

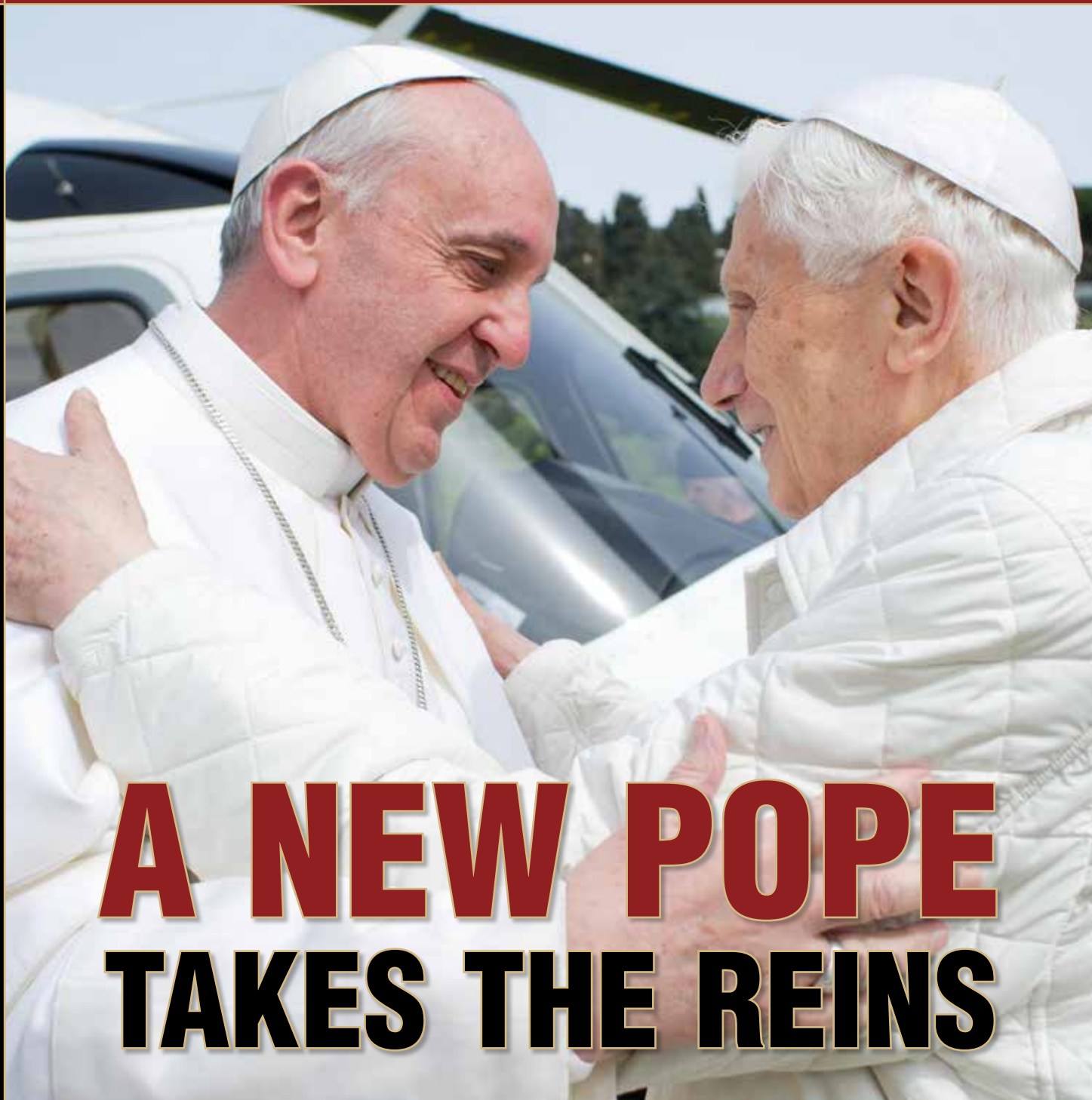
MARCH-APRIL 2013

THE

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



**A NEW POPE
TAKES THE REINS**

THE
REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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ARTICLES

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■ **CARIBBEAN JEWEL:** A centuries-old cobblestone road goes through a historical district of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

PHOTO: NESTOR A. TORO/THE REAL TRUTH

Interlocked Destinies— the *Unknown* Story of the United States and Puerto Rico

For the Caribbean island
and the U.S. to understand
their futures, both must
look to the past.

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FRONT COVER: Recently elected Pope Francis (left) and his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, greet each other on the helicopter pad of the papal summer residence near Rome, Italy (March 23, 2013).

PHOTO: SERVIZIO FOTOGRAFICO L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA GETTY IMAGES

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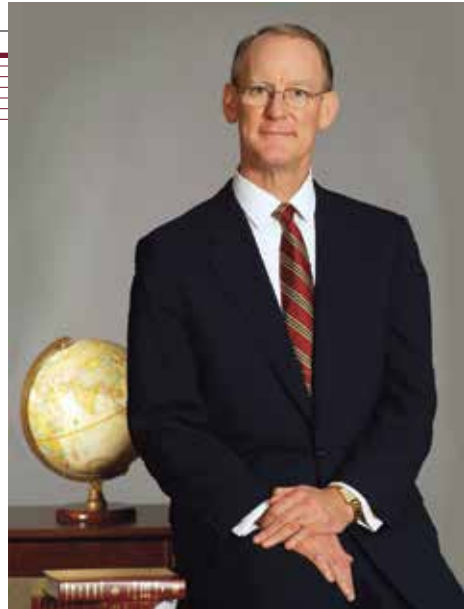
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



True Faith— What God's Word Says! Part 1

WHY ARE MOST people trapped by fears and worries? Because they lack faith! But what is faith? Is it positive thinking? A certain feeling? One's church affiliation? Is it confidence? Or hope? Or the simple belief that Jesus died for your sins? Or is it something far more?

Through the years, people have often told me, "Mr. Pack, I lack faith. I do not feel the presence of God or His power in my life. How can I have more faith?"

Millions misunderstand this subject. Consider yourself. Do you have real faith? Is it sufficient for salvation? Can you know?

This Personal will explain how to have real, true faith. God's Word holds plain answers!

Lack of Real Faith

The Bible states that "without faith it is *impossible* to please [God]..." (Heb. 11:6). This is an incredible statement—yet, it is in the Bible! Take it for exactly what it says. Just think! Anything a person does in attempting to be Christian means absolutely *nothing* if he lacks

faith. For without faith, he has no hope—*no possibility*—of pleasing God. Any who are not pleasing God are Christians *in vain*. So having real faith is serious!

What about you? Do you lack faith to know that God is with you? To overcome sin and guilt? To be healed of disease? To believe all things in His Word? To know that "all things [will] work together for good" if you are serving God (Rom. 8:28)? To believe God will work out injustices you suffer? To believe God will provide for you? To believe that you can endure severe trials and persecution? Or that God will deliver you from them? Do you lack faith to see the soon-coming kingdom of God more clearly and that you can be in it?

The Bible says that you need not lack faith in *any* of these! You **CAN** develop real faith. However, God's Word says that most people, in the age preceding Christ's Return, will *not* have sufficient faith to confidently claim *any* of these or other promises in God's Word!

Faith Found When Christ Comes?

This world is in trouble. Problems are escalating everywhere for a world cut off from God. The Return of Christ is imminent. This event will only occur *after*

certain catastrophic events have taken place. Wars, famines, disease epidemics, religious confusion, economic upheaval, and catastrophic weather will have first rocked civilization to its foundation.

When speaking of our time—the last generation before His Return—Jesus asked, “...when the Son of Man comes, *shall He find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8).

Think of the incredible implications of this question! Is it possible that true faith could be completely gone from Earth at Christ’s Second Coming? Jesus was able to look forward, into our time, and know that conditions would exist allowing this to be true—*almost!*

An article titled “Know Your Bible? Many Christians Don’t” by reporter Wendy Griffith discussed the issue of people’s ignorance of the Bible. Here is what she wrote: “It’s clear that many Americans—including Christians don’t know their Bible.”

The study revealed:

■ “More than 60 percent of Americans can’t name either half of the Ten Commandments or the four Gospels of the New Testament.

■ “Some 80 percent including ‘born again’ Christians believe that ‘God helps those who help themselves’ is a direct quote from the Bible.”

What a shame! What a terrible indictment of the nation with more Bibles than any other on Earth. And it is the single-greatest reason so little genuine faith exists.

But Jesus said He would build His Church and He promised it would never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18). His Church—God’s Church—is where people *do* have faith according to the Bible definition. Therefore, the presence of God’s people on Earth will ensure that at least a few people will be found to have faith when Christ returns.

Notice Galatians 5:22-23: “But the *fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

We must establish another important point relating to the life of all true Christians. Real faith comes from the

Spirit of God—it is a *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. No one can have it—or even be a true Christian—without God’s Spirit. Read Romans 8:9.

But what *is* faith? Surely God would not state that those lacking faith cannot please Him—and then withhold the correct definition of faith from all who seek to know it. Before examining what the Bible says about real faith, it is helpful to examine what people think it is.

Various Counterfeits

There are several common ideas about faith. If you doubt this, merely ask a half-dozen people to explain it—to define it for you. Be prepared for a half-dozen ideas—probably all wrong—all of them different from what the Bible reveals.

I have known many people who have believed that faith is an intangible “feeling” that cannot be defined. It is often thought to be personal, mysterious and unique to each person—off limits for anyone to question. This feeling usually has no definition, structure or clear purpose and, inevitably, is whatever people want or need it to be. In other words, for almost every person, there is a different description and definition of faith. It is strange how many people view faith this way, yet the Bible does not say anything of the sort.

Others believe that faith is some kind of “positive thinking.” It is as though as long as people take an optimistic view and remain upbeat about events and circumstances, they are demonstrating faith. The Bible nowhere describes faith with the words positive or optimistic—though these are certainly good qualities.

Other views of faith are that it is *hope* or *confidence*. Neither is true! But Hebrews 10:35 does say that confidence is important. Notice: “Cast not away therefore your *confidence*, which has great recompense of reward.”

While this passage reveals that confidence is vital for Christians, confidence is *not* faith. Regarding faith being hope, I Corinthians 13:13 states, “And now abides faith, *hope*, charity [love], these *three*; but the greatest of these is [love].”

If faith and hope are the same, why are they listed *separately*? Why does God refer to them as “these *three*”? Counting love, shouldn’t He have said, “these *two*”? Obviously, faith is different from hope.

Still others believe that one’s faith is the equivalent of the church denomination or affiliation they attend. This description of faith is seriously flawed and unscriptural. Notice Ephesians 4: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, *one faith*, one baptism” (vs. 4-5).

If faith is a church—and there are well over 2,000 denominations in the United States alone—there cannot be just “one faith.” This idea makes the apostle Paul wrong. He should have said “thousands of faiths.”

Related to this, many also talk of either “people” or “a person of faith”—you have heard the term—merely because one is religious. This term has even come to encompass non-Christian religions.

Bear in mind you have just seen the Bible state there is only *one* kind of faith! We will soon explore whether the Bible precisely defines that *one* kind of faith or leaves individuals to guess its meaning.

The last and perhaps most common idea is that faith is any general belief that Jesus died for our sins. As with the idea that faith is a feeling, the extent of people’s personal belief in Jesus’ sacrifice becomes the deciding factor. Certainly we will see that the true definition of faith does *include* this important belief. There is no doubt that if someone does *not* believe the most basic understanding that Jesus Christ died for his or her sins, this person does not have saving faith. Remember, without faith it is impossible to please God, and if someone doubts Jesus died for him, he is not pleasing God *and will not be saved!* Believing in Jesus’ sacrifice is a direction—an avenue—of faith, but it is not what faith *is!*

Bible Definition

It is now time for the most fundamental question in this article. Does the Bible

give an exact definition of *faith*? Since it says there is *one* faith, does it, in fact, give one definition of that faith? Is there a place where it says, “Faith is...” and a precise definition follows? If so, *where* is it and *what* does it say?

Hebrews 11 has often been called the “faith chapter.” It describes many of God’s greatest servants and how *their faith* enabled them to perform great acts and miracles, or to endure severe trials. This long chapter is very inspiring, and all who want to have real faith should periodically read it. It contains the word *faith* two dozen times. Verse 2 says, “For by it [faith] the elders [these Bible figures] obtained a *good report*.”

How could they have obtained a “good report” unless they understood faith? Now for God’s definition in verse 1: “Now *faith is the substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence of things not seen*.”

Did you notice that faith involves “evidence” of things “not seen”? The marginal rendering of “substance” is “*assurance*.” Faith involves an ASSURANCE “of things hoped for.” But, if something is hoped for, that something has not yet been *received*. Therefore, where faith is involved, there is an ASSURANCE that it *will be received*!

But how can *evidence* be related to something that is *not seen*? Do we not rather think of evidence as involving things that *are* seen?

In a courtroom, evidence is what *can be proven*. It involves facts that are recognizable—and usually visible—to a jury. In other words, legal evidence only involves things that *can be seen* or demonstrated. How then can faith involve evidence that is *invisible—not seen*?

Faith involves evidence in the following way. Real faith, in *any* promise made by God, is the evidence. It is the *belief* that is the *evidence*. If God promises to do something, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). Your evidence that He will perform it is the very unwavering faith that you hold. Understand this! Hebrews 11:1 said, “...faith is...*the evidence*...” If you have true Christian faith, you do not

need to search for the evidence—you already possess it!

Doctrine of Faith

We have read the biblical *definition* of faith, but faith is also a *doctrine*. Notice: “Therefore leaving the principles of the *doctrine* of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1). Faith is always exercised toward God, but it is Christ who makes this possible.

Faith is something Christ taught—this is why the Bible calls it “the doctrine of Christ.” By now, you realize faith is crucial for every Christian to understand. You need not be confused about it, though people around you may be. Eliminate all misunderstanding about faith.

When Jesus returns, perhaps He will find real faith in you!

For every doctrine of God, there are endless ideas that *people* conjure about it. The Bible explains what *God* says and thinks about His doctrines. If a doctrine comes from and belongs to *God*, we ought to examine what *HE* says about it. You should never be concerned with the opinions of people.

The balance of this article, and later Part 2, will explain the Bible’s true teaching about the doctrine of faith toward God.

Prepare to be surprised!

Not the Five Senses

Almost everyone believes that faith involves *feelings*. But physical feelings merely come from the human senses and have nothing whatsoever to do with what God promises—or faith!

Human beings accept knowledge they have received through the five senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. These senses all involve *physical* information—*physical* knowledge. The mind receives and processes this information in order to draw conclusions about circumstances, things and events taking place around it. Faith is *spiritual*, not physical. It is *confident assurance*, which comes from the Spirit of God in the mind of a converted person.

So many today lack the strength—the *POWER*—to believe God will perform the promises contained in His Word. He seems far away, vague and ethereal to billions of human beings caught up in a materialistic world. The vast majority do not make time for God. There seems to be no room for prayer, Bible study, fasting and meditation. All these things draw us closer to God.

Most ignore them, and then wonder why they have no faith! This leaves them forced to rely solely on their five senses for guidance. Most people feel that anything derived from a source *other* than these is not to be trusted.

No one would ever wish to lose his *physical* sight. Certainly no one would consider driving a car if he were blind. Now, consider this verse: “...FOR WE [Christians] WALK BY FAITH, *not by sight*...” (II Cor. 5:7).

Practicing true faith means learning to disregard what you *see*. Literally, sight does not count in relation to *what* God has promised to do or *when* He will do it. This verse reveals that Christians do not walk by what they see!

Think of this example in the following way. Just as you would never consider driving a car *WITHOUT SIGHT*, a Christian is not permitted to walk through life *BY SIGHT*! This is not a principle one learns overnight. The very concept of this kind of spiritual understanding is foreign—*COMPLETELY ALIEN*—to human thinking. Unlearning the wrong idea of faith requires a lifetime of practice.

Prayer, study, fasting and meditation are *spiritual* activities. God is Spirit and Christ explained, regarding Christians, “...they that worship Him [the Father] *must worship Him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

Of course, people who do not *KNOW* the truth of all the *other* doctrines of God, though they may know the truth about faith, cannot possibly worship Him in truth. They may try to worship God in spirit, but it is impossible to worship Him in truth if they are doing it in ignorance of crucial Bible truths. However, for our purposes here, at

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A New Pope Takes the Reins



Pope Francis will lead the Roman Catholic Church toward—and possibly into—an unprecedented period in its history.

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

PLUMES OF WHITE smoke, pouring for minutes on end from a temporarily installed chimney atop the Sistine Chapel, heralded the selection of a new pope on March 13. The decision came quickly on the second day of balloting. From a list of about 20 *papabili* (likely candidates) came an unexpected pick: Jorge Mario Bergoglio, onetime Archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Born in the Argentinian capital to working-class Italian parents, Cardinal Bergoglio chose to carry the name Francis during his papacy. Many were taken aback that a

76-year-old was elected, expecting a younger pope this time—particularly in light of his predecessor, Benedict XVI, having resigned, stating, “I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to [the papal office].”

Despite placing second on the ballot during the last papal conclave in 2005, Bergoglio was not a household name.

The transition from Benedict to Pope Francis has been groundbreaking, but with some echoes of history. What can be learned from how it unfolded? And as the fanfare fades and the reality of a new leader sets

in, what can we expect from the first pope to hail from either the Western or Southern hemispheres?

“Lord seemed to sleep”

Benedict’s papacy was overshadowed by dark clouds from the beginning. As one example, he inherited far-reaching allegations of abuse by Catholic clergy in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. The aftermath of this involved apologies, lawsuits, resignations, large financial settlements, and serious credibility damage.

In addition, Catholics have been leaving European cathedral pews increasingly empty, including in Benedict’s native Germany. On that continent, ex-Catholics appear to be



■ **INAUGURATION:** Opposite page, Jorge Mario Bergoglio attends his first mass as Pope Francis at the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City (March 14, 2013). Above, a view of Saint Peter's Square during the inauguration mass (March 19, 2013).

PHOTOS: SERVIZIO FOTOGRAFICO L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA GETTY IMAGES (OPPOSITE PAGE); FRANCO ORIGLIA/GETTY IMAGES (ABOVE)

largely dropping out of organized religion altogether. In other regions, Pentecostal and other Protestant denominations are drawing away considerable numbers.

Benedict was not the natural figure to oversee a Roman church in crisis. If John Paul II was a media-savvy, globe-trotting statesman, Benedict was an academic, professor-like pope who expected his writings and speeches—called a “master class” on Catholicism by some church members—to be water poured on the flames of discontent within the fold.

But the attacks and crises did not stop, culminating in what one Vatican official labeled “Vatileaks”—a release of documents that may have been the last straw as explained by the

Guardian: “[Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*] said the pope had taken the decision on 17 December that he was going to resign—the day he received a dossier compiled by three cardinals delegated to look into the so-called ‘Vatileaks’ affair.

“Last May Pope Benedict’s butler, Paolo Gabriele, was arrested and charged with having stolen and leaked papal correspondence that depicted the Vatican as a seething hotbed of intrigue and infighting.

“According to *La Repubblica*, the dossier comprising ‘two volumes of almost 300 pages—bound in red’ had been consigned to a safe in the papal apartments and would be delivered to the pope’s successor upon his election.

“The newspaper said the cardinals described a number of factions, including one whose members were ‘united by sexual orientation’.

“In an apparent quotation from the report, *La Repubblica* said some Vatican officials had been subject to ‘external influence’ from laymen with whom they had links of a ‘worldly nature’. The paper said this was a clear reference to blackmail.”

In his farewell address, Benedict alluded to an account in the gospel of Matthew: “...there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but [Jesus] was asleep” (8:24).

He stated that his papacy had “been a stretch of the Church’s pilgrim way, which has seen moments of joy and

light, but also difficult moments. I have felt like St. Peter with the apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee: the Lord has given us many days of sunshine and gentle breeze, days in which the catch has been abundant; [then] there have been times when the seas were rough and the wind against us, as in the whole history of the Church it has ever been—and the Lord seemed to sleep.”

Rare Resignation

Benedict was the first pope in nearly six centuries to step out of office. Since the start of the Catholic church, there have been perhaps seven resignations. The last occurred in 1415, with the abdication of Gregory XII. This move helped end the Great Schism, a time when two church factions were led by competing French and Italian popes.

But an even earlier resignation has been linked to the most recent one.

Celestine V, whose entire papacy fit within the latter half of 1294, had a tumultuous run that ended with his stepping down. Benedict seemed to make no secret of his affinity for Celestine, who is called the “hermit pope” because of his monastic life before becoming pontiff, in which he lived austerely in a primitive hut.

After an earthquake struck the Italian city of L’Aquila in April 2009, observers unknowingly saw a harbinger of things to come: “...Pope Benedict came to console victims. He prayed before Celestine’s coffin,” *NPR* reported. “In a highly symbolic gesture, Benedict laid upon it a most sacred vestment—his pallium, or a kind of scarf.

“Shortly after that, Celestine’s coffin was moved for a while. It was paraded slowly through the narrow streets, on the back of a small truck, to the nearby town of Sulmona.

“Benedict went to pray before Celestine’s remains there, too.

“The significance of the two visits is ‘quite staggering,’ says [George Ferzoco, an expert on Celestine at England’s Bristol University]. To him, it’s amazing no one saw the message behind Benedict’s actions.

“He was showing that it is permissible, licit, and in some cases spiritu-

ally beneficial that a pope may resign for the good of his soul and for the benefit of his flock,’ Ferzoco says.”

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* offered the following account of Celestine V’s tenure: “It is wonderful how many serious mistakes the simple old man crowded into five short months...he created twelve new cardinals, seven of whom were French, and the rest, with one possible exception, Neapolitans [each suggested to Celestine by the King of Naples, Charles II], thus paving the road to Avignon and the Great Schism...At Benevento he created the bishop of the city a cardinal, without observing any of the traditional forms. Meanwhile he scattered privileges and

canonical doubt arose: Can a pope resign? As he has no superior on earth, who is authorized to accept his resignation? The solution of the question was reserved to the trained canonist, Cardinal Gaetani, who, basing his conclusion on common sense and the Church’s right to self-preservation, decided affirmatively.”

Note that Cardinal Gaetani became the next pope, Boniface VIII!

The encyclopedia continues: “When the report spread that Celestine contemplated resigning, the excitement in Naples [where Celestine had chosen to station himself, far from Rome and close to King Charles] was intense. King Charles, whose arbitrary course

■ **PAYING RESPECT:** Pope Benedict XVI covers a relic of Pope Celestine V with a scarf during a papal visit to a church in L’Aquila (April 28, 2009).

PHOTO: OSSERVATORE ROMANO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



offices with a lavish hand. Refusing no one, he was found to have granted the same place or benefice to three or four rival suitors; he also granted favours in blank. In consequence, the affairs of the Curia fell into extreme disorder... he was ill at ease. Affairs of State took up time that ought to be devoted to exercises of piety. He feared that his soul was in danger. The thought of abdication seems to have occurred simultaneously to the pope and to his discontented cardinals, whom he rarely consulted.

“That the idea originated with Cardinal Gaetani the latter vigorously denied, and maintained that he originally opposed it. But the serious

had brought things to this crisis, organized a determined opposition. A huge procession of the clergy and monks surrounded the castle, and with tears and prayers implored the pope to continue his rule...A week later (13 December) Celestine’s resolution was irrevocably fixed; summoning the cardinals on that day, he...announced his resignation, and proclaimed the cardinals free to proceed to a new election...the next day Benedetto Gaetani was proclaimed Pope...After revoking many of the provisions made by Celestine, Boniface brought his predecessor, now in the dress of a humble hermit, with him on the road to Rome. He was forced to retain him in custody, lest [a hostile]

use should be made of the simple old man. Celestine...managed to effect his escape...Boniface ordered his arrest; but Celestine evaded his pursuers for several months by wandering through the woods and mountains. Finally, he attempted to cross the Adriatic to Greece; but, driven back by a tempest, and captured at the foot of Mt. Gargano, he was delivered into the hands of Boniface, who confined him closely in a narrow room...Here, after nine months passed in fasting and prayer, closely watched but attended by two of his own religious, though rudely treated by the guards, he ended his extraordinary career in his eighty-first year.”

This kind of historical turmoil is cited by some Catholics as proof that the church will weather the current storms—just as it has in the past.

Modern Pressures

Much of what has caused the Vatican to lose ground in Europe and North America lies in its positions on so-called social issues—stands which are rejected by most younger people. Many are gender-related. The church’s opposition to abortion (and all other contraceptives), its stance against homosexual marriage, doctrine of celibate priests, and limits on female leadership roles all make it appear antiquated and out of touch to many.

As the papal conclave neared, one chain of events summed up the church’s troubles all too well. Scottish Cardinal Keith O’Brien stated in a *BBC* interview that the new pope should reconsider the church’s longstanding position on celibacy for priests. This of course drew the ire of Catholic traditionalists, but others were angry for another reason. They recalled his vocal opposition to homosexual marriage and accused him of hypocrisy and a double standard. But only days after that interview, he resigned from his position after admitting to past sexual misconduct.

In this atmosphere of public criticism and shake-ups, some fear that Benedict’s resignation will set a precedent, with every pope from now on subject to a chorus of “step down”

demands from both within and outside the church.

But the larger struggle transcends any given hot-button issue, and even any particular pontiff.

Battle for the Church’s Future

While some deny the church is in crisis, there are two strong currents that are tugging its lay members and clergy in opposite directions: the desire to reform and change, as opposed to the determination to hold steady or even turn back the clock.

Forty years have passed since the last concerted effort to modernize the church, the Second Vatican Council.

Benedict, once a reformer, ultimately came to be known as an arch-conservative, first in his position as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly known as the Inquisition), when he was called Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and then as pope. He has stated that Vatican II’s decrees have been misinterpreted and were never intended as a step toward 20th-century values. A piece in *The New Yorker* pointedly called him “the man who, for the past thirty-two years, enforced and eventually led the doctrinal retreat into the Middle Ages begun by his predecessor.”

As the days passed between Benedict’s resignation and the Sistine Chapel’s white smoke, a huge question was on the minds of millions, yet in various forms: “Will the new pope be a traditionalist or reformer?”... “Insider or outsider?”... “European or non-European?”... “Conservative or freethinker?”

New Start

Enter Pope Francis. In the days following his selection, he has been well received by Catholics around the world, partly because he embodies elements of both opposing currents. He carries the political and demographic advantages, novelty and breath-of-fresh-air appeal of a pontiff from the developing world—the first from Latin America and first from the Americas, edging out candidates from the United States and Canada. But at the same time, he

is of Italian stock, as have been most popes through the centuries.

Francis is the first pope to be associated with the church’s liberation theology movement, which arose in Latin America in the 1970s. This school of thought asserts that the Bible can be truly understood only through the eyes of the poor, and advocates political involvement to help tip the balance of power and public resources away from elites and toward the lower classes who are victims of unjust social structures. (While both John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger initially opposed liberation theology and viewed it as a dangerous mix of theology with Marxism, they softened over time.)

But if this element of his background is seen as leftist, are his doctrinal views liberal? “The changes he is expected to bring to the Catholic Church are not likely to affect doctrine,” *The Christian Science Monitor* stated. “Pope Francis is a doctrinal conservative like his predecessors Benedict XVI and John Paul II. Where he may make his mark is in his personal commitment to issues of inequality, including poverty and globalization, as well as in tapping his outsider status at the Vatican to promote reform.”

He is also the first Jesuit pope. Members of the Society of Jesus, a male-only order, take vows of poverty; Ignatius, who co-founded the order with Francis Xavier, wanted to emulate Francis of Assisi, the “Poor Little Man” who was born to wealth and renounced it to devote himself to evangelism. The Jesuits are a teaching order that runs schools and universities around the world including Georgetown and Loyola in the United States. A controversial group, they have been expelled from many countries since their establishment in 1534, including Spain, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Russia and others. France alone has exiled them three times. Most of these nations eventually readmitted them, but Switzerland permanently banned the order in 1847.

Why did Cardinal Bergoglio take the name Francis, also a first? According to

CNN, “a fellow cardinal from Brazil had told him ‘don’t forget the poor’ as the votes stacked up in his favor.

“This thought stuck in his mind, Francis said, as it became clear that he had won the two-thirds majority that meant he was the new pontiff.

“Right away, with regard to the poor, I thought of St. Francis of Assisi,

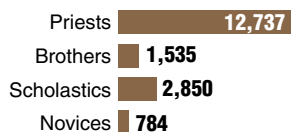


The Jesuits

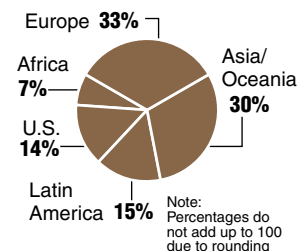
Newly elected Pope Francis is not only the first Roman Catholic pontiff from the Americas, he is also the first to be a member of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits.

Membership

As of 2011, the all-male society had nearly 18,000 members...



...in more than 100 countries.



Vision and duties

- Members take vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and willingness to accept any mission from the pope
- Letters I.H.S. in seal (shown above) stand for “Jesus, Savior of Humanity” in Latin

History



Ignatius of Loyola

- Founded in 1539 by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish knight, and nine of his companions
- Some speculate that Pope Francis may have taken his name in honor of St. Francis Xavier, one of the order’s founding fathers
- Jesuits have often been influential in politics
- Played a role in the Spanish Inquisition against so-called heretics, or non-Catholics

of the most famous moments in St. Francis’s life is the day he was passing by the church of St. Damiano. It was old and near collapse. From St. Bonaventure’s ‘Life of Francis of Assisi’: ‘Inspired by the Spirit, he went inside to pray. Kneeling before an image of the Crucified, he was filled with great fervor and consolation...

While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord’s cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from the cross, telling him three times: “Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling into ruin.” Francis was amazed ‘at the sound of this astonishing voice, since he was alone in the church.’ He set himself to obeying the command.

“Go and repair my house, which is falling into ruin. Could the new pope’s intentions be any clearer?”

Final Revival

Those wishing for major changes in Roman Catholic teaching are bound to be disappointed. Commenting on the direction of Francis’s papacy on “CBS This Morning,” Cardinal Timothy Dolan flatly stated, “He’s not going to tamper with the immutable [irreversible, absolute] teaching of the

church.” On the whole, Catholic doctrine has not changed, other than on details of policy or procedure.

While its growth has continued, it has relied on gains in Latin America and Africa to balance losses in North America and Europe. Beyond the early 19th century, it has never regained its status as the civilized world’s king-maker, as it held during the centuries of the Holy Roman Empire. But to truly dominate once again, it must sit

astride a dominant political power—a resurgent Europe.

Can Europe rise again? After years of financial crisis and bureaucratic paper-shuffling in the European Union, it seems unlikely.

But one source makes plain that Europe will rise again—the Bible.

It is well known that the Catholic Church acknowledges the Bible, but places tradition and the writings of its founders and popes ahead of Scripture in importance.

Only the Bible, however, has foretold the rise and fall of whole empires and even individual leaders. For example, the Persian king Cyrus was prophesied—by name!—to eventually perform certain divinely inspired tasks, decades before his birth (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Many other examples could be cited, including detailed prophecies of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman empires as seen in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Europe will come to dominate the globe, and with it, so will the “original” European church. But what will make this church—a hierarchy seen by many modern minds as a holdover from the era of castles, knights, competing kings and princes, feudal lords and peasants—relevant to the masses once again?

As a *Der Spiegel* article succinctly stated, “What it’s seeking is a miracle.” Miracles—events that could only be supernatural—WILL soon galvanize Catholics, accelerate reunion with Orthodox Christians and Protestants, and confound agnostics and atheists! This will occur—and is just over the horizon.

To learn more about what the Bible, the only authoritative source, states about the future, read David C. Pack’s free book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*. It is available at rcg.org/tbgpu for online reading and for download in ePub and other formats. This one-of-a-kind book reveals God’s road map for world events—the sobering, turbulent years ahead, followed by the greatest good news in humanity’s history.

Read it today! □

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Source: www.sjweb.info, www.jesuit.org, Le Moyne College, BBC
Graphic: Pat Carr

then I thought of war...Francis loved peace and that is how the name came to me.’

“He had also thought of St. Francis of Assisi’s concern for the natural environment, he said, and how he was a ‘poor man, a simple man, as we would like a poor church, for the poor.’”

Columnist Peggy Noonan highlighted another parallel from history in *The Wall Street Journal*: “One

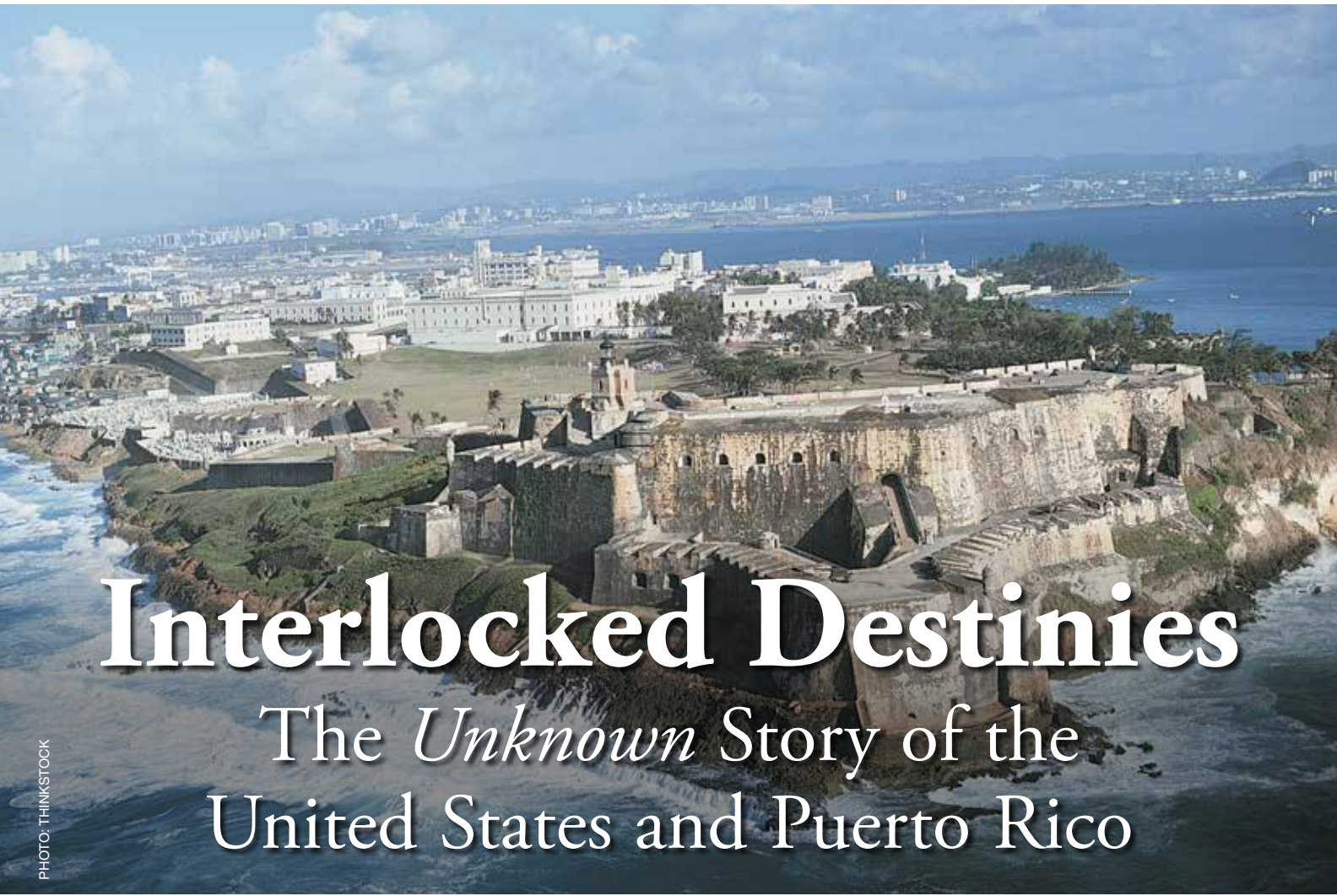


PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

Interlocked Destinies

The *Unknown* Story of the United States and Puerto Rico

For the Caribbean island and the U.S. to understand their futures, both must look to the past.

BY NESTOR A. TORO AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

ANY “TOP 10” list of things that unite Puerto Ricans easily starts with music. Details of the island’s past are preserved through elegant cadenzas of *danza*, soulful *cuatro* riffs, percussive interaction between *bomba* dancers and drummers, and much more. All these preserve the isle’s rich folklore—which has remained intact during its more than 100 years as a United States territory.

By the turn of the 21st century, however, rap-influenced *reggaeton* took over Puerto Rican airwaves. “Once reggaeton burst out of the barrio [low-income neighborhoods], it became impossible to repress,” the 2007 North American Congress on Latin America article “Reggaeton Nation” stated.

It added that this music “spoke directly to the social conditions prevalent in the country: outrageous unemployment rates of up to 65% in some towns, failing schools, government

corruption, and widespread drug violence.”

With raunchy lyrics and hypnotic beats, reggaeton is the new sound for a different, much grimmer nation from the Puerto Rico of just a few decades ago, which Florida’s *Sun Sentinel* described as “the jewel of U.S. policy in Latin America.”

But if music unites Puerto Ricans, politics divide them. The status quo as an American commonwealth has been an issue of debate for more than 60 years. A minority wants it to become an independent country. Others want

things to remain the same. Currently, Puerto Ricans hold U.S. passports and citizenship as well as have access to federal welfare benefits.

Still others claim it would be best for Puerto Rico to become part of the Union. As such, islanders would have the same rights as Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland including voting in presidential elections and active congressional representation in Washington.

The latest statehood referendum, held on November 6, 2012, surprised everyone. For the first time, a majority of islanders (61 percent) seemed to want to become the 51st star on the U.S. flag. But additional investigation revealed that the ballot questions were confusing, and the American Congress is expected to deem the vote invalid.

The U.S. and Puerto Rico have had intertwined histories since 1898. Puerto Ricans have fought alongside Americans in every military engagement since World War I. After their darkest hours in the Great Depression, both experienced a golden age in the 1950s—with the United States rising to incredible prominence.

Now those days are over and instead both have suffered years of decline. They are battling similar problems: high unemployment, skyrocketing debt, seemingly unwinnable drug wars, and a divided political landscape.

Yet the island's unique past—especially its historical characteristic as a coveted sea gate in the Caribbean—points to the only possible way both the U.S. and Puerto Rico can secure their futures.

Melting Pot

Reggaeton has an ancestor called *plena*. This musical style, born around the southern town of Ponce in the late 1890s, also has a news-on-the-street factor.

Plena was described by music historian Lise Waxer: "...plena often recites in four-line verses daily events, gossip, tragedies, and national and international news, helping to explain its reference as the 'public's newspaper'" (*Situating Salsa: Global Markets*

and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music).

This musical genre encapsulates the melting-pot culture of Puerto Rico. The drum rhythms come from Africa by way of Barbados. The melodies come from Spain, with some having a flamenco flavor. The word *plena* likely comes from the English phrase "play now." In addition, the gourd instrument *guiro* associated with the genre comes from the native Taino peoples.

Far and away, however, its two greatest influences are Spain and the U.S. *BBC* summed up these main characteristics: "Puerto Rico looks American, from the yellow school buses to a huge Macy's department store. Even the design of the road signs is the same—except that the directions are in Spanish.

"However, it feels Hispanic; its culture and traditions have much more in common with Latin America than with the US and with some 85% of the population admitting to speaking very little English, it sounds it."

This is understandable as Spain held the island for about 400 years. For much of that time, the Spanish Empire had a towering presence in Latin America.

Uncapturable Jewel

From the 1600s to the 1900s, Puerto Rico was a vital sea gate in the West Indies, and ships from the Spanish Armada traditionally stopped there whenever traveling to and from Europe.

Other forces recognized the crucial importance of the island, especially San Juan, and fought tooth and nail to wrest it from Spain—to no avail.

BBC Worldwide-owned lonelyplanet.com wrote, "In the golden age of piracy, Puerto Rico was revered by booty-seeking buccaneers like no other Spanish port. Everyone from daring British dandy Francis Drake to common cutthroats such as Blackbeard tried their luck against San Juan's formidable defenses."

"One of the colony's earliest invaders, Francis Drake first arrived in Puerto Rico in 1595 in pursuit of a

stricken Spanish galleon—holding two million gold ducats—that had taken shelter in San Juan harbor."

While Drake had led the British Navy to a famous victory against the Spanish Armada less than a decade earlier, excessive cannon fire from the Spaniards forced him to retreat.

Three years later, 1,700 Britons returned on a revenge mission. A dysentery epidemic foiled the campaign.

Due to regular attacks, San Juan built up its defenses in the early 17th century and thwarted a bold assault by the Netherlands in 1625. *Lonelyplanet.com* stated: "Acting under the command of Captain Boudewijn Hendricksz, the Dutch fired over 4000 cannonballs into the city walls before landing 2000 men at La Puntilla. Although the invaders managed to occupy the city temporarily and even break into the Fortaleza palace, the Spanish continued to hold El Morro fort and, after less than a month, with Puerto Rican reinforcements arriving, Hendricksz beat a hasty retreat, razing the city as he went."

France attempted to take the island in about 1665. The conquest was described by Rudolph Adams Van Middeldyk in his book *The History of Puerto Rico*, in which he stated that the French "appeared off the coast with 3 ships, but one of the hurricanes so frequent in these latitudes came to the island's rescue. The ships were stranded, and the surviving Frenchmen made prisoners."

In 1678, a fleet of 22 British ships arrived offshore of San Juan and demanded that the city surrender. The attack was prevented when a hurricane destroyed every sea vessel, with only a handful of survivors.

Lonelyplanet.com reported another attempt in 1797 when "the British, at war again with the Spanish, tried their luck one last time. The armada, which consisted of over 60 ships and 10,000 men, was one of the largest invasion forces ever to take on the Spanish in the American territories, but after two weeks of often vicious fighting, the British commander Sir Ralph Abercromby withdrew in exasperation. Noble in defeat, Abercromby

reported that San Juan could have resisted an attack force 10 times greater than the British had used.”

Complicating Abercromby’s offensive were 20,000 locals that banded together to repel the invaders.

In addition, Colombian strikes in 1819, 1825 and 1829 all failed.

No matter the size of the force or the tactics used, it seemed no one could take Puerto Rico from Spain.

Changing Hands

The city of Ponce is famous for another reason other than being the birthplace of plena. It was there U.S. forces first

established their military headquarters in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. The troops entered the city as easily as one dances to plena’s irresistible beat.

At that time, General Nelson A. Miles, commander of the offensive, issued the following proclamation: “In the prosecution of the war against the Kingdom of Spain by the people of the United States in the cause of liberty, justice, and humanity, its military forces have come to occupy the island of Puerto Rico. They come bearing the banner of freedom...They bring you the fostering arm of a free people,

whose greatest power is in justice and humanity to all those living within its fold...We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring you protection, not only to yourselves, but to your property; to promote your prosperity, and bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government” (The Library of Congress).

Liberty. Justice. Humanity. The banner of freedom. *Prosperity*. These were all on the minds of Puerto Ricans after decades of neglect by Spain.

The American commanders, however, knew they had to now contend with some 7,000 Spanish soldiers who held the highest point on the island, the mountain town of Aibonito. It was sure to be a long, bloody battle. Repeated failures by Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Colombia echoed down the halls of history—and the campaign seemed doomed.

But the anticipated carnage never happened. Just before the Americans launched a surprise attack, sudden news of an armistice deal ended the fighting. With that, the U.S. had done what no other nation could in the more than 400 years of Spanish dominance in the region.

As part of war reparations, the Americans received Puerto Rico and Guam. The agreement also included Cuba, as long as the U.S. agreed to take on that nation’s debt. (Realize that in 1860, American President Abraham Lincoln had previously offered Spain \$160 million for just the two largest of these islands.)

Yet the promises of liberty, justice and prosperity did not appear overnight. The U.S. was not yet the world superpower it would become. As one of the first noncontinental American territories, Washington did not seem to know what to do with Puerto Rico.

Regardless, Puerto Rico was truly a jewel in the Caribbean. An 1898 U.S. Department of Agriculture report stated: “The island of Puerto Rico is, as everyone knows, one of the richest and

Puerto Rico

The island’s name—“rich port” in Spanish—was given to it by settlers. The richness of its culture has influenced Americans since Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898.



What’s in a name

When Ponce de Leon saw the island, he said, “¡Ay que puerto rico!” (“Oh, what a rich port!”)



The war of acquisition

- Spanish-American War lasts a brief six months
- American troops land on the island on July 25, 1898
- Spain surrenders island in Treaty of Paris, signed Dec. 10, 1898

Famous Puerto Ricans

- Roberto Clemente, baseball player, first Latino in Hall of Fame
- Jose Feliciano
- Jose Ferrer
- Raul Julia
- Rita Moreno

History

1493

Christopher Columbus claims island for Spain; names it San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist)

1508

Juan Ponce de Leon begins the first European settlement; within 10 years, most natives are killed or die

1600s, 1700s

Settlers plant sugar cane, coffee, spices, tobacco; begin African slave trade to support farming

1873

Slave trade ends

1917

Islanders become U.S. citizens; fight alongside U.S. soldiers in World War I

1898

Island becomes U.S. territory as spoil of Spanish-American War

1948

Luis Munoz Marin elected governor

1952

Becomes self-governing commonwealth



Please see **PUERTO RICO**, page 19



International Criminal Court

Man's Best Attempt to Remedy Injustice

A visit to The Hague, Netherlands, the home of the International Criminal Court, was a perfect opportunity to analyze mankind's inability to bring true justice—especially to war-torn Africa.

BY KEVIN D. DENEÉ

IT IS A continent of tremendous beauty and diversity. Dry, unending deserts—verdant, deep-green jungles—vast plains filled with roaming exotic creatures.

Africa changes you. Those who have traveled there understand why some never leave. Its red soils not only stay in one's mind, but also in one's heart. Every continent on this

planet has its own beauty, but Africa is special. Having traveled there several times, both in the eastern and southern regions of the continent, I have experienced some of this beautiful land. I have also had the pleasure to meet many of its wonderful people—who, despite often having limited material wealth, appear to be some of the happiest and most hardworking on Earth.

An old Arab proverb rings true: "He that hath drunk of Africa's fountains, will drink again."

Yet there is another side to the continent—extreme poverty, rampant disease, child soldiers, brutal dictators, famine, hunger, human rights abuses, and continuous killings. Such dire summary statements can be found in other areas of the world, but to some degree they summarize what many in the world think of when they hear the word "Africa."

Case in point: in the Democratic Republic of Congo, *millions* have died since 1998. Some say more than five million while others report this figure to be somewhat lower. For years now, eastern Congo has been a place known for lawlessness. Various militias and armed groups roam the land

carrying out a war of rampant rape against young and old. Tragically, there is no solution in sight.

Some years ago, flying from Kenya to the United States, I sat next to a nurse who had just departed from eastern Congo. When I recounted some of what I had heard was occurring there regarding rape and other atrocities, she confirmed all of it—and much more.

The stories she shared were both stunning and sobering. The pain, sorrow and suffering that so many thousands endure were hard to comprehend. She explained how women's lives are ruined, mentally and physically, by rape and abuse. Adding insult to injury, they are often shunned as social outcasts through no fault of their own.

Similar reports of widespread violence, crippling famine, and disease epidemics can be found throughout the continent. Our hearts melt when hearing of heroin-addicted child soldiers and ladies being robbed of their womanhood.

In an attempt to bring justice not only to Africa, but also worldwide, humanity formulated a solution: the International Criminal Court (ICC), located in The Hague, Netherlands. I had the opportunity to visit this organization in November 2012. A trial occurring there called to mind my travels to Africa and its harsh realities.

Worldwide Body

The ICC began on July 1, 2002. Since then, many nations around the world have signed on. Some, due to a variety of reasons, have not. While this limits the court's jurisdiction, it is still man's best attempt to deal with atrocities.

According to a document produced by the ICC, it "is the first permanent, treaty-based, international criminal court established to help end

impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community."

"The international community has long aspired to the creation of a permanent international court and, in the 20th century, it reached consensus

arrest warrants have been issued, six arrests have been made, and two warrants have been withdrawn due to the deaths of the accused.

Upon review of the cases at the International Criminal Court, one realizes that it has so far solely attempted to provide justice to Africa.

The case updates provided by the court, marked September 12, 2012, included situations in Uganda, the Congo, Darfur, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Libya and the Ivory Coast. For example, the court attempted to prosecute the late Moammar Gadhafi and has pursued the notorious leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, Joseph Kony. A warrant of arrest has even been issued for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in regard to the situation in Sudan. In summary, the International Criminal Court appears to be man's best collective effort to solve Africa's problems.

But what has been the result after 10 years? Only *one individual* has been successfully prosecuted, and even that case is now being appealed.

Ten years. Yet very little justice has been served.

In the Court

The ICC is housed in a modern building on the outskirts of The Hague. Heavy security is maintained including electrified barbed-wire fences. It reminded me of a foreign embassy in a troubled country—perhaps an attempt to send a message that it is an independent organization.

Inside of the building is a viewing area where interested spectators can watch what is taking place. No video equipment or cameras are permitted.

During my visit, a trial was in session. It immediately became clear that it had been going on for some time. Very few members of the press were present, but there were a few

Getting Justice?

Charles Taylor is the first head of state convicted by an international court since the post-World War II Nuremberg military tribunal.

Charles Taylor Liberia



Found guilty by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for aiding rebels who raped, killed and mutilated civilians in Sierra Leone

Modern leaders accused of war crimes:



Moammar Gadhafi Libya

Killed in 2011 in the Arab Spring uprisings; ruled for nearly 42 years; rebels that overthrew him were backed by a NATO campaign



Gen. Augusto Pinochet Chile

Took power in a bloody coup in 1973; terrorized opponents for 17 years following takeover; died in 1990 in a military hospital despite efforts to bring him to trial for human rights abuses



Saddam Hussein Iraq

Hanged in 2006 after an Iraqi trial; stayed in power through war with Iran, defeat in Kuwait, rebellions and international sanctions; U.S.-led invasion drove him from power in 2003



Omar al-Bashir Sudan

Accused by the ICC of genocide and war crimes in Darfur; remains free in Sudan; UN estimates 300,000 people died and 2.7 million displaced in Darfur conflict



Slobodan Milosevic Serbia

Died in prison in 2006 in The Hague, which ended his four-year trial for a decade of conflict in the Balkans that left 250,000 dead

Idi Amin Uganda

Lived in exile in Saudi Arabia until death in 2003; led country into social disintegration and economic decline while torturing and killing opponents

Laurent Gbagbo Ivory Coast

Jailed in The Hague; awaiting trial at the ICC for crimes committed while clinging to power after losing a presidential election last year

Source: AP, MCT Photo Service

Graphic: Melina Yingling

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on definitions of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes."

The ICC has 18 judges from around the world with some 700 staff members from approximately 90 countries/states. Since its inception, 16 cases have been brought before the court. As of fall 2012, six were at the trial stage. Twenty-two

friends, relatives or supporters of the accused.

The defendant sat at one end of the courtroom with several defense attorneys in front of him. On the other end were prosecutors. Between these two parties sat a three-judge panel and a few other court employees. All three faced the witness stand. The witness was obscured and out of view so as to not reveal his identity.

Watching from a few feet away, I more fully understood why so many years had passed and only one person had been sentenced.

The defendant was on trial for two crimes against humanity—rape and murder—and three war crimes—rape, murder and pillaging a town or place.

Painstakingly, the prosecution cross-examined one of the defendant's witnesses. The questions were thorough and lengthy, and about only *one* aspect of the charges.

While the individual did not do these things himself, prosecutors claimed he was responsible for an army in the Central African Republic that committed the crimes.

The defense, however, argued that this particular army was “loaned” or “given” to another African leader during this time, which would make the defendant innocent of any crimes committed.

This sort of legal maneuvering is typical of cases that come before the ICC.

Far-off Solution?

In the article “The International Criminal Court—Why Africa Still Needs It,” *The Economist* wrote, “Above all, national judicial systems must be strengthened so that African countries can do the ICC’s job themselves. After all, the ICC is meant to be a court of last resort. It intervenes in Africa so much only because African countries have been unable or unwilling to handle complex and costly trials themselves. And African governments must enshrine the ICC statutes in their own laws, so they can bring prosecutions for war crimes, crimes against

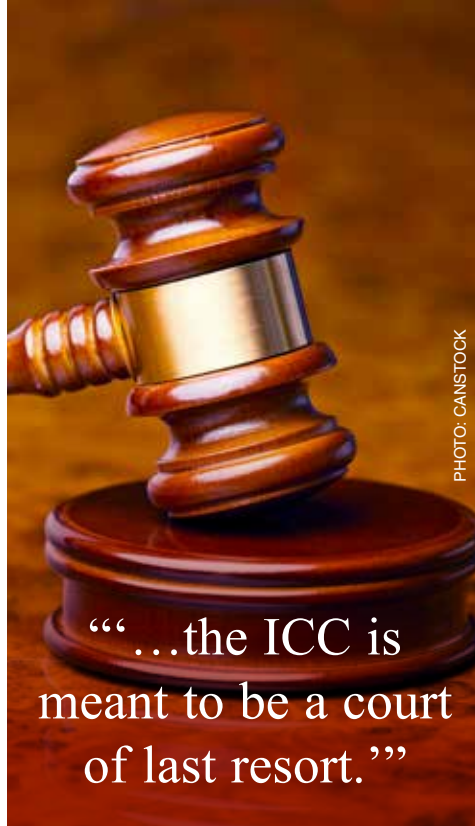


PHOTO: CANSTOCK

“...the ICC is meant to be a court of last resort.”

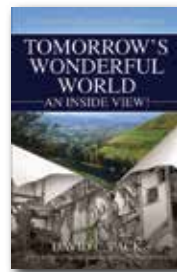
humanity and genocide. So far only a handful have done so; a few more are to follow soon. More must do so, until, in some *far-off legal nirvana*, Africa will not need the ICC at all” (emphasis added).

Man has been seeking his own solutions for thousands of years. Each time, success is sought, yet failure is found.

We all want peace, safety and abundance for all. These are the lofty ideals of many international organizations including the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, and the ICC. Think tanks spend a lot of time and money trying to solve basic problems.

Yet such ideals are never achieved. This is because these institutions address the *effects*, not the underlying cause of the problems—human nature.

Consider the paradox of mankind. In the 21st century, we are surrounded by technology, innovation, invention and progress. We can put a man on the moon, rovers on Mars, and send satellites hurtling away from our



galaxy at tremendous speed, yet we cannot stop the madness of war crimes. We cannot prevent women and children from being raped and exploited. We cannot conquer human nature.

Human nature is violent and ugly. We need not look only at Africa to see that. We can see it all around us daily, in newspaper headlines, on television, even on our own front doorsteps.

Yet there is an Instruction Manual for mankind that explains human nature and could serve all people if they would allow it—the Bible.

Of all men used to record this Book, King Solomon may have had the deepest insight into the human condition. He is known as the wisest man who ever lived. His words are recorded in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.

In Ecclesiastes, he explained the end result of slow and ineffective rendering of justice: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (8:11).

Why can humanity not see the problems and ills described? Why do they seem unable to grasp the cause?

The Bible again answers, this time in the book of Jeremiah. Notice: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man...to direct his steps” (10:23).

Could it really be that simple? Under inspiration of the God who created the universe, the prophet Jeremiah reveals that man is simply unable “to direct his steps”—and therefore unable to govern, direct and rule nations, and prevent atrocities and crimes against humanity from occurring.

But there is a solution! The suffering masses in Africa, and throughout the entire world, will no longer experience the anguish these crimes against humanity bring—and sooner than you think.

Take time to read David C. Pack’s free book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww to find out how. □

The Tragic Curse of ALCOHOL ABUSE

Part 1

On the individual, national and global level,
the misuse of alcohol is worse than ever.

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

A 23-YEAR-OLD WOMAN and her male friend leave a movie theater in New Delhi, India, when several men in a chartered bus offer them a ride. But the occupants of the vehicle have ulterior motives. The men, allegedly drunk, gang rape and torture the young student and beat her friend almost to death. She dies 12 days later.

An inebriated man drives home after a New Year's Eve party, swerving into the wrong lane and smashing into an oncoming van—killing a family of five.

A college student filled with dreams for the future passes out after a night of binge drinking to celebrate her gradua-

tion. Her roommates find her dead the next morning.

A young boy shields his face with his arms. His father rains down blows on the youngster, cursing at him with slurred speech. The child wonders, *What did I do wrong?*

These tragedies share a common denominator: alcohol abuse.

The thread of alcoholism is woven through mankind's history. It has left a trail of pain, misery, shattered marriages, sexual assaults, death, loneliness, hopelessness and depression. While alcohol can be enjoyed in a responsible way, its misuse has darkened an already sinister side of human nature.

Each year, governments spend billions of dollars on television commercials, billboard ads, and school programs to combat the scourge. But

in homes, cities and nations around the world, alcoholism is growing worse.

Not grasping a purpose for its existence, humanity has leapt headlong into widespread alcohol abuse. News reports continue to detail overdrinking by youth. Mass media attention has not made any headway in changing the trend of alcoholism in society.

Throughout man's existence, alcohol has been used by millions of people as a temporary distraction from life's hardships. Yet excessive drinking has only made people's problems worse—bringing about *more* pain, *more* financial difficulties, *more* divorce, violence, death and depression. A vicious cycle of abusing alcohol to escape only leads to worsening problems. As world troubles grow in complexity and number, the cycle of abuse is spiraling out of control.

Drowning in Booze

A 2011 World Health Organization (WHO) report revealed 2.5 million people die from alcohol abuse every year. Titled *The Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health*, the document's foreword stated, "The harmful use of alcohol is a worldwide problem resulting in millions of deaths, including hundreds of thousands of young lives lost. It is not only a causal factor in many diseases, but also a precursor to injury and violence. Furthermore, its negative impacts can spread throughout a community or a country..." (emphasis added throughout).

The report outlined the overwhelming nature of the problem: "Alcohol consumption is the world's third largest risk factor for disease and disability; in middle-income countries, it is the greatest risk. Alcohol is a causal factor in 60 types of diseases and injuries and a component cause in 200 others. Almost 4% of all deaths worldwide are attributed to alcohol, greater than deaths caused by HIV/AIDS, violence or tuberculosis. Alcohol is also associated with many serious social issues, including violence, child neglect and abuse, and absenteeism in the workplace.

"Yet, despite all these problems, the harmful use of alcohol remains a low priority in public policy, including in health policy. Many lesser health risks have higher priority."

The comprehensive study also revealed that even with widespread recognition of the situation, the world is nowhere near fixing it: "Many countries recognize the serious public health problems caused by the harmful use of alcohol and have taken steps to adopt preventive policies and programmes, particularly to reduce drink-driving and the carnage that it causes. However, it is clear that much more needs to be accomplished."

The report later stated, "A large proportion of countries, representing a

high percentage of the global population, has weak alcohol policies and prevention programmes that do not protect the health and safety of the populace."

In Russia, alcohol misuse is common, partly due to the popularity of vodka, which citizens associate with prosperity, hope, health and well-being. Many children drink—and sell—liquor! The WHO report revealed that in the Commonwealth of Independent States (a free association of 11 former republics of the Soviet Union), one in five deaths is from harmful drinking.

The study also confirmed that drinking among youth is on the rise around the world: "Overall, hazardous and harmful drinking patterns, such as drinking to intoxication and binge drinking, seem

levels are found in the developed world, including western and eastern Europe. High-income countries generally have the highest alcohol consumption..." (WHO).

As societies around the world deteriorate, the abuse of alcohol becomes one more indicator of the breakdown of character. More people than ever lack the self-control to say "no" to a second...third...or fourth drink.

Way of Life

In the United States, binge drinking (which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines as men consuming five or more drinks and women four or more in the span of two hours) and "partying" is now a way of life for vast numbers of young adults. Students skip

morning classes to recover from the night before. Employees miss work the next day to nurse hangovers. After drinking too much, revelers engage in drunken, casual sex.

Time magazine reported that binge drinkers make up a large portion of the U.S. population: "One out of 3 adults and 2 out of 3 high school students who drink alcohol binge drink... Startlingly, the data suggest that 90% of the alcohol consumed by high-school kids and more than half the alcohol consumed by adults is downed during the course of binge drinking."

A study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* claimed Americans drink too much. It showed that 18 percent of men and 11 percent of

women in the United States imbibe beyond the minimum recommended alcohol limit.

On top of this, in the age of "equal rights," it should not be surprising that the once male-dominated ritual of binge drinking is no longer gender-biased. One Harvard University study reported that women on campuses across the country "are not just drinking more; they're drinking ferociously" (*Time*).

Binge Drinking

More than 38 million Americans binge drink about four times a month.


Drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration to 0.08 percent or higher:


For men  5 drinks in about 2 hours
For women  4 drinks in about 2 hours

18-34

U.S. age group with the most binge drinkers

 About 90% of the alcohol youth under the age of 21 consume is during binge drinking

 42.2% of full-time college students ages 18 to 22 were binge drinkers in 2010

 35.6% of non-college students in that age group were binge drinkers in 2010

1,800 College students die each year from alcohol-related causes—1,300 of these from drinking and driving

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Graphic: Chicago Tribune

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to be on the rise among adolescents and young adults...One reason could be the use of alcoholic carbonate drinks, better known as 'alcopops', that is equated with more problematic drinking patterns, such as more frequent drinking, earlier onset of alcohol consumption, drunkenness and more alcohol-related negative consequences..." (ibid.).

Research reveals that Western nations are fueling this rise: "The world's highest alcohol consumption

Astonishingly, more than 90 percent of heavy drinkers consider themselves moderate or light drinkers. Yet denial is one of the first warning signs of alcoholism.

“Drunk Man of Europe”

As bad as conditions are in America, it could take lessons on how to party from Britain. This nation is awash in alcohol abuse. Recent studies reveal that around 50 percent of all men and women in Britain can be categorized as binge drinkers! This bad habit costs the country \$37 billion per year.

“New research from the Department of Health underlines how excess alcohol affects almost every aspect of British life,” *The Independent* report-

“Britain is the drunk man of Europe. Alcohol consumption in France, Germany and Italy is down by between 37 and 52 per cent since 1980. But in the UK it is up nine per cent, with binge drinkers sinking more booze than ever...” One expert stated that “it is now ‘commonplace’ to find young women being treated for liver disease.”

These statistics, however, should not be shocking when one considers what young adults are taught in homes and classrooms—or more correctly stated, what they are *not* taught. They are given no real, meaningful answers to life’s biggest questions. Millions are taught that the meaning of life is...you fill in the blank. Since nature abhors a

tality and act as though there is nothing to live for. So they live to drink.

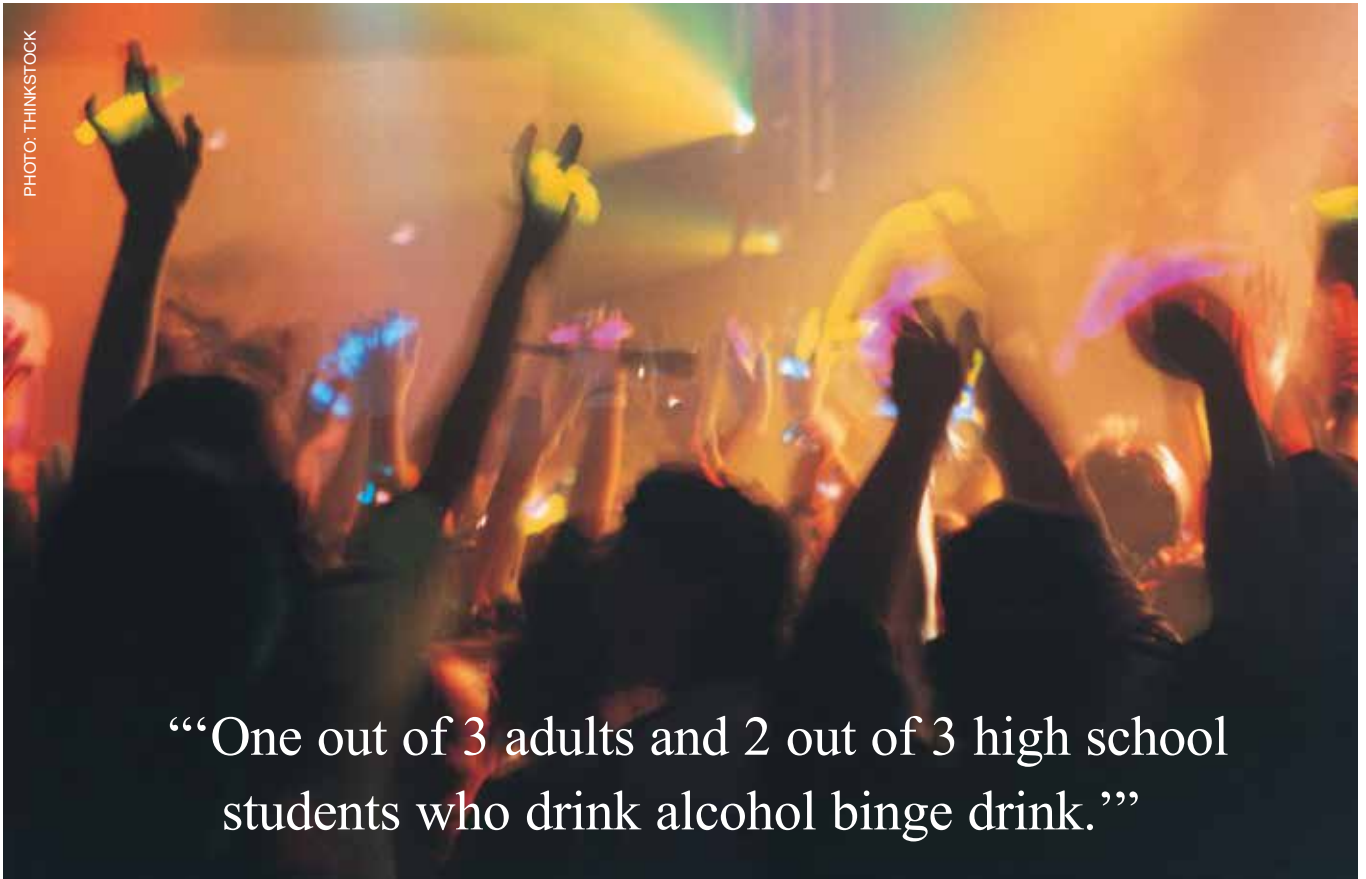
But this comes at a price.

High Cost of Hard Living

Although advertising and media present a glamorous picture—sipping martinis, reveling with friends, a “good time”—alcohol’s dark side is rarely highlighted. A Boston University study revealed that 3.5 percent of all cancer deaths in America are caused by alcohol.

The following examples detail its negative effects as reported by America’s National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:

■ In the United States, alcohol-related unintentional injuries kill more than 1,800 college students every year.



““One out of 3 adults and 2 out of 3 high school students who drink alcohol binge drink.””

ed. “More than 2.6m children in the UK now live with a parent who drinks at hazardous levels. Mortality rates from liver disease among under-75s rose by 16 per cent between 2001 and 2009...And lost productivity because of hung over staff cost businesses £1.7bn [\$2.6 billion] a year.

vacuum, youth often fill the void with a wild, anything-goes lifestyle. An entire generation has embraced partying and is showing no signs of looking back. (Even worse, the health risks of alcoholism have now been removed from educational curricula.) Young people have adopted a nihilistic men-

■ Approximately 97,000 students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.

■ 2.8 million students reported driving while intoxicated.

In Britain, the numbers are even more staggering, according to *The Independent*:

■ In certain age groups, rates of cirrhosis (severe liver disease) have risen tenfold in 30 years.

■ Nearly one in four Britons see drunken or rowdy behavior in their neighborhoods.

■ In 2010, alcohol was to blame in 928,000 violent incidents.

■ Around 17 million working days are lost each year due to alcohol-related sickness. More than one in four adults are regular drinkers.

■ Alcohol plays a role in 33 percent of child abuse cases.

The *Guardian* newspaper framed the problem this way: "...the death toll from alcohol misuse is the equivalent of a passenger filled jumbo jet crashing every 17 days. Furthermore, 80% of alcohol-related deaths are from liver disease, which is the fifth most common cause of death in England and is set to overtake stroke and coronary heart disease as a killer within the next 10 years."

Alcohol also plays a chief role in destroying families. When a bottle becomes primary in one's life, everything else—including one's spouse and children—is put on the backburner. Compared to married couples, divorced (or separated) people are 300 percent more likely to have been in a relationship with an alcoholic, according to the WHO report.

Children raised in a family that tolerates alcohol abuse often develop an unhealthy view of alcohol, the report stated. They grow up seeing no problem with excessive alcohol use and feel no need to exercise self-control. Because of this, one study showed that such children are *four times* more likely to become alcoholics themselves.

With such horrific consequences, one wonders why heavy drinking is socially acceptable.

Inside the Science

The science behind alcohol overuse provides insight into why it is the "causal factor" in so many other problems. When one first drinks alcohol, the level of serotonin sharply increases. This hormone controls happiness, excitement

and mood stability. Most antidepressants work by regulating serotonin levels. But unlike antidepressants, the serotonin increase from alcohol is short-lived. Alcohol's numbing effects eventually reach the receptors that *receive* serotonin. This causes the absorbed amount of serotonin to drop dramatically below normal.

At low levels in the blood, alcohol tends to lift spirits and causes individuals to become more talkative. Most have heard the expression, "Wine makes the heart merry." As the drinking continues, however, one's mood changes. A decrease in serotonin levels results in a lack of emotional control. Men tend to be brash and more prone to violence when drunk. Women can become promiscuous. This leads to unwanted consequences and regrets the next morning.

When heavily intoxicated, the brain overcompensates for the lack of efficiency in its transmitters and receptors. It fires faster and with more intensity, which allows alcoholics to appear "normal," even with a high blood alcohol level (BAL). When drunk, some alcoholics *appear* sober. But when *actually* sober, they are jittery and short-tempered. The individual then associates alcohol with feeling normal—which makes it addictive.

But as with an engine revved extremely high for extended periods, certain processes gradually break down. The brain's receptors and transmitters stop firing. This constant "revving" of the brain eventually kills it.

Breathing and coordination is also affected as BAL increases. Inhibitions disappear. Judgment is impaired. Speech slurs. If drinking continues, coordination becomes jerky and haphazard. Past this point, an individual begins to slip in and out of consciousness. Breathing may be suppressed. Binge drinking can cause one to stop breathing completely or slip into a coma and die.

In addition, the corrosive nature of alcohol irritates the stomach and intestines. After prolonged alcohol abuse, the liver is severely affected. The enzymes that break down alcohol begin to mass produce. Over time, this stress causes parts of the liver to harden and die.

The combination of these effects is why alcohol is responsible for hypertension, cerebrovascular disease, chronic hepatitis, and other chronic liver diseases.

High-functioning Alcoholics

One group of alcohol abusers suffers quietly under society's radar. Some live in affluent neighborhoods. They can be executives, professors, vice presidents, or principals of schools. The high-functioning alcoholic uses drinking as a crutch to hobble through life. They are *always* drunk—they wake and drink with breakfast—they drink at lunch—dinner is accompanied with alcohol and followed by a nightcap. Alcohol holds them up during hard times. It gives them strength to move forward. They cling to it like a baby to a bottle and nurse an addiction until it overwhelms them. It becomes a slow drip feed to their bloodstream—a constant, 24/7 buzz.

A *New York Times* article described this category of alcoholics: "Sarah Allen Benton is hardly your stereotypical alcoholic. She has a master of science degree from Northeastern University and is a licensed mental health counselor at Emmanuel College in Boston. In recovery from alcoholism for the last five years, she has written an enlightening new book about people like herself, 'Understanding the High-Functioning Alcoholic'...As Ms. Benton describes them, high-functioning alcoholics are able to maintain respectable, even high-profile lives, usually with a home, family, job and friends. That balancing act continues until something dreadful happens that reveals the truth—to themselves or to others—and forces the person to enter a treatment program or lose everything that means anything.

"Typical high-functioning alcoholics...are in denial about their abuse of alcohol. Coworkers, relatives and friends often enable the abusive behavior to continue by refusing to acknowledge and confront it.

"The story of the [high-functioning alcoholic] is seldom told," Ms. Benton writes, "for it is not one of obvious tragedy, but that of silent suffering."

Sadly, more are choosing this path of “silent suffering,” turning to alcohol to escape the stresses of school, work and family. Women drink to cope with their broken marriages. Men do it to deal with monotonous jobs. Many drink out of loneliness and depression. But the comfort is only temporary and eventually takes its toll. Again, the vicious cycle kicks in. The effects of misusing alcohol only make school, work and family life harder to handle. Many remain trapped—and drink to deal with problems that are only exacerbated by alcohol.

Answer to Alcoholism

Picture an alcoholic alone in a hotel room: a jobless, twice-divorced man who just lost his children in a painful custody battle. He is sprawled out on the bed with a half-empty bottle of whiskey at his side. He is miserable and struggles against the cycle in which he has become caught—drinking, sobering up, and drinking again to escape his

pain. He cannot see past drowning his sorrows in a bottle. With every sip, he wonders why life must be so hard—and why he can never fully escape his situation.

If he were to reach into the bedside drawer and pull out the Gideon Bible, however, he would discover that this cycle of widespread alcohol abuse was long ago foretold to occur. It is this Book, to which most will *not* turn for answers, that contains the truth about humanity’s collective bout with alcoholism.

The Bible explains the end result of thousands of years of man choosing his own path. Although alcohol abuse has existed since Noah’s time (Gen. 9:20-25), it has reached never-before-seen levels on a global scale. Notice the description in II Timothy 3 of our modern age: “...in the last days perilous [or dangerous] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasting, proud, blasphemers, disobedient

to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, *lovers of pleasures* more than lovers of God...” (vs. 1-4).

Those who are called by God out of the ways of this world are told that they should “...no longer...live the rest of his time in the flesh to the *lusts of men*, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have...walked in *lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings*, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same *excess of riot*...” (I Pet. 4:2-4).

God foretold these times would occur due to mankind’s nature. But will man ever be able to rein in human nature and control his addiction to alcohol? What does the Bible and prophecy reveal about alcohol and its overuse?

Part 2 will address man’s failed experiments at fixing his alcohol problem—and reveal God’s solution. □

PUERTO RICO

Continued from page 11

most fertile spots on earth; but its soil, after four centuries of occupation, is still underdeveloped. What cultivation has taken place would scarcely go by that name elsewhere. Modern methods, modern implements, and modern machinery will produce great results. But the political situation must change before anything can be done.”

Change did not occur quickly, and many of the same mistakes that happened on the mainland were mirrored in Puerto Rico—especially with monoculture farming.

Overproduction of sugar heavily taxed the soil. And natural disasters severely eroded the land. Between 1899 and 1929, four major hurricanes and two tsunamis wreaked havoc on the population and economy. For example, 1899’s Hurricane San Ciriaco killed 3,000 people.

These troubles all left the island teetering, and it was shoved over the

edge by the 1929 stock market crash and ensuing Great Depression.

From this point forward, Puerto Rico’s economic prosperity, or lack thereof, was tied to the United States.

Golden Age

The story of these two nations took a sharp turn around the middle of the century. World War II stimulated manufacturing, which sparked a renaissance in the island’s economy, as also happened to a greater extent on the U.S. mainland.

In 1949, Puerto Ricans elected their first governor, Luis Munoz Marin. A constitution followed in 1952. Highlighting its relationship with the U.S., the document opens, “*We, the people* of Puerto Rico, in order to organize ourselves politically on a fully democratic basis, to promote the general welfare, and to secure for ourselves and our posterity the complete enjoyment of human rights, *placing our trust in Almighty God*, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the commonwealth

which, in the exercise of our natural rights, we now create within our union with the United States of America” (emphasis added).

Since then, the island has officially been a “Free Associate State” and no longer just a protectorate of the United States.

Significant development began to take off in the island from then on. Its fast industrial advancement was a microcosm of the American golden age of the 1950s. This coincided with a boom in popularity of Puerto Rican music.

Economy-boosting legislation began with “Operacion Manos a la Obra” (Operation Bootstrap), which made it easy for American companies to operate in the island with low wages, taxes and import fees.

In time, the economy ballooned. The 3,435-square-mile island was transformed from an agrarian society to a bustling industrial center. Soon it became home to giant pharmaceutical drug manufacturers, world-class rum, five-star hotels, baseball all-

stars, boxing champions, and popular music.

Investors took notice. Even today “Puerto Rico is a prominent, popular seller of muni bonds,” *Reuters* reported. “U.S. investors like the debt’s fat yields, which come with unusual full exemption from federal, state and local income taxes. The island sold \$4.82 billion of bonds in 2012’s first four months, or 40 percent more than California.”

It has been argued that there are downsides to being a commonwealth rather than a full state. A portion of Puerto Ricans feel to some degree like second-class citizens. Also, securing federal funding from Washington is more difficult because there is no direct representation in Congress.

Yet it is undeniable that Puerto Rico stands among the most developed nations in the Caribbean. The World Bank listed it as a “high-income economy” in the organization’s 2010 World Development Report. The region has a U.S.-style educational system. And tourists can drink water straight from the tap rather than having to boil it before consumption or rely solely on bottled water as is the case with most Latin American nations.

Another telling example comes from nighttime satellite photos of the Caribbean Sea. While almost every other island remains largely dim, Puerto Rico shines as a beacon of prosperity.

So what has set the “uncapturable jewel” apart from all other Caribbean nations?

Intertwined Destinies

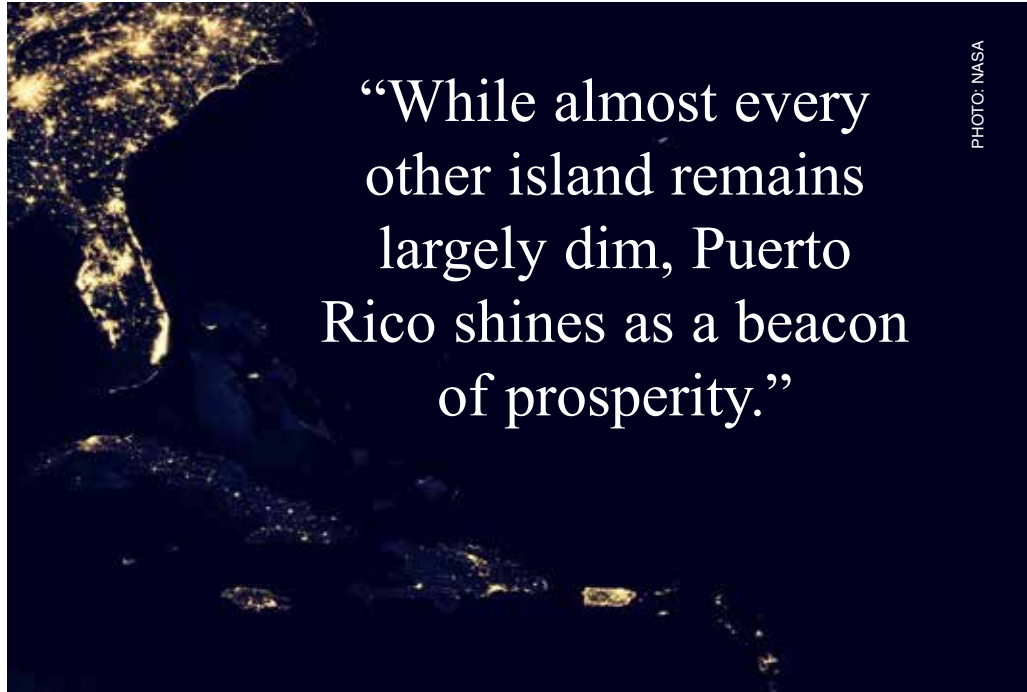
To fully understand the implications of this island in world history, one must acknowledge the role of Spain before the United States, and British Empire, emerged on the world scene.

Historian Huxtable Elliott described how Spanish conquistadors portrayed themselves as “the heirs and successors of the Romans, conquering an even more extended empire, governing it with justice, and laying down laws which were obeyed to the farthest ends of the earth... The sixteenth-century Castilians saw

themselves as a chosen, and therefore a superior, people, entrusted with a divine mission which looked towards universal empire as its goal. This mission was seen as a higher one than that of the Romans because it was set into the context of Catholic Christianity” (*Spain and Its World, 1500-1700*).

sea gates] *of his enemies*; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you [Abraham] have obeyed My voice” (Gen. 22:17-18).

Only two world powers have fit this description throughout history. The United States (a nation) and the British Empire (a company of nations). Both the Britons and Americans defeated



“While almost every other island remains largely dim, Puerto Rico shines as a beacon of prosperity.”

PHOTO: NASA

Since the first century AD, many nations and empires have used the banner of Christianity to support their causes.

While these facts of history are well-known, most are unaware that the Bible accurately detailed the rise and fall of many of these world powers long before any secular source could. The Book even foretold a time when the descendants of the Old Testament patriarch Abraham would emerge as “a nation and a company of nations” (Gen. 35:11) to inherit territories including those that once belonged to Spain.

The Bible explained that these nations would multiply greatly and obtain the strategic sea ports of their common enemies: “That in blessing I [God] will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate [including

Spain to become world empires and possess its precious “gates”—little more than 300 years apart.

At their apex, Britain and America had control over many of the world’s most coveted sea gates including the Suez and Panama canals, straits of Gibraltar and Hormuz, Singapore, Cape Horn, Malta, Cape of Good Hope, Hong Kong, Hawaii and the Philippines.

Where does Puerto Rico fit in all of this?

A closer look at the phrase “your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” in Genesis 22:17 reveals that in the original Hebrew language, the term *gate* means “an opening, that is...city, door, gate, *port*.”

And America got just that with Puerto Rico, which means “rich port” in Spanish.

In addition, the U.S. and England often obtained these territories through

seemingly inexplicable means. Recall the ease with which America took the “uncapturable jewel.” As a parallel, a cash-strapped Napoleon Bonaparte sold the Louisiana Purchase to America for about \$15 million in 1803. Counting for inflation, if this sale were made today, this amounts to about *60 cents per acre!*

In addition, think of how winds blew in Britain’s favor at the English Canal in 1588 to defeat a vastly superior Spanish Armada. To this day a famous medal from that 16th-century battle reads: “God blew with His winds, and they were scattered.”

History is replete with examples of the Creator’s blessings for this great nation and company of nations.

Secret to National Prosperity

While America and Britain may attribute their success to having developed the most powerful militaries and economies in history, it was truly due to God’s promise. Scripture makes plain that these blessings were a direct result of Abraham’s actions alone.

This was confirmed when the promises were passed on to the patriarch’s son Isaac: “I [God] will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father...Because that *Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws*” (Gen. 26:3, 5).

More details were recorded when Isaac later passed this birthright onto his son Jacob: “Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine...cursed be every one that curses you, and *blessed be he that blesses you*” (Gen. 27:28-29).

Puerto Rico has come to experience many of these blessings as a U.S. commonwealth. Some of this is due to the incredible loyalty of the island’s inhabitants. For example, Puerto Ricans have gladly served—often with high honors—in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and every military engagement since.

God has certainly fulfilled His promise to bless America (for

Abraham’s obedience) *and* Puerto Rico (for their continuing support).

Yet this fulfilled promise means that the Creator is no longer required to continue blessing these two nations. Both are now experiencing the obvious withdrawal of God’s hand.

Constant negative news reports make this clear in the United States, as they do in Puerto Rico. *NPR* summarized this by stating: “Puerto Rico’s population is declining. Faced with a deteriorating economy, increased poverty and a swelling crime rate, many Puerto Ricans are fleeing the island for the U.S. mainland.”

For the time being, the American continent offers a form of relief, but this will not continue long.

To return this pair of nations to prominence requires the same thing it did in the time of Abraham: OBEEDIENCE. The recent prosperity of the U.S. and Puerto Rico *proves* that obeying God leads to abundance!

One reason God wants nations to obey Him is revealed in Deuteronomy 4. Hundreds of years after Abraham, Moses explained this to the nation of Israel: “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me... Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding...” (vs. 5-6).

Moses continued by saying other nations would see the abundance produced by God’s Way and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?” (vs. 6-7).

In other words, God wants it to be obvious to all peoples that His way of life is the greatest treasure any nation can procure. Only His Law produces abundant blessings and brings true prosperity.

Realize an important point. The United States, and Britain with it, first received national blessings *unconditionally*. While there were periods of generosity and kindness, these brother nations have not been obey-

ing the God of the Bible and have not exhibited godly obedience.

Today, without national repentance, God’s blessings will continue to slip away. Losing control of vital sea gates is one proof of this. Waning economic prominence and military might is another.

For more proof that Abraham’s blessings were conferred on the U.S. and United Kingdom, and what is coming for these peoples, read the thorough and conclusive book *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp.

Blessings for All

While the Bible does carry some bad news, its pages are *not* primarily filled with doom and gloom. In reality, the greatest theme of this Book is how the entire world *WILL* be blessed when it learns to obey God—and soon!

Notice: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations*”—including the peoples of Puerto Rico!—“shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths...” (Isa. 2:2-3).

At that time, music will be as important as it is in Puerto Rico today, and nations will proclaim God’s blessings through song: “That Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations. Let the people praise You...O let the nations be glad and *sing for joy*: for You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth...” (Psa. 67:2-4).

When *any* nation applies God’s way of life, their example can shine as brightly as Puerto Rico does from the Caribbean in the night. Such a model nation would make any onlooker declare, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people”! □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 3

least all who read this Personal will no longer be unaware of the truth about the doctrine of FAITH—and how it relates to worshipping God.

Many wonder why they are never healed—or why their prayers are not answered. They wonder why they are not blessed or are not receiving deliverance from God when needed. They lack faith, which comes from the Spirit of God. If they had faith, they would have *evidence*—assurance—confidence—that they would be healed, blessed, delivered or receive answers to their prayers! They would KNOW these things were coming—in *advance* of their arrival.

Christ Had Real Faith

We have already seen that faith is a fruit of God's Spirit. Obviously, Jesus had perfect faith. Filled with God's Spirit, and possessing it from conception, He was the most converted Person who ever lived. It gave Him tremendous understanding of the importance of the power of God's Spirit. This is why He said, "I can of Mine own self do *nothing*..." (John 5:30)!

He knew "...*the Father* that dwells in Me [as He said], He *does the works*" (John 14:10).

It was through the power of God's Spirit in Him that Jesus accomplished *everything* that He did. He understood completely that it was only the presence of the Spirit of God in Him that allowed Him to perform miracles. He perfectly exercised the fruit of faith present in Him because of the Holy Spirit. No doubt, God gave Him the additional *gift* of faith (I Cor. 12:1, 7-9) that He would need to endure all that He was to face through His sacrifice as Savior of the world. I Corinthians 12:8-10 also lists faith as one of the nine special gifts of God's Spirit, which are given to some.

Jesus went on to say in John 14, "...He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater* works than these shall he do..." (vs. 12).

All the apostles, evangelists and others (including even deacons) performed mighty miracles after Christ's Resurrection and the start of the New Testament Church. The Bible records this. Through the power of real faith, ordinary people can do amazing things!

But can *you* have the same kind of faith that Christ had—or that the apostles had? Do Christians today have a *different* kind of faith?

Faith of Christ

What kind of faith does God expect of you? Most people think they must "work up" faith through human effort. They see it as something from within that they can WILL themselves to possess. This is terribly wrong and the Bible plainly says so. Realize that you can have the exact same faith that Christ possessed. You not only can—you MUST!

Notice: "Knowing that a man is not justified...but by the faith *OF* Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith *OF* Christ..." (Gal. 2:16).

This is an extremely important verse. It differentiates two vital points. *First*, it states that "*we* believe[d] in Jesus Christ"—this is something *we* do. *Second*, it is the faith *OF* Christ—Christ's actual faith *in us*—that justifies us (makes us righteous).

Most people never get this understanding straight. Faith starts with human belief, but must move to the faith *OF* Christ, which enters a person at the moment of baptism and conversion with the receiving of God's Spirit.

The Bible describes a certain *temporary* human faith that many have. In the New Testament, when Jesus healed people, *none* of them were converted. Yet He sometimes told them, "...your faith has made you whole..." (Matt. 9:22) or "...according to your faith be it unto you" (vs. 29).

These people lacked God's Spirit—it had not yet been given at Pentecost when the New Testament Church began—but they did have a temporary *human faith* that allowed Jesus to heal them.

It is this growth FROM human faith TO the faith of Christ that Paul referred

to when he said, "...the righteousness of God [is] revealed *from* [human] *faith to faith* [of Christ in us]..." (Rom. 1:17).

If there was not human faith and the faith of Christ in us, how else could people go from one kind of faith to another? If a person is in one room, that person cannot go to a different room and still be in the *same* room. Do you see this? It is the same with faith. Human faith is like a *small* room, which true Christians must leave to enter the great room of Christ's faith working in them.

Human faith wavers continually and goes up and down according to how one feels at any given moment in time. It is much like a roller coaster. When events seem positive or look good, human faith is up. When things look bad and the outcome of a matter appears gloomy, human faith usually disappears fast.

God's faith is permanent and does not waver. He requires that all who come to Him in prayer, with requests, not waver. Notice James 1:6-8: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Bible Promises

Every time you demonstrate faith in God, it involves a specific promise. A promise can involve healing, answers to prayer, receiving blessings, deliverance in a trial, guidance in a difficult decision, and—most important—receiving salvation. In every instance, faith involves claiming a specific promise made by God. We will see the importance of searching His Word to find those promises.

Consider! Paul recorded, "Above all, [take] the SHIELD *of faith*, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [or it means the wicked one, the devil]" (Eph. 6:16).

Now notice: "*Every word* of God is pure: He is a SHIELD unto them that *put their trust in Him* [that have faith in Him]. Add you not unto *His words*,

lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5-6).

Put together, these two verses show that faith becomes a shield to all who trust in exactly what God says. To doubt His Word, or to alter it in any way, is to call God a LIAR! That is serious!

Understand. When God makes a promise, He keeps it. *Human beings* may break their promises, but God does not. If He tells you that He will

do something for you—if you meet certain conditions—He *will* perform His promise. You have faith as an *assurance* that He will. So browbeating yourself into faith is silly. It suggests you doubt God will do His part after you have done yours. No wonder a lack of faith—calling Him a liar—makes it impossible to please Him. In fact, God says such people are liars.

Faith is relaxed. It is calm. It is sure. Where most people might have great doubt, a person led by true—real—faith is confident that God is guiding the final outcome of matters.

When you claim a promise, *expect* it to be carried out by God. Do not try to figure out *when* or *how* He will do it. I have learned two things about answered prayer. First, God always answers my prayers—if I seek His will—but second, He almost never answers in the way that I expect. This is why walking by faith cannot include sight. Looking for God to answer prayer a certain way, or in a certain time frame, is a waste of energy. Besides, it is far more important *that* God answers our prayers and fulfills His promises than *HOW* He does it or *when*! And He always knows the best time and way to do it, anyway.

Always Seek God's Will

No promise of God can be claimed unless you have learned what the promise is. God promises some things and does *not* promise others. So the only way to know whether He has made a particular promise is to study His Word.

In any matter, always ask, “What does the Bible say?”

Paul wrote, “...prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *will of God*” (Rom. 12:2).

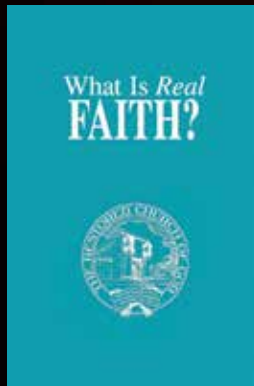
Proving involves study. Study involves effort, work. Then knowledge of God's promises brings confidence to those who pray about them. God is eager to bless people, but He cannot do this if people are ignorant of what He is willing to do. Paul also wrote, “Be you not unwise, but [understand] what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

Let's face it. It is terribly “unwise” for people to live in ignorance of God's promises. Why? Because they cut themselves off from so much that He is willing to do for them! Therefore, you do not have to wonder about God's will. His Word tells you His will on every single important aspect of life. (Take time to read II Timothy 3:14-17.)

But Bible study is not the only condition regarding faith. Much more will be covered in Part 2 in the next issue of *The Real Truth*. □

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MIDDLE EAST

Syrian Refugees Suffer Deplorable Conditions—with No End in Sight



■ **SEEKING ASYLUM:** Left, a woman carries a gas canister in a refugee camp in Zaatari, Jordan (Jan. 30, 2013). Right, a 75-year-old Kurdish woman who evacuated her home due to shelling by Syrian regime forces bakes bread with other displaced women in Khirbet al-Joz, Syria (Jan. 22, 2013).

PHOTOS: JEFF J. MITCHEL/ (LEFT); AAMIR QURESHI/AFP/ (RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

As Syria's two-year civil war rages out of control, more than one million refugees are seeking asylum in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, creating what the International Rescue Committee (IRC) calls a "worsening humanitarian emergency."

Refugees have settled in camps and surrounding cities, but have found that instead of sanctuary, they still face desperate conditions. Those displaced have been taken advantage of and forced to find shelter in sheds, barns, basements, abandoned buildings, or makeshift tent camps, according to IRC staff.

"We use a hole in the ground outside as a toilet and there's no refrigerator," a Syrian man living in Jordan stated in an IRC report. "But we don't have any money to buy fresh food anyway. It is better here than in Syria because we're safe, at least. But we lost everything, including our dignity and our privacy."

Many of the refugees have to pay for shelter or plots of land to pitch a

tent, which is difficult for the majority who fled with only the clothes on their backs.

"A number of women and aid workers told me that some landlords exploit their tenants' poverty," an IRC representative reported on the organization's website. "Without a steady income, families quickly run out of money for rent. Then a young daughter may be coerced into marrying the landlord in exchange for housing. If there is no young daughter, the euphemism for the mother's only other option is what's called survival sex."

In addition, "Domestic violence in refugee communities is exacerbated by the economic stress and poor living conditions," the IRC report stated. "Syrian women say they feel unsafe in crowded shelters where they have minimal privacy, yet they are scared to report violence, because of shame or fear of reprisal from family members. Others just don't know where to turn for help."

Besides a lack of food, electricity and plumbing, weather conditions have caused major challenges. Those without insulated or water-tight shelters are finding themselves in freezing conditions and pools of putrid water and mud when it rains.

"Many children...are already sick from poor water and sanitation" with their "health likely to worsen with the weather," the report stated.

It revealed these emerging health concerns do not include those suffering from life-threatening war wounds, chronic illnesses, and other medical issues.

With no end to the conflict in sight, conditions are only predicted to worsen. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres stated during a press conference as reported by *Reuters*: "Now if this escalation goes on...and nothing happens to solve the problem, we might have in the end of the year a much larger number of refugees, two or three times the present level." □



HEALTH ISSUES

Scientists: Superbugs on the Rise

Experts warn nations should prepare for future devastating outbreaks of superbugs unless they change the way antibiotics are used.

“Britain’s most senior medical adviser has warned [Parliament] that the rise in drug-resistant diseases could trigger a national emergency comparable to a catastrophic terrorist attack, pandemic flu or major coastal flooding,” the *Guardian* reported.

“Dame Sally Davies, the chief medical officer, said the threat from

infections that are resistant to frontline antibiotics was so serious that the issue should be added to the government’s national risk register of civil emergencies. She warned of an ‘apocalyptic scenario’ where people going for simple operations in 20 years’ time die of routine infections ‘because we have run out of antibiotics.’”

These superbugs include gram-negative bacteria such as *E. coli* that “have built-in abilities to find new ways to be resistant and can pass along genetic

materials that allow other bacteria to become drug-resistant as well,” according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“This is your own gut bugs turning on you,” Ms. Davies said in another *Guardian* article. “Between 10% and 20% are resistant to drugs. We do not yet know why they are on the rise, although some hospital procedures, such as the use of catheters, may be implicated.”

The CDC also reported a new “family of germs, dubbed CRE for carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae” in American hospitals that “evades some [of] the strongest antibiotics, making infections almost untreatable,” *ABC News* stated.

The article also explained that there is an increasing threat of drug-resistant *E. coli*, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases.

“We might have to rely on intravenous or intramuscular treatments, meaning the patient would have to come in or someone would have to go to their home,” Chairman of Prevention at Vanderbilt University Medical Center Dr. William Schaffner said. “These people don’t want to be recognized in their home environment as having one of these infections, which a visit would kind of announce. So people will begin avoiding treatment. You have a spiraling series of problems.” □

AMERICAS

Hugo Chavez Dies at 58

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez died from cancer on March 5, after 14 years in power. The polarizing politician “was known for his anti-American rhetoric and allied himself with others at odds with the United States,” *CNN* stated.

From Argentina to Iran, several countries declared days of mourning for the socialist leader. “In Cuba, President Raul Castro’s government declared two days of national mourning and ordered the flag to fly at half-staff,” *The Associated Press* reported.

Conversely, “Cheering Venezuelans in New York and across the U.S. waved their country’s flag and anxiously voiced hope that change would come to their homeland.”

Opposition leader Henrique Capriles will run against interim President Nicolas Maduro in elections set for April 14. □



■ **CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE:** Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez speaks during a press conference in Caracas (Oct. 9, 2012).

PHOTO: JUAN BARRETO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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AFRICA

Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 11:30 EAT, 10:30 CAT,
09:30 WAT, 08:30 GMT

ASIA/OCEANIA

Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air*
Thursday, 08:30 GMT

AUSTRALIA

Optus D2: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air*
Thursday, 6:30 p.m. EST, 6:00 p.m.
CST, 4:30 p.m. WST

Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 6:30 p.m. EST, 6:00 p.m.
CST, 4:30 p.m. WST

CANADA

Bell Satellite TV: Joytv11*
(Starting 4/14)
Sunday, 12:00 p.m. NT, 11:30 p.m.
AT, 10:30 a.m. ET, 9:30 a.m. CT,
8:30 a.m. MT, 7:30 a.m. PT
Shaw Direct: Grace TV
– Channel 399 Classic /
95 Advanced*
Sunday, 12:30 p.m. NT, 12:00 p.m.
AT, 11:00 a.m. ET, 10:00 a.m. CT,
9:00 a.m. MT, 8:00 a.m. PT

CARIBBEAN

Galaxy 25: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 4:30 a.m. AT, 3:30 a.m. ET

CENTRAL AMERICA

Galaxy 25: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 3:30 a.m. ET, 2:30
a.m. CT

EUROPE

**Eutelsat 28A: Gospel
Channel – Satellite Free-to-
Air* (Starting 4/22)**
Monday, 12:30 EET, 11:30 CET,
10:30 WET

Hot Bird 6: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 09:30 CET

ICELAND

**Eutelsat 28A: Gospel
Channel – Satellite Free-to-
Air* (Starting 4/22)**
Monday, 10:30 a.m. WET
**Antenna & Cable: Gospel
Channel* (Starting 4/22)**
Monday, 10:30 a.m. WET

INDIA

Tata Sky: The Word Network
Thursday, 2:00 p.m. IST
Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 2:00 p.m. IST

ITALY

Sky Italia: The Word Network
– Channel 823
Thursday, 09:30 CET

JAMAICA

Flow TV: The Word Network
– Channel 668*
Thursday, 3:30 a.m. ET

MIDDLE EAST

**Arabsat (Eurobird 2):
The Word Network**
– Satellite Free-to-Air*
Thursday, 11:30 EAT, 10:30 CAT,
09:30 WAT, 08:30 GMT

NEW ZEALAND

Optus D2: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air*
Thursday, 8:30 p.m. NZT
Sky: Prime*
Sunday, 7:00 a.m. NZT
TVNZ: TV ONE
Sunday, 5:30 a.m. NZT

NORTH AFRICA

**Arabsat (Eurobird 2):
The Word Network**
– Satellite Free-to-Air*
Thursday, 11:30 EAT, 10:30 CAT,
09:30 WAT, 08:30 GMT

NORTH AMERICA

**Galaxy 25:
Satellite Free-to-Air**
Thursday, 5:00 a.m. NT, 4:30 a.m.
AT, 3:30 a.m. ET, 2:30 a.m. CT,
1:30 a.m. MT, 12:30 a.m. PT

NORWAY

**Thor 5 – Canal Digital:
Gospel Channel**
– Channel 325* (Starting 4/22)
Monday, 11:30 a.m. CET

PHILIPPINES

Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 4:30 p.m. PHT

SOUTH AFRICA

M-Net Decoder: CNW Media
– Channel 6 & 8* (Starting 4/28)
Sunday, 13:00 SAT
Thaicom 5: The Word Network
– Satellite Free-to-Air
Thursday, 10:30 SAT

UNITED KINGDOM

Sky UK: The Word Network
– Channel 590
Thursday, 8:30 a.m. GMT
Sky UK: Gospel Channel
– Channel 588* (Starting 4/22)
Monday, 10:30 a.m. GMT

UNITED STATES

**BROADBAND: Sky Angel Faith
& Family TV – Channel 537**
Thursday, 3:30 a.m. ET, 2:30 a.m.
CT, 1:30 a.m. MT, 12:30 a.m. PT
DIRECTV: ION Television
– Channel 305
Sunday, 6:30 a.m. ET, 5:30 a.m.
CT, 4:30 a.m. MT, 3:30 a.m. PT
DIRECTV: The Word Network
– Channel 373
Thursday, 3:30 a.m. ET, 2:30 a.m.
CT, 1:30 a.m. MT, 12:30 a.m. PT
DISH Network: ION Television
– Channel 216
Sunday, 6:30 a.m. ET, 5:30 a.m.
CT, 4:30 a.m. MT, 3:30 a.m. PT
SELECT CITIES: The CW Plus
– Antenna & Cable
Sunday 6:30 a.m. ET/PT,
5:30 a.m. CT/MT

* New station added since last issue