thoughts centered around cities with a population figure like Omaha, Newark or Portland.

The grim reality is this was the number of disabled individuals whose only reason for “liquidation by the state” during World War II was that they were considered “lives not worth living.” In itself, this is a staggering figure, but we tend to be numbed at the even larger figure of 6,000,000. Maria LaGanga, a *Times* staffwriter, challenges her audience to contemplate a powerful question regarding these figures by simply asking—“is there enough grief to go around?”

Equal Victims

In her article of January 19, 1999, titled “Fighting for ‘Other’ Victims of the Holocaust,” she focuses on the efforts of Sid Wolinsky, who is litigation director of Disability Rights Advocates. Beyond his job title, he has a personal stake in this endeavor in that he is both Jewish and his brother is developmentally disabled. His mission? He is fighting so that people

with disabilities will be remembered as equal victims of the 20th century’s foremost horror. LaGanga shares in her article: “For starters he is pushing for greater acknowledgement of the ‘invisible’ first victims—the German men, women and children who were murdered or sterilized in the ‘30s and ‘40s because of conditions such as schizophrenia, genetic diseases, physical handicaps and developmental disabilities.” Wolinsky is not only focusing on the past, but trying to assist in the present and point towards the future. LaGanga goes on to say: “Last month, Disability Rights Advocates stepped into the controversial Holocaust-related litigation filed against Swiss banks. Although the suits have resulted in a \$1.25-billion settlement, lawyers are still fighting over how it will be distributed. The organization wants surviving disabled victims to receive a share of that settlement and wants another share to be used for setting up a foundation to advance rights of people with disabilities, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe.”

Why? The article supplies background as the writer quotes Hugh Gregory Gallagher, author of “By Trust Betrayed: Patients, Physicians and the License to Kill in the Third Reich,” which was published in 1995. It is Gallagher who makes the lament, “surely there is enough grief to go around!” He continues, “What happened to the Jews, the ‘Asocials,’ [happened to] the disabled people [who] were all part of the same gotterdammerung, the same catastrophe, and must not be forgotten.”

LaGanga continues to develop the need to remember, by
(See “FIRST?,” page 14)