

MARCH-APRIL 2015

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



What Happened to **AMERICAN PRIDE?**

The Hidden Law of Sleep
Why It Is Vital to Your Existence

Europe's
Culture Clash

Microchip:
the Mark of the Beast?

Hope for
Haiti!

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REAL TRUTH[™]
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VOL. XIII | NO. 2 | MARCH-APRIL 2015

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■ **MEMORIAL:** Haitian President Michel Martelly speaks at the site of a mass grave in Titanyen, Haiti, which was used for those who were killed by an earthquake that hit five years earlier (Jan. 13, 2015).

PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Hope for Haiti!

Despite the nation's roiling problems five years after a devastating earthquake, the people of Haiti *do* have a promising future.

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FRONT COVER: Americans celebrate in New York City's Times Square following the announcement of Japan's surrender, which marked the end of World War II (Aug. 14, 1945).

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU

PHOTO CREDITS: All photographs from Thinkstock unless otherwise noted.

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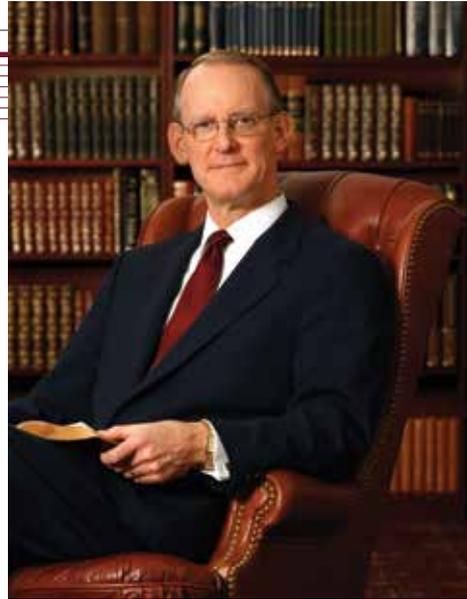
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Easter— Its Ancient Origins

EASTER IS A worldwide tradition involving many customs that people believe to be Christian.

What is the origin of Lent and sunrise services? How did rabbits, eggs and hot-cross buns become associated with Christ's Resurrection? Is Easter mentioned in the Bible? Did the apostles and early Church keep it? The answers will shock you!

Most people follow along as they have been taught, assuming that what they believe and do is right. They take their beliefs for granted. Most do not take time to *prove* why they do the things that they do.

Why do you believe what you believe? Where did you get your beliefs? Is the source of your religious beliefs the Bible—or some other authority? If you say the Bible, are you sure?

What about Easter? Since hundreds of millions keep it, supposedly in honor of Jesus Christ's Resurrection, then certainly the Bible must have much to say about it. Surely there are numerous verses mentioning rabbits, eggs and egg hunts, baskets of candy, hot-cross buns, Lent, Good Friday, and sunrise services—not to mention Easter itself.

Do not be so sure. Easter requires close scrutiny and this personal examines it carefully.

Bible Authority for Easter?

The Bible is the source for all things Christian. Does it mention Easter? Yes.

Notice Acts 12:1. King Herod began to persecute the Church, culminating in the brutal death of the apostle James by sword. This pleased the Jews so much that the apostle Peter was also taken prisoner by Herod. The plan was to later deliver him to the Jews. Verse 3 says, "Then were the *days of unleavened bread*." The New Testament Church was observing these feast days described in Leviticus 23. Now read Acts 12:4: "And when he [Herod] had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions [sixteen] of soldiers to keep him; intending after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people."

Is this Bible authority for Easter?

This passage is *not* talking about Easter. How do we know? The word translated Easter is the Greek word *pascha* (derived from the Hebrew word *pesach*; there is no original Greek word for Passover), and it has only one meaning. It *always* means Passover—it can *never* mean Easter! For this reason, we find a Hebrew word used in the Greek New Testament. Once again, this Hebrew word can *only* refer to Passover. Other translations, including the *Revised Standard Version*, correctly render this word Passover.

Instead of endorsing Easter, this verse really proves that the Church was still observing the supposedly Jewish Passover 10 years *after* the death of Christ!

Now let's go to the *other* scriptures authorizing Easter. This presents a problem. *There are NONE!* There are absolutely *no* verses, anywhere in the Bible, that authorize or endorse the keeping of Easter! The Bible says nothing about Lent, eggs and egg hunts, baskets of candy, etc., although it does mention hot-cross buns and sunrise services as abominations, which God condemns. We will examine them and learn why.

The mistranslation of Acts 12:4 is a not-so-subtle attempt to insert a pagan festival into Scripture for the purpose of authorizing it.

When Easter Came to America

Easter has long been known to be a pagan festival. America's founders knew this! A children's book about the holiday *Easter Parade: Welcome Sweet Spring Time!* by Steve Englehart, states: "When the Puritans came to North America, they regarded the celebration of Easter—and the celebration of Christmas—with suspicion. They knew that pagans had celebrated the return of spring long before Christians celebrated Easter...for the first two hundred years of European life in North America, only a few states, mostly in the South, paid much attention to Easter."

Not until after the Civil War did Americans begin celebrating this holiday: "Easter first became an American tradition in the 1870s" (*ibid.*).

Remarkable! The original 13 colonies of America began as a "Christian" nation, but did not observe Easter within an entire century of its founding. What happened to change this?

Where Did Easter Come From?

Does the following sound familiar? Spring is in the air! Flowers and bunnies decorate the home. Father helps the children paint beautiful designs on eggs dyed in various colors. These eggs, which will later be hidden and searched for, are placed into lovely, seasonal baskets. The wonderful aroma of the

hot-cross buns mother is baking in the oven waft through the house. Forty days of abstaining from special foods will finally end the next day. The whole family picks out their Sunday best to wear to the next morning's sunrise worship service to celebrate the savior's resurrection and the renewal of life. Everyone looks forward to a succulent ham with all the trimmings. It will be a thrilling day. After all, it is one of the most important religious holidays of the year.

Easter, right? No! This is a description of an ancient Babylonian family—*2,000 years before Christ*—honoring the resurrection of their god, Tammuz, who was brought back from the underworld by his mother/wife, Ishtar (after whom the festival was named). As Ishtar was actually pronounced "Easter" in most Semitic dialects, it could be said that the event portrayed here is, in a sense, Easter. Of course, the occasion could easily have been a Phrygian family honoring Attis and Cybele, or perhaps a Phoenician family worshipping Adonis and Astarte. Also fitting the description well would be a heretic Israelite family honoring the Canaanite Baal and Ashtoreth. Or this depiction could just as easily represent any number of other immoral, pagan fertility celebrations of death and resurrection—including the modern Easter celebration as it has come to us through the Anglo-Saxon fertility rites of the goddess Eostre or Ostara. These are all the same festivals, separated only by time and culture.

If Easter is not found in the Bible, then where did it come from? The vast majority of ecclesiastical and secular historians agree that the name Easter and the traditions surrounding it are deeply rooted in pagan religion.

Notice the following powerful quotes that demonstrate more about the *true* origin of how the modern Easter celebration got its name (emphasis added throughout article): "Since Bede the Venerable...the origin of the term for the feast of Christ's Resurrection has been popularly considered to be from the Anglo-Saxon Eastre, a goddess of spring...the Old High German

plural for dawn, *eostarun*; whence has come the German *Ostern*, and our English Easter" (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967).

"The fact that vernal festivals were general among pagan peoples no doubt had much to do with the form assumed by the Eastern festival in the Christian churches. The English term Easter is of *pagan origin*" (Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*).

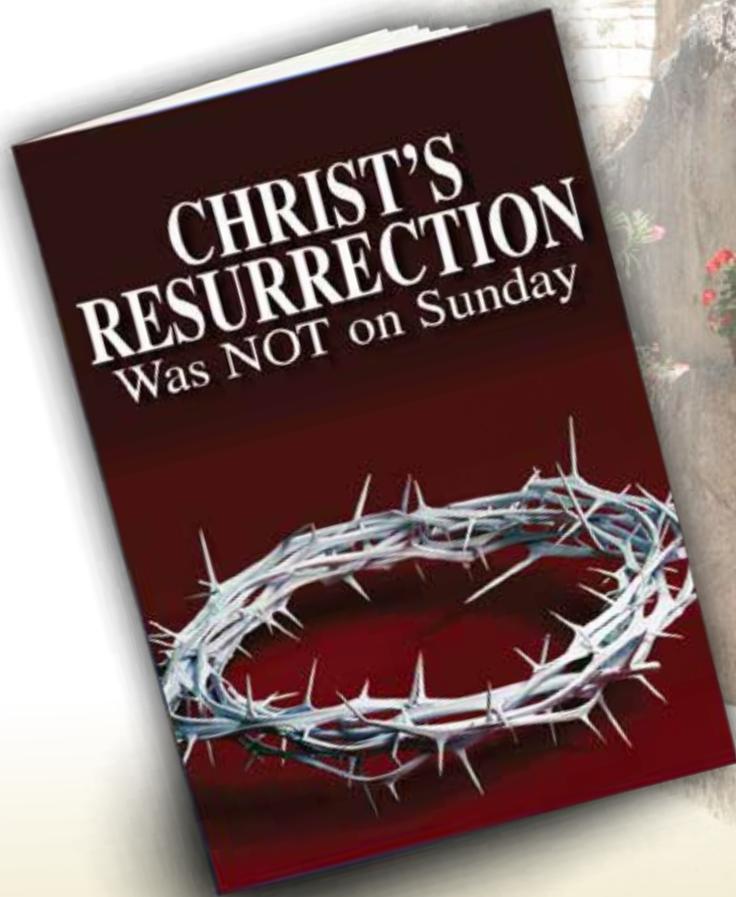
"On this greatest of Christian festivals, several survivals occur of ancient heathen ceremonies. To begin with, the name itself is not Christian but *pagan*. Ostara was the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring" (Ethel L. Urlin, *Festival, Holy Days, and Saints Days*).

"Easter—the name Easter comes to us from Ostera or Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, for whom a spring festival was held annually, as it is from this *pagan festival* that some of our Easter customs have come" (Mary Hazeltine, *Anniversaries and Holidays: A Calendar of Days and How to Observe Them*).

"In Babylonia...the goddess of spring was called Ishtar. She was identified with the planet Venus, which, because...[it] rises before the Sun...or sets after it...appears to love the light [this means Venus loves the sun-god]...In Phoenecia, she became Astarte; in Greece, Eostre [related to the Greek word *Eos*: "dawn"], and in Germany, Ostara [this comes from the German word *Ost*: "east," which is the direction of dawn]" (Englehart, *Easter Parade*).

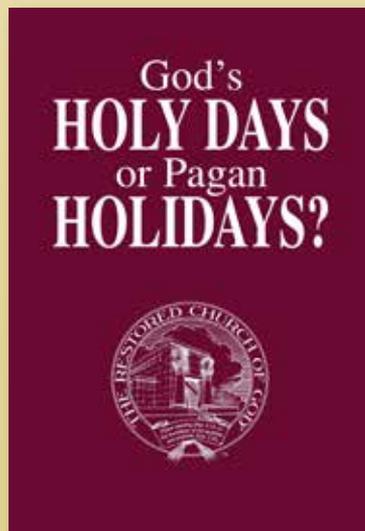
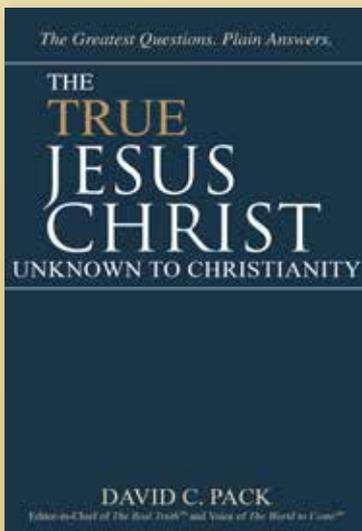
As we have seen, many names are interchangeable for the more well-known *Easter*. Pagans typically used many different names for the same god or goddess. Nimrod, the Bible figure who built the city of Babylon (Gen. 10:8-10), is an example. He was worshipped as Saturn, Vulcan, Kronos, Baal, Tammuz, Molech and others, but he was always the same god—the fire or sun god universally worshipped in nearly every ancient culture. (Read our booklet *The True*

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 30



NOT ON SUNDAY?

**Contrary to popular belief, Jesus was not
in the grave for 36 hours.**



Christ Himself said He would be "...three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is NOT three days and three nights!

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EUROPE'S CULTURE CLASH

The experiment of Europeans and Muslim immigrants living side by side strains under the weight of age-old problems.

BY ROBERT R. FARRELL AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

MULTICULTURALISM drives the European Union. Defined by *Collins English Dictionary* as “the policy of maintaining a diversity of ethnic cultures within a community,” it is a word that the continent prides itself on understanding and embracing.

Europe’s motto, “Unity in Diversity,” says it all. The Schengen Agreement allows EU citizens and immigrants to move through the

continent’s 28 member states with relative ease. Its policies, which serve a potpourri of ethnicities, languages and religions, champion distinct cultures peacefully coexisting.

Then disaster strikes.

Think of Paris, France: first there was the January 7 *Charlie Hebdo* shooting with 12 dead and the kosher market with four killed just days later. Then there were the thwarted plots in Belgium with two aspiring terrorists killed in a police shootout. These early 2015 events forced Europe to put multiculturalism back under the micro-

scope. More specifically, they pushed the continent to reexamine the idea of Muslims in Europe.

Politicians emphatically condemned the attacks, but most also made clear that multicultural policies were *not* to blame.

British Prime Minister David Cameron decried the first attack as “sickening” on his social media account. Yet later he stated “that what is happening in terms of extremist terror has nothing to do with the true religion of Islam...It’s being perverted by a minority who have been radicalised.”

■ **AGAINST MULTICULTURALISM:** Supporters of the PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West) movement protest with banners and German flags at the Theaterplatz Square in Dresden, Germany (Jan. 25, 2015).

PHOTO: MEHMET KAMAN/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

After the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings, over 70 world leaders—including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian Authority’s Mahmoud Abbas—as well as 1.6 million people marched in the streets of Paris as part of a unity rally.

French President Francois Hollande pledged to protect his nation’s 4.7 million Muslims, which is 7.5 percent of the population. He also said that Islam and democracy were compatible and that “it is Muslims who are the first victims of fanaticism, fundamentalism and intolerance” according to *BBC*.

Yet the spate of terror attacks also fomented anti-Muslim sentiments among some Europeans.

One such group, called Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA), saw its supporters swell after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.

CNN reported that police stated that “the number of people attending these rallies...increased from an estimated 350 protesters on October 20 to 18,000 on January 5 and 25,000” a week later in Dresden, Germany.

Subsequent protests also drew *anti*-anti-Muslim demonstrators who support multiculturalism. *NPR* reported that a heavy police presence and counterdemonstrators dampened a January 21 PEGIDA rally.

Other nations have anti-Islam movements. A *New York Times* article, “In Sweden, the Land of the Open Door, Anti-Muslim Sentiment Finds a Foothold,” highlighted growing apprehension over the flood of Muslim immigrants to the nation.

In addition, *The Independent* stated: “Twenty-six mosques around France have been subject to attack by fire-

bombs, gunfire, pig heads, and grenades as Muslims are targeted with violence in the wake of the Paris attacks.”

Has the diversity experiment failed in Europe?

Really, this is the wrong question. The EU *must* continue to embrace multiculturalism. With 28 member states that have distinct cultures and languages, its existence depends upon it. This is why its leading politicians so roundly defend it.

A better question is this: Has the experiment of non-assimilated Muslims failed in Europe?

Rising Tensions

Europe’s major multicultural problems stem from immigration and assimilation. Most migrants come from nations where Islam is by far the leading religion.



■ **COUNTER PROTEST:** Anti-PEGIDA demonstrators march through the streets holding brooms to symbolically “sweep away” racism and intolerance in Dresden, Germany (Jan. 12, 2015).

PHOTO: CARSTEN KOALL/GETTY IMAGES



■ **UNITED FRONT:** World leaders take part in a unity rally in Paris, France, in tribute to victims of Islamic extremists (Jan. 11, 2015).

PHOTO: PATRICK KOVARIK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Look at Libya, Tunisia and Turkey—all main sources of migration for the EU. The *CIA World Factbook* places Libya at 96.6 percent Muslim, Tunisia at 99.1 percent Muslim, and Turkey at 99.8 percent Muslim. In addition, many immigrants come from other majority-Muslim nations in the Middle East and South Asia.

The upsurge in Muslim immigrants has happened fast. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center, the number of Muslims in Europe was 29.6 million in 1990 (4.1 percent of the population) and increased to 42.9 million in 2010 (5.8 percent of the population).

The same study showed that their presence is expected to increase to 50.3 million in 2020 (6.8 percent of the population) and 56.9 million by 2030 (7.8 percent of the population). While

Muslims are spread out all over, cities generally have higher numbers.

The steady stream of immigrants to the EU is understandable. Europe offers relief from the countless problems in the Middle East such as the war in Syria, a shaky Libya, and widespread drought throughout the region.

Yet many native Europeans are wary of continuous waves of immigrants. A poll reported by *The Independent* indicated that 77 percent of Britons want a cut in immigration levels while 56 percent want it cut by a lot.

In addition, Pew showed that 33 percent of Germans have an unfavorable view of Muslims in their country.

Parallel Societies

Why should Europe, which has long promoted religious freedom, fear an influx from Muslim nations? The

answer runs deeper than the terror stigma Islam has gained as a result of incidents such as the United States September 11 attacks and the 2005 London subway bombings.

The current wave of European immigration started just after World War II as the economies of devastated nations began to bounce back in the 1950s and 60s.

To meet the growing demand for workers, Europeans recruited immigrants to do jobs they were unwilling to do. These were deemed “guest workers.” Most people expected they would eventually return home after working several years.

After the 1973 OPEC oil crisis triggered an economic slowdown, many European governments stopped issuing work visas—but by then it was too late. Having settled into life in their

adopted countries, most temporary migrants never returned home, and instead convinced family members to live with them in Europe.

Natural disasters, weak economies, and abject poverty spurred another migration wave in the 1990s, this time by refugees primarily from North and sub-Saharan Africa, and the Indian subcontinent. As more arrived, Europeans permitted them to receive welfare benefits, even if they had never worked in the EU. This was especially true of those who claimed refugee status.

Because many immigrants did not know the languages of their new countries, they began to congregate in specific neighborhoods with others from their home countries. This gave rise to the large immigrant neighborhoods characteristic of European cities.

Numerous problems have resulted. Immigrant communities tend to be poorer, and have higher crime and unemployment statistics. They often cite harassment from law enforcement as the reason for their troubles with the law and non-acceptance by the indigenous population for why they have not integrated.

These circumstances have created a generation of young people who do not identify with the European countries in which they were born.

“As morally indignant young Muslims turn away from what they view as decadent German culture, some are cultivating feelings of superiority,” a *Der Spiegel* article stated. While it was written in 2008, it still holds true today.

It continued: “While their immigrant parents and grandparents tried to assimilate, at least on the surface, some young Muslims deliberately flaunt the fact that they are different by wearing strict Islamic clothing in public.”

According to a survey by the newspaper, 71 percent of Muslims believe “sexual morals in Western society are totally degenerate” and 65.6 percent believe “Islam is the only true religion.” These ideas clash with the



■ **BLENDING CULTURES:** A Muslim family looks down from a balcony where a German flag is hanging for the World Cup (June 17, 2014).

PHOTO: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

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What Happened to American Pride?

U.S. citizens are changing their opinions of the nation's global role.
There is a reason this is happening.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER



DURING WORLD WAR II, a tradition was cemented in American culture: singing the national anthem before baseball games. The “Star Spangled Banner” had been used sporadically at events prior to that, but the custom took root in the 1940s. Given the time of national hardship, the U.S. needed any patriotic shot in the arm it could get.

Today, citizens cannot imagine a sporting event without it. Nowadays, though, they usually witness a 21st-century version involving a massive American flag spread out on a field and a roaring jet-plane flyover.

Belting out, “Oh say can you see...” at virtually every athletic matchup seems to be a unique American quirk. Other countries sing their anthems at games, but not every single one.

The characteristic is also tied to another U.S. oddity: American pride.

Sure, other nations love their homelands, but U.S. pride has historically been on a whole different level. For decades, the “Land of the Free” has been tied to American exceptionalism—the belief that the country is the indisputable greatest nation of all time.

Yet, while we still sing the words before every sporting game, that distinctive pride is waning. A growing number in the U.S.—58 percent—feel that America is just “one of the great-

est countries in the world, along with some others,” according to a July 2014 Pew Research Center report. In addition, 12 percent responded that there are other nations in the world “better than the U.S.” This means that just 28 percent are confident that America “stands above all other countries in the world.”

Such a trend is unsurprising when given the barrage of news reports about the shifting global stage. For example, Moscow, not Washington, took the lead on brokering a deal with Syria to dismantle its chemical weapons arsenal. The entire world has derided U.S. intelligence-gathering techniques. There are constant reports on China’s military and economic booms. By one measure, the Asian nation’s GDP surpassed America’s in 2014.

In addition, another Pew poll, this time from 2013, found: “Growing numbers of Americans believe that U.S. global power and prestige are in decline.” Of those surveyed, 53 percent felt that America’s role as world leader is less important and powerful than 10 years ago. This is a 40-year low—the worst since around the end of the notoriously unpopular Vietnam War.

For some, a decreasing belief in American exceptionalism is just a sign that the nation is taking its natural place among countries. Others feel that the loss of this belief is a clear symptom of an impending U.S. downfall—and they want desperately for the

“Home of the Brave” to retake its leading place on the world stage.

Either way, something definitely has happened to the nation’s pride. And every American should take note.

Perception vs. Reality

While 70 percent of Americans believe the nation is not the greatest, a wealth of statistics paint an entirely different picture. The U.S., on paper, is still the greatest nation in the world.

Look at political power. The Council on Foreign Relations wrote that the nation “has more than forty formal treaty allies—including most members of the world’s largest economic bloc (the EU) and its third largest economy (Japan). Moreover, it boasts friendly relations with a comparable number of other countries—including major emerging players like Brazil, India, and Indonesia. China’s dependable allies can be counted on one finger: North Korea.”

Look at oil production. In 2013, America became the largest petroleum producer in the world. The U.S. Energy Information Administration stated that the nation pumped about 14 million barrels per day in 2014.

Most notably, look at military might. The U.S. spent \$619 billion on defense in 2013—more than the next top 11 countries combined. China comes in at a distant second at \$171 billion and Russia third with \$85 billion.

Also consider that the U.S. Navy is the largest and most sophisticated

■ **SACRIFICE DURING WWII:** Opposite page, a U.S. soldier stands atop Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima, which took place south of Japan’s main islands. Top, from left to right, a scrap drive nets 150 tons of rubber for war materials. Women wait in a sugar-rationing line. A young boy uses his ration card to receive canned goods. Professor Harry Nelson of San Francisco, California, gives his daughter and her friends pointers about their victory garden. A young woman operates machinery at a factory in support of the war effort. A man plows an area in Boston Common park to create a victory garden.

PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN/NARA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

in the world. It has 10 aircraft carriers that can launch airplanes. Only six other countries have an aircraft carrier—one each—and just Italy and India have two. Those of other nations are all smaller than America's Nimitz-class 1,000-foot-long carriers.

In addition, the Navy boasts 60 destroyers, 22 cruisers, and 70 submarines. Altogether, the U.S. has approximately 473 ships. Battle fleet tonnage, a more accurate judge of effectiveness than the number of ships alone, is greater than the next 13 largest navies combined.

While China is rumored to be building a few more ships this year, the U.S. constructs on average six per year that are almost always larger and more sophisticated. Also, the Navy has ordered two new state-of-the-art carriers to be delivered by the end of 2016.

American dominance also includes aircraft, of which it has 13,683 aerial vehicles (more than Russia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, France and Egypt combined).

To ensure it stays the *greatest* nation, all the U.S. has to do is to hold onto what it has. This would require the nation to rally around the idea and have

the political will to make it happen. While this did happen shortly after the September 11 attacks, it did not last.

Home Front

For a classic, long-term example of what would be required to reignite American pride, one must look back to World War II. While still reeling from the Great Depression, U.S. citizens in the 1940s rallied around the war effort to support soldiers overseas. Historians still marvel at what they accomplished.

Information from the Smithsonian Institution described the motivating factors behind the efforts: "Nothing in America went unchanged by World War II. More than 16 million men and women—more than one-tenth of the population—served in the armed forces. More than 400,000 never returned. Those who remained at home found themselves taking on the responsibilities of 'citizen soldiers' at every turn of their daily lives. Decisions that were once only personal—what to buy, what to eat, how to spend free time—now had global consequences."

Everyone was wholly invested: "Posters reminded Americans of the

reasons for the shortages and asked them to make do by conserving, by avoiding the black market, and by generally becoming more self-reliant. Nowhere is the totality of the war effort seen more clearly than on posters that connect the campaigns overseas with growing vegetables [to reduce strain on the supply available for soldiers] in a home 'Victory Garden,' cleaning one's plate, or saving bacon grease. (Glycerin in recycled fat was used for ammunition and for some medicines.)" (ibid.).

President Franklin Roosevelt challenged the country to get to work.

"Powerful enemies must be out-fought and out-produced...We must out-produce them overwhelmingly, so that there can be no question of our ability to provide a crushing superiority of equipment in any theatre of the world war," the president declared soon after the Pearl Harbor attack.

The people responded. Elderly quit retirement to help build ships. Women—by the millions—left their positions as stay-at-home mothers to work in airplane and armored-vehicle factories. American civilians built 14,000 ships, 88,000 tanks, and



■ **WAR EFFORT:** Left, men salute at a war-bond rally during World War II (circa 1943). Right, women work alongside men in a Cincinnati, Ohio, munitions factory (Feb. 1942).

PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN/NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (LEFT), PUBLIC DOMAIN/OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

300,000 airplanes in the four years of war. In 1944 alone, the U.S. constructed more planes than Japan did throughout the entirety of World War II.

Despite only having 5 percent of the world's population, in 1945, the U.S. produced 50 percent of the world's manufactured goods.

One shipyard mechanic recounted his experience in the documentary *The War*: "It was seven days a week... And during the war when it was so strong, it was twelve-hour days five days a week, ten hours on Saturday, eight hours on Sunday, [which made it feel like] you've had a week off."

Amazingly, more than 85 million Americans of the 139 million at the time bought government war bonds. Half of the total cost of war, \$340 billion in 1940 dollars, was paid for by income from bonds—even children participated. In 2014 money, that is \$2.8 trillion in bonds. In today's dollars, this would be like every man, woman and child in America investing roughly \$8,833 in a war effort.

Imagine modern Americans backing *any* cause like this—even something non-violent—and supplying that kind of cash. It is unthinkable.

So why the drastic change since then?

War Weary

WWII established the U.S. as a lone world superpower. With its superior military capability, it seemed poised to lead the globe forward.

Yet everything changed with the rise of the Soviet Union and the start of the Cold War. Military engagements during this time, which pitted U.S.-style freedom against USSR-flavored communism, began to chip away at unabashed American pride.

A major reason for this was due to the nature of the Cold War itself. The two world powers never directly engaged one another. Instead, they used proxy warfare—confronting each other by supporting secondary nation-states and supplying intelligence, money, arms, or in some cases, troops for them—to avoid direct conflict.

Proxy war was a huge shift from how the U.S. operated in WWII. Nonetheless, given previous successes, U.S. officials and citizens assumed victory would come swiftly because of their superior military power and democratic principles.

For America, this "war" was not about acquiring land or peoples. It was about spreading its ideals—and it was considered worth the sacrifice. A U.S. National Security Council report in 1950 "recommended the United States use military force to 'contain' communist expansionism anywhere it seemed to be occurring, 'regardless of the intrinsic strategic or economic value of the lands in question'" (*The History Channel*).

The Korean War put this thinking to the test. U.S. politicians found themselves attempting to balance achieving complete victory over North Korea while avoiding any provocation of China and the Soviet Union. Yet this juggling act was unsustainable and eventually divided the nation over how U.S. military power should be used.

For example, General Douglas MacArthur expressed his clear desire to annihilate the enemy at all costs. He famously wrote of Korea and the spread of communism: "There is no substitute for victory."

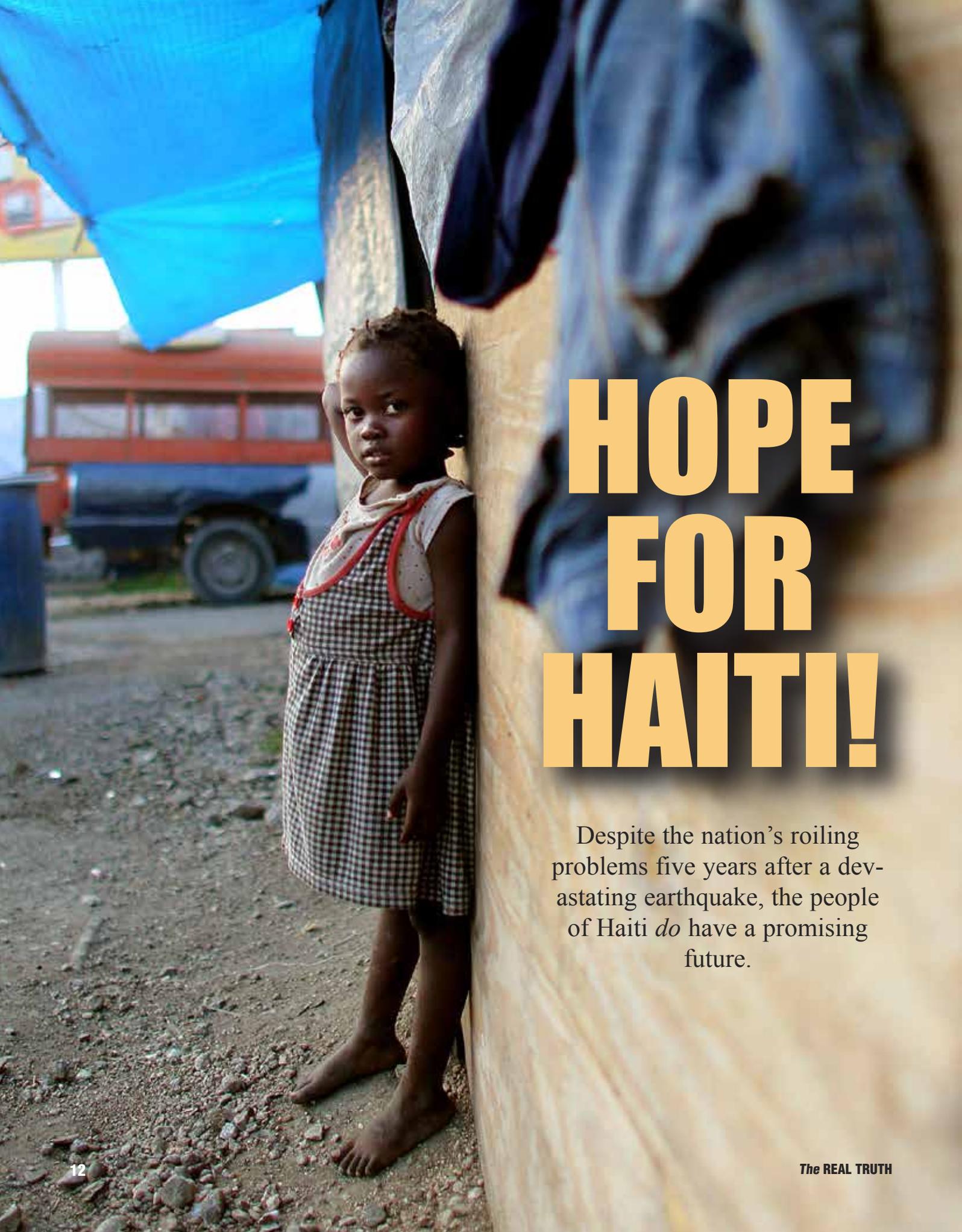
President Harry Truman, however, wanted to avoid a broader conflict

Please see **AMERICA**, page 27



■ **CHANGING ATTITUDES:** Left, U.S. soldiers carry a wounded comrade through a swamp in Vietnam (Jan. 1, 1969). Right, anti-war demonstrators march outside United Nations Headquarters in New York City to protest the war in Vietnam (April 16, 1967).

PHOTOS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES/AFP/ (LEFT); AFP/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

A young girl with her hair in small braids stands barefoot on a dirt and gravel path. She is wearing a sleeveless, checkered dress with a red trim. She is leaning against a vertical wooden post. In the background, there is a red and blue bus, a blue tarp, and other structures of a makeshift settlement. The overall scene is one of poverty and resilience.

HOPE FOR HAITI!

Despite the nation's roiling problems five years after a devastating earthquake, the people of Haiti *do* have a promising future.

“**S**TROLL IN HER hills, meet her people, listen to her music, bathe in her rivers and seas and smile because, in spite of her trials and tribulations, Haiti is smiling at you.”

These are the words “Destination Haiti,” a Haitian travel company, prints on banners that beckon foreigners to visit. It is a scene few associate with the beleaguered nation.

Many still think back to the devastating earthquake that occurred on January 12, 2010. They think of the cement roofs of makeshift homes collapsing on tens of thousands of people in Port-au-Prince. They think of rows of neighborhoods turned into stone heaps, 80,000 people still living in tents, and nearly three-quarters of the city’s residents living in slums with no building codes or sewage systems. They think of the collapsed presidential palace—once the crown jewel of the city’s government district—which was later deemed unrepairable and demolished after years of reconstruction attempts.

Others will recall the cholera epidemic that broke out nine months after the quake that continues to infect hundreds each week. According to the World Health Organization, as of December 2014, there was a total of 717,203 cases—resulting in 8,721 deaths—the most of any country in the world.

With these scenes lingering in people’s minds, luring visitors with a “new image and new message,” as Haiti’s Tourism Minister Stephanie Villedrouin put it, can seem like a stretch.

Yet the rebranded view is strategic. Currently, half of Haiti’s governmental budget comes from international economic assistance. In addition, non-profit groups have poured money into the nation for years.

These income streams, however, are unsustainable: “Humanitarian aid is petering out as agencies leave and money dries up. The decline means Haiti’s partners should be stepping up development efforts, to put the country on a sustainable recovery path, but that isn’t happening,” *The New York Times* reported four years after the quake.

In 2010, reports and images of the scale of the earthquake’s destruction spurred \$13.5 billion in pledges from private charities and national governments. Hundreds of relief organizations flocked to the country, providing food, water, medical supplies, and services to sustain the crippled populace.

Gael Turine, a freelance documentary photographer who spent 10 years of his career on the island, told *Time* that “there’s never been a situation when such a small country has been the target of such a massive influx of money and assistance in such a short span of time...On paper, with that much money in a territory the size of Haiti, we should have witnessed miracles; there should have been results.”

Even as the fifth anniversary of the earthquake passed, conditions for Haitians remain troubling. The *Economist* called this year’s remembrance of the earthquake an “unhappy anniversary” and described the problems it continues to face.

“...many who have found new [habitations] live in ramshackle temporary developments sprawling up hill-sides...Despite international promises to help Haiti build better governing institutions, municipal and parliamentary elections are three years overdue...aid has been dwindling for three years and is now drying up. Some of this is because of donor fatigue and pressing demands elsewhere...almost a quarter of the population earns less than \$1.24 a day, the threshold of absolute poverty.”

Despite continued incredible national problems, Haitians press on.

Mr. Turine noted: “It’s already a victory to see that the country hasn’t exploded...The fact that Haitians haven’t succumbed to madness shows that they’re resilient.”

Those in Haiti have no choice but to take each day as it comes and tackle one problem at a time.

Longstanding Problems

To put Haiti’s troubles in perspective, it helps to examine another major earthquake that happened around the same time.

Architect Paul Fallon wrote in an article for Boston’s *NPR* news station *WBUR*: “A month after the Haiti disaster, Chile experienced an 8.8 magnitude earthquake that claimed 523 lives, a count as precise as Chile’s stringent building codes. The comparative math from these two events is staggering: Chile’s earthquake was 60 times more powerful than Haiti’s, yet Haiti suffered 500 times more deaths...shoddy building construction was responsible for most earthquake-related deaths. Haiti’s long tradition of concrete construction, excellent at supporting direct pressure but weak if pulled or shaken, exacerbated the tragedy. Concrete requires steel reinforcing to withstand forces from all directions, but steel is expensive, and building codes are nonexistent in Haiti. Insufficiently reinforced concrete crumbled when the earth shook. People were crushed.”

Though Haiti’s government does have building codes in place, lack of ability to address and enforce them has rendered them null.

And it is not just infrastructure. Political disorganization has prevented Haiti’s government from obtaining the resources needed to provide for its people, whether educationally, economically or otherwise. This has been the case both before and after the temblor.

There is a reason behind the constant turmoil. In its colonial era, the

■ **SEARCHING FOR HOPE:** An orphan stands outside a makeshift tent at the Children’s Foundation of Haiti orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti (Jan. 10, 2011).

PHOTO: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

people of Haiti endured Spanish and then French rule from the 15th to the 18th century. Eventually, nearly 500,000 slaves rose up against brutish slave-owners, which developed into a colony-wide uprising in 1791. After 13 years of fighting, Haiti declared independence in 1804 and became the first independent state in the Caribbean.

Dreams of creating a republic modeled after the United States vanished after its first ruler, revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines, declared himself emperor for life. Two years later, his own advisers assassinated him, splitting the nation into two factions—a southern republic and a northern monarchy.

The leader of the republic soon declared himself president for life. The two halves later reunited after King Henri I of northern Haiti committed suicide over a looming coup d'état.

The nation's history is a continuous cycle: a new leader steps into office, takes advantage of power, people revolt, political chaos ensues, a hero steps in and instigates a revolution...

Throughout Haiti's over 200-year history, 23 constitutions have been signed. Also, it has experienced nearly every form of government—dictatorship, republic, democracy, military regime—and even periods of time without one.

Today, the political instability continues. Haiti was slated to hold legislative elections on January 12, 2012. Yet, "With elections delayed for more than three years, Haiti...has no elected mayors, no elected community representatives. The terms of a second-tier of the 30-member Senate [have] expired, leaving only 10 Senators. The entire 99-member Chamber of Deputies also left before it could approve the new prime minister or government," *Reuters* reported.

An *NPR* article added that on a weekend in the first half of January "demonstrators marched in the streets, sometimes clashing with police, as lawmakers met late into the night hoping to avert a political crisis and schedule long-overdue elections. Without an agreement, the terms of

a majority of lawmakers [expired]—leaving only the president left to rule legally, a troubling echo of Haiti's dictatorial past."

Later in the month, a new consensus government was formed, but leaders opposed to the current Haitian president feel he is using the crisis to promote the candidate he wants to succeed him.

Such political turmoil is a major reason why the pledged \$13.5 billion in aid has done little to bolster the Caribbean nation, as the *Miami Herald* noted.

"Five years after Haiti's devastating Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake, which saw millions of dollars in foreign debt forgiven, Haiti is once again deep in debt...Instead of achieving its projected 4.8 percent growth at the end of 2014, Haiti achieved 2.8 percent."

Despite both time and massive sums of money, Haiti still ranks high on the human misery index. A reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* stated: "On the United Nations human development index—a composite measure of length and quality of life—Haiti ranks 168 out of 187 countries, putting it squarely between Sudan and Afghanistan.

"And Haiti's only a two-hour flight from Miami."

World Forgets

Haiti's fade back into obscurity was noted by *The New York Times*: "Haiti is a fragile, largely forgotten country. It's possible that some natural or man-made crisis this year could push it back into the headlines. But sustained attention, with the kind of support from outside that Haiti still needs to rebuild and become more self-sufficient, is mostly gone."

While no one wants continued suffering, part of the reason for a lack of attention is the sheer number of tragic events occurring elsewhere.

Each subsequent crisis the world encounters shifts its focus further from Haiti. In March 2011, Japan was struck by an 8.9-magnitude earthquake, causing a tsunami that killed over 15,000. On top of that, a nuclear

facility was damaged and the world had to rush to avert a possible nuclear meltdown.

Throughout 2012, floods from monsoons displaced over 32 million people worldwide. Lives hung in the balance. Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in 2013, destroying roads, sanitation systems, and food sources. The 3.6 million people who were displaced needed shelter, food and medical attention immediately.

With natural and manmade disasters, the most recent ones take priority in people's minds. A front-page news story is often barely reported on later. For example, villages are still being destroyed and citizens attacked in Darfur, Sudan. Hyper-inflation, sky-high unemployment rates, and starvation still plague Zimbabwe. Even the little-known territory of Western Sahara continues to endure a 30-year civil conflict between two factions claiming control. Both have been criticized for human rights violations.

The constant deluge of both immediate crises and lingering ones makes it impossible for the globe to address each one.

Failure of Human Governance

Man has demonstrated an inability, despite his best efforts and good intentions, to bring lasting solutions to certain nation-states. This is especially seen in regions that have marginal or weak governments. Pouring a significant amount of aid and other resources into these areas has proven to be ineffective—and even counterproductive.

In reality, however, nearly every nation is struggling with the same difficulties. Whether it is poverty, lack of food and clean water, inadequate housing, crumbling infrastructure, political unrest, or the like, these challenges preoccupy all peoples to one degree or another.

In fact, these can really be categorized as *human problems* as they are more commonplace than most realize.

Far too many nations are teetering on disaster. Yet their problems are only brought to the fore when a calam-

ity such as Haiti's earthquake strikes. It is then that people acknowledge long-standing issues, at least temporarily, only to move on after a time. Regrettably, these difficulties do not simply go away once the headlines disappear.

Why are human leaders, some of them seemingly accomplished and brilliant, unable to bring lasting positive results to those they lead? Why in this modern age is man unable to per-

manently fix problems such as the lack of food or potable water for everyone, and create and sustain peace?

Various humanly guided approaches to governance—whether through communism, socialism, monarchies, dictatorships and democracies—seem to last for a time yet inevitably fail. After thousands of years of trial and error, why is nothing working?

It is because something vital is missing.

Essential to leadership in general is the requirement for a leader to guide those who follow toward a certain end or goal. Whether leading a company or a country, a good leader must have a firm grasp on a specific destination and the proper course of action to make it there.

This presents a colossal problem when it comes to man leading himself.

Please see HAITI, page 24



■ **LACK OF PROGRESS:** Above, an aerial view of the site of the Haitian presidential palace shows the destruction caused by the quake (Jan. 13, 2010). Below, the site remains vacant five years later (Jan. 13, 2015).

PHOTOS: LOGAN ABASSI/CC BY 2.0/U.N. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (ABOVE); JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES (BELOW)



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The Hidden Law of Sleep

Why It Is Vital to Your Existence

BY RYAN L. CASWELL

ABLARING ALARM is the first sound you hear in the morning. Grogginess brings back memories of the restless night before. You bat at the alarm clock, hoping to hit the snooze button and snatch a few more minutes of sleep.

The alarm sounds again. “I have to wake up,” you tell yourself. With only five hours of sleep, you face a packed day and busy schedule.

Most in the West, especially Americans, wake up exhausted, with the day seeming to begin far too early. The daily pressures of home, family, work and finances weigh on them. A never-ending list of tasks vies for people’s attention, tempting them to stay up a little later at night.

However, these lost hours of rest are more vital than most realize.

Sleep experts once thought that five to six hours of slumber each night was enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, based on new scientific measurements of the human body, they have adjusted these figures to seven to eight hours. Yet an estimated 40 percent of America’s population averages less than seven hours per night, which experts classify as “mildly sleep deprived.”

William Dement, a pioneer of sleep research, found that there is a

correlation between sleep and health. “In maintaining good health, sleep may be more critical than diet, exercise, even heredity,” he said.

Most do not realize that laws and principles govern our health, including the principle of getting sufficient sleep each day. Practicing the rules governing sleep will yield tremendous benefits, such as better job performance, mental clarity, and a greater capacity to manage stress.

Yet failing to follow them brings harmful consequences.

Startling Impacts

The most famous manmade catastrophes of the last few decades evidence the serious consequences that can result from sleep deprivation.

Consider the tragedy of the Challenger spacecraft in 1986. One of the primary causes of this explosion was a technical detail overlooked by NASA managers. The engineers, who worked tirelessly on the project, slept for two hours the night before the launch. Experts attribute their impaired judgment to a critical loss of sleep, which doomed the mission to disaster.

Another example is the crash of the Exxon Valdez oil tanker in Alaska in 1989. While many connect the cause of the crash to alcohol, those manning the ship were also severely

sleep-deprived. The steering shipmate had only slept six hours in two days! His severely impaired judgment caused him to err, resulting in one of the largest environmental disasters of all time. Thousands of animals died and over 11 square miles of ocean were contaminated with crude oil.

While missing a few hours of sleep here and there seems to only have the effect of making one a little drowsy, a study by David Dinges at the University of Pennsylvania proved otherwise. He found that people are notoriously bad judges of their own mental abilities. Subjects who slept six hours per night over two weeks claimed to be only slightly sleepy.

After impartial testing, however, he found that the cognitive alertness and attention spans of most subjects were equal to missing two full nights of sleep.

Although this may not seem significant, researchers compare sleep loss to the cumulative effects of alcoholic drinks. A study by the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales measured cognitive abilities, memory and motor skills after sleep deprivation. Researchers found that those who regularly missed sleep became comparatively “intoxicated.”

Given this, science writer Jennifer Ackerman concluded that the day after someone sleeps only six hours,



he or she will operate with the mental and physical effects of drinking two or three bottles of beer.

Further, Ms. Ackerman considers four hours of sleep equivalent to five bottles and an entire night of missed sleep equal to drinking 10 bottles of beer. Imagine the effects of trying to spend an entire day at work intoxicated!

Since the often-disconnected wooziness that occurs when one is inebriated does not always accompany sleep loss, most people assume that they can deal with a little tiredness. But the cumulative effects of mild sleep deprivation also cause what are known as “microsleeps.” This is a span of three to 10 seconds where sleep pushes through consciousness, causing an immediate distraction or lapse in consciousness. Those who seem to “fade out” for several moments sometimes mistake this as a common, natural occurrence.

Yet inadequate rest can have much more dire consequences. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that this time frame is just enough to veer hundreds of feet off an interstate. Every year in the United States, there are over 1,000 fatalities because of drowsy driving.

In addition, it has been found that sleep loss is directly tied to obesity. With only four hours of sleep, the body has difficulty regulating blood

sugar. To compensate for the energy loss, the body releases hormones telling it to eat to make up for the lack of energy. This is done by reducing leptin in the blood (the hormone triggering satisfaction after a meal) and increasing the amount of ghrelin (the hormone triggering hunger).

The end-result is a strong craving for heavier carbohydrates, even though the body does not need the calories. At its peak, this hunger resembles a 1,000 calorie deficit in a person’s diet. Most of these unnecessary calories are then stored directly as body fat—resulting in significant weight gain over time.

Nighttime Activity

Picture a typical day. Between working late at the office and the long commute home, you arrive at home well after 9:00 p.m. But walking through the front door does not mean your day is over: there is cooking, cleaning and paying bills. By the time your head hits the pillow, it is well after midnight; morning is only a few hours away. The minutes tick off the clock as you gradually drift to sleep.

In the scientific world, it was once assumed that the shift from being awake to falling asleep was gradual, leading to reduced brain activity. But research now reveals otherwise.

A scientist at the University of California in Los Angeles found that

once a person falls asleep, the brain actually continues activity.

J. Allan Hobson, a Harvard Medical School professor, stated, “The brain is still roughly 80 percent activated and thus capable of robust and elaborate information processing.”

This nocturnal process accounts for the varied shifts in brain activity throughout the night, resulting in changes in body temperature, chemistry and sensory activities.

Constant Stimulation

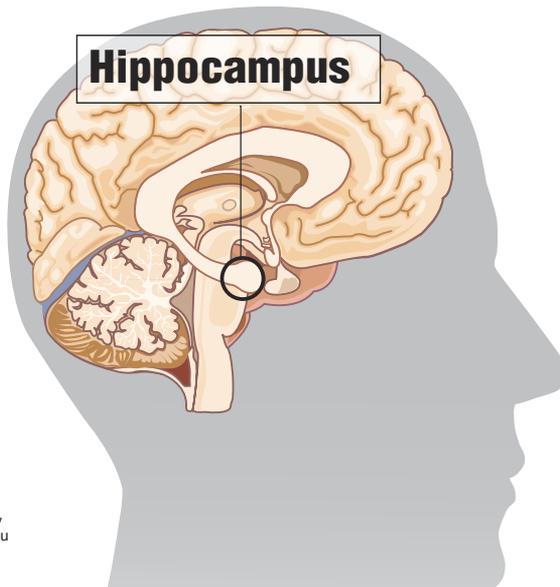
Have you ever woken up and had a “eureka” moment? Perhaps, thunderstruck, you realize after regaining consciousness that there is a much simpler way to perform a physical task, which makes you wonder why you never saw it that way before.

Ullrich Wagner, a researcher at the University of Lubeck in Germany, found that during sleep, the brain interprets, reorganizes and restructures information received during the day. He presented evidence that suggests our brains determine solutions to complex problems during sleep, which we realize only after we awake.

In Mr. Wagner’s experiment, sleep was crucial to problem solving. He showed patients a complex series of numbers that they needed to use to solve several numerical problems. However, there was a hidden solution

The Brain's Mapping System

The hippocampus processes spatial navigation and aids in long-term memory formation. It allows humans to recognize where they are, how they got there, and how to navigate to the next destination.



© 2009 MCT
Source: McClatchy
Washington Bureau

only found by combining these numbers in specific sequence. Mr. Wagner found that 60 percent of patients who slept before attempting to solve the problem found the answer—over twice the number of those who did not sleep before answering.

According to the study, sleep allowed patients to rearrange the numerical information and they could more easily find the solution when awake.

Several other studies have found that there are 20 percent increases in visual and motor speeds after sleep. The hippocampus, which is a part of the brain responsible for learning motor skills, is also active during the REM phase of sleep. Scientists attribute this activity to the brain performing a type of “instant replay,” in which it internalizes the learned skill then determines the most efficient way for your body to perform the action.

Thus, the common phrase “Let me sleep on it” is more rooted in science than most people believe. When you rise, you truly see the learned skill in a new light. Your brain effectively hardwires it into your consciousness, which results in the ability to perform a task much more efficiently the next morning.

Laws and Principles of Health and Wellness

All people desire to live an abundant, peaceful and productive life. God desires this for His creation. He inspired the apostle John to write, “Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers” (III John 2).

As the Creator and Lawgiver, God put in place physical laws—gravity, velocity, inertia and others—to govern and sustain the universe. Yet few recognize that the Bible has much to say about the laws and principles God has set in place to benefit man, whom He made “in [His] image” and “likeness” (Gen. 1:26-27).

For instance, God created the essential nutrients in the soil for humanity’s well-being. He determined which meats human beings should consume and which kinds they should avoid.

Through the apostle Paul, God gave principles regarding eating, drinking and living life in moderation. He

also stated that “bodily exercise profits [for a] little [season]” (I Tim. 4:8).

The Supreme Lawgiver also established statutes regarding sanitation (human waste, contagious diseases, etc.). During the Black Plague, it was these laws that kept the pandemic from decimating Jewish populations in Europe.

There is also a commandment that, if obeyed, is designed to rejuvenate us each week. God commands us, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work...” (Deut. 5:13-14).

Jesus Christ said the “Sabbath was made *for* man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). God commands us to “sanctify it” (Deut. 5:12)—“keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8)—that is, set apart the seventh day of the week by resting on that day, and refraining from work and the normal pursuits reserved for Sunday through Friday.

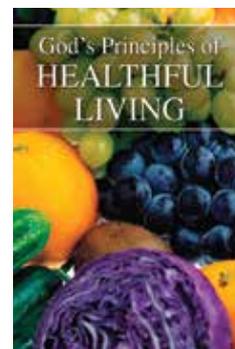
Even farmland is to receive a “Sabbath” every seventh year, ensuring that the soil retains vital nutrients necessary to grow healthy crops and stave off potential droughts.

Likewise, to “prosper and be in health” as God intended, we must be willing to recognize the laws and principles that govern our lives.

Sleep is just one of these laws. If practiced, it will keep you refreshed, rebuild your body and mind, and help you prepare for anything you encounter during waking hours. It affects your cognitive responses and the body’s ability to carry out normal biological

processes. To disregard this law brings consequences. Learn more by reading *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* at rcg.org/glohl.

Our Maker did not intend His creation to suffer an ongoing cycle of sleeplessness and exhaustion. He designed us to enjoy each day living a truly peaceful, rested and thrilling life! □



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Microchip: the Mark of the Beast?

Is a digital implant the “mark of the Beast” talked about in the book of Revelation?

BY F. JACO VILJOEN

AFTER AN EXHAUSTING 18 hours in labor, a mother delivers a healthy baby. The parents are overwhelmed with emotion to see their firstborn come into the world. Nursing staff wheel the child into the newborn ward, with a smiling father following.

But his joyful expression suddenly changes into a distressed frown when a nurse takes a stainless

steel syringe and inserts a microchip capsule into the child’s right hand. The healthcare worker quickly reassures the concerned father this is standard procedure.

This scenario depicts the much-discussed, often-feared, possible expanded use of radio-frequency identification (RFID).

RFID is an advanced identification process in which an individual or item is tagged with a specific ID number. Using

radio waves, a computerized reader can scan a tag’s unique serial number and access any stored information.

The advantage of this system? Beyond today’s barcode technology, the tagged object need only come within a few feet of a reader to process an identity number. The device, which is inserted through the skin in a procedure that takes less than 10 minutes, is no bigger than a grain of rice.

Although this now-\$8.89-billion-dollar industry was developed 10 years

ago and the technology is already in use today—in cars, merchandise, swipe cards, phones—it has yet to gain steam as a viable option to insert into the human body.

That is, until now.

In January 2015, a high-tech office block in Sweden began offering employees the option of receiving a tiny sensor under their skin in place of a swipe card to access amenities such as printers or pay for food from the café. Around the same time, Massachusetts-based MicroCHIPS created a remote control contraceptive chip that allows a woman to turn shots of birth control medicine on and off.

Even digital RFID tattoos are now being made available for those who want to monitor their body temperature, hydration levels, UV exposure, and other bodily factors. Hospitals

have also begun to harness it to diagnose and treat patients.

Despite obvious benefits, the technology causes uneasiness for many, particularly with recent concerns over privacy violations and the improper handling of sensitive data. Clearly, if someone can read it, then there is always someone who can hack into it.

For others, though, it sparks thoughts of George Orwell's *1984* or the biblical mark of the Beast described in the book of Revelation.

Many prophecy watchers and evangelical Christians are convinced that an RFID chip inserted into one's body is this prophesied mark. Articles, books and websites offer a cacophony of wildly different ideas on this subject. Self-proclaimed experts merely contribute to the confusion.

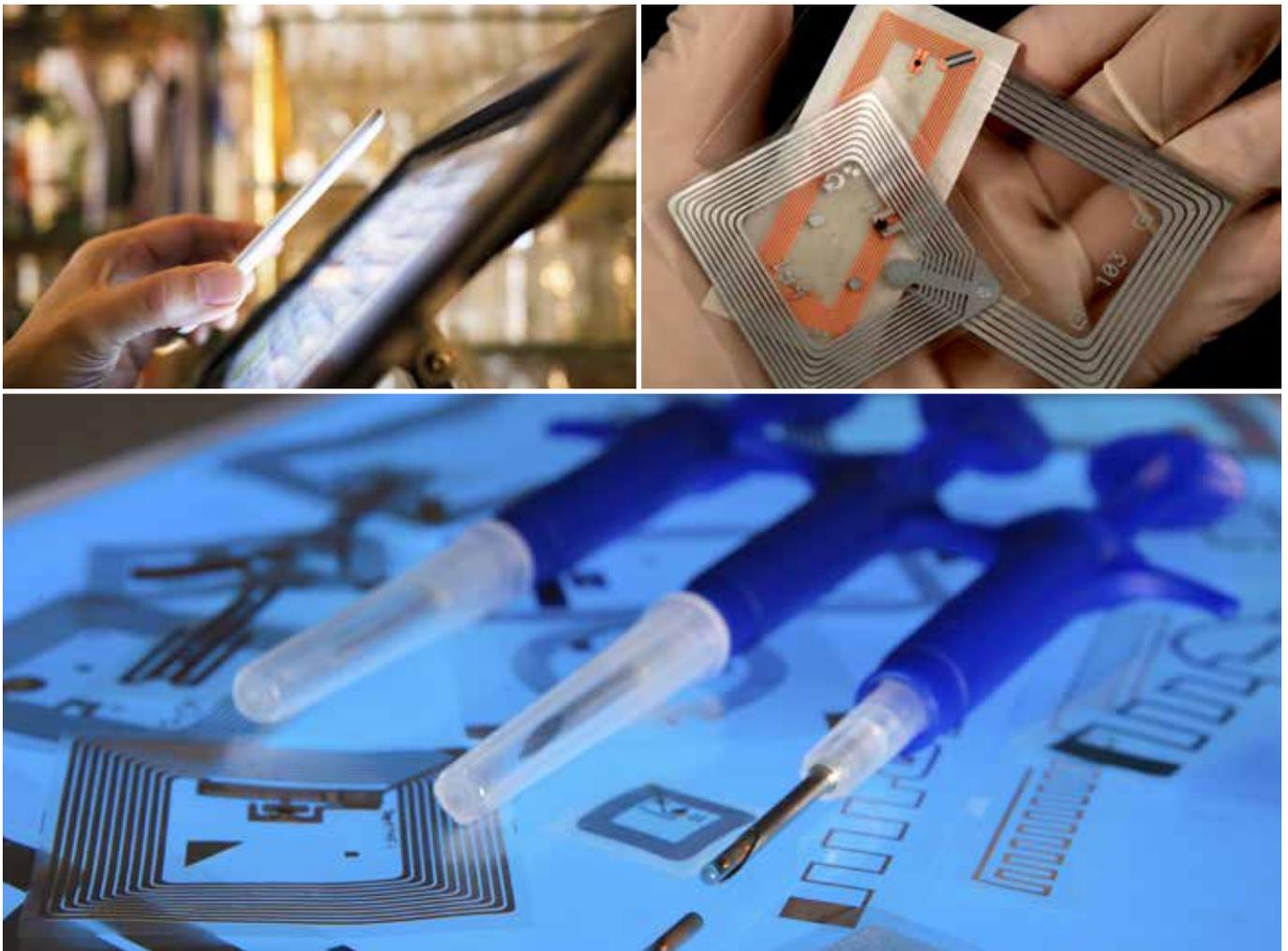
Is microchip technology the mark of the Beast?

Unraveling the Confusion

The only place in the Bible the mark is mentioned is in the book of Revelation: "And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (13:16-17).

A chapter later, the mark is mentioned again: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark...the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God..." (14:9-10).

After reading this account, some conclude the mark is an implanted computer chip or a barcode tattooed on a recipient's right hand or forehead by a figure known as the "Beast." Others feel the Nazi swastika is the mark. Then there are those who think



the Worldwide Web (or “www”) is the mark, with a few even considering it the H1N1 swine-flu virus.

Yet just *one* mark of the Beast is described in the Bible. Which is correct? And how can you know?

Consider. If God did not somehow show exactly what to avoid, then how could anyone be under “the wrath of God” without knowing *what* the mark was? Would God leave people clueless regarding this subject and then punish them for not knowing?

Of course not. I Corinthians 14:33 states: “For God is not *the author* of confusion...” Rather, He commands that “all things be done decently and in order” (vs. 40).

God never leaves His followers in the dark about matters He wants them to understand. Notice the first verse of the book of Revelation: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to *show unto His servants* things which must shortly come to pass...” (1:1).

Simply put, God *SHOWS* His servants what “must shortly come to pass”—including the nature of the mark of the Beast! Therefore, the answer must be simple and crystal clear.

Understanding the Mark

According to Scripture, the mark is something that will involve the vast majority of people as “*all*, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond” receive it. It is of such great importance that “*no man* might [or will be able to] buy or sell” if he does not have it.

The inclusion of the term “sell” along with “buy” indicates that the consequences of it go beyond having money to make purchases. When seen together, it becomes clear that those without the mark will not be able to earn a living or engage in business.

Recall that in Revelation the mark is placed in the “forehead” or “right hand.” This is where biblical theorists often make a jump in logic that this refers to an RFID chip, as this technology is currently the only kind that can be implanted in the body.

Yet a careful Bible student never forces conclusions. Instead, he allows the Bible to interpret itself. Simply breaking down these two terms reveals the actual meaning of the verses.

The frontal lobe of the human brain is the area where a person makes decisions. With his hands, he performs actions, deeds or works. Through the “right hand,” a person acts upon choices made in his “forehead”—the mind.

Similarly, a series of verses in Deuteronomy 6 shows the Bible uses symbolic language to discuss the mind and actions: “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do...these words, which I command you...and you shall bind them for a sign *upon your hand*, and they shall be as frontlets *between your eyes*” (vs. 3, 6, 8).

Here, God is commanding obedience to His Law through a “sign” upon the hand and “frontlet” (a decorative band or ribbon worn across the forehead). Yet this does not mean the person will *wear* a literal sign or frontlet. Rather, it symbolizes obedience to God’s commandments in the *mind* and through one’s *actions*.

Any doubt of the connection to obedience is removed upon reading Revelation 14:12. This verse describes those who refuse to take the mark as “they that keep the commandments of God.”

Romans 6:16 reveals more on the subject of obedience: “Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey...”

Reread the last portion of this verse: “his *servants* you are to whom you OBEY.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Bible Concordance* defines the word “servant” as “a slave,” whether “literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily.” A slave belongs to his master. In short, this verse shows a person belongs to whom he *obeys*.

Just as a Christian obeys God—and therefore *belongs* to Him—a person

with the mark described in Revelation obeys and belongs to someone called the Beast.

Return to Revelation 13: “...no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark” (vs. 17). Under the Beast’s rule, if one does not *obey* him, he will be unable to work or do business with others. This requires those who do not take the mark to have tremendous faith as their continued survival is at stake.

For the Beast to control buying and selling, he must have the political power to implement laws and the military backing to enforce them. This combination of authority will lead to widespread influence.

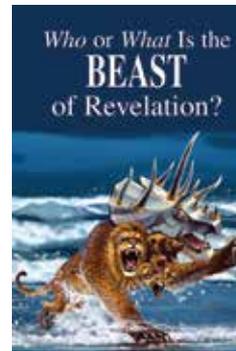
Those who obey God and refuse to follow the laws of the Beast’s government system, including taking his mark, will stand out to those around them. The intense scrutiny will certainly test their resolve as the entire world will be watching.

Realize. No invention by itself could be the mark of the Beast, including an RFID chip or any other type of technology. Instead of being frightened by a computer chip, a diligent Bible student should consider his own thoughts and actions—and look to this Book for answers.

God clearly explains in His Word what this mark actually is. When the political-military leader known as the Beast rises to power, the world will ultimately be divided into two groups: those who obey the Beast and those who refuse. Remember, the mark is tied to obedience.

The decision to accept or reject the mark will present a great world test. All people will face it. Those who take it will incur God’s wrath; those who refuse it will have His favor.

Soon everyone will be confronted with a choice of whom to obey—either God or the Beast. To understand that choice in detail, read David C. Pack’s booklet *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?* at rcg.org/wowitbor. □



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HAITI

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On his own, man has no clue where he is going or how to get there!

Consider the following from the Bible: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* defines the word “way” as “road,” “distance,” “journey,” “manner,” “habit” and “course of life.”

Come to grips with what this verse is saying. Man is unable to “direct his steps” or guide himself—even those who lead nations. In fact, the ability to do so is not even in him! This is why his ways, however brilliant and thought through, ultimately do not work. He is only looking within *himself* for solutions.

Does this mean mankind is doomed to fail with no hope of future success?

Far from it! The point is that instead of looking within for answers to life’s issues, man must first admit he does not have all the answers. Once this is done, he must then look to someone greater than himself to achieve lasting success.

Notice who is aware of the way man should go: “*Man’s goings are of the LORD*; how can a man then understand his own way?” (Prov. 20:24).

This verse begins with a statement and is followed by a question to which the answer should be clear: The way of man is not in himself and God knows the way he should go. Mankind must look to its Creator for guidance.

For all the millennia of human existence, man has done “that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Because of this, lasting peace, joy, security, prosperity and sense of purpose elude mankind.

Hope for All Nations

Unknown to most, an awesome future lies just ahead for the people of Haiti—and all nations. The lack of proper leadership that has plagued men’s governments will soon be addressed. Filling this void is of such crucial importance that it is the central message of the Bible. It is the gospel—or GOOD NEWS—of the coming kingdom of God.

“Kingdom” is another word for government. Notice how vital the execution of proper government is in this well-known prophecy about Jesus

Christ’s Second Coming: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: *and the government shall be upon His shoulder*: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Most focus on the various titles given to Jesus Christ in the verse. Yet realize this look ahead also reveals that He will shoulder the burden of government—a burden men have yet to properly bear.

Christ’s future role is further highlighted in Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (23:5). As ruler of Earth’s government, Christ will execute righteous judgment and justice, and the entire world will prosper.

Under this government the Bible makes clear that the world will be significantly different. Instead of the turmoil and strife that is so common today, Christ, along with those assisting Him, will bring peace and prosperity.

The extent of these coming changes are highlighted throughout Scripture. One notable place is Micah 4: “But



■ **SLOW RECOVERY:** Left, a construction worker spreads cement in Petion Ville, Haiti (Jan. 20, 2014). Right, a boy walks through a camp where he lives with his family in a home made out of tin and tarps (Jan. 10, 2015).

PHOTOS: HECTOR RETAMAL/AFP/ (LEFT); JOE RAEDLE/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it” (vs. 1-4).

This is one of several biblical references that speaks to a more desirable world—one with proper and unified government, religious unity, no more war, and economic prosperity on an individual basis. Consider all the related implications that go along with a change in these areas.

The following excerpts from the book *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* written by David C. Pack, publisher and editor-in-chief of this magazine, further address this coming world-ruling government. The volume contains specific Scripture-based details of how the entire world will prosper under Christ's guidance.

■ **Right government:** “The very gospel message that Jesus Christ brought is almost entirely about government. But this gospel—the good news of the kingdom of God—is almost entirely unknown to popular, traditional Christianity. Men have never wanted God's—or any other—government over them. Most have no idea that the Bible is primarily a book about government—why men's governments never work, and why God's pattern is the only one that does!”

■ **Cities of tomorrow:** “City planners of the future will always be certain to allow enough room for people

to enjoy their homes and the land around them. But the planning of this world's cities has been much different. Overpopulation has translated into over-crowding, with tenement houses teeming with too many people for the space allotted...(Isa. 5:8). The cities of the world to come will present a far different—and infinitely better and more beautiful—picture than the cities of today.”

■ **Health:** “Man is feverishly seeking to conquer disease. Yet he falls further and further behind—as he seems to control one disease, two more appear.

“This will all soon change. All man's efforts to cure diabetes, arthritis, cancer, heart disease, blindness, deafness, Alzheimer's (and other diseases of the mind), strokes, AIDS, and a host of infant and childhood diseases will soon be unnecessary. All of the ongoing searches for new wonder drugs, treatments, specialized diagnoses, surgeries and procedures, advancements in technology—and every other kind of medical advancement—will soon be called off.”

“Through proper re-education of the world, God's laws of health will become known—and compliance with them will become practical and affordable.”

■ **Economy:** “To survive in today's hostile world, governments must collect exorbitant rates of taxation to finance military forces and expanded law enforcement personnel. Of course, greed on the part of many government leaders accounts for much of the excess taxation that is now so burdensome to so many...Outrageous tax rates will be eliminated.

“The administration of God's government has costs, however. Rather than tax rates ranging from 30 to 90 percent, a tithe—just 10 percent!—will be required. That 10 percent belongs to God (Lev. 27:30).”

“Most nations have a variety of heavy, burdensome, hidden taxes, and national health and social security services. Ever-mounting taxes become overwhelming to many now struggling to survive. These burdens will be lifted in tomorrow's world.”

■ **Education:** “Life is a process of education—learning to develop character by obedience to God's laws, which in turn yields every good, fulfilling, and favorable result. Education in the world tomorrow will explain how to live—and how to learn a productive trade. Of course, all academic subjects, including wholesome art and music, will produce well-rounded people. Life will become invigorating, exciting, and fulfilling.”

“Re-educating the world will be a truly monumental task. The difficult job of teaching people to learn can only be done if teachers are un-handcuffed and allowed to bring proper discipline and order to schools and classrooms, now so out of control.”

(For more detail and insight on what is to come, read Mr. Pack's life-changing book at rcg.org/tww.)

All of this points to a promising future for the Haitian people. Under Christ's direction, rulers will have benevolent motives, seeking and ensuring the welfare of the people. They will lead citizens in rebuilding cities that consist of sturdy homes—all reflecting elegance, quality and efficiency.

God's involvement, along with proper sanitation and healthy lifestyles, will help make diseases like cholera issues of the past. There will be no need to rely on foreign income as the nation's economy will be self-sufficient and thrive.

Through proper education, Haitians—and those of all nations—will learn how to lead productive lives. All peoples will be happy and reap the bounty that this way of life affords.

Though the immediate future for Haiti and the entire world is filled with challenges, hope remains. Man has yet to solve his ever-growing list of problems, but a coming King *can*—and will!

The flawed governments of this modern age clearly do not work. But mankind's ways will soon be supplanted. They will be replaced by something far better—a perfect world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT—that will truly provide a bright future for Haiti and the rest of the world! □

EUROPE

Continued from page 7

relaxed approach many Europeans take toward lifestyle choices, including the way they view religion.

Although the two cultures believe they possess completely different mindsets, they actually have more in common than they realize, according to *Der Spiegel*: “Ironically, many Muslims in Germany ‘tend to be lax when it comes to religion,’ says Katajun Amirpur, a Berlin expert on Islamic studies. According to Amirpur, religion ‘doesn’t play a very dominant role’ in their daily life, and yet they would characterize themselves as devout Muslims—even if they ‘occasionally drink a glass of Arrak or Raki’ [liquor] and ‘sometimes forget one prayer or another.’ They are easily their Christian fellow citizens’ equals when it comes to disobeying the commandments of their faith.”

Why then are they not able to easily co-exist?

Two Sides

Just as “multiculturalism” is generally a code word for tensions between Europeans and immigrant Muslims, “Europe” is a code word for Christendom. The continent’s historical roots are steeped in traditional Christian culture, teachings, morals and values. Put simply, multicultural problems in Europe are a result of tensions between two religions: Christianity and Islam.

In a forum sponsored by Pew Research, Bernard Lewis, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, said the source of the Islam and Christendom conflict does not come from the two religions’ differences, but their *similarities*.

“These two religions, and as far as I am aware, no others in the world, believe that their truths are not only universal but also exclusive,” Mr. Lewis said. “They believe that they are the fortunate recipients of God’s final message to humanity, which it is their duty not to keep selfishly to

themselves...but to bring to the rest of mankind, removing whatever barriers there may be in the way.”

Because both believe they hold the key to human salvation, Mr. Lewis said tensions between Christendom and Islam occur because each have “aspired to the same role”—bringing God’s message to the whole world—“each seeing it as a divinely ordained mission.”

How does this apply to today, a time in which many people call Europe a post-Christian continent? Even though Europe is not dominated by religion as it once was, centuries of Christianity’s fingerprints are still found across the continent.

“In order to understand what is going on, one has to see the ongoing struggle within this larger perspective of the millennial struggle between the rival religions...” Mr. Lewis said.

The scars from the competing religions can most easily be found on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, which switched hands repeatedly during the Crusades. Muslims took the mount in A.D. 700 and built the wooden Al-Aqsa mosque on the foundation of a Roman temple. Christian crusaders then violently seized the Holy Land and, in the early 12th century, reconstructed an earthquake-damaged Al-Aqsa mosque as the Temple Solomonis and the Dome of the Rock, renamed the Temple Domini. Crusaders revamped both buildings, adding altars, icons, new mosaics, and Christian inscriptions. Crosses replaced crescent moons.

In 1187, Muslims recaptured the area and reclaimed the mount’s two mosques. Islamic followers purged the Catholic icons and renovated the marble mosaics and inscriptions. These two mosques remain standing today.

During that time, Christian Europe clashed with the Islamic caliphate, constantly shifting control of the land. The caliphate, a Muslim empire established after Muhammad’s death and ruled by a caliph, clashed with the Byzantine Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and then Western European

empires. It was not until 1924 when the creation of the Turkish Republic deposed the last caliph that this religious rivalry faded from view.

Since that time, entire generations of Europeans have grown up not understanding the constant battles that once took place between the rival belief systems.

Therefore, when they were presented with the idealistic option of a multicultural society, it seemed a good idea. Indeed, the concept was born out of a desire for tolerance and peace.

But history makes one point clear: these two religions struggle to coexist. Today, when EU Christendom and Muslim immigrants alike refuse to give up their respective cultures, it should come as no surprise. These two religions have never budged.

Bottom Line

The potential for clashes between Europeans and Muslim immigrants is not going away anytime soon. Substantial shifts in the continent’s demographics make this clear.

According to *Newsweek*, the number of deaths is expected to outnumber births in 10 EU member-states in 2015.

Put this in perspective. Starting in 2015, Europe’s population will experience negative natural population growth, and by 2050, the population is projected to decrease by as much as 52 million from its present level.

In a separate report, the United Nations said that Europe needs as many as 1.6 million immigrants *per year* just to maintain the current population level through to 2050. This represents at least 60 million new residents—many of whom will adhere to Islam.

While the European birthrate drops, the number of Muslims in Europe is projected to surge over the next 15 years. Given these statistics, for the EU to emerge as a true economic superpower, they have one choice: European Muslims and Christians must learn to get along.

Multiculturalism is here to stay. □

AMERICA

Continued from page 11

and instead sought to negotiate. In the end, MacArthur was fired by President Truman and the Korean War ended in a stalemate—with nearly 40,000 American soldiers dead and more than 100,000 wounded.

Because of what was perceived to be useless warfare, many thought, *What was the point?* The conflict had started at the boundary between the northern USSR-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the southern pro-U.S. Republic of Korea. After fighting back and forth, open warfare ended at the exact same place that it started. North and South Korea remain divided to this day.

America's pride and sense of place in the world was once again tested during the Vietnam War.

Additional factors made this conflict even more complicated—including a growing mistrust of the government in the wake of the Watergate

scandal and assassination of multiple U.S. leaders; a struggling American economy typified by a global oil crisis; and increased media coverage through television and print media that allowed the average citizen to come face to face with the carnage and perils of war.

These factors combined to decrease the nation's willingness to use its military power. By this time, the monetary costs and lives lost to spread American ideals no longer seemed worthwhile. After eight years of military involvement in Vietnam, America spent more than \$120 billion, 58,000 American soldiers lost their lives or were missing, and tens of thousands of soldiers suffered psychological effects.

The U.S. eventually withdrew from the fight. Some argue America did not suffer defeat, but nearly no one claims America was victorious.

This is a far cry from the nation that only 30 years earlier had come together to confront one of the greatest threats to freedom in history.

Worth It?

The effects of Korea and Vietnam on public perception and military willpower continue today. The latest wars in Iraq and Afghanistan make this clear.

Americans are tired of footing the bill for global defense. This is especially true with military engagements that linger for years. *The Guardian* wrote: "When the US invaded Iraq in March 2003, the...administration estimated that it would cost \$50-60bn to overthrow Saddam Hussein and establish a functioning government. This estimate was catastrophically wrong: the war in Iraq has cost \$823.2bn between 2003 and 2011. Some estimates suggesting that it may eventually cost as much as \$3.7tn when factoring in the long-term costs of caring for the wounded and the families of those killed."

Also deflating political will is the fact that the U.S. faces many complicated domestic issues. This has caused citizens to regularly demand that leaders prove the latest wars have been successful.



■ **GULF WAR:** Left, several oil wells burn after Iraqi soldiers retreat from southern Kuwait (April 1, 1991). Right, a convoy of U.S. tanks drive down a desert road during the U.S. withdrawal from Kuwait (March 5, 1991).

PHOTOS: PASCAL GUYOT/AFP/ (LEFT); MIKE NELSON/AFP/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



■ **EFFECTS OF WAR:** Above left, a U.S. soldier investigates the scene of a suicide attack at an Afghan-Pakistan border crossing (June 19, 2014). Above right, volunteers wear gas masks during a class on how to respond to a chemical attack in Aleppo, Syria (Sept. 15, 2013). Below left, a statue of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is pulled down in Baghdad, Iraq (April 9, 2003). Below right, a veteran of the Iraq War becomes emotional while visiting a grave site at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia (May 25, 2014).

PHOTOS: NOORULLAH SHIRZADA/AFP (ABOVE LEFT); JM LOPEZ/AFP (ABOVE RIGHT); PASCAL GUYOT/AFP (BELOW LEFT); MICHEL GANGNE/AFP (BELOW RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



While these leaders have tried, Americans do not seem to be buying the political spin. According to *USA Today*, with regard to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, "...most Americans have concluded that neither achieved its goals."

The article stated that there was an "erosion in support for the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the loss of faith in the outcome of the wars, both launched in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. The public's soured attitudes may make it harder the next time a president tries to persuade Americans of the value of military action when it involves putting thousands of U.S. troops in harm's way."

This reluctance to intervene in others' affairs remains even when atrocities may be involved. Look at the use of chemical weapons in Syria. *Reuters* reported: "Americans strongly oppose U.S. intervention in Syria's civil war and believe Washington should stay

out of the conflict even if reports that Syria's government used deadly chemicals to attack civilians are confirmed."

Recall that the alleged use of chemical weapons in Iraq just 10 years prior was a major reason America decided to invade that nation.

Clearly, the United States is becoming increasingly war-weary and losing the will to fight.

Promise Fulfilled

Despite waning pride in America's power, patriotism still exists in the U.S. Often it manifests itself in song, with many of its nationalistic hymns containing a common theme.

■ "The Star Spangled Banner" has an additional verse that states: "Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, and this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'"

■ "God Bless America" includes the words: "God Bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her thru the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam God bless America, My home sweet home."

■ "America the Beautiful" asks that "God shed His grace" on the nation—as well as for God to mend its every flaw.

In each case, the songwriter evoked God and connected it to the well-being and prosperity of the nation.

Many sing these songs glossing over these conspicuous references. There is a reason, though, that America and its history are intrinsically linked to the God of the Bible.

Thousands of years ago, a promise was made by God to the offspring of the patriarch Abraham. Through a special birthright blessing, God revealed that his descendants, namely Ephraim and

Manasseh, would “grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Gen. 48:16). The older brother, Manasseh, was to “become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations” (vs. 19).

History reveals that only one pair of brother nations has ever become a singular great nation and a multitude of nations—the United States (Manasseh) and Britain with its former colonies (Ephraim). This, along with other undeniable proofs in the scriptures, proves that America—the most powerful and influential single nation to ever exist—is addressed in the Bible!

The blessings promised to these brothers are so abundant that they are described as becoming the standard for prosperity. The next verse states that surrounding peoples would even declare, “...God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh...” (vs. 20).

The towering influence and sky-high standards of living in America, as with no other nation, are proof of the fulfillment of this. Other nations have craved for its success and striven for it, wishing—“If only we could be prosperous like them!”

Crucial Requirements

Stop and think. U.S. citizens regularly sing about how God made America a nation—and ask Him to bless it. Yet few think of what these words really mean.

The promises to Abraham regarding the future nations of America and Britain were conditional. They were ensured through ACTION. God fulfilled these promises due to the patriarch’s obedience.

Continued blessings require the same today.

Leviticus 26 plainly lays out how national blessings work. God says: “If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them” (vs. 3). What follows in the passage are the benefits the Creator will pour out for keeping His commands. Included are “rain in due season” (vs. 4) and “peace

in the land...neither shall the sword go through your land” (vs. 6).

These blessings have historically been the case for the U.S. Since the Civil War, there have been no major military conflicts on our mainland! We have fought all our battles abroad.

Also regarding military might, God details the blessings for obedience: “And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the

“These blessings have historically been the case for the U.S. Since the Civil War, there have been no major military conflicts on our mainland! We have fought all our battles abroad.”

sword” (vs. 7-8). Again, such dominance was part of America’s past.

But there is a flipside to all of this. Consider again the words from “America the Beautiful.” We ask that God mend our every flaw. In other words, we want God to *correct us* when we are headed down the wrong path.

As with any good parent, the God of the Bible lovingly chastises those whom He loves. He does this in the hopes that they can again receive blessings.

Know this: He is chastising the U.S. now.

Notice verse 14: “But if you *will not* hearken unto Me, and *will not* do all these commandments...”

The verses that follow look as though they have been ripped from today’s headlines. Verse 16 states, “I

also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you *terror*...”

We are in the midst of a war on terror!

Continuing, God says that “you shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and you shall flee when none pursues you” (vs. 17).

Most tellingly, He declares, “And I will break the *pride of your power*...” (vs. 19).

Consider everything you have read until this point. The U.S. is still a powerful nation, but the PRIDE of that power is being broken. This is the true cause for the dramatic decline in American pride.

Yet the punishment will not stop there if the U.S. does not heed God’s warning. The rest of Leviticus 26 describes increasingly worsening punishments—all designed so that the nation will wake up!

To better understand the U.S.’s historical and biblical link to ancient Israel, read David C. Pack’s extraordinary book *America and Britain in Prophecy* available at rcg.org/aabibp. It also provides detailed Bible proofs about coming punishment on the nation.

God does not want it to come to this. *Individuals* can decide to go down the path of blessings rather than chastisement. But they have to do what God says.

The choice the Creator set before ancient Israel still applies today: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you *life* and *death*, *blessing* and *cursing*: therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that both you and your seed may live” (Deut. 30:19).

The United States is at the front edge of a series of “cursings.” You will see them increasing in number and worsening in magnitude over the coming months and years. From here on out, every time you see an example of waning American pride, allow God’s words in Leviticus 26:19 to thunder in your mind: “AND I WILL BREAK THE PRIDE OF YOUR POWER...”

Then consider your options. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Origin of Christmas at rcg.org/ttooc to learn more about this holiday and Nimrod's part in it.)

The goddess Easter was no different. She was *one* goddess with *many* names—the goddess of fertility, worshipped in spring when all life was being renewed.

The widely known historian Will Durant, in his famous and respected work *Story of Civilization*, writes, “Ishtar [Astarte to the Greeks, Ashtoreth to the Jews], interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as the formal beneficiary of one of the strangest of Babylonian customs...known to us chiefly from a famous page in Herodotus: Every native woman is obliged, once in her life, to sit in the temple of Venus [Easter], and have intercourse with some stranger.” Is it any wonder that the Bible speaks of the religious system that has descended from that ancient city as, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5)?

We must now look closer at the origin of other customs associated with the modern Easter celebration.

Origin of Lent

According to Johannes Cassianus, who wrote in the fifth century, “Howbeit you should know, that as long as the primitive church retained its perfection unbroken, this observance of Lent did not exist” (*First Conference Abbot Theonas*). There is neither biblical nor historical record of Christ, the apostles, or the early Church participating in the Lenten season.

Since there is *no* instruction to observe Lent in the Bible, where did it come from? A 40-day abstinence period was anciently observed in honor of the pagan gods Osiris, Adonis and Tammuz (John Landseer, *Sabaeen Researches*). Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons* says this of the origin

of Lent: “The forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess. Such a Lent of forty days, in the spring of the year, is still observed by the Yezidis or Pagan Devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians. Such a Lent of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans...Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt...”

Lent came from paganism, not from the Bible! (To learn more about the Lenten season, read the article “The True Meaning of Lent” at rcg.org/ttmol.)

Eggs and Easter

Eggs have always been associated with the Easter celebration. Nearly every culture in the modern world has a long tradition of coloring eggs in beautiful and different ways. I once examined a traveling display of many kinds of beautifully decorated egg designs that represented the styles and traditions of virtually every country of modern Europe.

Notice the following: “The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races...The egg to them was a *symbol of spring*...In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection” (Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*). This is a direct example of exactly how pagan symbols and customs are “Christianized,” i.e., Christian-sounding names are superimposed over pagan customs. This is done to deceive—as well as make people feel better about why they are following a custom that is not in the Bible.

Notice: “Around the Christian observance of Easter...folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial...symbolism of European and Middle Eastern *pagan spring* festivals...for example, *eggs*...have been very prominent as symbols of *new*

life and resurrection” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1991).

Finally, the following comes from *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* by James Bonwick: “Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. [German scholar Christian Charles Josias von] Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial.”

What could be more plain in showing the true origin of the “Easter egg”? An Easter egg is just an egg that pertains to Easter. God never authorized Passover eggs or Days of Unleavened Bread eggs, but there have been Easter eggs for thousands of years!

It naturally progressed that the egg, representing spring and fertility, would be merged into an already pagan springtime festival. Connecting this symbol to Christ's Resurrection in the spring required much creativity and human reasoning!

Additional points regarding Easter observance could be covered. To learn more, read my booklet *The True Origin of Easter* at rcg.org/ttooe. Along with what has been presented here, it delves deeper into the origin of Easter observance, what the scriptures say about sunrise services, and how Jesus Christ as Savior relates to the subject. You will be surprised by what you read.

Avoiding the observance of Easter and other worldly holidays steeped in pagan tradition is important for building a proper relationship with God, who commands true Christians to keep His Holy Days instead. To learn more about these days and how you can keep them, read *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?* at rcg.org/ghdoph.

Do not believe that God will accept the celebration of traditions He did not establish. Always seek Him on His terms as outlined in His Word. □

ECONOMY & PERSONAL FINANCE

China Outproduces the United States for the First Time



■ **WINDS OF CHANGE:** Top left, Chinese laborers work on steel beams at a construction site in Beijing, China (Dec. 9, 2014). Top right, workers assemble automobiles at a factory in Shenyang, China (Jan. 9, 2015). Bottom, Chinese tourists view the skyline of Shanghai (Dec. 10, 2014).

PHOTOS: KEVIN FRAYER/ (TOP LEFT); STR/AFP/ (TOP RIGHT); STR/AFP/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES

For the first time, China's production of goods and services has surpassed that of the United States, another sign that the nation is gaining economic strength.

Data released by the International Monetary Fund combined with analysis by *MarketWatch* author Brett Arends showed that China produced \$17.6 trillion in goods and services while the U.S. produced \$17.4 trillion in 2014.

"To put the numbers slightly differently, China now accounts for 16.5% of the global economy when measured

in real purchasing-power terms, compared with 16.3% for the U.S.," Mr. Arends stated. "This latest economic earthquake follows the development last year when China surpassed the U.S. for the first time in terms of global trade."

The Asian nation started to surpass the U.S. when its gross domestic product, a major factor that determines the wealth of a country, began to increase in 2006.

"China's GDP increased at an average annual rate of 11.2 percent during the 11th Five-Year Plan period (2006-

10), and if the economy expands by 7.4 percent in 2014 and by 7.0 percent in 2015, as has been widely estimated, the average annual GDP growth will reach 7.8 percent during the 12th Five-Year Plan period, according to data from China Development Bank..." the Chinese English-language paper *Global Times* reported.

The U.S., however, still maintains a higher level of GDP per person. Currently, the average amount per person in China is \$9,800, which is in contrast to \$52,800 in the U.S. □

Shelling Endangers Children

The United Nations News Centre said that thousands of Ukrainian children are hiding in bomb shelters as Ukraine's cities endure consistent shelling.

The UN Children's Fund reported, "The most vulnerable are those who are forced to seek refuge in unsanitary, crowded and freezing cellars and bomb shelters, children living on the streets, and those who come from poor families or whose homes have been severely damaged." □



■ **CHILDREN AT RISK:** People wait in a shelter for the end of a shelling in Enakieve, Ukraine (Jan. 29, 2015).

PHOTO: DOMINIQUE FAGET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Self-harm Trends

Two large teaching unions in the United Kingdom say that self-harming practices are on the rise among students. From 2013 to 2014, hospital admissions for such incidences were 28,730 according to the National Health Service—up from 22,978 in 2012-2013. □

Teenage Drug Abuse

Australian high school graduates taking week-long vacations after final exams, called schoolies, are choosing drugs over alcohol during their time off.

According to *News.com.au*, one interviewed teenager explained, "It's cheaper than alcohol to buy one pill of ecstasy...It lasts you the whole night, while alcohol doesn't." Among other drugs of choice are marijuana and LSD. □

Antibiotic Breakthrough

Researchers from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, grew cultures of soil-inhabiting bacteria inside a lab and discovered 25 new antibiotics. Of these, teixobactin showed the greatest capacity of preventing bacteria from developing resistance. This discovery could lead to an end of a 28-year drought of antibiotic discoveries. Even if proven effective for humans, it will take at least six years before it can be made accessible to hospitals and physicians. □



China's Naval Expansion

China plans to add destroyers and an aircraft carrier to its naval fleet in 2015. It also plans on constructing two submarines by 2020, both of which will be nuclear powered with ballistic missiles that have a range of 11,000 miles. □



Overdose Fatalities

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, deaths caused by drug overdoses in the United States have doubled from 1999 to 2012. Most of the increase is attributed to heroin use and painkiller overdoses. □

Dwindling Family Time

The average British household spends as little as three hours together per week, according to a study commissioned by David Lloyd Leisure, a health and leisure business that owns clubs and gyms in Europe. Long work hours, long commutes, and participation in after-school clubs are cited as contributing factors. □

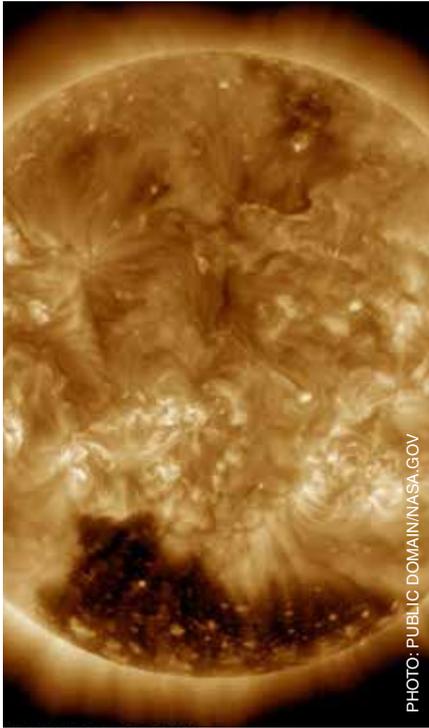


PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN/NASA.GOV

Solar Anomaly

An image captured on January 1, 2015, revealed a large, dim area near the sun's south pole. This phenomenon, called a coronal hole, occurs when the magnetic field reaches out into space instead of arching back toward the surface of the sun. Particles, normally trapped near the surface by the magnetic field, fling out into space, causing solar winds of up to 500 miles per second. □

Rising Murder Rate

In an attempt to lower its climbing murder rate following an 8 percent increase in the number of homicides in 2014 over 2013, Indianapolis, Indiana, will add more units to its police force. Since 2010, the city's murder rates have seen a continual rise, mostly caused by gang violence and drug activity. □



PHOTO: BLÖMKE/KOSINSKY/TSCHOPE/CC BY SA 3.0/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Greece Political Change

Greece's new prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, elected into office on January 26, 2015, promised radical economic change for his country by breaking from German dominance in its affairs. He aligned himself diplomatically with Russia while his administration criticized Germany's austerity measures as "fiscal waterboarding." □



Topsoil Degradation

Heavy chemical usage in farming and deforestation are slated to erode all of the world's topsoil within six decades. According to Maria Helena Semedo of the Food and Agriculture Organization, about a third of the world's topsoil is already gone. □



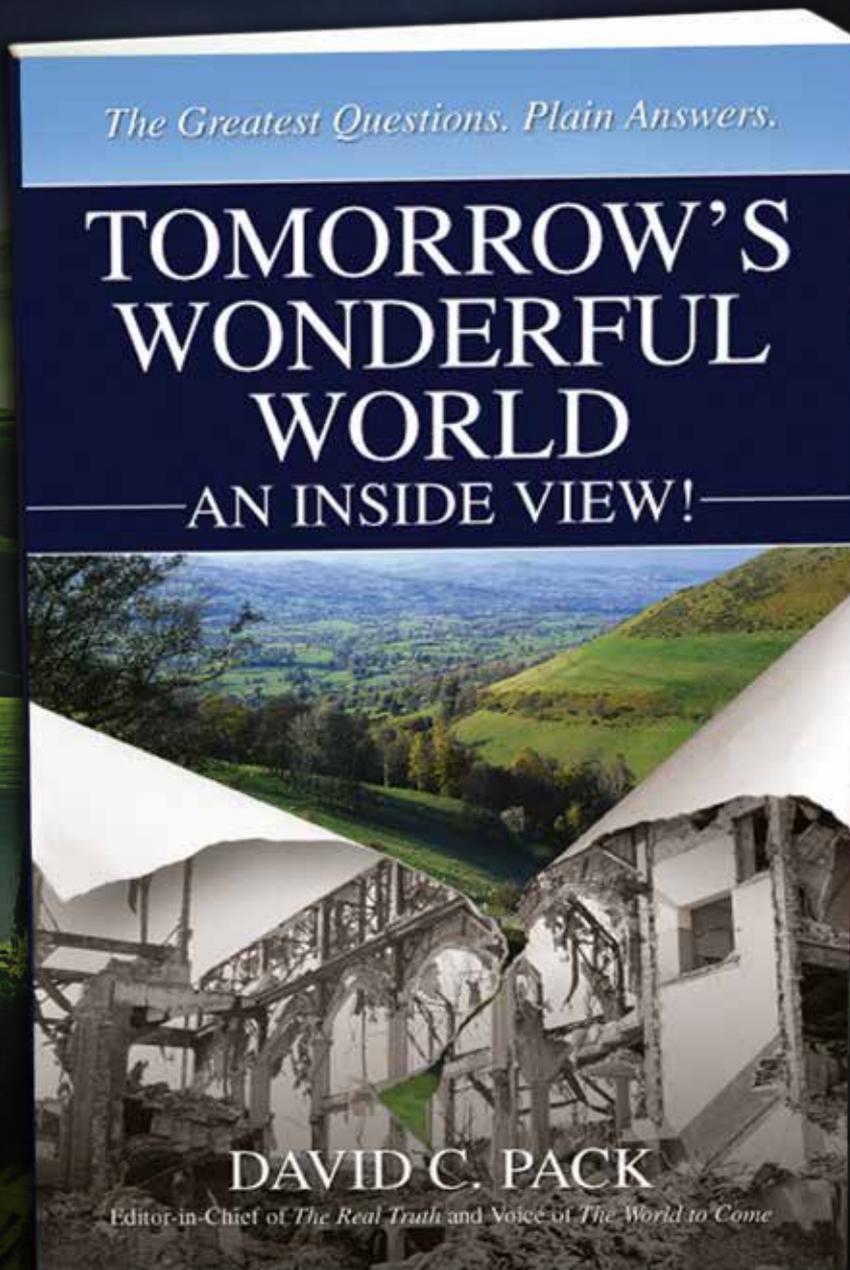
Judicial System Confidence

Confidence in judicial systems and courts by region

	Confident	Not Confident	Don't Know
Asia	65%	25%	10%
Europe	49	45	6
Sub-Saharan Africa	48	45	7
Middle East/North Africa	47	38	15
North America	47	52	0
Latin America/Caribbean	35	59	6
Former Soviet Union	28	55	17

Source: Gallup
Graphic: Tribune News Service

Where Will We Be in 35 Years?



Almost all forecasts for the future are bleak—overpopulation, crippling pollution, skyrocketing obesity rates, disappearing coastlines, constant extreme weather—yet this is *not* what the Bible says Earth will be like! Yes, there are trying times ahead, but man's ultimate future is BRIGHT.

You can know what the coming decades will bring—and in crystal-clear, astonishing detail. The book *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* offers details of what God's Word says is coming for the entire globe. Visit rcg.org/tww to order your free copy today!