

# WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

## Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

August 1998

Vol. 1, No. 1

# Why World News *and* Prophecy?

*When the sense of urgency diminishes from the message of the church, the zeal of the people fades accordingly.*

by Donald Ward

**W**e are very excited to provide the ministry, membership and interested persons, with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics. Our 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?" (Luke 12:54-56; Matthew 24:3).

Christ's first response to the disciples was: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). Since Christ spoke those words, thousands of books and articles have been written on Bible

prophecy and especially about the end times. Some of these proclaim that Christ has already returned and is hiding in a secret place ready to be revealed at a certain time or at the juncture of certain events.

The words of the New Testament are presented with a great sense of urgency. Such expressions as: "The time is at hand; the end of the world; behold I come quickly" made a deep impression on Christians of the first century. To a large degree, first century Christians viewed the Bible in eschatological terms. In other words, they thought that they were living in the end times and that the return of Jesus Christ was imminent.

The Apostle Paul wrote his second

epistle to the Thessalonians to clarify misunderstandings that some of them were promoting concerning the second coming of Christ. Paul wrote: "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

Just as Christ warned His disciples about deception, so did Paul. Both Paul and Christ gave some definite signs and

*(See "WHY?," page 3)*

### *In This Issue...*

**May They Rest In Peace — Kids Killing Kids — Global Banking —  
India and Pakistan — Fascism Returns to Europe**

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*World News and Prophecy* is published monthly by the United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A.

The mission of *World News and Prophecy (WNP)* is to provide our membership and interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy.

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.

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details of events that must transpire, before the return of Christ.

The eschatological fervor of Christians has waxed hot and cold through the centuries. The writings and teachings of the Church of God in the twentieth century reflect a strong eschatological orientation. But in recent years, the eschatological fervor of the church’s teaching and preaching has diminished. Is there a relationship between spiritual zeal and a sense of urgency in a church’s preaching and teaching? There is no scientific way that I know of to objectively answer that question. But from a pragmatic, historical point of view, there is some evidence to support that claim. The teaching and preaching of the prophets, apostles

*The misinterpretation of end time—or any set of tragic events—does not negate end time prophecies. Though false alarms may weary people, they do not do away with “the wolf.”*

and Christ resounds with a great sense of urgency. Through the centuries God has raised up individuals who began to preach the soon coming of the kingdom of God and people responded to the message and the sense of urgency. When the sense of urgency diminishes from the message of the church, the zeal of the people fades accordingly.

Perhaps some have become weary of “gun lap” prophecy. Most of us will remember the story of the little boy watching sheep for his father who gave false cries of “wolf, wolf” and wearied the townspeople who ran to his aid. When the real wolf came, no one responded to the boy’s cries.

For over fifty years, the church of God has heard the alarm sounded. In some cases dates were set. The dates came—time passed—and nothing happened. Moreover, the church has experienced many other traumatic events that resulted in a scattering of the flock. But the misinterpretation of end time—or any set of tragic events—does not negate end time prophecies. Though false alarms may weary people, they do not do away with “the wolf.”

The word of God is true. The Apostle Peter wrote: “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts...for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19, 21).

We will do our level best to rightly divide the word of truth. The publication is not a doctrinal treatise. The material is presented to help stimulate your thinking and motivate you to watch and pray.

In times like these, it is easy to fall into the attitude of, “My master is delaying his coming” and “begin to beat [our] fellow servants” (Matthew 24:48, 49). The person who falls into this frame of mind, and action, will not be prepared for the return of Christ (Matthew 24:51).

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins

who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ‘Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish’” (Matthew 25:1–2). Note the time frame. (There should be no chapter break between Matthew 24 and 25.) When will the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins? Answer, “then!” That is, when people begin to say in their heart that Christ delays his coming and begin smiting their fellow servants. That attitude and action is the time period in which the kingdom of heaven will be likened unto ten virgins—five wise—and five foolish.

Contrast the attitude of “my master is delaying His coming” with, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing” (Matthew 24:42, 44–46). “So doing” refers to watching and praying so you will be ready. Obviously, so doing can refer to doing the work of God in general, but in this context, it refers to watching and praying for the purpose of being ready for the return of Christ.

The book of Revelation pronounces seven beatitudes or blessings. Let’s focus on three of these beatitudes.

In Revelation 1:3 a blessing is pronounced on those who read, hear and keep the words of this prophecy. This blessing is in essence repeated in Revelation 22:7, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

And in Revelation 16:15, “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” It is in the spirit of these verses, and the admonition in Matthew 24:42, to watch and pray always that we were moved to provide God’s people with this publication.

*The material is presented to help stimulate your thinking and motivate you to watch and pray.*

As the new millennium draws ever closer, more and more attention will be focused on Bible prophecy and end time events. More and more material is being distributed on prophecy and end time events. Even though world news is so readily accessible in today’s fast paced, technological society, it seems that many of us have less and less time for reading newspapers and magazines. Most Americans now depend on television and radio for news. These broadcasts oftentimes give only short snippets of the news. In some cases, the more relevant issues in terms of Bible prophecy, are not covered at all.

We hope that this publication will make it easier for you to track some of the major items that are shaping the future of the world and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Moreover, we hope the articles will stimulate you to be sober, vigilant and watchful, so our heavenly Father may say of you, blessed is my servant for he or she is watching and praying so that day will not come on them unawares. ❖

# The Achilles' Heel of Global Banking

*One has to wonder what would happen if this "house of cards" based on derivatives finally collapses.*

by Mario Seiglie

*Parse the language and it means many banks have a new sideline: gambling.*

**T**he Asian economic crisis has brought to fore a dangerous new way of making money which has recently been developed by the banking system—derivatives.

"In just three decades," reports *Newsweek*, in the May 25, 1998 edition, "the volume of derivative contracts with U.S. commercial banks exploded, from practically zero in the early 1970s to more than \$25 trillion today, an amount exceeding the size of the U.S., European and Japanese economies combined. Bankers quickly, and appropriately, point out that this figure really represents just the 'notional' amount, or face value of the derivatives, and not what they could potentially lose. But the amount due, or at risk, is derived (hence derivative) from those vast notional amounts. Parse the language and it means many banks have a new sideline: gambling."

The article continues: "Derivatives are a kind of nuclear financial instrument. They are powerful and highly complicated agreements designed to offset certain financial risks. Under steady conditions they work well. But in derivatives, like nuclear mishaps, there are no small

accidents. And as the Asian economic crisis worsens—and in Indonesia's case near catastrophe—the financial Geiger counters are beginning to buzz.

"Derivatives have turned the financial markets into a hi-tech, international 24-hour casino," notes Richard Thomson, a former merchant banker. 'Right now you have a small number of banks sharing a very large risk. But this could turn out to be a serious problem if these banks are in the wrong place at the wrong time.' Thomson points out that if one or two large Asian parties default on their derivative contracts, computer screens around the world can be hit within seconds and instantly threaten other contracts.



‘It’s like a bunch of climbers on a mountain all tied by a rope. But if one climber slips and falls into a crevasse, he can quickly drag the other climbers to their end with little chance of time for rescue.’”

Unfortunately, as the Asian financial crisis worsens, these “climber banks” have to carry more weight and the possibility of slipping increases. “And now comes the *bad* news,” says the same *Newsweek* article. “Some \$10 trillion (yes, \$10,000,000,000,000) in derivative contracts are set to mature

off a chain reaction of failures. In the meantime, Howard Greenspan [an investor in the Canadian Imperial Bank, which is a big player in the Asian derivatives market] still awaits information to see if his bank will suffer from the fallout. ‘In the final analysis, this has to do with Asia,’ says Greenspan. ‘It’s derivatives themselves. We are into the age of global financial risk.’”

One has to wonder what would happen if this “house of cards” based on derivatives finally collapses, with the U.S. in the center of the mess. This

much has been learned about avoiding a world-wide depression since the last one in the late 1920s. Economic laws are better understood, and a number of safeguards have been built into the system. Insurance for deposits is available, and governments intervene when necessary to keep money in circulation. No economist has said the entire system could collapse because of a crisis based on derivatives, but it could be an important factor if the present economic system suffers a considerable loss of prestige with the world sinking into a prolonged and costly recession. Many nations would become impoverished and inequality would increase between the have and have not nations.

Certainly, the economic system which is described in Revelation 18 gives the impression of a world which is relieved by a more stable and equitable manner of redistributing the planet’s wealth than the present system. Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1997 warned, “This is a world where 400 multimillionaires have more wealth than half the world’s population. It is an open invitation to conflict” (*Newsweek*, May 19, 1997, page 58).

All nations have drunk of her wine and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of

*“Ten years ago, it was Japan. Today, we Americans are the leaders, and in 10 to 15 years, I believe it will be Europe.”*

this year for U.S. bankers, and the U.S. bankers are holding their collective breath to see which of their Asian clients will pay up. Many won’t.... Credit risk is the problem that American banks are facing. Buried deep within the arcane bank statements...is evidence of a potential chain reaction of derivatives heading toward an explosion.... The 25 American banks with the largest position have more than \$350 billion in credit exposure to derivatives—that’s more than enough to wipe out the \$250 billion in equity capital that the same banks keep on hand as a cushion to absorb losses.”

The article concludes: “In Asia, governments stung by currency speculators, who often use derivatives, are beginning to turn on their foreign bankers. ‘The bottom line in this whole derivatives issue is if I’m a trader, I’ll take the biggest bets that I can because if I win, I’ll go home a millionaire,’ says Charles Peabody, of Mitchell Securities, a brokerage firm in New York City. ‘If I lose, then the central banks or the IMF will bail me out. So you’ve created a moral hazard.’

“With Indonesia aflame, a virtual depression in Japan and both Malaysia and Thailand still struggling, the Asian economic crisis is far from over. In the worst-case scenario, one or more large derivatives defaults from Asia and sets

could produce enormous resentment from the rest of the world community. Perhaps a new player will have to enter the economic world scene to avoid such damaging speculation, much of it fueled by greed.

In a recent interview with Rudiger Dornbusch, a world-renown economist from MIT, a leading newspaper asked him, “Who do you think will be the eco-

nomie leader in 10 years?” Dornbusch answered, “Ten years ago, it was Japan: they had money, technology, everything. They were going to be the owners of the world. Today, we Americans are the leaders, and in 10 to 15 years, I believe it will be Europe.” A present crisis in a U.S. driven world economy could possibly bring this change in leadership even faster, if events continue to worsen.

To bring this into a balanced perspective, it is needful to clarify that

*All nations have drunk of her wine and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. Yet at the same time, the disparity between the rich and the poor is increasing even in America.*

her luxury (Revelation 18:3). Yet at the same time, the disparity between the rich and the poor is increasing even in America. Multinational capitalist corporations continue to exploit laborers around the world. Thousands are getting wealthier, while millions are struggling to make ends meet. The cries of these laborers come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Their cries play an important role in God’s intervention in world affairs at the end of the age (James 5:1–7). ❖

# The India/Pakistan Weapons Conundrum

*The more nuclear powers, the more other nations feel it absolutely necessary to develop and add weapons of this nature to their defense arsenals.*

by John Ross Schroeder

*"If we get it wrong," there is an increased threat to human survival on this planet.*

**D**ateline: London "Despite long-standing intelligence monitoring, India's five nuclear tests on land 13 May, 1998 took the world by surprise" (*Strategic Comments*, June, 1998).

So much for stability in an uncertain age. Two Eastern nations—India and Pakistan—threatened the peace and well-being of the world with their recent nuclear tests and mutual saber rattling.

Now there is no real end to the nuclear threat in sight. Clearly, if a larger number of countries develop or gain access to these nightmare weapons, the world will become a much less-safe place. The West has every reason for limiting the nuclear spread. Yet Libya, Iran, Iraq and possibly North Korea, are seen as nations with the worrying capacity to gain nuclear arsenals in the not-too-distant future.

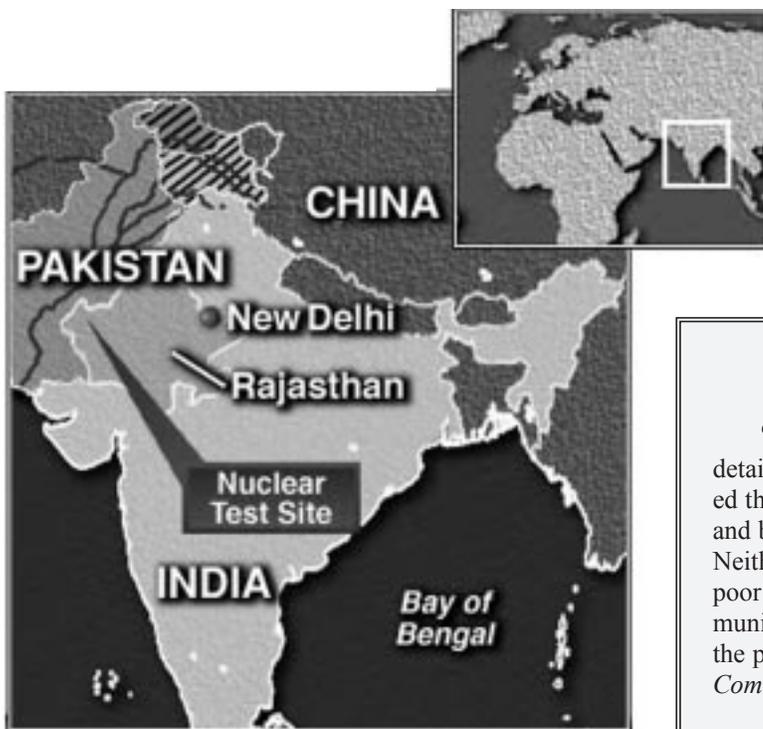
## A Sobering Press Briefing

This writer recently attended a London press briefing at the Foreign Press Association where Dr. Gerald Segal, Director of Studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, analyzed the recent India/Pakistan developments in the light of the overall nuclear threat to humanity.

Gerald Segal lamented the harm done to the discernible progress that had previously been made in limiting the nuclear threat in the world. He pointed out that drastic cuts in such weaponry had already occurred in some very prominent countries (the U.S.A., Russia, Britain) and also said that South Africa and Brazil had apparently pulled out of the atomic race altogether.

Dr. Segal also spoke of these most recent tests in terms of "a wakeup call to us all," and reminded the journalists in attendance that "if we get it wrong," there is an increased threat to human survival on this planet.

The Director of Strategic Studies shocked some of us when he firmly stated that China was the number one reason for India possessing and developing nuclear weaponry. Particularly in the long term India is far more afraid of China than Pakistan. Many international observers have



## The India/Pakistani War Threat

"Despite Western intelligence services' uncertainty about details, both New Delhi and Islamabad have clearly demonstrated the capability to deploy nuclear weapons on attack aircraft and ballistic missiles, and are likely to do this in the near future. Neither country's leadership is aiming at nuclear war, but their poor intelligence services, relatively inefficient military communications and deeply ingrained mutual paranoia mean that the possibility of catastrophic mistakes is very real" (*Strategic Comments*, June, 1998).

already labeled China as the next superpower.

National prestige is also a big factor in Indian thinking. According to *Strategic Comments*, "India wants to be seen to have a hydrogen bomb both because these devices are vastly more destructive than fission bombs (as used in Hiroshima in 1945) and for reasons of national prestige.

"The possession of such weapons would clearly raise India above Pakistan, and—so Indians think—place them in the club of the five recognized nuclear-weapons states [The United States, Russia, Britain, France and China]. These countries are also permanent members of the UN Security Council, to which India believes it has a right to belong" (op. cit.).

### A Growing Number

The number of nuclear powers is growing. Professional experts have already recognized and accepted the existence of five such nations and now, according to Dr. Segal, in reality its "five plus two." Some believe that there are more, Israel being one of those countries.

The more nuclear powers, the more other nations believe it absolutely necessary to develop and add weapons of this nature to their defense arsenals. That's just common sense. This factor considerably weakens world community control over the nuclear arms race.

Economic pressures in Pakistan are adding to the fear that she will share her

nuclear secrets with nations like Iraq and Iran, for a hefty price of course. Western sanctions which could greatly increase Pakistani economic hardship might drive her into making sales to dangerous and unstable regimes.

It's a "Catch 22" conundrum. The West believes sanctions are an important deterrence to further nuclear activity, but if overly applied they could easily backfire. It's a delicate balancing act. Ideally, we should not be continually faced with these kinds of dilemmas. Somewhere we have gone wrong as a species.

### The Essential Biblical Perspective

The nuclear threat is not as divorced from the Bible as some people might imagine. Though 2,000 years old and more, the Scriptures are very much up to date and applicable to our modern world.

They specifically warn us that an unprecedented time of universal distress

## India and Pakistan's Nuclear Capabilities

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
<b>India</b>						
<i>Weapons-grade plutonium (kg)</i>	330	350	370	390	400	430
<i>Number of weapons</i>	66	70	74	78	82	86
<b>Pakistan</b>						
<i>Weapons-grade uranium (kg)</i>	210	210	210	500	610	720
<i>Number of weapons</i>	10	10	10	25*	30*	36*

**Note:** \*Assuming enriched uranium products resumes in 1998  
**Source:** Institute for Science and International Security, Washington D.C. (reproduced in *Strategic Comments*).

would be coming on planet earth. This period of world-jarring chaos is referred to in several biblical books, written at various times by different authors.

For instance, consider the book of Daniel (ca. 535 B.C.) written by a great prophet of God. He wrote: "At that time Michael [an archangel] shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time" (Daniel 12:1).

Until mid-20th century, mankind could not have really grasped the horrendous portent of these words. Yet they are rendered even more ominous by the later warnings of Jesus Christ Himself. "It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world until now, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (Matthew 24:21-22, New English Bible).

### In Summary

Summing up, this is a world filled with unexpected dangers and new and threatening trends. Humanity is in jeopardy. We all have to make sure we are on our guard. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). ❖

### About the Weapons Crisis...

"India: "Its surprise tests threaten the global test ban treaty and point out the gap in monitoring nations" – Peter D. Zimmerman, a nuclear physicist (*Los Angeles Times*).

India & Pakistan: "Eyeball to eyeball, two proud nations on a race to disaster" – Lawrence Freedman, a professor of war studies (*The Daily Mail*).

"How can we expect India and Pakistan to eschew nuclear weapons if the U.K. and France have them?" – Edward Mortimer, *Financial Times* columnist.

"Failure to solve the latest nuclear arms row will fuel the nuclear ambitions of others" – Gerald Segal, a director of strategic studies (*The Sunday Times*).

"India's surprise nuclear tests shake a sense of security and could spark a new arms race" – Johanna McGeary (*Time* magazine).

# Fascism Returns to Europe

*Today, no extremist party calls itself fascist, but whatever the name, fascism is still the game.*

by Melvin Rhodes

Over 50 years after the defeat of the European fascist powers, the extreme right-wing political philosophy has returned to the continent, once again appealing to disillusioned voters.

France, Germany, Austria and Russia all have to contend with significant fascist parties. With support for fascism on the rise, the moderate parties that have governed since World War II are having to move to the right to keep up with voters.

It's an understatement to say that fascism got a bad name during World War II, particularly for its militarism and its persecution of

*Economic problems throughout the continent have led a new generation to look for simple solutions to complex problems, a recipe for extremism.*

the Jews and other minorities. But, even its supporters lost heart when it lost to the allied western democracies and the Soviet Union.

Today, no extremist party calls itself fascist. Contemporary names range from the National Front (France), to the German People's Union (Germany), the Freedom Party (Austria) and National Socialist (a label some Russian politicians use to describe their own ideals). Whatever the name, fascism is still the game.

Collins Standard Reference Dictionary defines fascism as "a system of government characterized by dictatorship, belligerent nationalism, racism, militarism, etc.," a definition that would accurately describe the successive "beasts" of the books of Daniel and

Revelation. The final rise of the Beast power will also likely share these characteristics.

First tried in Italy from 1922, Italian fascism seemed at first beneficial. Its leader, Benito Mussolini, famously got the trains to run on time. He didn't persecute the Jews, but his troops did invade some neighboring countries and Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

Hitler's brand of fascism was much more terrifying, partly because of added German efficiency. Hitler came to power by accident, receiving about one third of the votes in the 1933 election. His party was, however, the biggest single political party represented in the national legislature and so he was asked to form a government by the figurehead president, von Hindenburg. When the old president died one year later, Hitler's supporters had him proclaimed the Fuehrer (Leader), with absolute dictatorial powers. The rest, as they say, is history.

Other European nations opted for fascism at the same time. An alliance of the central European fascist powers came very close to world domination in the early 1940s.

Since World War II, democracy has seemed ascendent in Europe, first in the west, now also in the east. But economic problems throughout the continent have led a new generation to look for simple solutions to complex problems, a recipe for extremism.

France first saw the rise of a fascist party under Jean Marie LePen. With about 15 percent of the vote, it may be impossible for a future conservative government to hold power without the support of the extremists. Austria's Freedom Party is the second largest party in the country and is led by the charismatic Jorg Haider. (Remember, the charismatic Hitler also came from Austria.)

A turning point this year came in the

German state of Saxony-Anhalt, formerly a part of communist east Germany. Here Gerhard Frey's German Peoples' Union received 13 percent of the vote—better than Hitler's Nazi Party did the first time round. Cleverly using American election techniques and targeting the dispirited young (19–29 year-olds) and those over 65 (many of whom were members of the Hitler Youth), Frey's party came from nowhere and forced two other political parties out of the state parliament.

The local leader of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's party said of the election result: "I was astonished. We have experienced the whiff of Weimar here." (The Weimar republic was

*Faced with increasing economic problems, more and more people are blaming western style democracy and the free market for their woes.*

Germany's brief and ill-fated experiment with democracy between the two world wars.)

The above quote is taken from an article in *The New Republic* ("Thunder on the Right" June 28, 1998.) The same article pointed out that "about 17 percent of the population is ready to contemplate voting for right-wing parties.... Researchers questioned 6,600 Berlin youths in high school to arrive at the conclusion that the majority would rather vote for an extremist party on the right or left or none at all."

Germany's political system of proportional representation means that just five percent of the vote guarantees a political party a place in parliament (the Bundestag). Five percent of the vote can

*"Russia would become an angry place—neither democratic, nor prosperous, nor kind to its neighbors. It is a nightmare scenario."*

also mean that a small party can be the kingmaker. German governments are usually coalitions made up of one or more political parties. Without support from others, no party would have the 50-plus percent of seats needed to form a government, so smaller parties are often involved. Historically, the liberal Free Democrats (with anywhere from 5 percent to 12 percent of the national vote) has played a major role. By switching allegiance from one of

the two big parties to another, it could bring down a government, forming a new one in the process without an election.

The Free Democrats failed to get five percent of the vote in Saxony-Anhalt and are no longer represented in the state legislature. But the fascists are. They are only a minor party right now, but national elections scheduled for September this year could see them becoming a bigger force in the federal parliament. "As Germany heads into a tumultuous election period...the prospects for the far right look increasingly favorable" (ibid. *The New Republic*).

It is in Russia, however, that right-wing extremists could come to power first. Faced with increasing economic problems, more and more people are blaming western style democracy and the free market for their woes. Although the communists remain the biggest political party in the Duma (parliament), right-wing former generals command big followings and seem more likely headed for power.

Britain's *Economist* magazine had this to say in its July 11th, 1998, issue: "It has become something of a commonplace to say that Russia will never go back to what it was—to orthodox Soviet-style communism. True enough....

"Far more likely...if things continue to go sour, is that Russia will swing the other way—not all the way to fascism but towards something nearly as bad, a kind of extreme nationalism: intensely prickly and pan-Slavic, anti-semitic, hostile to foreigners beyond and within its boundaries, eager to absorb the Slav heartlands of Ukraine and Belarus within the Russian fold, eager to make the Baltic trio of countries as weak and jumpy as possible.

"This quasi-fascism would also, in economic terms, be protectionist, corporatist and loth to privatize any more of Russia's ailing industry or let people (certainly not foreigners) buy land.... The armed forces and the successors to the KGB would be raised again to a position of special eminence within the state. The press and television would be corralled. Russia would become an angry place—neither democratic, nor prosperous, nor kind to its neighbors. It is a nightmare scenario."

A nightmare scenario indeed. But not only in Russia. A worse case scenario would be fascist domination of both Russia and the European Union, a scenario now increasingly possible. ❖

# May They Rest in Peace

*Romanov burial exposes rift in Russia. An attempt to bring closure on one of the most sordid affairs of the 20th century.*

by Darris McNeely

*The bones were exhumed in 1991 from a forest near the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. DNA testing verified the remains as those of the Romanovs.*

**E**ighty years after their brutal murder, the mortal remains of the last Czar of the Russias, Nicholas II, his wife Alexandria, three of their four children, and four servants were finally laid to rest on July 17, 1998, at the



Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul in St. Petersburg, Russia. The burial turned out to be a feeble attempt at closure on one of the most sordid affairs of the twentieth century. A descendant of the last Czar, Prince Nicholas Romanov, desired that the burial be a “signal of forgiveness” and “a moment of repentance, understanding and mutual pardon.”

The bones were exhumed in 1991 from a forest near the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. DNA testing verified the remains as those of the Romanovs. Still missing are the remains of one daughter and the heir, Alexei.

The deep rift within Russia was evident in that President Boris Yeltsin, who ordered the burial of the remains more than six years ago, waited until the last minute to decide to attend. Because he believes the remains of the family are not authentic, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church would not officiate. Some members of the Romanov family would not attend because of deep-seated animosity toward the Bolshevik regime.

Today’s Russia is facing critical economic and political problems that threaten to end its brief experience with democratic rule. A headline in the July 10 issue of *The Economist* read “Russia’s Crisis: Could It Lead To Facism?” As Russia lurches from one crisis to another some speculate that its current problems could snatch the fragile seeds of democracy from the mother soil. The article paints a gloomy picture, “Even by Russian standards, it has been a frightening and sometimes bizarre few weeks. The ruble is on the edge of a precipice. Short-term interest rates, just 21 percent last autumn, shot up to 150 percent last month before coming down to 60 percent; they have again climbed back to 80 percent. If the ruble crashes, economic—and quite possibly political—catastrophe beckons. Instead



*Nicholas II on horseback, 1891 (top). People said Nicholas never looked better than when he was on horseback. He was an accomplished horseman and here he is dressed in a Cossack uniform. The Czar and his wife, Alexandria, at tea in the palace (bottom).*

of pottering around their weekend dachas and bathing in muddy pools (their usual summer pastimes), intelligent Muscovites are talking seriously—for the first time in five years—about a financial and political crisis that may be settled only by force of arms.”

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 the world has watched and hoped for true reforms that would bring about prosperity for the middle class and a political stability for a country still possessing a vast nuclear arsenal. The intervening years have produced conflicting emotions of hope, dismay, and cynicism. In 1993

President Yeltsin turned the Army’s guns on the Parliament building to deal with dissent. The Russian Army brutally crushed nationalist desires in Chechnya. While workers go months without getting paid and whole cities suffer energy shortages, a new class of wealthy elite secrete away money in Swiss bank accounts and live a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption. Today, Russia awaits word whether another monetary bailout from the International Monetary Fund, \$15 billion worth, will come in time to stave off another revolution.

A comment by communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov, before a recent meeting of the International Press Institute in Moscow, sums up the current crisis. He said: “You have come here at the height of our national catastrophe.... Today we have a president with more power than a Russian czar or Egyptian pharaoh...yet the man on the street knows that this road leads to destruction.”

Russia has come to the end of a 1,000 year period which began with the Christianization of the country in 988 A.D. From the ancient city of Rostov the orthodox faith spread throughout the country until Moscow became known as the Third Rome. The hierarchical and autocratic faith eventually was wedded to the political power of the czars. The Romanov czars came to be regarded by the peasants as deities, answerable only to God. In Nicholas II this arrogance came to a head as his well intentioned but inept leadership

plunged the empire into a crisis that resulted in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Three hundred years of Romanov rule were replaced by the utopian theory of communism which also failed to bring about a just society.

Modern Russia has become a proverb among the nations for what was written long ago in the Bible: “Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; but by a man of understanding and knowledge right will be prolonged” (Proverbs 28:2). Also in Proverbs 29:2: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan.”

There appears today to be no leader in Russia who has the wisdom or vision to lead the people into a brighter safer time. During her long history, no political or religious leader measured up to the description of a just and wise ruler that King David described at the end of his reign. “The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain” (2 Samuel 23:3–4).

A little understood factor in the rise and fall of great powers has been the lack of true justice and righteous rule within their borders. Other than Israel of old, no nation has ever been founded on the just law of God. Without such a proper foundation the words of the second Psalm come to light. Nations rage and the people devise empty paths (verse 2). Monarchs, presidents, dictators, and all rulers plan strategies and devise theories apart from the foundation of God’s Word. Ultimately, God will set His hand to bring all nations under His rule, but not until the lessons of human

*“The greatest truth about Russia today is that, after 1,000 years of one absolute faith or another, today it has no faith and no system at all.”*

*“And here, in this new period for Mother Russia, we come to the final truth, one that will haunt and change this country.”*

experience prove the folly of man’s government (verses 8–9). God urges those who rule over men to seek godly instruction and to humbly serve their people, knowing they hold office by God’s will (verse 10–11).

Nicholas II, like so many other autocratic monarchs, sought to hold onto his power at a time in history when the *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, was changing. Freedom, liberty, and self-determination had long been denied the Russians. The Czar could not grasp what was happening and abdicated the throne. With his murder, the Bolsheviks hoped to kill a part of their history and start anew. During their 74 year reign they tried to extinguish the Orthodox faith throughout the land. Churches were closed or left to rot. Priests who sought to minister to the people were persecuted. One autocratic rule was substituted for another, one form of faith for another.

Columnist Georgie Ann Geyer wrote recently about this cumulative effect of misrule: “The greatest truth about Russia today is that, after 1,000 years of one absolute faith or another, today it has no faith and no system at all. Oh, a few communists still hang around, but their time is clearly at an end. The Orthodox Church is experiencing a small revival, but it is too

soon to say how deeply its tenets still bore into Russia’s soul.

“Above all, this is an age here without principle. This is not a time for grandeur and a true faith, but a time dictated by individual seeking and the miniaturization of dreams. And here, in this new period for Mother Russia, we come to the final truth,

one that will haunt and change this country: When the United States and the West defeated communism, they did far more than defeat one period of Russian history. They defeated its entire history” (*Universal Press Syndicate*, June 2, 1998).

While a burial should be a time of healing and looking forward to the future, the burial of Russia’s last czar is a reminder of past mistakes and human misrule. May the Romanov family and their servants rest in peace until better times. ❖

# Kids Killing Kids

*The horror of pistol-packing students—and what to do about them*

by Cecil E. Maranville

*Overtones of shock, perplexity, fear and desperation spoke through news reports as the incidents of school shootings mounted throughout the school year of 1997–98.*

**S**avage, random shootings repeatedly terrorized people over the past year. As shocking as the deeds themselves, was the identity of the perpetrators—not masked madmen, but mere boys, students of the public schools of the United States!

The potential for this kind of nightmarish violence is disturbingly widespread. One survey's findings "suggest that for *every classroom* of 30 students, *in every school building in America*, on average one student has *attended school with a gun* in grades six through 12" (Gun "Nightmare" Gets Better, But Still a Reality For Schools, © 1998 *MSNBC*, Friday, June 19, 1998) (emphasis ours throughout.).

Overtones of shock, perplexity, fear and desperation spoke through news reports as the incidents of school shootings mounted throughout the school year of 1997–98. Why is this happening? Who is responsible? What can be done to stop it?

School and community officials, along with politicians at all levels, have banded together with parents in a common sense of urgency to make schools safe again. While numerous solutions or partial solutions have been suggested with great passion, none offers an obvious or certain fix. Soberly, circumstances augur more of the same for the 1998–99 school year, with more kids killing kids.

## The Profile of a Gun-Toting Student

What profile does a gun-toting student fit? "Students who said they carried a gun were:

- Less likely to live with both parents...

- More likely to be in trouble with the police...
- More likely to join gangs...
- Less likely to get good grades..." (ibid.).

Not surprisingly, *drug usage* is also part of the profile. "Among the gun-toters, two-thirds said they used illicit drugs...at least once a month" (ibid.).

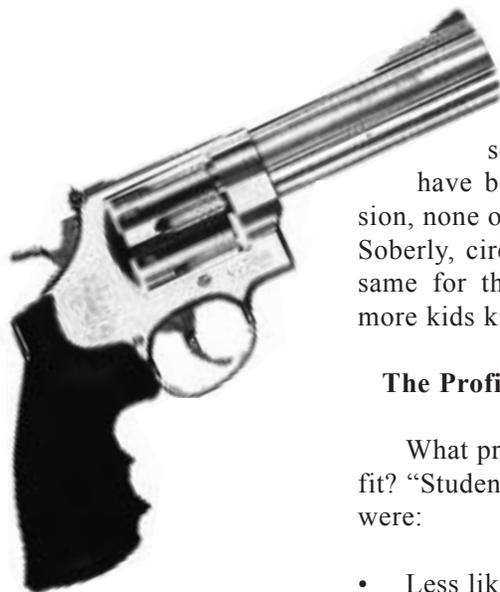
Disquieting trends in the emotional maturity level of youth are an evident factor. Ron Stephens, head of the National School Safety Center, says we are talking "about kids who are *'more callous, less remorseful and have a lot of anger inside'*" (ibid.).

Music and entertainment preferences need to be added to the profile. "The 13-year-old Arkansas boy accused of gunning down classmates was influenced by the violence portrayed in the rap music he played repeatedly before the shooting, his English teacher told [federal] lawmakers Tuesday [June 16, 1998].

"Mitchell Johnson listened to gangsta-rap artists including Tupac Shakur and Bone Thugs 'N Harmony 'over and over' in the months leading to the March rampage in Jonesboro, Ark., said teacher Debbie Pelley. Often, he sang along to the lyrics, like the ones about *'coming to school and killing all the kids'*" (Music Warning Labels Probed, by Eun-Kyung Kim, © 1998 *Associated Press*, June 16, 1998).

## Increase Police Presence?

Much touted is the addition of more law-enforcement officers, either resident on the school property or in increased patrols around school perimeters, or both.



President Clinton threw the weight of the White House behind this concept “by ordering his cabinet to find ways to put more police officers in schools before classes resume after the summer break” (Clinton Wants More Police In Schools, by Randall Mikkelsen, © 1998 *Reuters Limited*).

Accepting for the moment that funding for such a program can be created, how much hope should we realistically place in this idea? What’s to prevent a student from committing a violent act out of the sight of an officer? At least one shooting occurred this past year in a school that had a resident police officer. The officer was on the second floor when the shooting took place on the first floor. Increased police presence is clearly not a complete solution.

Potentially enhancing the effectiveness of this plan is a sweeping concept offered by Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher. “[Create] a School Resource Officer Program to place a law enforcement officer in school full time to spot and counsel troubled students, to educate others on violence and to arrest those who commit crimes” (Pennsylvania Attorney General Fisher Recommends Actions To Address School Violence, © 1998 *PR Newswire*, June 22, 1998).

Not to say this is without merit, but such a concept is, to say the least, *ambitious*. Is it reasonable to expect that such a program could succeed where home and communities have failed?

Look again at the profile of a gun-toting student. Broken or single-parent homes, criminal history, gang affiliation, low personal achievement, serious defects in emotional maturity and illicit drug usage are *colossal* social factors, not to be counteracted by limited interactions with law

*Some propose that schools need to be made into high security, restricted access areas. Prevent the guns from ever entering the schools.*

enforcement officers on staff at the local school. Even if it could achieve the impossible, this is another long-term program, not one which offers security guarantees for the immediate future.

#### **Razor Wire and Metal Detectors— For Public Schools!**

Some propose that schools need to be made into high security, restricted access areas. Prevent

the guns from ever entering the schools. Sensible though this is, what is necessary to accomplish it demands a heavy price. “We may soon see kids being locked in, fences placed around school, razor wire and metal detectors, [School Superintendent Jamon] Kent [of Springfield, Ore.] said. ‘I am not sure our communities, parents or our kids want that to occur.’

“The tough issue is: ‘How do they react without overreacting?’ said Ron Stephens, executive

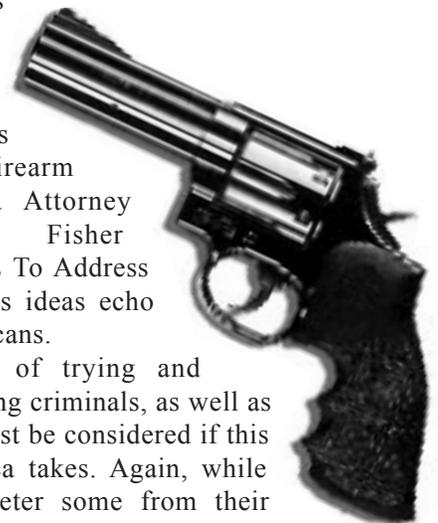
*Yes, the children of the United States are sadly lacking in the ability to manage their desires and disappointments in an acceptable way. But do the adults have the heart and the sense to set the example?*

director of the National School Safety Center. ‘You don’t want to ignore a ticking time bomb and you don’t want to be too Draconian in what you do’” (Violent Year Has Schools on Edge, by Will Lester, © 1998 *Associated Press*, Wednesday, June 17, 1998).

It is indeed hard to visualize this in “America, the land of the *free*.”

Calls for bringing the full force of the law down on gun-toting kids and their parents are being heard repeatedly. Pennsylvania’s Attorney General Mike Fisher has made several tough suggestions to his state legislature along this line. They include a one-year mandatory minimum sentence for any person convicted of bringing a gun onto school property and holding parents responsible to the families of victims when their minor child kills or injures with the parent’s firearm (ibid., Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher Recommends Actions To Address School Violence). His ideas echo those of many Americans.

Attendant costs of trying and incarcerating the young criminals, as well as the civil litigation must be considered if this is the course America takes. Again, while these factors *may* deter some from their



(See “KIDS,” page 16)

# In Brief...

## World News Review

### The Specter of Financial Instability

Ostensibly, both the United States and Britain are in great financial shape, perhaps more prosperous than ever before. Yet, several times since the advent of the Asian economic crisis, world finances have been on the brink of a chaotic comedown. Each time saw a valiant rescue. Yet as noted author and columnist Paul Johnson recently wrote, "Asia is the detonator—the Big Bomb is in Wall Street where speculative fever recalls 1929" (*The Daily Mail*).

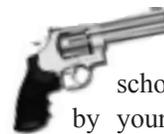
Even though there are now far more safeguards than during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the speed at which the stock market presently moves is astonishingly frightening, particularly to those less well versed in new marketing technology. What goes up can come down very rapidly. The once proud British bank, Barings, was driven to its knees in just a few weeks by the activities of one renegade trader.

Wall Street has been riding high, big time. Yet well-respected financial guru Alan Greenspan, chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, worries about a crash and has urged marketeers to effect a slowdown which hopefully will produce what he terms "a soft landing."

Summing up the situation across the Atlantic, Paul Johnson writes that "In Europe there are fanatical ideologues, hell-bent on federalism and a common currency for political reasons, whatever the economic and financial cost."

Meanwhile a massive International Monetary Fund cash injection relieved a Japanese economy judged to be in its worst state since World War II.

### Prosperity Without Morality— the Moral Maze



America has been shocked and stunned by a spate of school killings callously perpetrated by young people—usually one student murdering and wounding other students. This phenomenon was unthinkable in the 1940s and 50s.

The U.S.A. is the richest society on this planet, but moral values are often given short shrift by the media and other parts of North American culture. Basic concepts of right and wrong have not been sufficiently imbedded into young American minds.

The country is booming, but its citizens are busily ingesting more "lifestyle" pills—like Viagra—than ever before. At 60 we seem to want to be 17. Decades ago, in his prophetic novel, *Brave New World*, author Aldous Huxley described a society hooked on *soma*, a drug aptly described as "the pill of universal happiness and enhanced performance." Some people neither want to grow old or grow up. They never leave high school. The cult of youth tends to be pervasive.

Across the waters in Britain, the Archbishop of Canterbury has called for a strong moral direction. He has rightly warned that taking Britain into the 21st century "would be an immense challenge for the church." From time to time he and other astute observers lament the coarsening of morals that tends to characterize modern England.

A recent look at official statistics showed that "Britain has the world's highest rate of unmarried teenage mothers." Of those that have children before age 20, 87 percent are unwed. Yet sex without real love is constantly

*"Asia is the  
detonator—the  
Big Bomb is in  
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where  
speculative  
fever recalls  
1929."*

promoted in movies, pop songs, teen magazines and television.

Surprisingly, the number of women who leave their husband and children has tripled in the last three years. Desertion used to be a dubious male preserve, but times are apparently changing fast.

### The Failure of Religion

Vulnerable young people have not been educated into a right understanding of the true values of living. The Ten Commandments are no longer in vogue, not even in the established Anglican church. No wonder one in five British girls apparently tries suicide. No wonder a fifth of adults in the Western world carry the sexually-transmitted Herpes virus.

Anglican church attendance has recently dropped to all-time record lows—plunging downwards at the rate of more than 600 per week, nationally. A popular columnist, A. N. Wilson, titled one recent weekly feature article, “Is It Time to Shut Down the Church of England?”

Small wonder then that the government is planning “religion-free baptisms.” Poetry and music would replace prayers and holy water. Surely a secular baptism is a new wrinkle on the earth. We have let our young people down.

### Pope Urges Faithful to Keep Sunday Holy

“Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life” writes Pope John Paul II in a recently issued apostolic letter called “Dies Domine” (the Day of the Lord). “From the beginning of my Pontificate, I have not ceased to repeat: Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ! In the same way, today I would strongly urge everyone to rediscover Sunday: do not be afraid to give your time to Christ!”

The letter, addressed to “the Bishops, Clergy, and Faithful,” intends to boost the dwindling number of regular mass-goers and reiterate the church-

es theological doctrine of the first day of the week. In several references it admonishes Christians to “ensure that

*Some church leaders have urged an end to sporting events on Sundays. Cardinal John O’Conner of New York appealed for a stop to Little League games on Sunday mornings earlier this spring.*

civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy.”

Low church attendance among Catholics in much of the world has prompted in part the Pope’s charge. In Vienna last month the Pope told Catholics: “Do whatever you can to preserve Sunday. Make it clear that this day must not be worked [on], since it must be celebrated as the day of the our Lord.” Only 17 percent of Austrian Catholics attend mass.



The percentage is lower in many Latin countries where there are major shortages of priests for the large Roman Catholic populations. Some church leaders have urged an end to sporting events on Sundays. Cardinal John O’Conner of New York appealed for a stop to Little League games on Sunday mornings earlier this spring.

Citing many ancient references to church fathers, the pope’s letter offers a contemplative, philosophical vision of

the meaning of Sunday. Sunday “is the supreme day of faith” and “given its many meanings and aspects, and its link to the very foundations of the faith, the celebration of the Christian Sunday remains, on the threshold of the Third Millennium, an indispensable element of our Christian identity,” he said.

The letter is a significant statement to the church about the importance of venerating one day above all others. The full text of the letter can be downloaded from the Vatican web site at <http://www.vatican.va>.

### AIDS Conference

Scientists, doctors, activists, and journalists meeting at a U.N. sponsored AIDS conference in Geneva last month heard chilling news about the widespread impact of the disease and the rapid rate at which it is spreading. 16,000 new cases arise each day and currently there are 31 million people infected with the HIV virus.

The overwhelming majority of the 30 million people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, are doomed to die because they live in countries that cannot provide adequate health care. Africa is being hit so fiercely that it now rivals history’s greatest and deadliest epidemics—plague in Middle Ages and influenza in 1918–1919.

The U.N. AIDS program cited four reasons for the high infection rates in Africa. One is that more women of child-bearing age are infected with HIV in Africa than elsewhere. A second is that African women have more children on

(See “BRIEF,” page 16)

“KIDS” (Continued from page 13)

crimes, deterrence works over time—perhaps not *in time* for the next school year.

We haven't even touched on the hotly debated gun control issue, which some offer as another piece to the ugly and complex puzzle before the parents and communities of the United States in the late 1990s. But enough has been said to convey that the puzzle is indeed *ugly* and *complex*.

### Lasting Change or Quick Fix?

No instant or even quick solution presents itself. The circumstance in which the United States finds itself was determined by millions of choices of millions of individuals over the course of decades: choices to use or to sell drugs, choices to buy or to market violence as “entertainment,” choices to break up a home or to produce children without marriage, and choices to rear children without instilling a sense of personal responsibility [or is it simply the lack of knowing *how* to rear children?].

The cost of changing the frightening crisis of kids killing kids far supercedes any proposal reviewed in this article. Reversing the factors that brought on the current predicament is *the only way* to bring about lasting change. Millions of individuals will have to learn what is right, decent and moral. Those same millions will have to choose the right way and live it, regardless of what those around them do.

Yes, *the children* of the United States are sadly lacking in the ability to manage their desires and disappointments in an acceptable way. But do *the adults* have the heart and the sense to set the example?

People of the U.S. are not “comfortable” with too narrow a definition of right versus wrong. They would fit quite well in the time of unstructured leadership in the history of ancient Israel. “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25, New International Version throughout).

There is a price to be paid for such an approach to life. The country is paying part of it with the current experience with school violence. These young people were conceived and reared by the people who now struggle to control them (not to focus upon parents to the exclusion of non-parents). *The youth of the United States are the products of the United States, in toto.*

### In God We Trust

There was a time when it was important to the leaders and citizens alike of the U.S.A. to orient their lives—home, school, entertainment and government—around a simple belief and practice of the Ten Commandments. The American anthem, “God Bless America,” proclaimed the stolid creed of liberty *in law*. Somewhere along the way its citizens lost sight of the fact that true liberty is by and through the law of God.

Deadly gunfire now echoes across the U.S. landscape. Unless its people undergo a profound repentance, more is sure to follow. Sad to say, that will include more kids killing kids. Would that these Words of God would echo more loudly than the report of any weapon: “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them *and their children* forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29.) ❖

“BRIEF” (Continued from page 15)

average than those on other continents. Thus, one infected woman may pass the virus on to a higher number of children. A third reason is that nearly all children in Africa are breast-fed. Breast-feeding is thought to account for between a third and a half of all HIV transmission from mother to child. A fourth reason is that new drugs are less readily available in Africa than in the industrialized world.

At the last such conference held two years ago in Vancouver, delegates heard promising reports of new vaccines. Such hoped for vaccines have

*The overwhelming majority of the 30 million people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, are doomed to die because they live in countries that cannot provide adequate health care.*

failed, producing AIDS in test situations rather than preventing the disease. Other anti-AIDS drugs have also proven futile. Participants left the conference facing the fact that the best approach to fighting the disease was the one with which they began—prevention.

Sadly, two of the most effective tools of prevention, abstinence and maintaining a monogamous relationship run counter to the prevailing mores of those groups most affected by the disease.

With a vaccine against HIV a distant hope, AIDS is with us to stay for a long time. (Source: *International Herald Tribune* and the *Wall Street Journal*)

*John Ross Schroeder  
and Darris McNeely*