

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

June 2000

Vol. 3, No. 5

Is China Really “Opening Up” to the West?

By a remarkable coincidence, controversial international trade agreements that are opening up China to America and the European Union come exactly 100 years after a previous disastrous opening.

by Melvin Rhodes and Darris McNeely

One hundred years ago, as now, there was talk of China opening up. Then, as now, China had been going through a period of rapid and significant change. Then, as now, her relations with the rest of the world were often traumatic.

Then, as now, there was much resistance to foreign influence while other forces strove to modernize the country. Then, as now, foreign ideas were not welcome. Then, as now, Western business interests saw China, with one fifth of the world's population, as a potentially profitable market providing them with endless opportunities to make money. Then, as now, Western

liberal reformers hoped for democracy in China, while missionaries hoped the country would more readily embrace their beliefs.

Perhaps this time it will be different. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

For thousands of years, the Chinese had always been a self-sufficient nation with a highly developed culture. When Europeans first arrived in the 16th century wanting to trade, the Chinese felt no great need to do business with them. Nor did they think the foreigners had anything to offer them.

The Europeans continued to push, seeing this potentially lucrative market just waiting to open up. A series of con-

flicts in the 19th century led to the Chinese being forced into signing trading pacts, granting the Europeans trading posts along the coast and special trading rights. These treaties humiliated the ruling Manchu dynasty that had been in power since 1644. Europeans demanded and received the right of settlement in designated areas reserved for them and were not subject to Chinese law.

A great source of grievance was the foreign missionaries to whom the treaties gave the right to reside and preach inland. These missionaries were perceived to be destroying the national

(See “CHINA,” page 3)

In This Issue...

**Trade With China — Why Is Everyone Courting India? —
The Ominous GNR Revolution — Fanfare for the Common Man**

WORLD NEWS and PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

June 2000

Vol. 3, No. 5

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. © 2000 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.

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).

Editor: Don Ward
Managing editor: Darris McNeely
Senior editor: Melvin Rhodes

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder
Copy editors: Doug Johnson, Cecil E. Maranville, Becky Bennett
Layout/design: Peter W. Eddington, Mike Bennett

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>

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

International addresses:

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BAHAMAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas. Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 4052, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK13 7ZF England. Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (416) 231-8238

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 10-577, Nadi, Fiji. Phone: 723-678

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, B.P. 51254, 45002 Orléans Cedex 1, France

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228 - 9454636 Fax: 0228 - 9454637
E-mail: gutenachrichten@compuserve.com

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy. Phone: 0039-035583474 Fax: 0039-035582140

MAURITIUS: *The Good News*, P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

The NETHERLANDS: United Church of God Holland, P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 4774, MCPO, 1287 Makati City, Philippines. Phone: (+63-82) 241-0733; (+63-2) 728-5952

SOUTHERN AFRICA: United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A. Phone: (903) 636-4928

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Internet access on your computer:

The United Church of God, an International Association, has a home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. The address <http://www.ucg.org> gives you access to general information and news about the Church, issues of *The Good News* and *United News*, as well as our booklets. The address <http://www.ucg.ca> accesses the Church's Canadian Web site, <http://www.ucg.org.au> the Australian Web site, <http://www.labuonanotizia.org> the Italian Web site, <http://www.goodnews.org.uk> the British Isles Web site and <http://www.ucg.ph> the Philippines Web site.

Contents

Is China Really "Opening Up" to the West?

by Melvin Rhodes and Darris McNeely . . page 1

Trade With China— Road to Utopia or Conflict?

by Darris McNeely page 5

Why Is Everyone Courting India?

by Graemme Marshall page 7

The Ominous GNR Revolution

by Mario Seiglie page 9

In Brief... World News Review

by Cecil Maranville and John Schroeder . . page 12

This Is the Way... Fanfare for the Common Man

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 July 7 on the Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml#4>.

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.

“CHINA,” (Continued from page 1)

way of life—the nation’s social cohesion that went back thousands of years. Chinese converts stopped participating in community life and withdrew their financial support, which meant that others had to make up the difference.

Realizing its weakness in the face of Western encroachment, the Chinese embarked upon a policy of “self-strengthening,” building navy yards and arsenals and their first railway. This did not prevent more loss of territory to Europeans who had recently divided the

about to fall having “lost the mandate of heaven to rule.” Blame was also placed on the foreigners who had upset the *feng-shui*, the spirits of land and water. The country was ripe for revolution and the Boxers’ slogan, “Overthrow the Ch’ing (Manchu); destroy the foreigner,” appealed to the masses.

The official name of their organization was “Righteous and Harmonious Fists.” Westerners called them “Boxers” because of their ritualistic system of calisthenics, which aimed at full harmonization of the mind and

muscles preparatory to battle. To the uninitiated, these exercises resembled boxing.

The Boxers’ influence spread. After suffering a defeat at the hands

ing military forces to Beijing to liberate their citizens.

Diplomats, businessmen, missionaries, their families and their converts were all confined to a small area of Beijing, frequently subject to hostile acts by the Boxers and the Imperial troops that besieged their compounds. They had little food and ammunition. Both had to be rationed out. The besieged were finally liberated when allied troops arrived in the middle of August.

The siege and its aftermath brought out interesting national traits that were harbingers of the century ahead. It took time for the Western nations to coordinate their efforts. As is still the case today, the Anglo-Saxons led the way. In 1900, the British were in the lead. Today, it is the Americans.

None of the nations involved had a good word to say about the French who often delayed things so that their honor and glory could be seen. (The French insisted that final victory be delayed until their forces arrived.) The Germans fueled racial tension when the kaiser talked of the “Yellow Peril.” Russian soldiers turned up with no supplies and astounded everybody by being able to live off the alien land.

Everyone spoke highly of the Japanese who were the most disciplined of all the forces. They continued fighting even when the battle was won because they had lost their commander and there was no one to give them the order to quit.

The Italians were the only military force to retreat. The Americans would not accept authority, while the British naturally took command and continued to dress for dinner. The Americans insisted that the peace terms imposed upon the Chinese should be generous. Six decades later, Hollywood was to make a movie of the siege that got everything wrong!

A century of turmoil

China’s decline continued. The Manchu dynasty collapsed a few years later, replaced by a fledgling republic that was wracked by internal divisions.



A modern Beijing street scene (Stephen Shaver/AFP)

African continent between themselves and saw China as their next victim.

In 1894 and 1895 came the most humiliating defeat of all against the despised and “inferior” nation of Japan.

This war worsened the internal crisis in China. The province of Shandong was already in severe economic depression before the war. Added to this was a large influx of demobilized and defeated troops, combined with great numbers of refugees who came north to escape floods, drought and famine. To make matters worse, severe drought hit the province itself in two successive years, 1898 and 1899. Paradoxically, that first summer the Huang He River overflowed and flooded the entire Shandong Plain.

Boxer Rebellion

The central government was unable to deal with the floodwaters, a traditional sign that the dynasty was

of Imperial troops, the Boxers dropped their animosity to the dynasty, which by now had found common ground with the Boxers against the hated foreigners. Massacres of Chinese converts and Western missionaries began in earnest. The reason? The Western missionaries had brought in strange religious beliefs that had supposedly angered the traditional gods. European and American men, women and children were publicly beheaded as foreigners were hunted down and killed.

After killing the missionaries, Imperial troops and the Boxers turned their attention to the embassies at Beijing. The Legation Quarter was surrounded and a siege began that lasted 55 days. Because of poor communications, the rest of the world knew nothing of what was going on. When news of the siege finally did reach the Western press, it was thought that everybody was dead. For these reasons, Western nations took their time in send-



McDonalds seen from Tiananmen Square in Beijing

Eventually two forces fought for domination—the pro-Western Kuomintang and the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong. Internal division enabled the Japanese to continue their aggression against the Chinese. The Japanese were to conquer a great deal of China, only withdrawing after the Allied victory over Japan in 1945.

Civil war then followed until the Communist Party triumphed in 1949. Anti-Western forces had won. Foreigners were expelled from Mainland China. Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-69) was aimed at expunging all foreign influences from China. His followers' excesses resulted in the deaths of an estimated 25 million people—all Chinese supposedly tainted by Western customs.

Mao's Great Leap Forward was actually many strides backwards. Collectivization of farms led to severe famine and industry collapsed. His successors had to face the fact that communism wasn't working. At the same time, the party had to remain in control. Economic reforms began that allowed limited free enterprise.

Now, 20 years later, the Peoples' Republic of China is a communist country that isn't communist. Capitalism is actually encouraged while democracy is forbidden. The Chinese leadership does not want China to go the way of neighboring Russia where chaos has replaced the authority of the Communist Party. In China, the party remains firmly in control while giving

the people the hope of greater prosperity.

Anti-foreign sentiment continued after Mao. In the 1990s the British and Portuguese lost control of Hong Kong and Macau. Now pressure is on Taiwan to come back under the rule of Beijing. Taiwan was lost to the Japanese in the 1895 war and is now seen as an American satellite, the last

humiliation still endured by the Chinese people.

China has come a long way since the siege at Beijing a century ago. If a similar siege took place today, no Western power or combination of powers would risk sending forces into China. China has the upper hand in its dealings with the West.

Contemporary Chinese attitudes toward foreigners are best summed up in an anecdote told of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the architect of America's rapprochement with China in 1972. Kissinger asked the Chinese leader what he thought of the United States. His response was, "It's too early to tell." With a continuous civilization that goes back longer than any other on earth, the Chinese do not feel that they have anything to learn from foreigners. They would certainly not be preached to by a republic that was only two centuries old. When it comes to human rights, a major concern in Washington, the Chinese react by reminding Americans that their streets and schools are a lot safer than those in the United States, so there is nothing they can learn from the U.S.

Over 2,000 years ago, the Chinese built the Great Wall to keep out foreigners and their influences. This mentality hasn't changed. Trade with the West will be permitted but strictly controlled. Looking at the historical record, any perceived threat to the authority of the Chinese government and the Chinese way of life will be dealt with

swiftly and severely. "Opening up" will only go so far.

Unless, of course, the ruling Communist Party cannot save the people when the Huang He River next overflows and is perceived to have "lost the mandate of heaven to rule."

Tidings from the east

Interestingly, the Bible shows us that at the time of the end, before the return of Jesus Christ, the world will be



Modern Shanghai shows Western influence

dominated by a commercial, political and military union of 10 kings that combine power with the beast and rule for a short period. Daniel 11:44 shows that the power occupying the Middle East will be troubled by news from the east and the north and will attack these threats.

In the final scenario, an army of 200 million will come from the east, beyond the Euphrates, to fight against this aggressive power that will seek to conquer the earth (Revelation 9:13-16). With the sounding of the sixth trumpet, a full-scale international conflagration will erupt. Against this background, all the other events of the time of the end unfold.

China is a vast Asian power with the resources that could fulfill these prophetic visions. Its land stretches from the shores of the Pacific to the borders of Pakistan, and from the deserts of Asia to the Tibetan

(See "CHINA," page 15)

Trade With China—Road to Utopia or Conflict?

Free trade has been hyped as the solution to almost everything. But how will peace really come?

by Darris McNeely

On May 24, the U.S. House of Representatives voted decisively to grant permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China. The vote came after an intense lobbying effort on the part of the Clinton administration that has an interesting legacy of relations with this Asian giant. Three former U.S. presidents and a host of top foreign policy experts came out in support of this measure. The Senate is expected to ratify this move when it comes before them.

This vote is a stepping-stone to China's later expected entry into the World Trade Organization. Proponents of this bill say that American business will benefit from easier access to the vast Chinese consumer market. Tariffs would be reduced and trade would be expanded. American businesses hope for greater distribution of consumer items, which in turn would translate into more jobs for American workers.

Opponents say that the United States gives up far more than it gains. It gives up its right to unilateral trade restrictions. Since 1992, China has signed four agreements with the United States. According to a recent article in *The Economist*, China has only complied satisfactorily with one of those agreements, the one that protects intellectual property rights. It rated compliance with the other three (dealing with the environment, nuclear proliferation and private commercial disputes) as fair, "a bit less so" and bad (May 20, 2000, p. 21). Whether China will play according to the agreed rules of today's global economy is suspect in some circles.

Human rights

Another issue of concern is China's record on human rights. Does this agreement give

endorsement to grave violations by the Communist leadership? The Clinton administration's own annual report on human rights in China found that China's "poor human-rights record deteriorated markedly throughout [1999] as the government intensified efforts to suppress dissent" (ibid.).

Historically, the concern over human rights issues usually loses out to trade and economic development. In today's world, it is felt that open markets between countries lead to greater personal freedoms for the world's citizens.

On the day before the vote, the *Wall Street Journal* had this to say: "Beyond all this, there is a final, most important reason to grant China PNTR. For 30 years the U.S. has worked to bring China more fully into the community of nations, and to promote both economic development and a more liberal society. The policy has been working. Anyone who saw China in the early 1980s and compares it with today must be amazed. Bicycles and drab Mao suits have morphed into traffic jams and bright fashions; the freedom and the range of individual choices available to the average person has [sic] expanded exponentially. After years of estrangement, China is asking to join the international community. To turn it down at the very moment it is moving in the direction we have desired would be a tragic and historic mistake" (Internet edition, May 23, 2000).

Great expectations about free market

The prevailing feeling today is that poorer nations will reach a greater level of freedom, democracy and prosperity as they are brought into the global economic community. True, there is some evidence that leads one to think the road to world peace can be achieved by free market

The U.S. House voted decisively to grant permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China. This vote is a stepping-stone to China's later expected entry into the World Trade Organization.

economics and the accountability that brings.

After the House vote, the *Wall Street Journal* printed another editorial showing the impact of the free market on modern China. It said: "...the China of Chairman Mao could kill millions of its own people and no one noticed; the China of Deng Xiaoping tried the same formula in 1989 and outraged the world and wrote its own, ultimate death sentence. For all the Communist Party's undeniable abuses, it would be hard to find someone who thinks the China we see on May Day 2000 is not freer and better off than the China of May Day 1979, before Deng Xiaoping opened its door to outside economic interests. That process will now continue and hasten" (May 26, 2000).

The article concluded with this thought: "It is the very self-interest of economic development spurred by outside forces that gives leaders in developing nations incentives to do the right thing even when their hearts aren't in it. It is this dynamic that carried the day in Congress this week, one that holds out the promise of making this coming century a much more promising one for the billions living with the isolation of poverty or oppression or both" (ibid.).

Proponents of free trade have long preached with evangelistic fervor that the way to end strife among nations and bring peace to the world is through market economics. This current period of globalization is but one more round in man's efforts to create a utopia of his own device through free and open trade between the nations.

In the 1830s during another period of globalization, economic theorists proclaimed this message in England. Henry Fairbairn boldly proclaimed this vision of a world based on free trade. "Seeing then, that in the natural order of things the triumph of Free Trade principles is now inevitable, magnificent indeed are the prospects that are opening for mankind. Nations will become united in the golden bands of peace; science, liberty and abundance will reign among the inhabitants of the earth; nations will no longer be seen to descend and decline; human life will become prolonged and

refined; years will become centuries in the development of the blessings of existence; and even now the eye can reach to the age when one language, one religion, and one nation alone will be existing in the world" (*The Great Betrayal*, Patrick J. Buchanan, 1998, p. 187). (See the August 1999 issue of *World News and Prophecy* for a review of this book.)

This expression of human pride echoes the account in Genesis 11 where Nimrod at Babel attempted to bring the families of the earth together in the first attempt at globalization. To prevent the fragmenting of talent and wealth, he tried to create a society whose goals were opposed to those of God, the Creator. It was the first of many efforts to create a human substitute for the Kingdom of God on earth. God prevented that effort just as He has every subsequent one.

Global system prophesied

Prophecy shows there will be one final attempt to create a global system that promises peace and prosperity. This system is described in Revelation 13 as a beast that arises from among the nations and inherits authority and worshipful obedience. Religious deception is combined with a political and economic power to deceive "those who dwell on the earth" (verse 14). Those who refuse to receive its identifying mark will not participate and benefit economically (verses 16-17).

This final revival of a system that dates to Nimrod and the Tower of Babel will once more attempt to unite the nations in a human utopia. A "peace" will be enforced according to the rules laid down by the leaders of this combine. Just as the ancient Roman Empire enforced its iron-willed "Pax Romana" over the lands it conquered, so also this beast power will create a peaceful and productive economic power. For a time, all the nations will grow rich beyond their dreams (Revelation 18:3).

Verses 9 to 15 of Revelation 18 describe in detail just how extensive the economic clout of this empire will be. All manner of commodities will be bought and sold among the nations creating a once-in-a-lifetime economic miracle.

Verse 13's reference to the "bodies and souls of men" hints at the great human cost that will be required to sustain this culture. While the world may seem to be spiritually motivated, God will strip away this façade, and men will weep and wail at the agony in which this system comes crashing down (verse 15). In the end, God will bring this revived system to its knees just as He did every previous incarnation.

Peace impossible by free trade alone

Can free trade and economic prosperity alone create the conditions for universal peace and freedom for the peoples of the world? Throughout the Scriptures, God teaches against trusting in wealth and uncertain riches. Reliance and faith should be in God and in Him alone. The Psalmist wrote, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).

Free trade enthusiasts feel that the barriers of race, ethnicity and religion, which have been the cause of so much strife and division, will be torn down and that trade will unite the nations within economic bands of dependency and prosperity. It is a very simplistic view of human nature that ignores the inherent self-interests of all groups. The ties of race, religion and culture go very deep. Economic policies alone will not change the human heart. Prosperity, even on a worldwide scale, will not end war among the nations. One of the last deeds of this economic combine of nations will be an act of war (Revelation 17:16).

Nothing short of the Kingdom of God, brought by the return of Jesus Christ, will produce lasting peace among the nations. In Revelation 11:15 we read, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"

No man-made economic system will produce the conditions necessary for peace and brotherhood among the nations. The Kingdom of God will not be created through the dollar, but by a change of the heart (Jeremiah 31:33). ❖

Why Is Everyone Courting India?

Everyone seems to want stronger ties with India. The U.S., Japan and Germany all seek India's favor. Does this signal a change in Asian focus?

by Graemme Marshall

On the heels of U.S. President Bill Clinton's tour of India in March, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer (a strong critic of India's bomb) arrived in New Delhi on a fence-mending trip. Soon after came the Turkish premier, a Muslim leader who disapproves of Pakistan's military rule. The diplomatic traffic went both ways as India's defense minister visited Japan and Vietnam. What's behind this flurry of diplomatic activity?

Indian strategists see it as an overdue recognition of their country's world status following nuclear tests in 1998. There are signs of an informal security-cooperation chain forming between India, Japan and Vietnam—all of which share a common strategic concern over China.

India's foreign minister, Jaswant Singh, maintains this is merely India's belated due. "We export no destabilizing or even disturbing ideology," he says. "We have no expansionist designs and we desire no one's land. Civilizationally and culturally, India's presence in Asia is a soothing presence" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 13, 2000, p. 20).

U.S. interest

In May 1998, India stunned the world by setting off five nuclear explosions in the Rajasthan desert. Nearly two years later, talks between the U.S. and India have failed to get India to the table to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to halt nuclear testing. Back in March, Stephen Cohen, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution (a Washington think tank) said India's failure to sign would make it harder

for New Delhi to "extract economic and technological concessions from the United States" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 2000, p. 24).

This prediction fell apart with the Clinton visit later that month when animosity between the two countries was put aside. President Clinton toasted a "new beginning" although he had recently described India as "the most dangerous place in the world."

Behind-the-scenes security cooperation has been going on for a long time. In 1995 and 1996, FBI experts became involved in efforts to resolve the kidnapping of several Westerners in Kashmir. Under a new agreement between the two countries, the FBI is to set up a station in New Delhi while its Indian counterpart is to do the same in Washington. During the Gulf War, India quietly granted U.S. military craft refueling rights en route to the Middle East.

Accepting India's nuclear status

A U.S. administration source says the Chinese "would like the U.S. to bear the burden of stripping India of its nuclear capability. That's not going to happen" (*ibid.*, p. 23). Why the Chinese reluctance and now the U.S. acceptance of the nuclear status of India?

President Clinton's visit was seen as a celebration of democracy in Asia, with India at its center. Some U.S. voices are clamoring for a broader reorienting of Asia policy—in India's favor and away from strategic partnership with China. They believe that a partnership with India would better serve U.S. interests, because they see India as a democracy unlike China.

What's behind this flurry of diplomatic activity? Indian strategists see it as an overdue recognition of their country's world status following nuclear tests in 1998.



India's navy trains at the INS Chilka base (source: inschilka.aiol.com)

Economically, the U.S. is India's largest market and largest foreign investor. India's large body of computer programmers has helped fuel the Silicon Valley boom. In recent years, major U.S. high-tech firms have moved to India to take advantage of its talent pool and cheap skilled labor.

Americans hope, too, that growing ties may hasten economic reform in India.

Indian navy combats piracy

While India's nuclear weapons and emergent high-tech industry are giving it new respectability, its sizable navy has proved a key in New Delhi's efforts to claim a regional security role. This year, the navy demonstrated its muscle by recovering a Japanese ship that had been hijacked by pirates. India has forged new security ties with both Japan and Vietnam and is more assertive towards China.

Japan was among the countries that strongly denounced India's bomb, backing its words by suspending nearly \$4 million in aid. Along with Washington, Tokyo since has come to accept India's nuclear status as fact.

Japan remains the top investor in India and has come to appreciate the growing Indian naval power in maintaining the security of sea traffic through the Indian Ocean. Japanese

coast guard ships, along with Indian vessels, plan joint training in tackling piracy. Their cooperation is more

While India's nuclear weapons and high-tech industry are giving it new respectability, its sizable navy has proved a key in New Delhi's efforts to claim a regional security role.

than a concern for pirates. Unresolved territorial disputes in the South China Sea make the area volatile. India's defense minister said: "A strong India, economically and militarily well-endowed, will be a very solid agent to see that the seelanes are not disturbed and that conflict situations are contained" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 13, 2000, p. 20).

India has made a similar joint naval training offer to Vietnam to combat piracy. The Vietnamese army, masters of guerrilla warfare, will train Indian officers in jungle fighting and counterinsurgency, an art in strong demand in Kashmir. In return, India

will repair and overhaul Russian MIG aircraft belonging to the Vietnamese air force and train its pilots. India will also help Vietnam set up its defense industry for manufacturing small and medium weapons.

All this activity, of course, produces mild alarm bells in Beijing. The Indian response is for China to quit keeping the Pakistani arsenal in business.

Germany seeks India's help

Why would Germany have an interest in India? Because Europe has a tech-skills gap that cannot be satisfied locally. The computer-savvy Indians have for years helped fuel the rise of America's Silicon Valley. Now Europe wants to attract some of Bangalore's cyber elite.

To do that, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder unveiled a special program last March to lure some of India's best and brightest to Germany. This is in the form of special five-year work visas. The task will not be easy as many Europeans still view immigration as unskilled labor and lost jobs. Despite the problems, Germany's high-tech ambitions and skill shortages are shared by its European Union partners. As European Commission President Romano Prodi says, "building e-Europe is top on the agenda."

Asian volatility

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh together form the second most populous region in the world after China. Both India and Pakistan have missile and nuclear capability. It's a disparate area—Pakistan and Bangladesh are mostly Muslim, while India is primarily Hindu. The U.S., Japan and Germany all recognize the economic and military emergence of India.

What role will the new India, along with China, play in prophecy? That's a question to keep in mind, as the focus shifts towards India, adding to the complexity of Asian aspirations in the region. ❖

The Ominous GNR Revolution

The Biotech Age brings new and terrifying scenarios. How might the explosion of knowledge of genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR) change our world?

by Mario Seiglie

How many people in the year 1900 could have foretold some of the amazing scientific inventions of the 20th century? Only a very few. Perhaps visionaries such as Jules Verne and H.G. Wells could have imagined a world of flying and submersible machines or spaceships going to the moon. But certainly even they could not have envisioned a world driven by computer and atomic power.

Now, in the year 2000, it is indeed an intrepid soul who dares to predict what the 21st century will hold. Yet some scientists are already boldly drawing a rough outline of the future.

“The past hundred years began with the horse and carriage, the ink pen and ledger,” reports the French Agency Press (AFP). “Knowledge was confined to libraries and a tiny elite, and diseases, epidemics and deformities could brutally truncate lives. It ends with robot emissaries from the earth to the farthest bound of the solar system; e-mail and live satellite TV; the democratization of knowledge through the Internet; and medical breakthroughs that have made the plague, smallpox and cataracts the stuff of Bible stories. And more miracles are in the pipeline, *as the century of physics yields to the century of biotechnology*” (November 28, 1999, emphasis added throughout).

The Biotech Age is upon us, whether we like it or not. Perhaps as early as this month, the human genome, which contains all the genetic information that makes up a human being, will be completely mapped. Some scientists are already comparing this feat with the creation of the periodic table of elements. Now there will be a table of genes that, for the first time, will give man the knowledge not only to shape matter, but himself.

“In just a few short years,” comments science writer Mark Ridley, “we will have moved from knowing almost nothing about our genes to know-

ing everything. I genuinely believe that we are living through *the greatest intellectual moment in history*. Bar none” (ibid.).

A terrifying dimension

“Yet there is also a dark side,” the same AFP article cautions. “The 20th century began promisingly, with a shining faith in science as a vehicle for human progress. As Jules Verne optimistically declared, ‘Whatever one man is capable of conceiving, other men will be able to achieve.’ But two World Wars and a Cold War harnessed many brilliant minds to the business of destruction rather than progress. On the brink of the 21st century, the attitude towards what goes on behind laboratory walls is frequently [tainted] with fear and cynicism.

“Two of the greatest breakthroughs in knowledge—*atomic fission and DNA*—have brought two of the greatest perils: the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the risk of human cloning. ‘Science has increased man’s control over nature, and might therefore be supposed likely to increase his happiness and well-being,’ the philosopher Bertrand Russell once wrote. ‘This would be the case if men were rational, but in fact [we] are bundles of passions and instincts’” (ibid.).

Intelligent bio-robots

Another warning voice comes from Bill Joy, chief scientist and cofounder of a leading technology company, Sun Microsystems. He is one of the privileged few who is on the cutting edge of the biotech business. Why is he so concerned about the future? He has an interesting story to tell.

After delivering a lecture at a conference on technology, Bill Joy listened as Ray Kurzweil, the



“The 21st century technologies—genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR)—are so powerful that they can spawn whole new classes of accidents and abuses.”

inventor of the first reading machine for the blind, predicted that the accelerated improvement in technology will produce superintelligent robots in the decades just ahead.

“I already knew that new technologies like genetic engineering and nanotechnology [the building of microscopic-size machines] were giving us the power to remake the world,” commented Bill Joy, “but a realistic and imminent scenario for intelligent robots surprised me.... We already have our first pet robots, as well as commercially available genetic engineering techniques...” (“Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us,” *Wired*, April 2000).

He continues, “The 21st century technologies—genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR)—are *so powerful* that they can spawn whole new classes of accidents and abuses. Most dangerously, for the first time, these accidents and abuses are widely within the reach of individuals or small groups. They will not require large facilities or rare raw materials. Knowledge alone will enable the use of them.

“Thus we have the possibility not just of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) but of knowledge-enabled mass destruction (KMD), this destructiveness hugely amplified *by the power of self-replication*. I think it is no exaggeration to say that we are on the cusp of *the further perfection of extreme evil*, an evil whose possibility spreads *well beyond that which weapons of mass destruction bequeathed to the nation states*, on to a surprising and terrible empowerment of extreme individuals” (ibid.).

Can GNR tech be controlled?

As we acquire the most powerful form of physical knowledge yet conceived, GNR technology, what can be done to avoid its evil use? The 20th century witnessed what happened after atomic energy was discovered. It was used for both good and evil. First it was used to build two atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan and effectively ended World War II—but started the dangerous nuclear arms race. Afterwards, this same atomic energy was used to generate electricity for the masses.

Moreover, several times during the rest of the 20th century, the world was on the brink of using nuclear weapons again. Thankfully, treaties, regulations and plain “luck” have to this point prevented the nuclear nightmare from becoming reality.

Will the same hold for the GNR revolution? Unfortunately, it will not be as easy to harness GNR technology as it is to control nuclear arms.

“International treaties between nations,” writes Michael Elliott for *Newsweek*, “may prohibit the development of GNR technologies into instruments of war, just as they have in the case of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. But those 20th century weapons are made from rare natural resources like uranium; GNR technologies, on the other hand, depend on nothing more than the manipulation of weightless information” (March 27, 2000, p. 2).

*What happens now, as
man opens another
bottle of select
knowledge and
unleashes an
unknown genie upon
the world?*

So the type of governmental control of powerful technology that worked relatively well in the past will be difficult to implement in the GNR revolution.

How genetics, nanotechnology and robotics are merging

During the 21st century, not only will atomic power continue to be a present danger, but now the GNR revolution brings a potential for an even greater danger. It could be our undoing.

Already the cloning of animals and human body parts is a reality. “Using a different form of cloning, a scientist in America produced *a human ear* on the back of a mouse,” reported BBC correspondent Ian Kirby (May 21, 2000).

As genetics, nanotechnology and robotics combine, man could eventually create something smarter and more powerful than himself. “For Bill Joy,” adds the *Newsweek* article, “the real danger from GNR technologies comes from the fact that they have the ability to produce matter that is ‘self-replicating’—in other words, that can breed. That leads to the possibility of true horror, that an organism accidentally created could simply obliterate all other life on the planet” (ibid.).

Two Frankenstein scenarios

Bill Joy envisions two possible scenarios, when computer scientists succeed in developing intelligent machines that can do things better than human beings. Already, an IBM machine has beaten the world’s top player at chess and the chess master has declined to challenge the computer again. A machine is now smarter than any human being in this intellectual pursuit. How long will it be before another machine will also exceed its creators in a much more vital area of knowledge?

The first scenario in Bill Joy’s nightmare is that these supremely intelligent machines will be allowed to make their own decisions. Will humanity be at the mercy of these machines, and become so dependent on them they can’t be turned off?

The idea that man can create something that eventually outsmarts him is called in scientific jargon “the gray goo problem.” It is the nightmare scenario of accidentally creating a GNR organism that can reproduce and that eventually succeeds, like the IBM machine against the chess master, in defeating humans. To preserve itself, it may decide to eliminate other forms of life on the planet. “Gray goo would surely be a depressing end to our human adventure on earth,” reflects Joy. “And one that could stem from a simple laboratory experiment. Oops” (op. cit., *Wired*).

The second possibility is that humans will manage to retain their control over these superintelligent machines. Joy quotes robot-builder Hans Moravec as predicting that our main job in the 21st century will be “ensuring continued cooperation from the robot industries” by passing laws decreeing that they be “nice” and

don't try to conquer us. Moravec then goes on to describe how dangerous a human can be "once transformed into an unbounded superintelligent robot" by downloading his consciousness into these machines. All of this is still only a possibility, not a reality, but scientists like Joy are truly frightened.

"In designing software and micro-processors," Joy ponders, "I have never had the feeling that I was designing an intelligent machine.... But now, with the prospect of human-level computing power in about 30 years, a new idea suggests itself: that I may be working to create tools which will enable the construction of the technology that may replace our species. How do I feel? Very uncomfortable" (ibid.).

Is this how man's history ends? As a species that accidentally creates a GNR organism that eventually outwits and destroys its intellectually inferior creator?

What can be done?

What happens now, as man opens another bottle of select knowledge and unleashes an unknown genie upon the world? If this knowledge turns out to be too powerful and destructive, will he be able to put the genie back in the bottle?

Bill Joy expresses it this way: "The new Pandora's boxes of genetics, nanotechnology and robotics are almost open, yet we seem hardly to have noticed. Ideas can't be put back in a box; unlike uranium or plutonium, they don't need to be mined and refined, and they can be freely copied. Once they are out, they are out" (ibid.).

Joy's answer to this dilemma is establishing a policy of relinquishment—a voluntary ban on certain technological areas that are simply too dangerous to pursue—signed by nations, commercial organizations and scientists.

But, as Michael Elliott notes, "Verifying such relinquishment would be a nightmare, partly because any regime of inspection would have to exist partly in cyberspace. (By contrast, detecting nuclear tests is child's play.) It follows that any regime to control the development of GNR technologies would inevitably imply a massive invasion of privacy" (*Newsweek*, March 27, 2000, p. 2).

On a practical level, this solution does not appear very promising, but it appears to be what governments will try to do. As Professor Alan Linton of Bristol University has written, "'Evolution is a manmade theory to explain the origin and continuance of life on this planet without reference to a Creator.' It is because of our inability or refusal to accept the existence of a guiding hand that nature has come to be regarded as a system that can be engineered for our own convenience or as a nuisance to be evaded and manipulated, and in which anything that happens can be fixed by technology and human ingenuity" (op. cit., Reith Lectures).

Enter the Creator God

The Bible describes a scene very reminiscent of the present society, where "many shall run to and fro [a description of worldwide travel], and knowledge shall increase [science and technology expand]" (Daniel 12:4). Daniel wanted to know more. "Then I said, 'My lord, what shall be the end of these things?' And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed *till the time of the end*. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:8–10).

God prophesied that man is destined to go through some terrible punishments for rebelling against Him and putting the earth at risk. He has shown in the past that He will intervene just before human beings destroy themselves. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

When mankind defiantly built the Tower of Babel and tried to reach up into the heavens, God showed He was a hands-on Creator. Unifying knowledge without submitting to the Creator and His laws will eventually produce chaos and destruction, so God limited man's ability to acquire knowledge by separating man by languages.

When sin reached universal levels during Noah's day, universal punishment came in the form of a worldwide flood, thus leaving only righteous Noah and his

family to renew God's culture on the earth. He also intervened in Sodom and Gomorrah when sin again reached crisis proportions and forcibly eliminated this moral plague that threatened to spread its sinful virus to the rest of the world.

Man's final destiny

Thankfully, God has looked into our future and "gray goo" is not the outcome of man's history. He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Gray goo certainly is not made in God's image, nor is it the final purpose God has for mankind. But if mankind would be left on its own, who knows what eventually would turn out due to man's unbridled desires?

Fortunately, God will not leave man's destiny in his own hands. He has said, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9–10). Nothing man will do can alter what God has predestined for him, for He has promised to intervene when it is necessary to carry out His master plan—establishing the Kingdom of God.

So, as we find ourselves in the midst of a new knowledge revolution, let's not forget to include *God's knowledge revolution*—the one described in the pages of the Bible. Of all the different types of knowledge, the most important is the one that not only has to do with this life, but also the next.

The Bible puts man in his place by saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, *that he understands and knows Me*, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight'" (Jeremiah 9:23–24).

It is comforting to know God is on our side, and that He will see us through this new and dangerous phase of history. Considering the future, how much more should we pray, "Thy kingdom come!" ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

Saudi Prince Invests Billions in Financial Markets

It's a no-brainer to predict that the Internet will change the lives of every citizen of planet earth! *How* the Internet will affect everyone is not so easy to predict. Because the Internet is an American invention and Wall Street is perceived to be the economic engine that currently powers the world's economies, perhaps it's too easy to assume that both are under U.S. control.

Recent reports from Reuters and AP challenge that assumption. A billionaire nephew of Saudi King Fahd, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal used some of his "discretionary funds" to make some investments in the depressed U.S. market on May 16. The prince has a little more than the average individual has to invest—his new investments are worth \$1 billion! They're spread over 15 U.S. companies, including six Internet firms.

His largest purchases were \$200 million of WorldCom, Inc. stock and \$150 million of AT&T Corp. stock, but he also picked up \$50 million each of Priceline.com, InfoSpace, Inc., Doubleclick, Inc., Amazon.com, Internet Capital Group, Inc., and eBay.com.

This recent \$1 billion investment is in addition to another \$1 billion that Prince Alwaleed has made over the past six months in technology, media and telecommunications companies. In addition to these recent investments, the prince owns approximately \$8.5 billion in Citibank stock.

In a prophecy focused across the ages, God forecast that the ancient nation of Israel could expect its wealth to be taken over and controlled by individuals from other nations. "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower" (Deuteronomy 28:43). This obviously undesirable turn of financial fortunes would come as a consequence of failing to respect and live by the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 28:15).

"Should Women Preach?" No, Say Southern Baptists

"Let your women keep silent in the churches...for it is shameful for women to speak in church," wrote the apostle Paul to Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). He mentored the evangelist Timothy with the instruction, "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:12).

The leadership of the Southern Baptists agrees, but they may have difficulty convincing their 15.9 million members and 41,000 congregations. They issued the following policy statement on May 18: "While both men and women are gifted for service of the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." The new policy cannot be imposed on their membership, but it must be ratified at their upcoming annual meeting on June 13 and 14.

The proposed policy reverses current policy, which has allowed approximately 1,600 women to be ordained into the ministry of the Southern Baptists. Approximately 100 of these women ministers pastor leading congregations. The new policy would not cause those women presently recognized as ordained ministers to lose their credentials, but it would prevent further ordinations.

Comments from some of those women who are presently serving as elders indicate that opposition to the proposed policy will be strong, even if the measure passes. Statements of opposition are framed with words like "repression," as many see the new proposal as indicative of unjust treatment of women.

How do opponents deal with the seemingly plain statements of the New Testament quoted above? They say that the biblical statements about women's service reflect the cultural setting in which they were written, and that these guidelines are not applicable in today's world.

Source: AP.

U.S. and Russian Arms Sales Make U.A.E. a Formidable Military Power

Illustrating the strange twists and turns of Middle East politics, Russia and the United States have sold the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) enough military hardware to make it one of the most formidable military powers in the Persian Gulf. The United States sold the tiny country 80 F-16s, and Russia recently provided the Emirates a top-of-the-line anti-aircraft system.

World News and Prophecy reported on the growing military strength of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the December 1999 issue ("A New Military Might in the Middle East"). Six nations make up the GCC: Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Begun for economic purposes, the GCC realized over time that they needed to create and maintain military muscle to

defend their economic interests. Iran and Iraq are seen as potential antagonists, and the GCC members do not want to be dependent upon the U.S. should they come under threat.

The sale of arms to GCC members brings a double benefit to the United States: cash income, as well as relief from the financial burden of defending the Gulf. Cash is even more welcomed by the hungry Russian bear. But, arming the U.A.E. has brought a new wrinkle to the complex politics of the Middle East. Three tiny islands in the Strait of Hormuz are occupied by Iran, but claimed by the U.A.E. Their increased military also increases their bargaining position—and the potential of conflict. Relations between Russia and Iran were strained already, and this development will likely add even more pressure.

At the same time, a stronger military will also strengthen the U.A.E.'s status vis-à-vis their powerful neighbor, Saudi Arabia. While allies in the GCC, these Persian Gulf nations are still in competition with each other.

Why should we concern ourselves with such a tiny nation as the U.A.E.? Its newly acquired military force speaks with a loud voice. Additionally, the Persian Gulf sits in the shadows of the world's greatest empires and can never be overlooked in geopolitics, whether one is considering oil, religion or human rights—all powerful players on the world stage.

Source: Stratfor's May 30, 2000, press release.

Anarchy and Disorder Increase in England

The crime correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* recently wrote: "Falling police numbers have created deep problems in the inner cities with violence and disorder amounting to 'anarchy' outside pubs and clubs at night in London, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester." These are four of England's major population centers.

Some city forces are policing difficult areas with only half of the officers available five years ago. For this and other reasons (i.e., the general breakdown of society), mindless thuggery is definitely on the increase in England.

Somewhat symbolic of what is happening to British society were the thousands of pounds of damage caused to a London bus by rioting pupils. The indignant bus company CEO reacted by personally driving this bus to the school premises and showing the headmaster the massive damages to the interior. Then he promptly cancelled all runs to this London school.

Of particular concern were the London riots that occurred on the first of May when the finest officers of the Metropolitan Police squared off against 4,000 anticapitalist protesters near the Houses of Parliament. But before these violent rioters were fully brought under control they had managed to deface Sir Winston Churchill's statue in Parliament Square plus a treasured war memorial in the area—both historic symbols of British willingness to protect their national integrity.

Churchill is a national hero universally credited with being one of the most important World War II leaders who helped save the world from fascism. In many people's minds he was Britain's man of the century. Yet these violent thugs deliberately desecrated his statue and daubed it with the word "murderer."

Daily Mail columnist Lynda Lee-Potter commented, "This vile anarchic army of would-be destroyers was recruited through the Internet. The potential viciousness on the day appealed to every failure, every embittered useless troublemaker and yob in the land.

"*The genuine protesters were totally swamped by those who had destruction in their hearts*" (emphasis added). But the Bible counsels all who would place themselves in a position where they could be potential accomplices to the desecration of revered national monuments. "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exodus 22:28). Also: "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil" (Exodus 23:2).

A whole generation in Britain has not been taught even the most basic of biblical teachings—the Ten Commandments. We are now reaping the bitter fruits of our careless neglect.

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

Vignettes on Violence in America

A similar anticapitalist protest happened on the streets of Washington D.C. in mid-April. Police clashed with 10,000 activists, with the worst fighting occurring near the White House. However, forewarned police officers were ready and this time they were successful in preventing a repetition of the melee at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle in December 1999.

Yet violent assaults remain a troubling aspect of American life. The problem in Texas public schools is a case in point. Last year there were nearly 51,000 assaults against students by other students. Another 3,800 incidents of assault were reported against the teachers and 500 guns were confiscated from pupils.

The state of Texas had already formed a 22-member school violence task force following the tragic events at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. At the center of this committee's recommendations are character education programs. It was wisely recognized at the onset that personal character is the key to the prevention of violent behavior in public schools.

However, this must first be taught in the nation's homes by responsible parents. Teachers cannot completely make up for parental neglect. By age 6 much of a child's character is already formed, and even those teachers imbued with the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job are hard pressed to deal effectively with badly neglected children.

Sources: *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, *The Daily Mail* (London).

Contributors: Cecil Maranville, John Schroeder

“FANFARE,” (Continued from page 16)

en into that category? The mindset that satisfies itself with, “I don’t mind who is in office as long as the trains run on time, the snow is plowed in front of my house, and I can walk down the street safely.” Should it be simply wishful thinking for one to expect that character would be central to leadership?

David himself had to learn the lesson he wrote about in Psalm 146:3–4. While composing wonderful psalms to God and lifting Israel to international prominence, David was also living out another story. On the surface, it was a time of focused “family values” and a strong defense policy. But to what end? While committed to his nation, he was not committed to his family.

Was law and order at the top of his agenda? No question! Just look at the way David cut through the prophet Nathan’s story of the rich man and poor man of 2 Samuel 12. David came down harshly on the rich man’s extortion of the poor man’s lamb. “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity” (verses 5–6). Talk about law and order!

Then Nathan cut to David’s heart with his famous retort, “You are the man!” (verse 7). A great leader had lost his values and stolen another man’s wife. The example is not lost on today’s world. Only the names have changed.

God did not put up with today’s notion of the “compartmentalization of character.” A man is as he thinks. What he does reflects what he is. Character and commitment to one’s pledge was paramount—so important that God allowed David’s and Bathsheba’s son to die to make the point.

Headlines or lifelines?

In search of an antidote for my disappointment with the headline-making politicians and celebrities, I began to think of all the people around me who are faithful in their responsibilities. Heroes are people who do the right things, at the right times, because they are the right things to do—regardless of threat to life and limb or the hope of financial remuneration or public acclaim.

There are married couples who are faithful to their mates in body and in mind every day. There are citizens who faithfully pay their due portion of taxes every year. There are people who obey the laws of the road every day, and don’t think they are the exception to every rule



Never underestimate the extraordinary accomplishments that ordinary people like you and me can make on a daily basis.

in the book. There are people in every city, every neighborhood and every country who, when riots break out and law and order break down, don’t step through the broken window of someone else’s store to get what they perceive society “owes them.”

There are young children and teens in school who are not looking over someone else’s shoulders for the answer, but have discovered that the answer is within them through hard work, study and character.

These individuals are not looking to make immediate headlines, but rather lifelines to the future. Oh, they may not be cool or hip in the eyes of their children or their peers. But when all is said and done, they are the people you hope to have as neighbors—just good common folk who work diligently on the basic premise of what you see is what you get. Their character is transparent and honest. They are hardworking examples of lifelines that touch future generations. They testify daily that loyalty, commitment and character are still the building blocks of life.

No, these people may never be featured in a headline or elected to office, but there should be no doubt of their inestimable value. Never underestimate the extraordinary accomplishments that ordinary people like you and me can make on a daily basis. Abraham Lincoln long ago understood the significance of the unsung hero when he stated, “God must truly love the common man, because he made so many of them.”

On my honor

While my mind was musing on the fall of another politician, I had the opportunity to go to something very special that rekindled my spirit with hope. A young man in our congregation invited me to his induction as an Eagle Scout. This is the highest level of achievement in the Boy Scout program. Only 2 percent of all the boys who start out in the scouting program obtain this distinction.

What makes these young men stand out is not necessarily their looks, mental aptitude or physical prowess,

but rather their commitment to the scouting ideal. It's that "inner something" that they choose to own for themselves, thereby being transformed by its precepts. It doesn't happen overnight. It takes a long time. Most young men today drop out of scouts because of all the demands and allures of society.

Today people don't want to wait for anything—especially character—to take hold. Rather, the focus is on the celebrity, regardless of his or her inner character.

I can still hear the echoes of the pledge young Jonathan made before his scout mentors, fellow troop members and his family:

"On my honor I will do my best, to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

Lyrics to a fanfare

God has His own fanfare for the majesty of everyday, unadulterated character. It's found in the first Psalm. Featured is an individual whose life exudes the premise that character is precious. Just imagine when the Kingdom of God is established on this earth and society from top to bottom reflects on these lyrics of God's "Fanfare to the Common Man." It's a salute to the ordinary man who taps into an extraordinary picture of what God says can be.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:1-6).

Each of us has a choice to contribute a verse to the "Fanfare for the Common Man." I suggest that if we do, then we are in harmony with the great millennial refrain, "this is the way, walk you in it." ❖



"CHINA," (Continued from page 4)

Himalayas. Its population of 1.2 billion, a rapidly changing and growing economy, and immense natural resources make it a rising challenger on the world stage. Regional leaders have not ignored the emerging importance of China and other Asian nations. Last fall, a start toward greater pan-Asian cooperation was made during a summit of leaders in Manila. Here is how the *South China Post* reported it:

"Leaders of North and Southeast Asian nations have signed a historic pact to strengthen bonds through closer economic and monetary cooperation.

"The mainland, Japan and South Korea joined the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the first step towards the eventual creation of a giant East Asian common market, an economic powerhouse encompassing two billion people.

"Philippine President Joseph Estrada, who chaired yesterday's informal summit in Manila, said: 'If we persevere and work harder, maybe, the promise we fulfill will realize an even loftier dream.

"An East Asian common market. One East Asian currency. And one East Asian community—a family from the happy union of north and south'" (*South China Post*, November 29, 1999, Internet edition).

Last December the Stratfor news agency made a decade forecast about Asia based on the premise of strong protectionist measures from the United States.

"It is vital to understand, of course, that a round of protectionist measures by the United States late in the decade will have profound effects on the international system. Most important, as the United States disengages from the Eastern Hemisphere, powerful hegemonistic forces will emerge in Eurasia that will tend to destabilize the international system as a whole. That will leave a politically resentful, militarily powerful America, suffering from serious but far from catastrophic economic dysfunction, facing an increasingly unstable world.

"It is therefore our view...that economic destabilization in the United States will contribute greatly to a massive rise in international tension late in the decade. Several great powers will arise throughout Eurasia, challenging American primacy. The competition among those powers and between them and the United States will be intense, complex and dangerous. It will lack the elegant simplicity of the Cold War, posing instead the mind-numbing complexity of the pre-World War I period" (Decade Forecast, December 1999).

China is a nuclear power with large technical and intellectual resources. Matched to this is the desire to become a true superpower in today's world. Historically, its leaders have shown little concern with what other nations think of its actions and policies. As 21st century trading policies open new inroads to China, will we see a new, kinder, gentler China emerge?

Perhaps. Perhaps not. ❖

This Is the Way... Fanfare for the Common Man

by Robin Webber

Many years ago, the great American composer Aaron Copland penned a majestic anthem entitled “Fanfare for the Common Man.” Over the years, it has become a signature piece at the Olympics and other gatherings that spotlight individual achievement. The dynamic nature of this composition makes you sit up and take notice. The heraldry of its opening notes allows us to know something special is being commemorated.

The title “Fanfare for the Common Man” is dramatically different from other majestic pieces of fanfare music normally written for royalty. This special composition offers the perception that the person being honored is being saluted, not for “right of birth,” but rather for personal character and integrity.

The “pomp and circumstance” depicted by this piece signifies the ordinary men and women whose names we do not know and whose lineage we have not memorized from history books. Nevertheless, their everyday activities make a difference.

Promises or premises

This article was inspired by a recent headline of yet another politician “biting the dust” because of personal

behavior. It simply struck a raw nerve inside me. Here was an individual who could clean up streets, whether littered with crime or garbage, but at the same time could not clean up the inconsistencies within his own life.

Politicians are so good at trying to save their city, state or country, while they slip into the sewer of compromise. They are so ready to “promise the moon” to their constituents, but falter on the basic premises of personal morality and upright conduct. Initially, they sound good, but the longer their lives play out, the more hollow the ring. As a public, we become disappointed repeatedly.

You may think you know whom I am talking about, but, sadly, what I am saying applies to any number of so-called leaders. Long ago, God gave His own political commentary through the inspired musings of David in Psalm 146:3–4. “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish.” Even with this warning, many keep on hoping in and looking to human leaders—only to be disappointed.

What concerns me is how few people place a high regard on personal integrity and character. Have you fall-

(See “FANFARE,” page 14)