

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

March/April 2001

Vol. 4, No. 3

The Special Relationship Reaffirmed

The close historic ties between Britain and the United States continue, yet a cloud hangs over the alliance. Britain is increasingly caught in the middle between the United States and Europe.

by Melvin Rhodes

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, on a visit to the United States a few years ago, told viewers on a breakfast television program that the great lesson of the 20th century was that when Britain and the United States stood side by side in the interests of world peace, they always won.

These words were reminiscent of the prophetic warning given by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the 19th century, who predicted that the most important fact of the coming 20th century was that Britain and the United States spoke the same language.

The impact of this upon Germany was to be profound.

Winston Churchill, whose mother was the American Jennie Jerome, once cautioned, "English is the common language that divides us."

The preceding comments are reminders that Britain and America are very similar, but still different. Inevitably, their interests will not always coincide.



Source: www.whitehouse.gov

U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair meet at Camp David February 23

But the fact remains that the two nations have enjoyed a formal "special relationship" for six decades and an informal "SPECIAL," page 3)

In This Issue...

When the Angel Leaves the Storm, Part 2 — Mad Cow Disease — Another Crack in the Transatlantic Alliance? — Running Better Than Ever

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World News and Prophecy is published monthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, publisher of *The Good News* magazine, 5405 Dupont Circle, Suite A, Milford, OH 45150. © 2001 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

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Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Subscriptions: *World News and Prophecy* is sent free to the membership of the United Church of God, and all who request it. There is no subscription price. To request a subscription, write to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, telephone (513) 576-9796 or download a copy off our Web site at <http://www.ucg.org>

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Contents

The Special Relationship Reaffirmed

by Melvin Rhodes page 1

When the Angel Leaves the Storm, Part 2

by Darris McNeely page 5

Mad Cow Disease: The Fear Alone Is Costly

by Cecil E. Maranville page 8

Another Crack in the Transatlantic Alliance?

by Paul Kieffer page 11

In Brief... World News Review

by Cecil E. Maranville and
John Ross Schroeder page 13

This Is the Way... Running Better Than Ever

by Robin Webber page 16

Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed.
The next issue is scheduled to be available on May 9 on the
Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/wnp/>.

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.

“SPECIAL,” (Continued from page 1)
mal one that goes back much further.

At one time, the two countries were subjects of one crown. This was prior to 1776 when the 13 original colonies (soon to be states) were all part of the British Empire. “Most colonial leaders in the mid-eighteenth century thought of themselves not as Americans but as Britons,” writes American historian Gordon S. Wood (*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 1991, p. 12).

Together the American settlers and the British military defeated the French in North America during the French and Indian War (called the Seven Years War in England, 1756-63). Barely a decade later, differences between the mother country and colonists led to America breaking away.

Further conflict between the two was to follow in the War of 1812. In the interim, the British merchant bank Berings had arranged the financing for the Louisiana Purchase, thereby substantially increasing the size of the new American Republic. British investment throughout the 19th century was to play a significant role in the development of the new country. A century later American investment was to help Britain recover following World War II.

Without the British Royal Navy, America could not have enforced the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European powers to stay out of the Americas following the upheavals that freed Latin American countries from Spain. Even as recently as 1940, Americans still looked to the nations of the British Empire and Commonwealth as their first line of defense.

American historian James Truslow Adams wrote in that threatening year when the British Empire was at war with the Axis powers and America was still neutral: “...for those who have been accustomed to freedom of person and of spirit, the possible overthrow of the British Empire would be a catastrophe scarcely thinkable. Not only would it leave a vacuum over a quarter of the globe into which all the wild winds of anarchy, despotism and spiritual oppression could rush, but the strongest bulwark outside ourselves for our own

safety and freedom would have been destroyed” (*The British Empire, 1784-1939*, p. 358).

Role reversal

World War II was to see a role reversal with America emerging as the dominant global power by 1945. The British had needed American help in both world wars. In World War I, “pro-British feeling was particularly strong in Wall Street, where J.P. Morgan, Jr., son of the great financier and heir to his vast banking empire, was an ardent anglophile who spent half of each year in Britain. It was to Morgan’s that the British Government turned in the early months of the war to handle its military purchases in the United States, to arrange contracts for rifles, shells and heavy guns, for food and vital raw

Without the British Royal Navy, America could not have enforced the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European powers to stay out of the Americas....

materials such as oil, cotton and copper.... By mid-1915 Morgan’s was spending millions each week to pay for Britain’s war needs...” (David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart*, 1988, pp. 45, 49). In 1917, the United States was to enter the war fighting alongside nations of the British Empire and Commonwealth.

America might have continued to play a significant role in world affairs following her involvement in World War I, but Congress would not support President Woodrow Wilson’s desire that America join the League of Nations, forerunner of the United Nations.

A “serious obstacle to co-operation” between Britain and America after World War I “was the fact that the Big

Two of the post-war world were rivals as much as collaborators” (ibid., p. 78). Texan Colonel Edward House, an ardent supporter of Great Britain and an adviser to President Wilson, visited London shortly after the war. He shared his observations with Wilson:

“Almost as soon as I arrived in England, I sensed an antagonism to the United States. The English are quite as cordial and hospitable to the individual American as ever, but they dislike us collectively.... While the British Empire vastly exceeds the United States in area and population and while their aggregate wealth is perhaps greater than ours, yet our position is much more favorable. It is because of this that the relations between the two countries are beginning to assume the same character as that between England and Germany before the war” (ibid.).

The two main issues that divided the countries between the world wars were sea power and finance. Britain’s remained the biggest navy, but the United States was rapidly increasing the size of her own (as was Japan), which Britain perceived as a possible threat. At the same time, the United States found it difficult to break into Britain’s captive colonial markets, another source of friction.

Britain remained briefly committed to her Commonwealth ties after World War II. Film footage of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953 illustrates the military ties that still bound the multitude of nations together. But this was to change, suddenly, dramatically and unexpectedly as British and American interests diverged.

The crisis was Suez in 1956. The British- and French-owned Suez Canal was seized by the new nationalist military government of Egypt. British, French and Israeli troops attacked Egypt to win back the canal. Fearing that such a move would let the Soviets into the region by the back door, American President Dwight D. Eisenhower did not back the British. Economically still very fragile and heavily dependent on the United States, Britain pulled back. The ripple effect was the end of her empire and recogni-

tion by London that America had replaced her as the global superpower.

A decade later, Britain's Labour government failed to back the United States in Vietnam. Interestingly, Suez and Vietnam were both lost while other wars were won, thereby emphasizing Margaret Thatcher's point, that when the United States and Britain stand together, they win. When they do not support each other, as in Suez and Vietnam, they lose.

Frequently, both nations, acting in unison, have led the defense of the Western world against the forces of despotism. As we shall see, this was prophesied in the pages of the Bible.

Common ancestry

Genesis chapter 49 is a chapter about the "last days" (verse 1), prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of God at the return of Jesus Christ. Far from being of no significance, thousands of years after their ancestor Jacob (Israel) lived, the descendants of his 12 sons were prophesied to be at the center of human affairs. Joseph, Israel's favorite son, was to be "a fruitful bough...his branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22), spreading out around the world and bringing economic development to many nations (Genesis 12:2-3).

Joseph's descendants were also prophesied to be at the center of world conflicts, victorious with God's help. "The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob" (Genesis 49:23-24).

The preceding chapter, Genesis 48, shows that Britain and the United States at this time were to be separate nations. Joseph's sons, verses 19 and 20, were to "become a multitude of nations" and a "great" single nation (the British Empire and the United States). Joseph was their common parent. Interestingly, Joseph is mentioned in chapter 49, not Ephraim and Manasseh, his two sons. The two peoples were to be acting in unison in prophesied end-time conflicts.

Ephraim, the multitude of nations,

was to be great "before Manasseh" was (Genesis 48:20). The great company of nations was to become great before the United States. As we have seen, this is exactly what happened. For two hundred years, right up until World War II, the "multitude of nations" was the free world's first line of defense. Since World War II, the U.S. has been the leader of the Western world, the most powerful of Israel's sons. (For more on this subject, see our booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Caught in the middle

The visit of British Prime Minister Tony Blair to Washington D.C. in February was the first meeting of a European leader with the new American president, George W. Bush, a reflection of the closeness of the two nations and of the special bond that has bound them together. President Bush spoke warmly of the special relationship and of his desire to see it continue during his administration.

Watching their press conference on America's Fox News satellite network on Friday afternoon, February 23, I was struck by how positive the coverage was and how favorable it was to Britain. Only one week earlier, the two nations had acted together against Iraq while other allies were not so supportive—some were openly critical. Less than one hour later, I watched coverage of the same press conference on "BBC America," Britain's television channel in the United States. Here the emphasis was more negative, pointing out the differences between the two leaders and the two nations they lead. In this writer's opinion, a subtle change has taken place in the "special relationship." In the past, the British talked about it most, concerned that America might forget them. Now, it is the Americans expressing their fears for the future.

While both leaders seem committed to the continuance of the "special relationship," a cloud hangs over the

alliance. That cloud is the European Union and the increasingly divergent interests that aggravate relations between the United States and Europe. Britain is increasingly caught in the middle. Tony Blair has said that he sees himself explaining America to Europe and Europe to America. But at some future time, it is likely that Britain will be torn between the two.

Ironically, it was former American Secretary of State Dean Acheson who proclaimed in 1962, "Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role." Encouraged by the United States, Britain's new role was to be a member of the European Common Market, now the European Union. American administrations hoped that a British presence in Europe would guarantee America's interests on the continent.

Past American administrations have supported the drive for European unity, but there now seems to be an increasing awareness that Europe could break away from the United States. In less than 12 months, the single market will be a reality with the euro in circulation as Europe's new currency. Europe is growing faster than the United States, and its trade ties often negatively affect America's overseas business interests. Additionally, there are fears that the new European Rapid Reaction Force will be outside America's control. Tony Blair was reassuring on this matter. But he may not be able to deliver on that reassurance. Britain does not control Europe and is often the outsider looking in.

The next few years will be important ones for the "special relationship," as different interests threaten the close ties between Western Europe and the United States, with Britain caught in the middle.

The book of Hosea suggests that the United States (Manasseh, the dominant tribe of Israel today) and Britain (Ephraim), with the Jewish state of Israel (Judah in biblical prophecy), will "fall in their iniquity" at the same time (Hosea 5:5). The United States and Britain will likely continue as allies until God removes His protection from them as a result of their turning away from Him. ♦



When the Angel Leaves the Storm, Part 2

The hand of God—the “angel in this storm”—has blessed America, yet how much longer will that angel stand guard over the nation? How much longer can we count on God’s material blessings on the nation? Are the current good times merely an Indian summer of prosperity before a winter of tribulation? The time has come to understand.

by Darris McNeely

In his January 2001 inaugural address, President George W. Bush alluded to “an angel in this storm,” a metaphorical reference to divine providence guiding the destiny of the United States. America must face some crucial issues if it is to maintain its role as world leader. Yet Scripture indicates the same social problems that led ancient Israel to its fall are present in modern America.

In part one of this series (see February 2001 *World News and Prophecy*), we looked at the condition of ancient Israel during the midpoint of the eighth century B.C. The prophets God sent to warn of Israel’s condition spared no words in pointing out the inner decay that threatened ruin if not changed. Amos, Hosea and Isaiah clearly pointed out the problems facing the nation and its people.

Amos showed a nation with deep social divisions. Notice this passage, “They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly. Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time” (Amos 5:10–13).

This gulf between the rich and the poor seems to be even further aggravated by a callous disregard for the well-being of the disadvantaged. Those who were profiting from the good economic times focused their attention on themselves and consumer consumption. “Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence

to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed. The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts says: ‘I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore I will deliver up the city and all that is in it’” (Amos 6:3–8).

Amos saw these social problems as deep sins entrenched in the national character that would lead to punishment by God. Unless drastic changes took place, there would be a soon-coming day of judgment. In fact, judgment did come within a few short decades. The prophet’s message is stern. He felt Israel was really beyond repair. He held out the hope of restoration in his concluding statement (Amos 9:11–15), but he definitely saw a coming calamity that would sweep away the moral decay.

America today

The aftermath of the 2000 election shows America to be a nation divided along deep lines of cultural issues. President George W. Bush won a narrow victory in the electoral college, even though he lost the popular vote. A look at the breakdown by state shows that Bush carried most of the midwestern, southern and western states while losing the key population centers in New England and the West Coast.

There is more to this divide than mere geog-

There are major gaps in what people say they believe and how they actually live. All around us, we see evidence of moral and ethical failure.

raphy. The January 19, 2001, *Wall Street Journal* gave this view of what the new president faces. “As the nation’s 43rd president, he inherits a country split not by economics or politics so much as by culture. On one side is the America Mr. Bush already identifies with: mainly rural, religiously observant, devoted to traditional notions of marriage and morality. On the other is the group he is reaching out to: largely urban, secular, tolerant of feminism and gay rights” (“President-Elect Bush Risks Widening the Cultural Gap, Instead of Closing It” by John Harwood).

The divide is starkly shown in areas of race and religion. The priorities of those who regularly attend church are different from those who do not. “Among Americans who say they attend church at least once a week, 48% say it’s most important for the new president to restore moral and family values, while 37% say it’s most important for him to maintain economic growth. Among those who don’t attend church at all, 59% think the most important mission is maintaining economic growth, while only 25% say it is restoring moral and family values” (ibid.). The more often voters went to church, the more likely they were to vote for Mr. Bush. Those voters not attending church tended to vote for Mr. Gore.

Perception of which ideology best serves a particular racial group is also evident. “And the racial divide—which persists notwithstanding the conservative social views held by many African-Americans—has become a chasm. Among white Americans, 55% say they have positive feelings toward Mr. Bush; just 13% of blacks do. Almost half of white Americans say they are confident that Mr. Bush has the right set of personal characteristics to be president; only 6% of blacks feel that way” (ibid.).

It is increasingly evident that America has become one system, but two nations. One Republican pollster commented, “We have two massive colliding forces. One is rural, Christian, religiously conservative. [The other] is socially tolerant, pro-choice, secular, living in New England and the Pacific coast” (*The Economist*, “One Nation, Fairly Divisible, Under God,” January 18, 2001).

The new president, and likely any

president after him, will face a growing cultural divide in this country. The divide will be along the lines of what people believe about race, sexual morality, money, values, religion and even themselves.

As he struggles to bring people together, he will have to contend with polarizing views of the various groups. Those on the right will want to see their social agenda prevail in areas of economic tax cuts, abortion and education. Those on the left will resist programs that threaten to roll back their social agenda in these areas. This will continue to erode our national character over the next decade.

America in 2001 is a country divided along significant cultural lines. A majority middle group, which describes itself as moderate, holds the extremes together. Fully 50 percent of Americans describe themselves as moderate. This means they are socially liberal, economically conservative. They are concerned about their kids’ schools, their Palm Pilots, their SUVs and the roads over which they drive them. They are interested in values, and the value they most cherish is tolerance—which suggests their moral center, their spiritual compass, is not fixed.

Religious decay

Such was the case in ancient Israel. Amos eloquently addresses the false religion that had permeated every part of Israelite society. The Baal worship imported by Jezebel remained as a stain upon the nation. The churches of the land were full of people. The wealth of the merchant class found its way into the religious coffers as well. “‘Come to Bethel and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days. Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, proclaim and announce the freewill offerings; for this you love, you children of Israel!’ says the Lord God” (Amos 4:4–5).

Yet the worship services of Israel did not reflect the true pattern given through Moses. God turned a deaf ear to the music and praise that came to His hearing. He averted His eyes from the outward form of religion that came before His face. “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not

savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21–24).

Israel had abandoned the true faith and embraced a false religion based on the worship of Baal. Ironically, they still looked upon themselves as a righteous nation even though there were few vestiges of the truth. “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God” (Hosea 4:11–12). A new updated form of religion had supplanted the true worship of God.

American spirituality— “Twinkies or broccoli?”

Today we live in times of paradox. In America there seems to be a period of religious revival. Typical surveys show that 90 percent of people say they believe in God. Many feel they are spiritual or feel a need to fill a spiritual void in their life; not that they always feed on valid knowledge. One prominent American theologian was asked if he felt the people’s quest for spiritual fulfillment was authentic. “The hunger is always authentic,” he answered. “It’s just that you can feed it with Twinkies or with broccoli.”

But what exactly are people feeding upon? Is it truth or is it error? What is the foundation upon which modern religionists base their faith and practice? “In polls on biblical literacy, half of those describing themselves as Christians are unable to name who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Many Americans cannot name the reason for celebrating Easter or what the Ten Commandments are. People think the name of Noah’s wife was Joan as in *Joan of Ark*” (George Gallup, Jr., *The Next American Spirituality*, 2000, p. 30).

There are major gaps in what people say they believe and how they actually live. All around us, we see evidence of

moral and ethical failure. Political leaders flagrantly transgress moral and professional standards. Television has become a moral wasteland. Two-thirds of adults in the United States say the country's moral and cultural values have changed for the worse since the 1960s. For the first time in a half-century of surveys on American's top national concerns, a Gallup poll conducted in 1999 revealed "ethics, morality, and family decline" led the list at 18 percent (*ibid.*, p. 31).

Twenty years ago in America, Ronald Reagan, a Republican conservative, was elected president. Reagan drew largely upon the support of traditional Christians organized under the banner of the Moral Majority. There was great expectation that through legislation and politics the moral and cultural slide that began in the '60s could be reversed. But something happened along the way. Religious conservatives learned that because of the expediency of politics and the pervasive influence of the popular media culture they could not stem the great moral slide of the times. Ronald Reagan, a decent man espousing positive patriotism and family values, won the Cold War against Communism but, regrettably, lost the culture war.

"Paul Weyrich... a founding father of the Moral Majority says that traditionalists 'have lost the culture war.' The nation is caught up, he argues, 'in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics'" (*ibid.*, p. 31).

Leaders of the so-called "Christian Right" have come to see that they cannot effectively work within the political structures. While politicians may speak words of sympathy and a common ideology while they are running for office, once they are elected, they sacrifice principles to the expediency of policy or other business. It seems their influence within the political circle is not strong enough to influence legislation, much less the cultural decline.

A false foundation

While the emphasis continues to be on a moral and spiritual renewal, the question must be asked, "What is the founda-

tion of our modern Christian religion?" The answer is, a false form of the true religion taught by Christ and the apostolic Church. Like ancient Israel, today's manifestation of spirituality draws the condemnation of the Creator.

"Thus He showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the Lord said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the LORD said: 'Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam'" (Amos 7:7-9).

Little understood in today's religious supermarket of ideas is the reality that foundational Christian doctrines taught in churches bear little resemblance to the teaching Christ gave His disciples, which they spread to the world of the first century. A return to that form of apostolic teaching would require a repentance few groups could muster in the modern wilderness of spiritual deception. You cannot reform faulty theology and solve the fundamental problems created by spiritual lies. New wine cannot be poured into old wine skins. New containers must be built to hold long suppressed truths.

Israel of old did not heed the message of Amos or the other prophets. They haughtily thought that the God of their fathers was on their side and would not forsake them. They mistakenly interpreted their economic prosperity and international stature as proof of God's blessing. It was unthinkable that their world would or could be any different from the comfortable and secure state that they had always known. Israel had existed in its land for more than four hundred years and their current prosperity had lasted for many decades. They saw no reason to think this would not continue indefinitely.

Yet when Jeroboam II died, there ensued a period of political uncertainty from which the nation never recovered. No one was able to adequately assess the danger and effectively govern the disintegrating state. The words of Hosea sum up the situation, "They set up kings, but not by Me; they made princes, but I did not

acknowledge them. From their silver and gold they made idols for themselves—that they might be cut off" (Hosea 8:4).

Chapter 15 of 1 Kings shows a dizzying succession of kings reigning for short periods, with many of their reigns ended by assassination. Finally, under Pekah, a military man who seized control of the kingdom, the wrath of Assyria was aroused, the nation was invaded and lands seized. Within a few more years, the nation ceased to exist.

Good will and good intentions did not keep Israel from experiencing the judgment of God.

By 718 B.C., the nation had been overcome by Assyria and ceased to exist. These northern tribes were exiled, sifted among the nations (Amos 9:9), to reappear generations later as significant powers on the world scene.

Much of prophecy is dual and what came upon ancient Israel will come upon their modern descendants, the American and British peoples. They have sown the wind and shall reap a whirlwind of tribulation. Yet, through it all God remains faithful to His promise to restore and rebuild. "I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God" (Amos 9:14-15).

In order to have full confidence in continuing to receive God's blessings, sooner or later a nation has to be willing to take a long look at its lifestyle and make sure that it is pleasing to the Creator. The Bible speaks seriously of basic spiritual obligations we need to fulfill. God's willingness to continue to bless America or any other nation is contingent upon its people complying with His laws.

In Amos 3:2 the Israelites were reminded that with knowledge of the true God came moral responsibility. Jesus Christ reemphasizes this point by stating that men and women should not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). Only then can the divine blessings in God's Word be absolutely assured. ❖

Mad Cow Disease: The Fear Alone Is Costly

Concerns over mad cow disease are growing rapidly with the discovery of infected animals in France and Germany. The EU and the U.S. have stepped up control measures, but is it too late to contain the strange and cruel illness that could turn into an international catastrophe?

by Cecil E. Maranville

*The EU fears
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The name “mad cow disease” sounds like someone’s idea of a joke—or a B movie title—but there’s nothing humorous about it. It’s both an international trade issue and health concern.

“Mad cow disease” or simply, “mad cow” is the media’s shorthand for BSE, an acronym for “bovine spongiform encephalopathy”—“bovine” for cattle, “encephalopathy” for brain disease and “spongiform” for the dreadful effect that it has on the brain. A protein called a “prion” causes holes, like those in a sponge, to develop in the brain, eventually causing death. Some scientists believe this could be an entirely new type of disease, the scourge of the new millennium. A prion is neither a virus nor bacteria, meaning it cannot be killed or contained by methods familiar to today’s medical science. BSE is part of the transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) family of diseases.

After some hesitation, the EU has finally taken the step of banning animal feed that contains ground-up bones, entrails and other animal by-products, including blood. The EU fears BSE will spread uncontrolled to the continent from Britain, threatening not only livestock, but also people. Approximately 90 Britons have died from a human version of the disease, which is a new variant of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease and designated as vCJD.

While scientists cannot say with certainty how humans contract vCJD, it is believed that it’s transmitted by infected meat that humans consume.

Panic in Europe

The presence of BSE in U.K. cattle was first diagnosed in 1986, but other EU countries were hesitant to implement import restrictions on animal feed made from rendered British animals. Recent cases of BSE in France and Germany caused wide-

spread alarm, bordering on panic. EU officials immediately proposed draconian measures that could result in the destruction of up to 2 million cattle that cannot be certified as BSE-free.

Not surprisingly, European consumers have lost their taste for beef, regardless of whether officials declare it safe. Concerned parents demanded the removal of beef from school menus in nearly two dozen French school districts, as well as in Geneva. Many German restaurants are no longer serving beef. Both beef and pork are absent from the German parliament’s canteen, and beef is no longer served to German soldiers.

German consumers turned to venison when the BSE scare started a few months ago, but have since learned that the deer apparently were fed the same contaminated feed that transmitted BSE to German cattle.

A small city zoo in Berlin reported that staff members hungry for meat had stolen and eaten geese, ducks and hens from the zoo!

One French slaughterhouse reported a 65 percent fall off in business and will likely be put out of business altogether. Italian abattoirs have lost 70 percent of their business since the scare began. Similar reports come out of Spain and Portugal. Governments and producers have moved to attempt to restore consumer confidence, but beef is a tough sell.

The discovery of a batch of BSE-contaminated meat *on supermarket shelves* in Britain in October 2000 did little to alleviate concerns—there or elsewhere. European Commission (EC) figures as of January 28 show that beef prices have fallen by nearly 25 percent since last October. The EU’s agriculture minister, Franz Fischler, described the effect of the mad cow scare as “alarming.”

Hamburger giant McDonald’s reported a 7

percent drop in fourth quarter earnings for 2000, due to a 10 percent reduction in sales in Europe—as a direct result of the BSE scare that began to be publicized in November of last year. (Europe is McDonald's second largest market, behind the U.S.) An AP report on February 7 noted that the sale of beef had fallen 27 percent throughout the EU since October.

In addition to the recently proposed EU action to wipe out millions of cattle, Britain has destroyed 4.5 million cattle since the outbreak of BSE was first discovered. The domino effect on the economies of EU countries is clearly staggering. The EC estimates that the crisis could cost the EU an extra billion dollars and put other agriculture programs at risk.

Science has been painstakingly slow in determining the existence of BSE, how it is spread and whether it can be transmitted to humans. British officials did not announce the link between the bovine version of the disease and the human version, vCJD, until 1996. The EU immediately banned the export of U.K. beef worldwide.

USDA action timely, or too late?

Heeding the potentially disastrous consequences of the EU's delayed actions, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) banned imports of animal feed that contains ground-up animals as early as 1989. The ban on all meat and bone imports was extended in 1997 to include all of Europe, but contradicting reports indicate that *these bans were not taken seriously or not fully enforced until December 2000.*

Up until that time, imported feed from rendered animals had been used to feed chickens and pigs, as well as cattle and sheep. Now, the USDA wants to destroy two flocks of Vermont sheep, based upon fear that they have contacted BSE through imported feed. The incubation period for BSE is so long that the possibility that U.S. stock is infected cannot be ruled out.

Another spongiform encephalopathy disease called "scrapie" has been found in sheep and goats for centuries. While fatal to infected animals, there is no proof that this form of the disease has ever been transmitted to humans. Therefore, sheep producers are reluctant to cooperate with

the USDA's wish to destroy their flocks and are fighting the order.

Who is right? "Skeptics argue...that there is no way to prove that the species barrier cannot be surmounted," reported *The Atlantic Monthly* ("Could Mad Cow Disease Happen Here?" a 3-part series by Ellen Ruppel Shell, 1998, part 1, p. 6).

Sheep and cattle are not the only animals that can have a type of TSE. "Strains of TSE have been found in sheep, goats, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, mink and cats" (ibid., part 2, p. 2). The strain in deer and elk is called chronic wasting disease.

Confident assertions by the USDA that no BSE exists in the U.S. sound hollow against the backdrop of the above information, as well as the fact that the USDA has tested only 12,000 U.S. cattle in the past 10 years—*out of approximately 100 million* ("Americans Wake Up to Threat of Mad Cow Disease" by Greg McCune, Reuters, January 28, 2001).

Blood could proliferate vCJD

Although not confirmed, human blood and blood plasma are thought to be possible transmitters of vCJD through transfusions. Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the U.S. are among the countries that have banned blood donations by people who spent more than six months in Britain between 1980 and 1996.

In a special report on the BSE crisis, a February 5th article in *The Guardian* said blood products donated by three people who later contracted vCJD had been sold to 11 countries: Ireland, Brazil, Dubai, India, Turkey, Brunei, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Russia and Singapore ("CJD Link to Blood Britain Sold Abroad" by James Meikle and Alex Bellos.)

The United States is experiencing a nationwide blood shortage, due in part to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ban on potentially infected blood donations. Australia is considering a similar ban—and counting the cost. Recent news stories in the Australian press estimate that up to "\$6 million will be spent each year, calling for blood donations" to replace those lost because of the ban (*The Age/Sydney Morning Herald*, "Blood Shortage Fears as CJD

Ban Likely," September 19, 2000, p. 1).

Fearing infected blood, German hemophiliacs and their families are campaigning for all patients to receive synthetic blood instead of human blood or blood-products.

While the bans may give comfort to some, the parameters of 1980-1996 as the years during which people spent more than six months in Britain are somewhat arbitrary. Consider this chilling fact from *The Atlantic Monthly* series: *It takes up to 30 years for humans infected with TSE to manifest symptoms* (part 1, p. 3).

How many people might be infected with vCJD? An October 26, 2000, CNN report says, "Estimates of new infections range from hundreds to millions...." Should we be concerned? The United Nations is.

UN investigates "worldwide exposure"

In late December 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) "expressed concern about what it called 'exposure worldwide' to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and its fatal human form... (vCJD). The United Nations health agency said that it would convene a major meeting of experts and officials from all regions on the neurodegenerative diseases that affect cattle and humans. It will be held in Geneva in late spring, probably in May" ("WHO to Convene Meeting on Global Risk of vCJD," Reuters, December 26, 2000, p. 1).

Given the latest news on BSE-infected cattle in France and Germany, WHO is concerned about beef exports from all EU countries, not just Britain. But, how easily can they track infected meat or animal by-products?

It's shocking to learn that "exported beef and meat products [are] often repackaged or transformed before being re-exported with new labeling" (ibid., p. 1). Tracing them becomes difficult, if not impossible.

With its citizens starving from famine, North Korea is ready to take donated beef from 400,000 cattle that Germany plans to slaughter. (The EU believes that it needs to create an artificial shortage of beef in order to buttress plum-

meting beef prices.) The cattle will be tested for BSE before being butchered—but the tests are not 100 percent reliable, and the Koreans face an undefined risk by consuming it.

In early February, China announced that it would begin testing cattle in response to fears that BSE may have been imported in infected animals or through contaminated feed.

Another problem is the fact that much of the world does not have the sophisticated testing equipment available to wealthy Western countries. *Blue Sky News* reported the first suspected case of vCJD in Russia, “raising fears that rules agreed [to] in Western Europe to contain BSE may not prevent its spreading much further afield” (“Fears That BSE Has Reached Russia,” December 6, 2000, p. 1). Quoting the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya*, “There is no laboratory in Russia that is able accurately to determine whether...BSE is present in meat.” It adds that Russia is not likely able to impose the kind of tough restrictions on meat production and distribution that the EU, the U.S. and other countries have.

Horrible new discovery

Alarming scientific findings were reported in the British press in August last year. Previously, it was thought that BSE did not jump from species to species very easily. Additionally, the general belief was that only clinically infected animals could transmit BSE.

A world-renowned expert on BSE, Professor John Collinge, has published findings that challenge both assumptions. Beef products contaminated with BSE rendered into animal feed that is fed to pigs, sheep and chickens could infect them with BSE, as well—and, conceivably, the humans who consume their flesh.

Even more alarming is the discovery that animals can be infected with BSE at a sub-clinical level. A clinical infection is manifested by outward symptoms. By contrast, the sub-clinical infection *manifests no symptoms, although the infected animal can still transmit the disease*.

The research may force authorities to reassess the scale of the BSE epidemic in cattle, as well as its potential for wider transmission.

Potential human and economic catastrophe

British beef producers have been hit the hardest up until recently. Now, the economies of other EU countries are being affected. Government ministers in Germany have been forced to step down to take responsibility for the outbreak of BSE there. The short-term panic has already caused the beef industry considerable losses and more will undoubtedly come before the BSE scare dies down—if it does. The more that is known about BSE and vCJD, the more likely it is that increasing numbers of people worldwide will reduce or stop their consumption of beef.

To date, the United States has dodged the BSE bullet. However, one wonders if that will continue in light of the facts brought out in this article. Even without BSE infection, meat producers (including pork and poultry producers) will have to bear the cost of providing their stock with feed free of animal by-products. A logical assumption is that beef producers will probably face mandatory BSE screening tests for their stock.

Normally, increased costs would be passed along to the consumer. Will that be possible, if the consumer is already hesitant to buy the product?

Another question looms: Will investors pull their money out of beef ventures? McDonald’s direct losses in European sales are noted above. McDonald’s stock and cattle futures prices fell after the FDA announced on January 25 that it had quarantined some Texas cattle that had reportedly been fed some of the banned feed—made from rendered cattle.

“The government agencies say they have erected this firewall (against mad cow). We don’t have a firewall. *It’s more like a white picket fence*,” said Michael Hansen, a research associate with the Consumers Union in Washington” (Greg McCune, emphasis added).

One of the most recent British victims to succumb to vCJD rarely ate beef, according to his sister. Another victim, a young man about 20 years old, had been a vegetarian since he was 15. Obviously, one doesn’t have to consume large quantities of beef to contract the disease. This

fact might further depress sales of beef.

That brings us to the human cost of the crisis. Although the numbers of human victims of vCJD to date are relatively low, their suffering and that of their families has been great. vCJD is a terrible, nightmarish disease—and no cure exists for it.

If BSE is “out of the box,” unable to be contained, the potential loss of human life to vCJD could be considerable. Given the litigious society in which we live, the potential for damage claims in civil suits is enormous—another potential economic blow.

“Your cattle will be cursed”

Christ foretold a dark time of health plagues as part of the “beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:7–8) that lead to the collapse of the age of man, shortly before the beginning of the millennial age of God. A detailed prophecy about “pestilence” is found in Leviticus 26:25 in the context of a warning from God to His covenant people. They could expect this kind of terror, should they refuse to live as God had instructed them.

The Hebrew word for “pestilence,” *deber*, means murrain, pestilence or plague (*Strong’s Concordance*). The word is usually associated with death (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, 1985, “Pestilence”).

A parallel reference in Deuteronomy is more specific: “Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.... The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart” (Deuteronomy 28:18, 28).

Whether vCJD is the beginning of the fulfillment of these sober words or only a harbinger of things to come will become clear in time.

Thankfully, as terrible as this dark period will be, it will quickly pass and give way to the world that God will create through Christ and His saints. In that “Promised Land” to come, those who love and worship God can anticipate: “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be...the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks” (Deuteronomy 28:3–4). ♦

Another Crack in the Transatlantic Alliance?

In a nationally televised speech February 27, President Bush announced to a cheering Congress his intention to move forward with his national missile defense plan. Will this plan, which does not protect Europe, goad the Europeans toward independence from any U.S. military shield?

by Paul Kieffer

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's first visit to NATO headquarters on February 27 came at a time when strains in transatlantic relations are more evident than ever before, despite the solemn pronouncements made during the alliance's 50th anniversary celebration two years ago.

When the common threat posed by the Soviet Union ceased to exist in the early 1990s, NATO pessimists wondered whether the United States and Europe would be able to maintain the special relationship established during the Cold War years. In retrospect, it seems that those pessimists may have had some kind of crystal ball.

The strains in the transatlantic relationship are somewhat paradoxical, since in so many ways Europe and North America share basic common interests. Democratic governments, individual freedoms and human rights are basic philosophical tenets shared by both continents. In addition, transatlantic business is intertwined as never before, with large-scale mergers, such as German automaker Daimler's acquisition of American manufacturer Chrysler, becoming commonplace and capital exchanges via stock and currency markets creating an ever denser web of economic interdependency.

Although economic relationships gener-



ally are quite good, there are frequent squabbles over agricultural policies (Europe's large subsidies for its farmers, America's liberal approach to genetically altered food and fertilizers) and manufacturing subsidies, such as those granted for the Airbus.

Conflicting EU and U.S. interests

Foreign policy contrasts largely fuel those developing cracks in the transatlantic partnership. America sees itself, rightly so, as a world power with the right to intervene as a global disciplinarian (although it is not yet clear if the new Bush administration will be as proactive as the Clinton administration was). By contrast, Europe's interests are now largely regional and may not always coincide with America's wishes in its overall foreign

The proposed National Missile Defense system may prove to be a major test of the alliance's resiliency.



policy framework. In addition, to date Europe and America have been unable to develop or pursue a coordinated foreign policy approach to Russia and China.

The United States would like to see a stronger European effort as the eastern pillar of NATO, but is not excited at all by the thought of an independent European military alliance, or whatever name is eventually given to what the European Union now calls the Rapid Reaction Force. When Europeans voted in December 1999 at the Helsinki summit meeting to establish their own rapid-deployment force of 60,000 troops, it was the first time since the Suez crisis of 1956 that Europe had initiated its own military cooperation outside of the NATO alliance with its American leadership.

During his brief visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels, Secretary Powell heard concerns voiced by NATO's European members over the decision made by the new American president to continue development of the National Missile Defense system (NMD). NMD may prove to be a major test of the alliance's resiliency.

What concerns European military planners and governments the most is the fact that they would be beyond the perimeter of NMD's anti-ballistic shield, which is seen to protect only North America. If NMD is able to be implemented, America may be safe from missile attack by rogue states, but where would that leave Europe?

Threat from the Middle East

The latest intelligence report from Germany's *Bundesnachrichtendienst* or BND ("Federal Intelligence Service") on Saddam Hussein's armaments program illustrates why Europe is concerned about its own anti-missile defense shield.

According to the BND, the Iraqi leader has plans for developing a missile with a range of up to 1,850 miles, capable of delivering either a

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nuclear device or a biological war-head weighing as much as 300 kilograms. German intelligence officials believe that the development of the missile by the year 2005 is a distinct possibility. As part of its report, the BND outlined its assessment of an Iraqi attempt to revive its armaments program, including biological, chemical and nuclear capabilities.

The projected range of the Iraqi missile thought to be under development would place all of southeastern Europe, a portion of southern Europe (including nearly all of Italy) and half of Germany, including major

cities like Munich and the capital Berlin, within range of Saddam's military forces.

German journalists speculate that the BND report was shared with the German government soon after the U.S. and British warplanes struck at Iraqi targets on February 16.

In contrast to the very critical French reaction to the attack, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer were very restrained in their comments. During a quick visit to the United States the week following the bombing, Fischer remarked at a joint press conference with Secretary of State Colin Powell that it was not for Germany to criticize the decision to strike at Iraq.

Recognizing the potential for European discontent over America's NMD, Russia has now proposed its own missile defense plan intended to provide a defensive shield for Europe as well as its own territory. Oddly enough, the Russian proposal was announced in mid-February when NATO Secretary-General George Robertson visited Moscow and conferred with Igor Sergeyev, the Russian defense minister.

The Russian NMD would be developed in a three stage process, with stage one devoted to a risk assessment analysis of current threats and projected threats over the next 15 years. The final stage, implementation itself, would provide multinational rapid-deployment units capable of being dispatched on short notice to any part of Europe. The mobile-missile concept was also a mainstay of the Soviet Union's ICBM program.

America is reported to be concerned at times about Europe's perceived growing independence politically and militarily. It does seem odd indeed that President Bush's decision to continue development of NMD with its anti-missile shield limited to North America just may provide the impetus Europe's military planners need to chart an even more independent course for the future. ♦

In Brief...

World News Review

AIDS Threat Persists

If you visit *Time Magazine's* Internet site, scan the main menu on the left side of the screen until you come to "Special Features." Click on "AIDS in Africa." A photo essay will appear, headlined by the starkly sobering graphic of a red chronometer. The numbers change every 25 seconds, marking the infection of another African with HIV. The clock reads over 25,500,000.

World News and Prophecy and *The Good News* have reported regularly about the havoc wreaked by AIDS in Africa. *Time* has found a way to dramatize the horrible reality of the dimensions of this tragedy in a way that words alone cannot accomplish.

Once thought to be on the way to controlling AIDS, the U.S. population has reason for increased concern. A group of scientists and researchers working with the disease were confronted recently at a conference in California with statistical proof that HIV-infected people are spreading the disease with careless abandon.

A series of studies of a variety of groups, including homosexuals and heterosexuals, showed that a majority did not reveal their infection status to sex partners. Prevention programs, touted as reason to believe that the threat of AIDS had peaked in the United States, are not reaching HIV-infected people.

Sexual sin, says the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:18, harms the body, in addition to the ultimate penalty sin garners. Dr. George Lamp, director of the Universitywide AIDS Research Program, related that HIV-infected people are receiving medication, but no one helps them with "the psycho-social and relationship issues."

If people had ears to hear what God reveals in the Bible, they would find the help they need. He reveals the behavior that helps produce and maintain healthy minds and bodies: any sexual relationship outside of that supreme expression of love between a husband and wife is sin. God condemns sin in hope of motivating the sinner to stop the wrong behavior, and He offers forgiveness for the past to those who do. Thereby, we have an accepting, loving environment with realistic boundaries that would enhance and enrich the lives of those who follow the program.

As it is, many people seem to want to take their chances that medical breakthroughs *might* push back the boundaries of disease that naturally result from wrong behavior. It's a reckless choice.

From the earliest treatment programs, HIV mutated within infected people and resisted medications. Those mutations have now begun to be passed on from person to person—no longer developing only within the HIV-infected. "Between 1995 and 1998, less than 4 percent of the patients caught [the] resistant virus. In 1999 and 2000, *this rose to 14 percent*" ("Drug-Resistant AIDS Virus Spreading" by Daniel Q. Haney, AP, February 8, 2001, emphasis added).

Because many gamble that HIV is treatable, they recklessly engage in what we will politely refer to as "high-risk sexual behavior." The result is not only an increase in HIV infections, but also in another sexually transmissible disease that many thought was controlled—syphilis.

Because of these alarming trends in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has "recommended a search for new, innovative ways to get the safe-sex message to gay and bisexual men in large cities" ("Alarm Over Calif. Syphilis Outbreak" by Erin McClam, AP, February 22, 2001).

We have a suggestion for the CDC: Pass around the good news that our Creator issued an instruction manual (the Bible). If people would live by it, they would avoid the immeasurable pain and financial penalties their present choices are bringing on themselves and others.

Additional source: *Sacramento Bee*.

One More Cheap Drug Problem

Young adults have found another substance to give them a rush, but it's rushing some to their graves. Ever vulnerable to the unscrupulous pushers of potions, young people in their late teens and early 20s are buying laughing gas to get high.

Known on the street as "hippie crack," the gas is attractive in part because it is non-addictive and inexpensive. Laughing gas (nitrous oxide) is not a controlled substance, which means that it's legal to sell or possess

(See "NEWS," page 15)

“RUNNING,” *(Continued from page 16)*

Anthem and dance to songs such as the sweet Congolese melody that proclaims God’s mercy. Just down the road, giraffes nibble at the tops of acacia trees, their long necks outlined in the sun against the vast African plain.” One of the adopted students, Faraj Kiptarus Keino, wearing his school uniform of purple sweater, white shirt, tie, gray shorts and knee socks, announces with pride, “Mum and Dad care for us!”

But Abrahamson is quick to note that Keino and his wife see nothing extraordinary in the path they are pursuing. He relates Keino’s humble assessment, “We feel they need help. They need shelter. They need food; they need clothing. They need love.”

Where did it all begin? In 1972, Keino came home with four Olympic medals, but the real Olympian effort was about to begin. “By the end of the year the Keinos would have eight children in their house.” Three would be born to them, and the others Phyllis found standing in line for food in front of a police station. Being a nurse, she told her husband the children needed food. This was the launchpad event leading to what is now the Kip Keino Children’s Home. The children who come to them, old enough to have a memory, normally bear a horrific story.

Often it includes the reality of one or both parents dying of AIDS. Other children are the offspring of mentally disabled women unable to care for their children. One such story relates how four young girls ranging from 6 months to 12 years old were left behind for the Keinos. Their mother was so drunk she beat her mother-in-law to death, whereupon the woman’s husband beat her to death, then killed himself with insecticide.

A lot of work

Today, not all the children are living under one roof. Half of the young people are now away at high school, boarding schools or college. Of the others, Abrahamson informs us that 18 are living at the first farm that the Keinos bought. This

200-acre farm is called “Kazi Mingi,” which in Swahili means “a lot of work.” Twenty-three younger children live on their second farm known as “Baraka,” which in Swahili means “blessing.” Indeed, it is a blessing for these children. One of their adopted daughters, Alice Cheruto Keino, now 16, puts it this way, “I would be somewhere else or maybe I would have died.”

But realizing blessings takes vision and realization that they don’t all come at once. The Keinos had a vision of not only adopting children on their own, but also starting a school for others in the community. Due to substandard schooling facilities and road conditions that would impair a quality learning environment—or even access—it was essential to build a school, not only for their own children, but also for the good of others. The Keinos felt a school with tuition could generate income that would help maintain a good learning environment and provide scholarships for needy kids. As Kip Keino summed it up, “They are tomorrow’s leaders of this country. They must have education.”

For of such is the Kingdom of God

What motivates this outstanding couple? What allows them not to simply drift into the good life that easily could be theirs based upon his name? The Keinos are living out basic biblical principles. In Luke 18:15–17, we discover a classic story. “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might

touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’”

Christ’s comments echo the spirit of the allegory in Ezekiel 16:4–6, which shows God’s concern for the people of Israel who had been

orphaned and disadvantaged. He lifts them and offers them dignity! “As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’”



Group photo at the Kip Keino Children's Home



Pictures of Kip Keino from his organization's Web site

God's approach toward Israel showed His intentions and hopes for all peoples. Yes, God truly loves all children and longs to bring all nations into a state of dignity and prosperity. Unfortunately, in today's world, children are often lost in the shuffle.

Regular readers of *World News and Prophecy* and *The Good News* magazine realize that the Keinos, and all well-intentioned people like them, will not be able to save this world in its present state. That will happen only by the sure coming of Jesus Christ back to this earth to restore not just one child or one nation, but all humanity. An insight into that godly world was given to us through the prophet Zechariah 8:5, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing...."

Run in such a way

A wonderful world is coming, but the Keinos haven't waited for it to bring needed change. They have chosen to do something now. How about you? You see, Kip has been running all of his life, and he is not about to stop. As former International Olympic Committee President Juan Samaranch remarked, "This man—what he has done, what he does—is fantastic!" Told later of Samaranch's remarks, Keino furrowed his brows in puzzlement and asked, "For what?"

At age 61, Keino is still running better than ever. In the greatest race of his life, he has incorporated Paul's encouragement found in 1 Corinthians 9:26–27.

"Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

In many ways, Kip Keino is still way out ahead of the pack. As he looks forward to reaching his present finish line, his example cites the familiar millennial refrain of Isaiah 30:21—"this is the way, walk you in it." ♦

"NEWS," (Continued from page 13)

it. Small gas canisters called whippets cost as little as 50 cents apiece and are sold with a tool and balloons. The tool is for cracking open the canister and dispensing its contents into the balloons for inhaling, called "huffing."

Despite the obvious intended use of these items, distributors have skirted the law by labeling their packages, "for food use only." (Nitrous oxide is the propellant in cans of whipping cream.) However, the death of a 20-year-old Virginia Tech student enabled prosecutors to successfully convict a Phoenix distributor on the technical charge of mislabeling the product.

About a dozen states have attempted to combat misuse of nitrous oxide by legislating stricter labeling and distribution guidelines.

A U.S. federal survey conducted in 1999 showed that its use as a recreational drug had increased 20 percent over the previous year. Nationwide, 6.6 million people had used it at least once. Further, the largest age group among new users was those 35 and older. A number of vendors blatantly sold balloons full of laughing gas at a professional football game tailgate party last fall.

Some readers will recall traveling carnivals that would sell a minute's worth of laughing gas for a few cents to the public. Users would laugh and act silly until the drug wore off, leaving them confused. Even that was probably irresponsible, but today's use is far from humorous.

Today's users sometimes mix it with marijuana and other drugs, seeking to enhance the impact of each. They also will tie a bag around their heads to increase the amount of gas they inhale, which is how the Virginia Tech student died. Nitrous oxide replaces the oxygen in the blood, and a person asphyxiates. Because it is an anesthetic, users are not aware that they are in danger.

The gas can cause people to lose motor control so rapidly that they fall over. A *Dateline* NBC segment on

nitrous oxide huffing showed a Phoenix teenage girl passing out and falling to the ground at a rave party.

Scientists have found that regular use can cause reproductive problems. A 1992 *New England Journal of Medicine* study revealed that women exposed to high levels of nitrous oxide in their jobs as dental assistants faced a greater risk of infertility. Prolonged use is also believed to damage the bone marrow and the nervous system, due to a diminished ability to process vitamin B-12.

Sources: *The Arizona Republic*; www.drweil.com.

Keeping Up With Africa: A Continent in Jeopardy

Though there are a few bright spots, the overall African situation still looks decidedly grim. Several countries on the continent are convulsed by troublesome insurgencies. Six more are heavily involved in a Congolese war. Moreover Ethiopia and Eritrea are taking time to lick their wounds in the aftermath of a long, bloody conflict.

And several countries that may have escaped military grief are embroiled in very serious economic difficulties. Perhaps up to half of sub-Saharan Africa's 600 million people eke out an existence on about 65 cents a day.

In terms of leadership, Zimbabwe's President Mugabe is now being called Africa's Mussolini by some observers as he takes his people further and further down the road to fascism. A few politicians in Britain are even calling for Zimbabwe's expulsion from the Commonwealth.

This is the ugly picture that high officials of the World Bank had to face as they recently toured African countries. The question is: Who will mend Africa? The current scenario seems beyond human solution.

Sources: *The Economist*, *The Daily Telegraph* (London).

Contributors: Cecil E. Maranville and John Ross Schroeder

This Is the Way... Running Better Than Ever

by Robin Webber

Today we are confronted with headlines regarding athletes who are overpaid, over-privileged and disconnected from the realities of ordinary people. But there is a wonderful story about a loving family on the high plains of Kenya that is truly making a difference. The man was incredibly gifted with some of the fastest feet ever to touch a racetrack. Yet what makes him special is not the gold medals he has won, but the heart of gold that lies within. With his wife, he runs a far greater race today. Alan Abrahamson, a *Los Angeles Times* staff writer, chronicled their story on February 25, 2001, in an article titled "Grand Kenyans."

Anyone growing up in the late 1960s or early 1970s will recall the marvelous career of this man when I mention his name, Kip Keino. What we remember is the graceful and determined stride of this world-class distance runner. With a quiet dignity and gentle determination, he drew all of us into his humble world of perseverance. He burst on the international scene in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. He and fellow African Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia would become arguably the most famous faces in sub-Saharan Africa. These men and their achievements on the world stage were significant as role models for the emerging African states.

Today, Keino "remains a living legend in this East African country. A man, who could afford the sort of classy ride befitting a man of distinction, yet drives around this high-plateau country in a beat-up four-door sedan. Others suggest he buy something more upscale, if only as a nod to appearance." But as Abrahamson captures the essence of Kip Keino, he quotes him as saying, "The money is needed at home. I have people depending on me. I can get where I need to go." Kip and his wife, Phyllis, are running better than ever in a far greater race.

"Mum and Dad care for us"

Abrahamson shows how the Keinos over the last 30 years have taken in more than 100 orphaned or abandoned children and made them their own. Each of these children has started grade school in their care and completed the high school requirements. Beyond those numbers, the Keinos have just realized a long-held dream, which is the opening of Kip Keino School with an enrollment of 250 youngsters.

"Boys and girls line up in the school's quadrangle each Monday morning as they sing the Kenyan National

(See **"RUNNING,"** page 14)