

DECEMBER 2016

THE

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



AMERICA'S FUTURE *Cutting Through the Uncertainty*

**No End in Sight for
War in Afghanistan**

The Election
Everyone Missed

**Nigeria: Sleeping
Giant in the Sun**

Searching for the
True Jesus Christ

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VOL. XIV | NO. 8 | DECEMBER 2016

A R T I C L E S

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■ **GEOLOGICAL WONDER:** Aso Rock, an over-1,300-foot monolith, towers over the horizon in Abuja, Nigeria (Feb. 15, 2015).

PHOTO: MARK FISCHER/CC BY-SA 2.0

Nigeria: Sleeping Giant in the Sun

Despite having enormous potential, the nation has struggled for decades to overcome challenges and take its place as a powerhouse on the world stage.
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FRONT COVER: President-elect Donald Trump listens as U.S. President Barack Obama speaks during a meeting at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Nov. 10, 2016).

PHOTO: WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO CREDITS: All photographs from Thinkstock unless otherwise noted.

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The Real Truth
1000 Ambassador Drive
Wadsworth, OH 44281
realtruth.org

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAVID C. PACK

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

MANAGING EDITOR
EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

SENIOR EDITOR
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
SAMUEL C. BAXTER

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
SAMUEL C. BAXTER
RYAN L. CASWELL
ANDREW J. HOLCOMBE
GREGORY E. K AidANNEK
DAVID J. LITAVSKY
KENNETH M. OREL
JUSTIN T. PALM
JAMES F. PASTOR
BRUCE A. RITTER
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
NESTOR A. TORO
F. JACO VILJOEN
VIDAL N. WACHUKU
EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
DAVID J. LITAVSKY
KIRSTEN A. SODERQUIST
AISHA STOVALL

ART/GRAPHICS
STACEY L. PALM
JODY E. LYDICK
PAULA C. RONDEAU
SARAH O. VIDAL

WEBSITE SERVICES
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
ANGELA K. BAXTER
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
AMANDA B. DODD

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
TIMOTHY C. WILLARD

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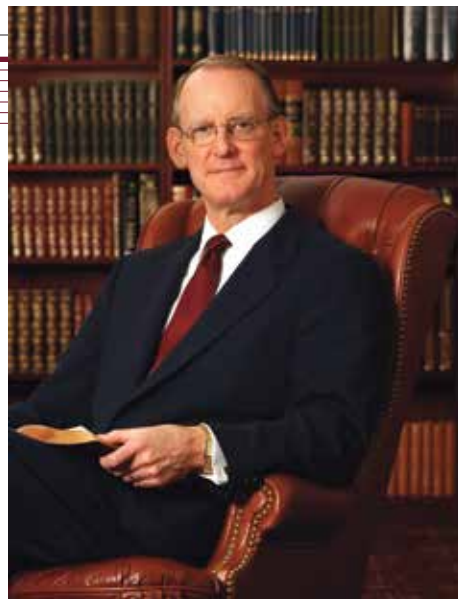
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Pearl Harbor: 75 Years Later

SINCE I WAS born on the seventh of December, and the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor forever made this same day back in 1941 “a day of infamy,” my mother nicknamed me her “Pearl Harbor baby.” This caused me to take special interest in this historic occurrence. Its 75th anniversary is an opportune time to reflect on lessons from this event as they apply to mankind as a whole.

The attack, which occurred “suddenly and deliberately” as described the next day by President Franklin Roosevelt, came as a total surprise to the United States. Without declaring war or giving any warning, two waves of Japanese dive bombers and torpedo planes virtually destroyed U.S. air bases, battleships, cruisers and destroyers at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

In just 90 minutes, 2,403 Americans were dead and 1,178 wounded, as well as over a dozen naval vessels sunk or damaged.

The following day, Roosevelt addressed Congress to ask for a declaration of war against Japan. In a matter of weeks, the U.S. found itself embroiled in the most destructive war in history.

I am a classic example of how some grow up hearing and learning much about war. Stories from military history were a large part of my childhood. So was learning about ancestors who always seemed to have fought in wars, in which several died.

My family was filled with Army and Navy officers—some of them senior career officers. Both of my female cousins married naval officers. A step-cousin of mine was an Army officer. His younger brother attended the naval academy in Annapolis, Maryland. I was also appointed to Annapolis, though I declined because God was calling me into His truth at that time.

Also, my father was an Army officer and pilot in World War II, and his older brother, also a pilot (who later rose to the rank of captain in the Navy—equal to a full colonel in the Army), was present at Pearl Harbor during the attack. Their father (my grandfather) fought in World War I.

Believe me, I understand Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3, which speak of those who “learn war.”

As a child, my father told me stories of his harrowing time as a reconnaissance pilot near Remagen, Germany, in the wake of the Battle of the Bulge. He and another lieutenant in his tiny Piper J-3 Cub, a single-propeller airplane, directed American artillery in order to stop the



■ **“DAY OF INFAMY”**: Top left, a photograph taken from a Japanese plane during a torpedo attack on Pearl Harbor shows ships moored on both sides of Ford Island (Dec. 7, 1941). Top center, a burned U.S. Boeing “Flying Fortress” rests in Hickam Field on Oahu, Hawaii (Dec. 7, 1941). Top right, sailors stand amid wrecked planes at the Ford Island seaplane base as the USS Shaw explodes in the background (Dec. 7, 1941). Middle left, the memorial for the USS Arizona, which sunk after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, stands in the foreground with the battleship USS Missouri and the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson visible in the background (Jan. 31, 2003). Center, the USS Arizona burns after the Japanese attack (Dec. 7, 1941). Middle right, a memorial sits over the wreckage of the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (Feb. 12, 2008). Oil from the ship, called “black tears,” is seen trailing in the current. Bottom left, a photograph taken from space shows the southern coastline of the Hawaiian island of Oahu, including Pearl Harbor (Oct. 27, 2009). Bottom right, a survivor of the USS Arizona, which was destroyed during the attack on Pearl Harbor, attends a memorial service marking the 74th anniversary of the bombing (Dec. 7, 2015).

PHOTOS: U.S. NAVY/NATIONAL ARCHIVES (TOP LEFT, TOP CENTER, TOP RIGHT, MIDDLE LEFT); NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (CENTER); ERGOSUM88, CC BY 2.0 (MIDDLE RIGHT); NASA (BOTTOM LEFT); KENT NISHIMURA/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM RIGHT)



Germans from destroying the Bridge at Remagen. Their efforts helped allow the Allies to continue advancing toward Berlin as the war was coming to an end.

Even though I enjoyed hearing such stories as a young boy, I have come to realize the plain truth about war: It is the worst of “man’s inhumanity to man.”

Throughout World War II, the world learned that “total war” casualties draw no boundary between military and civilian. Never before were so many civilians in harm’s way. The percentage of mobilized forces lost in WWII was stunning: Germany, 22.8 percent—France, 3.5 percent—the United Kingdom, 6.4 percent—the Soviet Union, 30 percent—Japan, 20.4 percent. The U.S. was just under 2 percent.

One factor that accounted for the lower numbers of France and Britain was that they had not recovered from their staggering battlefield losses of WWI and were not in a position to field nearly as many troops as they needed. Also, France was overrun and defeated in 1940 and thereafter only fielded smaller resistance forces.

Although the U.S. entered the conflict in December 1941 in the Pacific, and only a little later in the European theater, it is miraculous that the nation’s percentage of military losses was so low. Part of the explanation is that no air attacks were launched on the homeland other than Pearl Harbor. Also, God’s hand was at work on America’s behalf.

When you are in Hawaii today and you see Pearl Harbor (I visited there both in 1996 and 2013), and you see what the Japanese did only a few generations ago, and you have heard all the stories, and you are, like I am, born on Pearl Harbor day, and your uncle was there—what the Japanese did that fateful day lives in infamy more than for the average person. For me, seeing it firsthand brought to life all that happened, and how terrible war is.

Pearl Harbor is a reminder of a time in which the world truly came to the brink of destroying itself. Similar to September 11, 2001, it is a reminder of

the vulnerability of the United States without God’s protection.

Today, the world is filled with war, terrorism and threats of *more* war and terrorism. Yet all nations long for peace. Leaders negotiate for it. Millions pray for it. Armies fight for it. Despite constant effort, it remains more elusive than ever.

While men have created many amazing technological inventions, they cannot “create” peace. Scientists have unleashed the power of the atom, but are powerless to “unleash” peace upon Earth. Astronomers have discovered much about the size, majesty and pre-

“Pearl Harbor is a reminder of a time in which the world truly came to the brink of destroying itself.”

cision of the universe, but they cannot “discover” the way to peace. They can find galaxies far away throughout the universe, but they cannot “find” peace here on Earth. Neither can leaders end famine, disease, poverty, overpopulation, religious confusion, and hatred, as well as every other misery, evil and woe that unchecked human nature can produce.

But the Bible says world peace will come—and *soon*. How?

Men seem to invariably go to war in search of peace. Eventually, wars usually come to a truce, which always fails to yield permanent peace. This is because men cannot, and never will, find the way to peace *on their own*—without outside help. In reality, they have *no chance* to achieve world peace. *Why?*

As part of an extensive prophesy about world conditions in our

time, the prophet Isaiah answers: “The *way of peace they know not*; and there is *no judgment* in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes there *shall not know peace*” (59:8).

It has not been given to men to understand the path to peace—or, for that matter, the way to abundance, happiness, health and prosperity. No wonder the greatest thinkers, leaders, educators and scientists have failed miserably in their quest for peace on Earth! God has not yet *revealed* to the vast majority of mankind the solution to its unending wars and world troubles.

Like a newscaster ahead of his time, Jesus Christ came to make an announcement about a complete change in the way the world will be governed. With this change will come unprecedented world peace—and happiness, harmony, universal health, and prosperity.

Everywhere He went, Christ spoke about this coming Kingdom. It was the subject of most of His parables. When He commissioned and sent His 12 apostles to preach, the instruction was to preach about the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent His 70 disciples (10:1), He also commanded that they preach the Kingdom of God.

The word “gospel” comes from an Old English word meaning “god spell” or *good news*. “Kingdom” also comes from an Old English term simply meaning *government*. In other words, Christ preached “the good news of the *government of God*.”

This is a great source of comfort for the fewer and fewer numbers of people who remember Pearl Harbor—and for those today who remember the horrors of September 11. No longer will this nation fear a surprise attack or tragic loss of life in such large numbers.

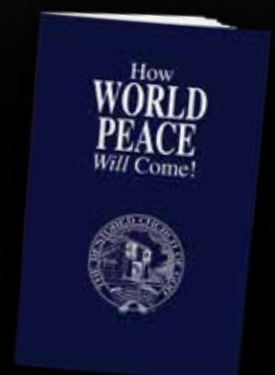
The coming of world peace, happiness, health and abundance *is* good news for a mankind that has never known it. To learn more, watch my *World to Come* broadcast “World Peace—How It Will Come!” at world-tocome.org. □



“WE SHALL BEAT OUR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES”

These words, which mark a special sculpture on the grounds of the United Nations headquarters in New York City, come from the biblical book of Isaiah. Yet even more than a lofty ideal or nice-sounding idea, this Bible verse will come to pass—and soon. Read *How World Peace Will Come!* to learn exactly how this will occur.

Visit rcg.org/hwpwc to order your free booklet!





WAITING IN a long line outside a Donald Trump rally in Canton, Ohio, in September, a German-born woman told *The Real Truth*, “I’m a little bit embarrassed.”

These words were in response to a question about the state of the nation today. Having spent over 45 years in the United States after obtaining citizenship in 1972, she was ashamed by the hatred she saw between Americans.

“It’s just really divided.”

The woman also shared her views of the nation’s issues with illegal immigration: “You should come here legally, not illegally.” She eagerly described her process of obtaining citizenship, which included learning U.S. history as well as to read and write English. Once the process was completed, the judge told her she could “do everything except go run for president.”

“Would you if you could?” she was asked.

“No,” she stated emphatically, her eyebrows raised. She looked up again, and burst into laughter. “I’m too old for that.”

It was a moment of levity during a tumultuous run-up to the election. Yet she—as with many others attending the rally—shared her hopes for change under a Trump presidency.

Hours later, Mr. Trump appeared before thousands of his supporters. During his address, he delivered promises of economic growth to cash-strapped residents of the Canton area. He also outlined his vision for policies on immigration, taxes, the federal deficit, political reform, and trade.

“So the people of the United States are truly”—he summarized—“ready for change.” Thunderous cheers confirmed—a President Trump would be their champion.

Fast-forward to the early hours of November 9. News broke that Mr.

■ **ON THE TRAIL:** Presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks to his supporters at a rally in Canton, Ohio (Sept. 14, 2016).

PHOTO: STACEY L. PALM/THE REAL TRUTH

AMERICA'S FUTURE

Cutting Through the Uncertainty

The result of Election Day in the United States has left many citizens doubting the future of the nation.

Trump had acquired the 270 electoral college votes needed to win over Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

In New York City, the president-to-be addressed his supporters and the nation: “Working together, we will begin the urgent task of rebuilding our nation and renewing the American dream.” Meanwhile, protesters filled the streets of Washington, D.C., and trash fires burned in Oakland, California. During the following days, high schoolers skipped class to protest in Los Angeles, and anti-Trump slogans saturated Twitter. Disgruntled voters across the nation chimed in with a common phrase: “Not my president.”

According to a final pre-election poll by *The New York Times* and *CBS News*, more than 8 in 10 voters said the campaign had left them repulsed rather than excited. The same number felt that they had no faith in either of the presidential candidates, and that both are unlikely to bring the country together after a bitter election season.

This will be a challenge for the president-elect, who faces a citizenry disinterested in politics, distrustful of the media, and fearing the future. Even among his supporters, there are questions of whether the new president will fulfill his campaign promises.

CBS News journalist Bob Schieffer, who has covered every election since 1964, offered a historical perspective: “I have seen a few [elections], but I have run out of ways to say I have never seen one like this.”

He further stated: “The country seems at a turning point, but the divide over where to turn seems wider than ever. Perhaps we can at least agree on one thing—the first task of whoever is elected must be to repair the damage that’s been done by this campaign to the good name of our country.”

After months of heated standoffs, teeter-tottering poll results, vicious campaign ads, and endless (and often misleading) media speculation, America’s future is fading into a fog of uncertainty.

Uncharted Territory

News headlines reflect severe reservations about the next four years. Under

the Business & Finance section of *The Wall Street Journal*, an article titled “Home Loans Enter Uncertain Era” began, “The remaking of U.S. politics also is likely to upend the nation’s mortgage market.”

In another article, the paper reflected a “cautious optimism” concerning the economy: “The presidency of Donald Trump is poised to usher in a new era for the U.S. economy that forecasters say could boost economic growth, bring higher interest rates and inflation, and a new set of potential risks including international trade wars.”

The international community is also unsettled. *The Wall Street Journal* further reported: “Obama faces the task of reassuring allies about U.S. foreign policy as he prepares for his final world tour as president.”

One of the European Union’s top officials—President of the European Council Donald Tusk—congratulated Mr. Trump on his victory, but later called his election a “moment of uncertainty over the future of our transatlantic relations” (*CNN*).

French President Francois Hollande also defined the new era as one of “uncertainty,” and urged “vigilance because of statements made by Donald Trump” (*Business Insider*).

Nations in the volatile Asia-Pacific region hope that Mr. Trump’s “isolationist campaign rhetoric will not be implemented as policy by the incoming administration,” Yoichi Funabashi, chairman of a Tokyo-based think-tank, wrote for *The Straits Times*. “The region is rife with major geopolitical hot spots—China’s rise, maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas, instability on the Korean peninsula and a recent trend of tensions between South-east Asia’s strongmen leaders and Washington. Were America to withdraw, it would destabilise the region and cause a split between Asia and the Pacific.”

On top of this, concerns are mounting among climate change proponents. Many wonder whether the new president and a Republican-majority Congress will address growing environmental problems. An article in the Chinese

newspaper *Global Times* summed this up: “Prospects of US Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Uncertain under Trump Administration.” French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault worried, “What will become of the Paris agreement on the climate...?” (*The New York Times*).

Doubt is also found among individual Americans. Those from both ends of the political spectrum have expressed concerns. Their comments on a KQED Learning website discussion board are revealing.

A Democrat voter stated: “I think this could impact our country negatively or positively. You never know, Trump could surprise us considering he surprised us by winning the election. I think the fate of our country is really up in the air at this moment.”

A voter who favored Trump wrote that “it is disconcerting that many people ferociously disliked both candidates, and only voted for one candidate because they disliked the other one more.”

Another commenter shared what could be a summary statement on behalf of all citizens: “...a very large portion of America is...scared for the future. I was never a big Trump supporter before the outcome of the election nor was I really against him. There is much uncertainty to what Trump will do during his presidency.”

Dispelling the Doubt

As wary newspaper reporters, concerned politicians, and sincerely worried civilians express doubts, it can seem impossible to know what’s ahead.

How can *you* cut through the uncertainty?

First, follow the advice of the apostle Peter, who lived under the Roman Empire in the first century AD.

He wrote: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will

Please see **AMERICA**, page 30

No End in Sight for War in AFGHANISTAN

A UNITED NATIONS report warned that Afghani civilians will face greater food and housing shortages as well as violence through the coming winter. This comes as the war between U.S.-backed forces and Taliban militants in Afghanistan reaches its 16th year.

With ongoing conflicts such as those in Syria and the war with the Islamic State terror group (ISIS), many have forgotten about the conflict between U.S.-led NATO forces and Afghanistan's Taliban regime that began in 2001. Since then, 2.6 million Afghan citizens have fled to neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran, to escape conditions caused by violence. Yet increasing persecution from authorities and citizens in those countries, such as police harassment and government pressure, is causing over 5,000 Afghans to return each day, according to the UN report.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien stated in a press release: "Families have lost their homes and livelihoods. Displaced people are living in tents, unable to feed their children and have had little or no formal education. This cyclical pattern of prolonged conflict must end to avoid another generation of children being lost to war and suffering." In addition to migrants returning to the nation, 1.2 million internally displaced Afghans are struggling to find housing, food and water supplies.

In the face of these issues, the UN has appealed for \$150 million in emergency aid. Currently, it has received only 13 percent of the requested amount.

Meanwhile, the war shows no sign of ending. Fighting between NATO forces and Islamic militants—both organized Taliban forces and more recently ISIS—continues, contributing to a rise in the number of military and civilian deaths. In early November, heavy fighting in the northern part of the country left over 30 civilians and two U.S. servicemen dead.

Between 2009 and 2016, according to UN data, nearly 20,000 Afghan civilians lost their lives from war-related causes.

In addition, over 1,830 U.S. service members have been killed in action since the war began in 2001, according to the Pentagon. Afghan forces, which have operated more independently as international support in the region has ended, have suffered much greater casualties—over 5,500 were recorded in the first eight months of 2016.

The United States entered Afghanistan in 2001 under the premise that "U.S. military power can not only eliminate those threatening to do us harm, but also install in their place a stable political order conducive to liberal values," *Los Angeles Times* reported.

"In Afghanistan, the United States and its allies have succeeded on neither count, despite considerable sacrifice and expenditures exceeding one trillion dollars. Notwithstanding many years of Western tutoring, the Afghan government, currently depen-

dent upon international donors for 70% of its operating revenue, has shown little capacity to stand on its own. Efforts to root out pervasive corruption have gone nowhere. Opium production flourishes, with Afghanistan persistently supplying 90% of the world's heroin. Although no longer at the helm in Kabul, the Taliban persists and by some estimates is growing stronger."

One way in which the Taliban is strengthening its position is by smuggling minerals. *Bloomberg* reported: "The Afghan government will earn about \$30 million in 2015 from its mineral sector for the third straight year, far short of a previous projection of \$1.5 billion...That's also a quarter of what smugglers—mostly linked to the Taliban and local warlords—earn annually selling rubies and emeralds..."

"Afghanistan's struggles to generate cash signal that it could be decades before Kabul's leaders wean themselves off funds from the U.S. and its allies. U.S. President Barack Obama...decided to keep 5,500 troops in the country indefinitely after 2016, underscoring the Taliban's strength..."

The country's Mines and Petroleum Minister Daud Shah Saba stated: "Afghanistan needs to continue receiving international funds—otherwise the country won't remain functional at all."

With the United States' inability to secure Afghanistan's needs, the *Los Angeles Times* article stated that America's new global policy mission objective is simply to "hang on." As conditions worsen for Afghani civilians, their objective may be the same. □



■ **CONTINUING CONFLICT:** Top, Taliban fighters hold on to their weapons before handing them over to Afghan security forces in Jalalabad, Afghanistan (Feb. 24, 2016). Middle left, Afghan protesters demonstrate near the Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul against the Taliban's kidnapping of civilians (June 2, 2016). Bottom left, an internally displaced Afghan family poses in front of a temporary home where they resided after fleeing from ongoing clashes between Afghan security forces and Taliban militants (Aug. 12, 2016). Bottom right, Afghan security personnel prepare for an operation against Taliban militants (May 31, 2016).

PHOTOS: NOORULLAH SHIRZADA/ (TOP); WAKIL KOHSAR/ (MIDDLE LEFT); NOOR MOHAMMAD/ (BOTTOM LEFT); NAJIM RAHIM/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES





The Election Everyone Missed

Few noticed the selection of a leader in one of the world's most powerful positions—one that aims to bring global peace and unity.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

WITH THE United States presidential election looming, a bitter war of words and wills raged. Soon-to-be voters latched onto the juicy details of one scandal after another. Salacious revelations and hyperbolic headlines reigned supreme.

Amid a maelstrom of pervasive attack ads, daggers-drawn debates,

and even political persecution from friends and family, the public missed a rare showing of international unity.

In early October, Russia, China, America, France and Britain all agreed to elect Antonio Guterres to become the ninth secretary-general of the United Nations. The near-unanimous vote from the Security Council was 13 “for” with two abstentions. Days later, all 193 member states of the United Nations passed a resolution declar-

ing Mr. Guterres the new leader as of January 2017.

Samantha Powers, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, called the process “remarkably uncontentious” and “uncontroversial.”

The overwhelming victory for the former prime minister of Portugal and current UN high commissioner for refugees signaled a new era for the world's peacekeeping organization. He will follow South Korea's Ban

■ **CHANGING LEADERSHIP:** The newly elected United Nations Secretary-General-designate Antonio Guterres shakes hands with outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the UN headquarters in New York City (Oct. 13, 2016).

PHOTO: DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

Ki-moon, who has held the secretary-general post since 2006.

After the announcement that Mr. Guterres would succeed him, Mr. Ban hailed his soon-to-be successor as a “wonderful choice to steer this organization.”

For those watching, the news came as a rare glimmer of unity and hope during a particularly devastating year—with Europe deeply entrenched in a refugee crisis, nations in the Middle East continuing to splinter under political instability and extremist activity, and a divisive election cycle in the United States.

Although the UN’s top position is often ignored and its powers vaguely defined, Mr. Guterres wields great political influence. He, like many of his predecessors, will take on the heavy burden of attempting to resolve the world’s greatest troubles.

Powerful International Role

United States President Franklin Roosevelt, who championed the idea of forming the United Nations, conceived the organization’s top office as a “world moderator.” Now, over 70 years since the appointment of the UN’s first secretary-general, the role has amassed a wealth of duties.

The secretary-general is officially the head of the UN’s executive arm, the Secretariat. This branch, which has a staff of close to 9,000 people from 170 different countries, handles UN operations including research, media relations, and translation.

As leader, he appoints heads of offices, recommends members of the General Assembly, and decides which nations become members of the Security Council. He is considered the de facto head of the UN, which requires him to chair meetings of the General Assembly, as well as all UN agencies (such as the World Health Organization), various arms of the organization (including UNICEF and UNHCR), and councils (such as the Security Council), which all fall within the organization’s massive bureaucratic system.

In addition to his executive roles, the secretary-general serves as the

UN’s spokesperson. He is entrusted with making statements on behalf of the international community and keeps up a rigorous itinerary, traveling to as many member nations as possible to keep in touch with their needs. The secretary-general then informs the UN and the world of his findings by issuing yearly reports on the progress of the UN’s goals and by establishing future priorities.

All of these roles would seem menial were it not for the secretary-general’s main objective, which is to “speak and act for peace.”

To achieve this, the UN’s top administrator must fulfill seemingly opposite roles: that of world advocate as well as chief executive of operations. As a world advocate, he represents all member nations and works to fulfill their needs. As a CEO, he enforces the moral values of the organization. The latter carries “the risk, from time to time, of challenging or disagreeing with those same Member States,” according to the UN’s website.

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) reported that pulls between these roles fosters either “an independent political force” or a “public servant”—or some combination of the two.

As an “independent political force,” the secretary-general has the power to “bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security,” as it states in the UN Charter. He can “rally world public opinion around issues that wouldn’t necessarily have been addressed otherwise,” former Director of the World Policy Institute Stephen Schlesinger stated.

At times, this calls for military involvement. For example, the first secretary-general, Trygve Lie, was instrumental in gathering support to defend South Korea after it was invaded by Communist China and North Korea in 1950. Despite opposition from the Soviet Union, which was a UN member at the time, Mr. Lie helped convince 21 member countries to contribute to the defense of South Korea—which started the Korean War.

As a “public servant,” the secretary-general must be acutely aware of member nations’ needs. He must relay them to the public, and “work, privately and publicly, to fulfill those needs,” the UN’s website stated.

Kurt Waldheim, the UN’s fourth secretary-general (1972-1981), took on this approach. While in office, he “oversaw effective and sometimes massive relief efforts in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, the Sudan-Sahel area of Africa, and Guatemala, as well as peacekeeping operations in Cyprus, the two Yemens, Angola, Guinea, and, especially, the Middle East” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). His accomplishments have been described as “ministerial” as he attended to the needs of the countries he served.

Balancing the “creative tension” between bureaucratic and executive roles of the office led the first incumbent to label it “the most impossible job on this Earth.”

Exactly how each secretary-general operates is left up to the individual. The UN stated: “Each Secretary-General... defines his role within the context of his particular time in office.” In other words, as one former CFR Senior Fellow member put it, “A secretary-general is like a Supreme Court justice—you never know what you’re going to get.”

How might Secretary-General-elect Guterres define his tenure during such a pivotal time in human history? A look at his own history helps build a case.

Early Training

A fervent Catholic born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1949, Antonio Guterres entered the political world soon after completing engineering school. In 1974, he joined protests that helped dismantle the five-decade dictatorship the nation had endured, and he subsequently led the newly founded Socialist Party.

His work in the political party was characterized by seeking social justice and equality. *The New York Times* reported: “Mr. Guterres extols the gender quotas his party adopted in the early 1990s to promote women in the party. He does this to under-

score what he calls his commitment to women's rights, and he has promised gender parity in senior United Nations appointments."

In 1995, he was voted in as Portugal's prime minister, a post he held until 2002.

"As prime minister," the media outlet continued, "he earned a reputation as 'a skilled negotiator,' according to a former minister in his government, Joao Cravinho, who credited him for reaching agreements with the right and left at a time when his own party did not have a parliamentary majority.

"One of his signature measures was to decriminalize drug use, in response to a surge in heroin addiction in Portugal. Less successful was his party's effort to loosen curbs on abortion. A majority of the Socialist Party favored the move, though Mr. Guterres said that, as a Catholic, he opposed it. The law was abandoned after an unsuccessful referendum."

Once he had accrued a powerful resume resolving social issues, the United Nations took note. *BBC* detailed the Portuguese prime minister's next step: "Then Mr Guterres, fluent in Portuguese, English, Spanish and French, turned his attention to the world of international diplomacy, becoming the UN's high commissioner for refugees in 2005.

"Under his guidance, the numbers working in the UNHCR's Geneva head office were slashed, while its capacity to respond to international crises by deploying more staff closer to hotspots was improved.

"However, it was his tireless attempts to get the world's richest countries to do more for those fleeing conflict and disaster around the world that people remember.

"We can't deter people fleeing for their lives," he wrote in *Time* magazine last year. "They will come. The choice we have is how well we manage their arrival, and how humanely."

"Prior to his nomination, he said that his work at the UNHCR had been excellent preparation for a secretary-general."

"I think we are living in a world where we see a multiplication of new conflicts, and you see an enormous difficulty in solving the conflicts," he said."

Mr. Guterres is particularly lauded for his accomplishments as a human rights commissioner. In 2015, when Kenya called for the shutdown of a Somali refugee camp because of the threat of terror attacks coming from it, Mr. Guterres flew from Geneva to intervene. He drew up a deal that kept the camp open and helped rally international aid for both Somalia and Kenya. "He was managing a very politicized situation with a lot of raw nerves," refugees expert Bill Frelick of Human Rights Watch stated.

Mr. Ban also highlighted this strength. After Mr. Guterres's appointment, he called him "perhaps best known where it counts most: on the front lines of armed conflict and humanitarian suffering."

Greater Challenges

On January 1, 2017, Mr. Guterres will take on the duty of "securing international peace" among 193 member nations. He will also be entrusted with the operations of the mammoth UN bureaucracy itself, which have come under scrutiny. Meanwhile, he must juggle the many international crises already in progress.

According to *The New York Times*, "His first major diplomatic test will be to rally Russia and [the new president of] the United States to address the carnage in Syria."

During a late 2015 briefing to the Security Council, Mr. Guterres, acting as the high commissioner for refugees, shared his desire to establish a program "for resettlement and other forms of admission to European countries and further afield."

As commissioner, Mr. Guterres spent 10 years visiting war zones and refugee camps. In a statement to the General Assembly after his appointment as secretary-general, he admitted that his experiences often left him questioning: "What has happened to the dignity and worth of the human person?"

"What has made us immune to the plight of those most socially and economically underprivileged?"

Yet he has also stated his awareness of the connection between the humanitarian crisis in Syria and its "enormous impact on regional stability and global peace and security."

In addition to the crisis in Syria, *The New York Times* article continued, "He will also face a range of thorny conflicts elsewhere, from South Sudan to Yemen, and nuclear brinkmanship in North Korea."


Many of these issues will be inherited from the incumbent's tenure. Mr. Guterres has promised to seek the advice of Ban Ki-moon, who has spent the majority of his time in office addressing climate change policy, excessive food and energy prices in developing countries, Iran's and North Korea's nuclear threats, and the UN's role in Sudan's Darfur conflict.

In the same speech to the General Assembly, Mr. Guterres thanked Mr. Ban for his "international public service" and work toward resolving these issues. Mr. Guterres then affirmed that his mission was the same, stating that "having been chosen by all Member States, I must be at the service of them all equally and with no agenda but the one enshrined in the UN Charter."

At the same time, he acknowledged the reality of the office he was accepting.

"I am fully aware of the challenges the UN faces and the limitations surrounding the Secretary-General. The dramatic problems of today's complex world can only inspire a humble approach—one in which the Secretary-General alone neither has all the answers, nor seeks to impose his views; one in which the Secretary-General makes his good offices available, working as a convener, a mediator, a bridge-builder and an honest broker to help find solutions that benefit everyone involved."

He summarized that the core of his work will be to restore "human dignity." How he manages to carry this out—as a bureaucratic secretary or an influential political force, or both—has yet to be seen. □



Searching for the TRUE JESUS CHRIST

Many desire to know the truth about Jesus Christ. But do their ideas measure up to what God's Word says?

FOR SOME, the idea that Jesus Christ walked the Earth 2,000 years ago—turning water to wine, healing the lame, raising the dead—is just too fantastical to be true.

In fact, some believe that Christ was a hoax devised by the Romans. The thought is that, since the Jews were expecting a heroic savior to liberate them, the Romans invented an opposing belief system that taught adherents to “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39) and “render

unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's” (22:21). Thus, Rome would have pacifist taxpayers in Judea.

While this idea is far-fetched (why would the Romans murder Christians if they created the religion?), it is indicative of the many titillating theories out there. They promise to provide secret knowledge that is often scandalous.

Most, including Christian and secular scholars, believe that Jesus *did* exist. But no one seems to agree on the *exact* details surrounding His life. In fact, there is an endless array of competing theories.

One retired professor of religion and culture at Oregon State University proclaimed that Christ “did not ‘die for the sins of the world,’ but he was killed by the powers that ruled his world. His followers found meaning in his death.” He also stated that Christ likely considered Himself a prophet, but titles such as “the Messiah” and “Son of God,” as well

as accounts of the miracles He performed, came posthumously.

This is just one more conflicting idea about the carpenter from Nazareth. Others include that He had a wife and family, that He was a violent revolutionary, or that He was just a moral philosopher with some nice “Kumbaya” ideas.

How can you separate truth from men’s ideas? Can you know for certain?

The short answer: Yes! The longer answer: To do so, you will need to work, study and prove who Jesus Christ was and His purpose on Earth.

David C. Pack’s book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity* can help you do just that. It pairs plain Bible truths with solid historical evidence to remove all doubt about the life of Jesus.

What follows is an excerpt from this eye-opening book, starting with the ideas surrounding Jesus’ birth...

Separating Fact from Fiction

Most people are, to varying degrees, familiar with the story about Joseph and the pregnant Mary journeying to Bethlehem, a small village just outside Jerusalem, to register in an empire-wide census decreed by Rome. According to the account, the couple arrived to find Bethlehem filled with visitors from the region, leaving the young couple without a place to stay at the local inn. Ever resourceful, Joseph and Mary decided to temporarily stay in a stable, where the young mother supposedly gave birth to Jesus on December 25.

Then shepherds out in the fields and pastures witnessed a stunning supernatural event—a great star in the heavens—a sign that the Christ child was born. Also, the supposed three “wise men” from the East came to Bethlehem to honor Jesus. Herod, Rome’s client king over Judea, felt threatened by Jesus’ existence. Since he could not find the child, Herod decided to massacre all baby boys that were estimated to be Jesus’ age.

Or so went the account, which grew over the centuries, weaving chapters

from the Bible with Christmas myths originating from Babylonian mystery religions practiced by idol worshippers since the tower of Babel! To understand the events surrounding Jesus Christ’s birth and His early years, we must separate fact from fiction.

First, despite what billions today believe, Jesus was *not* born on December 25, or even in winter. He was, in all likelihood, born in early autumn.

The *Adam Clarke Commentary* states: “It was custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the passover [early spring], and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain.” The first rains began in early to mid-fall.

Continuing with this same quote: “During the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As...the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November [begins sometime in October], we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could he have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground, the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact...”

Luke 2:8 explains that when Christ was born “there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” Note that they were “abiding” in the field. This could not have happened in December, or even close. Both Ezra 10:9-13 and Song of Solomon 2:11 show that winter was the rainy season, and shepherds could not reside in cold, open fields at night.

Numerous encyclopedias plainly state that Jesus was not born on December 25. Even *The Catholic Encyclopedia* confirms this!

Then from where did the festival associated with this date originate?

Read the following quote from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under “Christmas”: “In the Roman world the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merrymaking and exchange of gifts. *December 25 was also regarded as the birthdate of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the Sun of Righteousness.* On the Roman New Year (January 1), houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. To these observances were added the German and Celtic Yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain, and central Europe. Food and good fellowship, the Yule log and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, gifts and greetings all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian.”

Next is a quote from a December 1984 *Toronto Star* article titled “We owe a lot to Druids, Dutch,” by Alan Edmonds: “The Reformation cast a blight on Christmas. By then, of course, clever ecclesiastical politicians had adopted the Pagan mid-winter festival as the alleged birthdate of Jesus of Nazareth, and thrown in a few other Pagan goodies to make their takeover more palatable.”

Why Late December?

Understand. December 25 was not selected because it was the birth of Jesus Christ or because it was near that date. It was selected entirely because the 25th of December coincided with the idolatrous pagan festival Saturnalia!

In any event, we do not know the exact date of Jesus’ birth (though He was most likely born in the fall). While God certainly could have made it clearly known, He chose to hide it from the world’s eyes.

For years, the birth of Jesus has been shrouded in the pagan trappings of Christmas, whose traditions and practices predate Christ’s earthly ministry by thousands of years!

Billions around the world exchange gifts with each other every December 25, believing they are following the “three wise men’s” custom of giving birthday gifts to Jesus. Yet the “three wise men” of the Xmas myth are simply called “wise men” in the gospel of Matthew, the only book in which they are mentioned.

The term “wise men” is translated from the Greek word “magos,” meaning “by implication a magician” according to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. These were likely astrologers, who were considered nobles, from the East. Scripture does not specify how many visited Jesus. Also, the men gave gifts to the Christ child out of respect and royal tradition. They acknowledged Him to be a king, and thus treated Him as such, practicing the custom of giving gifts to a royal ruler. These were in no sense birthday gifts.

By the time the men visited Jesus, He and His parents were no longer in the stable. They were in a house, and the Bible refers to Christ as a “young child” (Matt. 2:8, 11), not a baby. Much time had passed between Jesus’ birth and the “wise men’s” visit. This is why Herod slaughtered all baby boys up to two years old—it was not evident to him how many years had passed since Jesus had been born!

When we separate fact from fiction—that is, biblical truth from the lies and deceptions of pagan myth and legend—we get a better, much clearer view of the true Jesus Christ!

Christ’s Ministry—Almost Entirely Overlooked Purpose

When the wise men asked Herod, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:1-2), Herod “was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him” (vs. 3).

Why? Herod learned from the Jewish religious leaders that Christ was foretold to be born in Bethlehem—this came from God’s Word. You would think that Herod and “all Jerusalem with him” would be excited over the news, not “troubled.”

Yet Herod and the religious authorities of the day felt threatened by Christ’s existence—why?

The story of Jesus Christ’s miraculous conception and birth is known worldwide and has been taught from generation to generation for nearly 2,000 years. But what did it *mean*? What was its true significance?

The Bible identifies Jesus in His existence before human birth as “the Word,” an eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful God-being who “was with God, and...was God” (John 1:1). “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (vs. 14)—He voluntarily lowered Himself to become limited, corruptible flesh, subject to weariness and death.

Why?

The varying and competing denominations, sects, arms, churches and movements of professing Christianity preach that Jesus came to save the whole world. “For God so loved the world,” their pastors, teachers and religionists frequently recite, “that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Even those who have never opened a Bible are familiar with the biblical account in the book of Genesis, in which Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit, thus cutting themselves off from the utopian Garden of Eden—and more importantly, from the One who created it: God.

Subsequently, every man, woman and child for the past 6,000 years has had at least one thing in common: “For all have *sinned*, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “All” means ALL—not “some,” not “most.” *Every* human being—even Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, Daniel and other righteous, faithful servants of God—has sinned.

But what is sin?

Sin Defined

The leaders and instructors of the world’s two-billion-plus professing Christians talk almost endlessly about sin—more accurately, they talk

around sin, freely promoting their own interpretation and personal opinion of what sin is—yet they do not stand before their listeners, open their Bibles, and read aloud I John 3:4—“Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: *for sin is the transgression of the law.*”

Grasp this important biblical truth!

Sin is the breaking of the Law—God’s Law, which is “holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12) and is “spiritual” (vs. 14). Religionists preach a message of “come as you are,” shamelessly proclaiming that “Jesus did away with the Law” and has removed “the terrible burden of keeping it.”

Yet the Word of God—“quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), which “cannot be broken” (John 10:35)—declares the opposite: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: *and His commandments are not grievous*” (I John 5:3). But many believe they are!

Breaking even one of God’s commandments earns the offender the same penalty as breaking all of them. Notice: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law” (Jms. 2:10-11).

The penalty of sin—the wages that one earns for breaking God’s Law—is plainly defined: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Some critics have sought to rationalize this verse. “This doesn’t *literally* mean death,” they claim. “It means being cut off from God.”

Yet God declares that man is *already* cut off from Him! Notice: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have *separated* between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

Please see **TRUE JESUS**, page 31

NIGERIA: SLEEPING GIANT IN THE SUN

Despite having enormous potential, the nation has struggled for decades to overcome challenges and take its place as a powerhouse on the world stage.

BY VIDAL N. WACHUKU

AS A BORN and bred Nigerian, I am well-acquainted with my country's dubious global brand. The “giant of Africa” often is reduced to a land of fraudsters and heartless online scammers who dupe people out of their life savings.

Beyond this stereotype and the accompanying jokes, the nation, named for the Niger River that runs through it, is also known as the birthplace of Boko Haram. The terrorist group grabs world headlines as it wreaks havoc and displaces millions in and around Nigeria.

These are just two of the many scurrilous claims to fame for my place of birth.

It reminds me of what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, an award-winning Nigerian author, stated in the lecture “The Danger of a Single Story.” She said that “to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and that is what they become.” The unfavorable narratives placed on my native land regrettably have shaped the world's view of it.

Nigeria, like every modern nation, is a mix of good, bad and sometimes very ugly. During my 27-year legal career, I lived mostly in the north. This occupation, however, allowed me to travel the length and breadth of the country, which is more than twice the size of the American state of California.

Yes, I have witnessed firsthand the nation's crime, corruption and squalor. Yet I have also personally experienced the sprawling modern skylines of Abuja and Lagos, the magnificent mangroves and tropical rainforests of the Niger Delta, the low-lying savannah and rolling mountains of the Middle Belt, and the undulating sand dunes of the far north.

This says nothing of Nigeria's 186 million inhabitants who, despite the nation's challenges, are happy. Happiness is considered one of the best things about Nigeria. This is easy to see when one walks down its winding streets. The people are lively and always seem to smile, displaying energy and enthusiasm. The 2015 and 2016 World Happiness Report ranked Nigerians 2nd and 6th, respectively, in Africa.

One label certainly does *not* tell the whole story.

Yet, as one who has long been intrigued by the history, culture and politics of my beloved birthplace, I concede that Nigeria *is* a land of contradictions. There are undeniable problems plaguing the West African nation, which otherwise has so much going for it. It has so much promise, but something always seems to be holding it back.

The 1959 Nigerian short film “Giant in the Sun” introduced Africa as the “continent of the future.” The film predicted that it would be led by a self-governed Nigeria, as it would become a former colony of Great Britain the following

■ **SIGN OF POWER:** The monument known as “The Mandate,” which symbolizes the strength and unity of Nigeria's diverse peoples, stands at the National Assembly complex in Abuja, Nigeria.

PHOTO: SALASI D. JEZHI/THE REAL TRUTH







year. The movie, highly acclaimed at the time, demonstrated how Nigeria distinguished itself as a leader in industrial, agricultural, commercial and social development.

Sadly, the tremendous advancements shown in the documentary never materialized. Now, well over 50 years later, the nation has yet to reach its full potential.

Nigeria remains an enigma. This “sleeping giant in the sun” is yet to awaken and find its place among the powers of the world.

“Great” Resources

The title “giant of Africa” is fitting for Nigeria. Though not the oldest or geographically largest country on the continent, the coastal nation nonetheless stands out—mostly for its high economic status and enormous population.

Nigeria’s robust economy (the world’s 26th largest GDP in 2016) is based on an extensive list of agricultural resources and industries including: cocoa, peanuts, cotton, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava (manioc, tapioca), yams, rubber, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, timber, fish, coal, tin, coltan, rubber products, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cement and other construc-



■ **DIVERSE CITYSCAPE:** Left, federal buildings tower in the background at the capital city of Abuja, Nigeria (Oct. 25, 2016). Middle, yams are sold at a rural market. The nation is the world’s largest producer of yams, accounting for up to 76 percent of global production (Oct. 30, 2016). Right, the Abuja National Mosque gleams in the sun in Abuja, Nigeria (Feb. 16, 2016).

PHOTOS: SALASI D. JEZHI/THE REAL TRUTH (LEFT AND MIDDLE); FLICKR/CC BY 2.0 (RIGHT)

tion materials, food products, footwear, chemicals, fertilizers, printing, ceramics and steel (*CIA World Factbook*).

Yet nearly all of Nigeria's wealth is based on its abundant oil reserves. Petroleum and petroleum products have been the primary source of income and government revenue for more than 40 years. The world's increased dependence on crude oil has made Nigeria the 13th largest producer of oil in the world and the top in Africa.

This reality, incidentally, has caused the nation's other viable industries to suffer. Merchants pour their resources into the oil business seeking the best return on investment. This leaves the nation's economy vulnerable due to volatile world oil prices.

The economy is not the only "giant" thing in my homeland. Nigeria is easily Africa's most populous nation at over 186 million—nearly twice the size of Africa's second largest—and the 7th most populous nation in the world.

As with many African nations, Nigeria is in the midst of a baby boom. It has the 12th highest birthrate in the world. (The United States is ranked 159 by comparison.) The nation is also among the world's youngest with a median age of 18.3 years (the U.S. is

37.9 by comparison). With a young and already large population, it is estimated that by 2050, Nigeria will be the world's fourth most populated nation at 392 million.

Abundant resources, wealth and people should leave the nation poised to succeed. Yet the advantages do not end there.

Exceptional People

Nigerians are among the most capable and educated people in the world. Nearly every family, especially in the southern part of the country, has college-degree holders or professionals. The country boasts qualified specialists in virtually every field of human endeavor. Many qualified Nigerian professionals (lawyers, doctors, nurses, engineers, architects and more) fill positions around the globe where more opportunities are available.

The Migration Policy Institute, an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to the movement of people worldwide, released a June 2015 report on the immigration of Nigerians to the United States. It listed Nigerians as the "largest source of African immigration" to the U.S. It stated that the "Nigerian diaspora is

the best educated" of the groups studied and that a "far greater share of the Nigerian first and second generation earned undergraduate degrees than the U.S. population overall (37 percent versus 20 percent)." The study also found that Nigerians were "more than twice as likely to have secured an advanced degree (29 percent versus 11 percent)."

Per the institute, "Members of the Nigerian diaspora are also substantially more likely than the general U.S. population to be in the labor force and to work in professional or managerial occupations."

Please understand, I do not bring all this up to prove some sort of vast superiority of my countrymen. Yes, I have seen them generally excel at whatever they apply themselves. They are a capable people who have access to abundant resources and are steadily increasing.

But the nation remains embroiled in problems. So what is holding it back?

Divergent Rationales

Despite working mostly in the northern part of the country, I was born in the western area and grew up in the east. This has given me a wide perspec-





tive. Though united as Nigerians—my people are not all the same.

For instance, there are more than 250 ethnic nationalities over the nation's 36 states and federal capital. Many of these groups have different cultural practices, foods and daily lifestyles. And though English is the official language of the former British colony, the nation is home to over 500 indigenous languages. Few nations come close to such variety!

More facts to consider. The nation's three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani who live mainly in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and Yoruba in the southwest. They are known domestically as “the big three.” Each reflects an assortment of traditions and governance.

The Hausa-Fulani are more feudal in nature. They rely on a hereditary monarchy for their governmental system, meaning leaders are selected along bloodlines. Many in this ethnic group adhere to Islam—as do 50 percent of all Nigerians. Most Muslims occupy the northern area of the country.

Southern Nigeria, which hosts the Yoruba and Igbo, is more westernized and urban. The south is also where most Christians dwell. They make up 40 percent the nation, with the remaining 10 percent of citizens holding to

indigenous beliefs. The Yoruba, like the Hausa-Fulani, look to bloodlines for the selection of its leaders while the Igbo are mostly republic in nature, with leaders or elders chosen by the people.

Nigerians adhere to traditional practices in an ever-changing and contemporary world. For instance, all its ethnic nationalities are patrilineal, which means that children belong to the man and any inheritance is strictly from the father. Also, polygamy is traditionally practiced by almost all ethnic groups.

These differences lead to a series of competing allegiances and ways of life. Yet the ultimate conflict of interest may be in the world of religion.

Nigerians are typically very religious. Federal and state governments heavily promote religious pilgrimages and prayers are given openly at state functions, in schools, and at public gatherings. It is common to hear Nigerians invoke God's name in practically every given situation. In the face of economic hardship, deprivation, unwarranted suffering, or blatant political oppression and repression, the typical Nigerian will just say, “I leave it to God.”

But religion is not helping the nation work out its problems. Instead of spurring tighter bonds, it has brought intense division between Muslims and

Christians—both claiming to fight in the name of their god. Attacks from Islamic Boko Haram are at times met with some form of response from radical Christian groups. Adherents from radical Muslim groups burn places of worship of more moderate Muslims and Christians. They also attack villages populated by the opposing side's followers.

The medley of beliefs and culture would affect any nation's ability to pull toward a common goal.

Culture of Corruption

Pervasive religion in Nigeria seems to have no effect on rampant corruption, however. It is *everywhere*. As soon you land in Nigeria, the immigration officer will likely shuffle through your documents and ask what you have for him. In other words, “settle me” and have an easy passage.

If you are bold enough to say you brought nothing, he will likely more blatantly ask you to drop some dollars, pounds or euros “for the boys.” If you are still unwilling to pay, then brace yourself for a long wait as your baggage will be subjected to intense and rigorous scrutiny—all because you refused to “play ball.”

By the time you wade through this and start driving to your destination,



a policeman at a highway checkpoint with a gun slung across his shoulders will utter the same words, “Settle me.” Thus, the cycle starts again.

I personally remember many years ago, going to the Department of Inland Revenue to be assessed for taxes. The young tax officer asked why I would want to pay money to the government when—for a small sum—he could get me my tax clearance certificate “in a jiffy.” Because I turned him down, it took a much longer time before the certificate was given to me.

Corruption is so widespread that there are outlets such as the nonprofit website *BribeNigeria.com* dedicated to empowering Nigerian citizens to report bribery and hold culprits accountable.

Political Instability

Unsurprisingly, rampant corruption has led to political instability. This has been a problem for decades.

Notice the motivation for a military coup on January 15, 1960. The uprising’s leader stated in a broadcast about his goals on *Radio Kaduna*: “Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that

they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least...those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.”

Continued corruption by the political class led to another military coup in July 1966. About 10 months later, the eastern portion of Nigeria attempted to secede from the rest of the nation by declaring itself the Republic of Biafra. This led to the Nigerian federal government launching a full-scale civil war that raged for 30 months.

I remember as a young 9-year-old boy fleeing from invading Nigerian troops in November 1969. I spent Christmas that year hiding in a forest with nowhere else to go after armed men invaded my grandmother’s village. We fed on raw cassava roots and leaves and other wild herbs for weeks and dared not light a fire to cook a meal. I will never forget the boom of heavy mortar and artillery fire as fighting raged around us.

On January 15, 1970—my father turned on his small battery-powered radio. Shortly after, I heard him scream at the top of his voice, “The war is over!” followed by similar shouts from all parts of the forest. Soon people streamed out of their hiding places and spontaneously burst into songs of



■ **DISPARITY OF LIVING:** Left, a well-set neighborhood in Abuja, Nigeria, where it is common to see the contrast between rich and poor communities (Oct. 28, 2016). Middle, traders maneuver through traffic as they attempt to sell produce (Oct. 20, 2016). Top right, a view of the Lagos, Nigeria, skyline. Bottom right, a lady carries water in a plastic basin for domestic use. Most suburban houses are not connected to running water, therefore residents must purchase water daily from wells (Oct. 30, 2016).

PHOTOS: SALASI D. JEZHI/THE REAL TRUTH (LEFT, MIDDLE, BOTTOM RIGHT); THINKSTOCK (TOP RIGHT)

thanksgiving. They cried and hugged each other with joy at having survived the grueling 30-month war.

In total, the conflict took over one million lives and left several additional millions displaced.

Since that time, though, the nation has continued to struggle with corruption and multiple regime changes, much of it by military coup. While, by 1999, the nation had returned to democratic civilian rule and had begun to stabilize, it has not been enough to overcome the continued religious division, corruption, political instability, and inefficient leadership that has characterized the country since independence.

All these have also negatively contributed to the single story of Nigeria.

Way Forward

Though quick to call on “God,” Nigerians demonstrate, as my late father would say, “a form of religion without genuine godliness.” What did he mean?

Though many Nigerians are certainly sincere in their view toward God and religion—something seems missing. My father’s observation reflects a Bible verse in II Timothy 3:5.

In a detailed description of attitudes prevalent in our modern time, Paul explained to Timothy that some would be seen as “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...” These people would have a “form” or *appearance* of “godliness,” of being religious, but would be unable to fully experience the benefits. They would somehow “deny” or *reject* the “power” or *miraculous force* or *ability* available through the true and living God.

How could something like this happen?

One form of God’s power is His words—the Holy Scriptures. For instance, Hebrews 4:12 describes it as follows: “For the word of God is quick, and *powerful*, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

People can, unwittingly or otherwise, deny the power of God by

not obeying Him—His words. One wonders, how many pious Muslims or firebrand Christians in my country have read and considered such counsel?

Nigerians, however, are by no means alone in this way. Most people on the planet struggle with this concept.

The God of the Bible wants everyone, not just Nigerians, to go beyond acknowledging His supremacy with mere words. He wants action in the form of obeying His commands.

“Change starts at the individual level. It then eventually spreads to the family, to the neighborhood, to the city, to the nation, then finally to the world.”

God’s true people are known by their obedience. It is how His children express love to Him and others. Notice: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:2-3).

The connection between knowing God and obedience is even stronger earlier in the book. Notice: “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. *He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him” (I John 2:3-5).

These are powerful words!

Obedience requires humility—a willingness to put aside one’s own

will and come under the authority of another. Humility combined with the knowledge that comes from studying God’s Word results in a desire and ability to turn from sin, which is the transgression of God’s holy, righteous and perfect Law (I John 3:4).

In exchange for this commitment from human beings, whether individually or collectively as a nation, is the promise that almighty God will hear their pleas from His throne in heaven, forgive their transgressions, and attend to their needs (II Chron. 7:14). This most powerful promise comes from the Being who cannot lie (Num. 23:19).

My countrymen and women must be ready to obey every word of God in accordance with Isaiah 1:19, which says, “If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.”

God is not interested in those who only mouth their love for Him. He wants to see people genuinely repent and obey Him.

It is only then that things will begin to turn around. It is then—and only then—that the single-story narrative that has defined places like my dear country will disappear.

Yet change starts at the individual level. It then eventually spreads to the family, to the neighborhood, to the city, to the nation, then finally to the world.

To begin to take steps toward real change, order David C. Pack’s book, *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* (available at rcg.org/syotte). The book explains in detail what God requires for those who are seeking to obey Him.

The “sleeping giant in the sun” *can* awaken from the abyss of gloom and despair. It can combine the abundant resources and abilities of its people—if it turns and obeys God.

This will give it a foretaste of the peace and prosperity that will come in the very near future, not only to Nigeria but to the entire world.

To understand more about this time, watch *The World to Come* broadcast, “How God’s Kingdom Will Come—Not What You Think!” □

MISSING: SHAME, GUILT AND REMORSE

Signs of a Society That Can No Longer Blush

A WAR-TORN TOWN in the Middle East: No one hears the screams of a nine-year-old girl suffering at the merciless hands of ragtag “soldiers.” The assault is violent—brutal—unthinkable—yet commonplace in a land without hope, a world in which the helpless suffer and the remorseless roam free.

Evening, the parking lot of an out-of-the-way restaurant infamous for adulterous rendezvous: Surrounded by floodlights and a television crew, a husband lunges at his wife and threatens to harm her as she cowers behind the host of a reality TV show. The host asks, “Why are you cheating on your wife?”

The husband feels no shame, sense of guilt, or remorse, only “righteous” indignation over being caught—and on camera. He blames his wife for not understanding the affair meant nothing to him. “You know I always come home to you.”

A nursing home where loved ones rarely visit: Caregivers taunt, slap, shake, push, punch, beat and spit on elderly residents suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

A prominent cable television news program: Horrified viewers watch CCTV footage of a car speeding away after it hits a jaywalking pedestrian. Onlookers hesitate. Some call 911, others draw closer to gawk at the

unconscious man, but all wait before offering assistance.

Across “civilization,” people from all walks of life either commit vile acts without remorse or think only of themselves when others need help.

Teachers, convinced they have “fallen in love,” prey upon students for sexual encounters, stealing their innocence, and, in effect, sentencing their young minds to a lifetime of mental and emotional anguish.

Teenagers and pre-teens see nothing wrong with “sexting”—sending risqué, even nude, digital images of themselves to their peers. They fail (perhaps refuse) to comprehend that, despite all efforts to push “delete,” anything sent electronically will exist in cyberspace for many years to come—and could lead to being charged with a crime.

A Wall Street con artist swindles family, “friends” and colleagues out of untold millions of dollars.

A paranoid and delusional dictator strikes fear in the international community as he test fires a costly, state-of-the-art weapon—the price of which could have fed millions of his starving citizens and prevented needless deaths.

In the 21st century—the age of instant communication, instant travel, and instant pleasures—shame lies on its deathbed, remorse gasps its last breath, and personal guilt is fast-becoming extinct. It is time to understand why.

Changing Standards

The Victorian Era was a glorious time for the world-spanning British Empire.

Yet it was also a period of extreme sexual prudery. The subject of sex was taboo. It was viewed as shameful, despite being a God-ordained blessing for husband and wife.

With the nightmarish horrors of World War I came the apathy of the disillusioned “Lost Generation,” the Roaring Twenties, and the cynicism of “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

The Great Depression and the second world war ushered in an era of harsh and desperate times, leaving mankind teetering on the brink of destruction. Out of it, America emerged as a world superpower, with calls of patriotism and “doing your part.” Citizens embraced the importance of the nuclear family and advocated conservative, middle class values.

But the 1950s, the decade of “country and family first—don’t question authority,” gave way to the 1960s, the decade of “question everything” and “don’t trust anyone over age 30,” along with political assassinations and the sexual revolution.

With the laidback, “go with the flow” 1970s came oil embargoes, high gas prices, high unemployment rates, the rise of two-income families, the abuse of government powers, and embarrassing U.S. losses in the Cold War.

The “Morning in America” 1980s brought a hollow morality, leading to the situation ethics of the tattooed, body-pierced, “hooking up” 1990s, and the polarizing of the secularism

versus evangelical “righteousness” of the 21st century.

Each successive generation thought it knew better than the previous one. Things people felt shame and remorse over in the 1950s they questioned in the 60s, tolerated in the 70s, and embraced in the 1980s and beyond.

Clearly, society’s deteriorating morality continues to get worse and worse.

Foundation of Civilization

God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and gave them plain instructions: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

Eating the fruit of the Tree of Life symbolized choosing to follow God’s will, allowing Him to determine how man should live. Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented choosing to make decisions based on one’s own understanding.

Adam and Eve ate of the wrong tree.

When they heard God’s presence drawing near, they hid from Him because *they* had decided to be ashamed for being naked. They did not wait for their Creator to tell them when or in what circumstances they should feel embarrassment.

That was the problem. Instead of being humble, teachable and ready to let God instruct them in making successful decisions, Adam and Eve became their own judges. They decided for themselves that they should feel embarrassed for being naked.

Sadly, civilization was founded on man’s natural inclination to judge for himself how to live, how to make life decisions, and how to direct his own steps.

Yet God’s Word declares, “It is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23) and, “There is a way that *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16:25).

No One Standard

Approximately one in every three people on Earth claim to worship the same God and hold sacred the same Bible—yet the world’s 2.2 billion professing Christians are divided among competing and disagreeing churches, denominations and sects. Catholics, Protestants, evangelicals—none walk together in absolute doctrinal agreement.

Others assert that the Bible is still in effect, yet they have added (unnecessarily) humanly devised traditions and manmade codes of conduct, which have turned the Law of God into a heavy burden.

Many professing Christians claim God’s Law is “done away.” Notice a prophecy about today’s religious leaders: “Her priests [this world’s religious leaders] have violated My law, and have profaned My holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them” (Ezek. 22:26).

If there is no Law, then sin does not exist, for, “Whosoever commits sin transgresses [breaks, violates] also the law: *for sin is the transgression of the law*” (I John 3:4). If there is no sin, then there is no reason to feel remorse.

Ours is an age of changing moralities. Man conducts himself according to what “seems right in his own eyes.” Religions cannot agree to one standard of belief. Governments are the same, with politicians changing sides whenever the winds of public opinion switch direction.

People feel shame and remorse for their actions when they believe in a standard of right and wrong. But in this modern world, standards deteriorate with every passing generation.

Humanity is fast approaching a time Jesus Christ warned would come, a period that would mirror Noah’s final days in the pre-Flood world. People will—as they did prior to the Great Flood—continue daily life as though nothing is wrong (Luke 17:27), all while ignoring God’s warning as they

did before: “until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.”

Except for Noah and his family members, God took the life of every human being—but why?

Notice Genesis 6: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great [abundant] in the earth, and that every imagination [purpose] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil CONTINUALLY. And it repented [regretted] the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart” (vs. 5-6).

Jesus foretold the perverse spiritual conditions of the final days before His imminent Return to replace the governments of men with the Kingdom of God: “And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax [grow] cold” (Matt. 24:12).

Genuine outgoing concern for others will “wax cold” because sin—hatred, malice, selfishness and insincerity—will abound!

Darker times are ahead for mankind. The Bible states: “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them *every one is given to covetousness*; and from the prophet even unto the priest *every one deals falsely*. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? *No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, says the LORD.

“Thus says the LORD, Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.” What was their response? “...they said, *We will not walk therein*” (Jer. 6:15-16).

Man seems determined to walk in his own ways. To understand why he is trapped in this mindset, and how you can escape and learn to walk in “the good way,” read *Did God Create Human Nature?* at reg.org/dgchn. □

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Case for Cooking

While it is usually impractical to cook every meal from scratch, doing so as much as possible will help you reconnect with the natural life processes that occurred to make the food in the first place.

BY JUSTIN T. PALM AND STACEY L. PALM

NEVER DID the saying “you are what you eat” become more important to us than several months ago, when we contemplated feeding our six-month-old son his first bite of food. From birth to that time, he had only consumed his mother’s milk.

His first bite could determine how he viewed food, what kind of future meal choices he would make, and possibly what kind of illnesses he would be saddled with later in life— we reasoned with first-time-parent apprehension.

In the truest sense, he was a completely clean slate. How could we help him have the best possible start?

Our minds turned to all the food decisions we had made in our own lives—the ones we would change and the ones we thought had been responsible. Knowing what we do now about the connection between food and health, we thought: *If we could train*

our taste buds from an early age, how would we do it? The decision weighed on our minds.

The entire experience made us long for several hundred years ago, when one did not question the source of meals. Food back then was not readily available in grocery and convenience stores and the concept of using chemical filler ingredients was nonexistent.

Instead, meals of the time were made with fresh ingredients, containing copious amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals, healthy carbohydrates—and *zero* refined sugars. And in almost all cases these foods came straight from the source and landed on the table: milk from a cow, eggs from a henhouse, and maybe fish for dinner from a nearby lake. Any vegetables were pulled from a family garden.

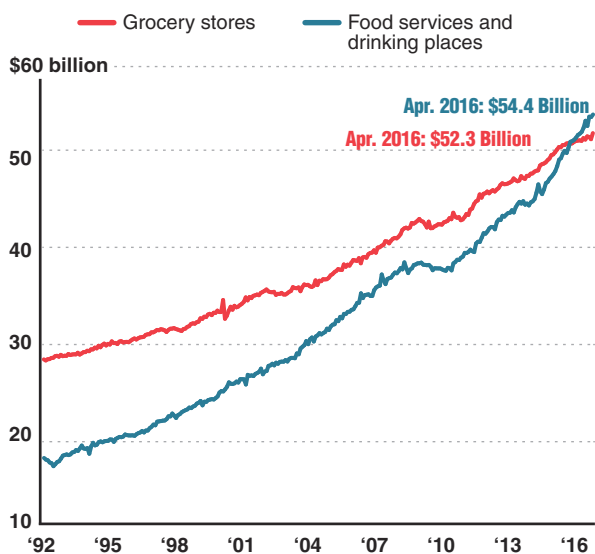
Now it is not so simple. Most people worldwide live in crowded urban areas and do not have access to these kinds of fresh foods. Almost everything found on grocery store shelves is laced with preservatives





Eating Out Versus Cooking

Americans are spending more eating out than grocery shopping
Seasonally adjusted monthly retail trade and food services:



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Graphic: Tribune News Service

and chemicals—even if the companies that produce them claim they are not harmful.

The news of deceptive practices by food-science corporations can be maddening. Perhaps you have felt the urge to shun the “food” these businesses produce altogether, move to a rural area to farm pasture-raised animals, and grow your own gardens. Yet, as it is for almost all, this is simply impossible in our modern world.

Similarly, it is impractical for many to stay completely away from wholly or partially processed foods. There *will* be

processes by which the raw stuff of nature gets transformed into a cooked meal is changing our understanding of what food is. Indeed, the idea that food has any connection to nature or human work or imagination is hard to credit when it arrives in a neat package, fully formed. Food becomes just another commodity, an abstraction. And as soon as that happens we become easy prey for corporations selling synthetic versions of the real thing—what I call edible foodlike substances. We end up trying to nourish ourselves on images.”

the occasional night when “pizza happens,” as one mother put it, because of the busy lifestyles we lead.

So we have to do our best.

But home-cooked meals do have their place. Making them not only fosters good health, but it also gives us a deeper understanding of the natural world *and* our place in it.

Why Cook?

Everyone knows that eating processed food all the time is unhealthy. As the saying goes, if you eat junk, you will feel like junk. But why the connection between processed foods and “junk”?

In his book *Cooked: A History of Transformation*, author Michael Pollan explores cooking through four classical elements: fire, water, air and earth. Throughout the text, he compares current culinary trends to those of the past. He makes the case that modern preparation leads to numerous health problems and shapes the view of food for people worldwide.

“Our growing distance from any direct, physical engagement with the

Mr. Pollan maintains that people who eat unprocessed foods have a better connection to the environment, which benefits society as a whole.

“Corporations cook very differently from how people do (which is why we usually call what they do ‘food processing’ instead of cooking). They tend to use much more sugar, fat and salt than people cooking for people do; they also deploy novel chemical ingredients seldom found in pantries in order to make their food last longer and look fresher than it really is. So it will come as no surprise that the decline in home cooking closely tracks the rise in obesity and all the chronic diseases linked to diet. The rise of fast food and the decline in home cooking have also undermined the institution of the shared meal, by encouraging us to eat different things and to eat them on the run and often alone.”

He continues: “The shared meal is no small thing. It is a foundation of family life, the place where our children learn the art of conversation and acquire the habits of civilization: sharing, listening, taking turns, navigating differences, arguing without offending. What have been called the ‘cultural contradictions of capitalism’—its tendency to undermine the stabilizing social forms it depends on—are on vivid display today at the modern American dinner table, along with all the brightly colored packages that the food industry has managed to plant there.”

Bread is an example of a food that has become so manipulated by companies trying to “make it better” that it now provides very few of the health benefits it once did.

A main reason for this is a desire for companies to get the most bang for their buck where production is concerned.

Realize that bread used to be made naturally by one of the thousands of varieties of natural yeasts in the air. Now it usually contains patented dry yeast, which strips out much of what makes it good for human consumption.

“Most people don’t know that grocery store yeast is not a naturally occur-

ring substance,” Caleb Warnock and Melissa Richardson wrote in the book *The Art of Baking with Natural Yeast: Breads, Pancakes, Waffles, Cinnamon Rolls and Muffins*. “Since 1984, the vast majority of yeast has been man-made and laboratory created.”

They continue: “Commercial ‘instant’ yeast was created to be fast, and is called quick or fast-rise yeast. In fact, the quick yeast produced for store-bought brands is so foreign to our digestive systems that some people develop allergies to the yeast itself. Sure, it frees up the schedule a bit. But when you consider that every culture across the globe has been using the same system for thousands of years, you have to wonder whether throwing that tried and true system out the window is considered progress.”

According to the authors, bread made with *natural* yeast “converts dough into a digestible food source that will not spike your body’s defenses. It predigests sugar for diabetics, breaks down gluten for the intolerant, and turns calcium-leaching phytic acid into a cancer-fighting antioxidant.”

This is very different from what the fortified breads made with “natural ingredients” sitting on the majority of grocery store shelves actually do!

How did it come to be this way?

Turn for the Worse

Following World War II, industries that had helped supply food to the troops needed to find a new consumer base to keep their operations booming.

Their answer? Busy housewives.

“Beginning after World War II, the industry put a lot of effort into selling Americans on the processed food wonders that it had invented to feed the troops,” Mr. Pollan said in a documentary based on his book. “Canned meals, freeze-dried foods, dehydrated potatoes, powdered orange juice and coffee, instant and super convenient everything. Processing food is extremely profitable, much more so than growing it or selling it whole.”

In the documentary, food historian Laura Shapiro said the goal was not only to convince women (many of whom were starting to move into

Where to Start

While many find cooking daunting, it is not as difficult as it seems. It just takes a little practice and perseverance.

While there is not space here to address every cooking technique, the best place to start is by trying to make a dish that you particularly enjoy. This can range from something as simple as mashed potatoes to even pizza or chicken with wild rice.

To ensure that the recipe will not be too complicated, search the internet for a particular food and add the word “simple” next to it. Often, this will yield recipes that have 10 ingredients or less, and do not take as long.

If you feel uncertain about making an entire meal from scratch, start out by making parts of it that way. For example, start with a salad. First chop the vegetables and then mix olive oil with balsamic vinegar and a sprinkle of basil, salt and pepper—it is that easy!

As you become more comfortable, you can try other things. If you are making noodles with vegetables, saute the chopped vegetables in olive oil, but buy a sauce with no added sweeteners or preservatives. Then slowly build up to making the sauce yourself once you have mastered the first form of the dish.



While shopping, ensure the ingredients you purchase are the highest quality that you can afford. Try to use organic or buy from local farmers markets if possible.

Most of all, never tell yourself you cannot learn to cook! This is the way many food corporations want you to feel. “Let us do the work,” they say. “You can spend your time elsewhere.”

“For the food industry, people cooking traditional food at home is an obstacle to selling more of their product,” Mr. Pollan stated in the documentary *Cooked*. “They have a vested interest in destroying food culture and food traditions and getting people to eat stuff they have gotten good at making. And they’re doing a lot of food science to make this food as acceptable as they possibly can.”

Those who have learned to cook will tell you that, while not always easy, it *does* pay dividends. All it requires is an adventurous spirit—and a desire to invest in your health. □

the workforce at that time) that the company could cook better and faster than them for their families, but that their products would make their lives simpler.

At the same time, scientists also began experimenting with how to “fix food” and fortify it with extra nutrients. Notably, it was also at this time that obesity rates and incidences of diseases, such as cancer, began to skyrocket.

Author Melanie Warner echoed this sentiment in *Pandora’s Lunchbox: How Processed Food Took Over the American Meal*: “The trouble with this wholesale

remaking of the American meal is that our human biology is ill equipped to handle it...Our many novel and high-tech innovations of food destroy much of its essential geography, resulting in all sorts of unintended consequences. When we start taking food apart and industrially processing it, it often stops making biological sense.”

Case in point: Scientists recently discovered that emulsifiers, additives used to extend a product’s shelf-life and improve its texture, have been linked to a rise in colon cancer—the fourth leading cancer killer in the United States.

Emulsifiers are used in everything from ice cream to hamburgers.

“Researchers at Georgia State University say they found that regular consumption of emulsifiers by mice altered intestinal bacteria in a way that contributed to tumor development,” Consumer Affairs reported.

This is just one of many studies that have come out recently linking modified “edible foodlike substances” to incidences of cancer, heart disease, and obesity.

Even more shocking is that some nutritionists have actually advised certain tribal peoples whose incidences of diabetes, cancer and heart disease had increased to return to their original lifestyles.

In the documentary featuring Mr. Pollan, he cites a study by a nutritionist in the 1980s in which a group of aborigines, who were diabetic and suffered from high blood pressure, were advised to return to their way of eating (which consisted of mostly wild iguanas) and leave behind the fast food Western diet to which they had become accustomed. Within six weeks, they had lost an average of 15 pounds per person, and their blood pressure and blood sugar returned to a normal range.

Consider what is being said: eating lizards (an animal deemed unfit for human consumption by the Bible in Leviticus 11:29-30) was a healthier option than our modern Western diet, which many consider so much more advanced!

It seems messing with nature does not pay when it comes to human health, no matter the justification.

Beyond Health

With all the studies in our heads and our son in tow, we decided to try making as much of his baby food from scratch as we could. We went to local farmers markets to buy the freshest produce we could and took him to see a farm that raises sheep so he could see the animals in their natural environment.

Even though he is only 10 months old, he gets excited when he watches us cut up fresh vegetables and fruits, and grind them in the blender

to make them more digestible for him. Surprisingly, he seems to understand that dinner is near.

Health-wise, he has also responded better when he eats food made from scratch.

We recently went on a vacation during which it was necessary to use some packaged foods throughout parts of the trip. He ended up with the sniffles for the first time in his life! By the end of the visit, he was not interested in eating the occasional processed package of fruit we set in front of him. He seemed relieved once we returned home and he could once again enjoy home cooking.

Eating well, however, is not just about fostering better health. Cooking at home has numerous other benefits that extend past the kitchen. It also plays a role in the development of children and has the effect of building up the family.

We have seen this with our son. It is exciting to think of being able to help him understand the benefits of cooking and preparing food from scratch. As a couple, we often cook together and the result is always more satisfying than when one of us does all the work. Eating that meal feels like more of an accomplishment and a labor of love than a chore. We both know we are working toward keeping ourselves—and our child—healthier in the long run.

“Over the past 15 years researchers have confirmed what parents have known for a long time: sharing a family meal is good for the spirit, the brain and the health of all family members,” the Family Dinner Project, a non-profit organization committed to restoring the concept of families eating dinner together, reported.

“Recent studies link regular family dinners with many behaviors that parents pray for: lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression, as well as higher grade-point averages and self-esteem. Studies also indicate that dinner conversation is a more potent vocabulary-booster than reading, and the stories told around the kitchen table help our children build resilience. The icing on the cake is that regular family meals also lower the rates of obesity and eating disorders in children

and adolescents. What else can families do that takes only about an hour a day and packs such a punch?”

Wonderful Reminder

Using ingredients derived straight from the ground has the added benefit of making you think about the actual source of food. It is not the same as pulling frozen chicken fingers—prepackaged and ready to eat—from the freezer or popping open a can of soup and dumping it into a dish.

When we buy our carrots at our local farmers market, the skin needs to be scrubbed well before it can be used in a particular dish due to the dirt that is still on it. This is a simple reminder that this veggie comes from the ground. The simple act of washing veggies reminds us of man’s intrinsic connection to the soil.

Cooking from scratch makes us think of our own humanity—and how we came to be. It brings to mind the Genesis account in the Bible in which God created man: “And the LORD God formed man *of the dust of the ground*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:6).

So man was formed from “the dust of the ground,” and this is where our food comes from.

Cooking at home teaches us about the greatness of God’s Creation and our place in it. By working with things directly from the natural world, we can better understand God’s purpose behind what we were always supposed to eat.

The Acts 17 account of the apostle Paul preaching in Athens at Mars’ hill explains that God is the ultimate source of all things—plants and animals—that give and sustain life.

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. *God that made the world and all things therein*, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; nei-

ther is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing *He gives to all life, and breath, and all things*" (vs. 22-25).

"All things" means just that—all things—including the variety of plants and animals for food that sustain us every day.

These plants and animals had to be put in place by *someone* and for a specific purpose. God wants us to know, through His Word, that He created and ordered the universe for us to be able to live an abundant life (John 10:10).

Contrary to what evolutionists believe, many proofs show the world around us could only have been created by an all-wise Creator God. (Those who wish to see evidence proving God's existence are urged to watch *The World to Come* series titled "Does God Exist?—Many *Absolute Proofs!*" You will be amazed by what you learn.)

One of the fascinating ways we can see God's fingerprints on His Creation is through a concept many of us learned in grade school. Plants grow by converting energy produced by the sun into nourishment, a pro-

cess called *photosynthesis*. Along with nutrients from the soil, energy is then stored by the plants and, once eaten by humans, gives us energy to live and breathe. Energy provided by the sun and soil allows for man's very existence! This simple element within the cycle of life could only have been designed "from the ground up" by a Creator.

More Evidence

Thousands of years ago, King David mused on the importance of recognizing and appreciating God's Creation. In Psalm 143:5 he stated: "I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands."

Go back to the Genesis account. It states that God created all life on Earth—plant, animal and human. He created sea creatures, birds and land animals *after their kind* (1:20-25). It also records that "*God created man in His own image*, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (vs. 27).

Read that again, "God created man in His own image." The simple act of preparing a home-cooked meal reminds

us that we came from the dust of the ground—but it should also be a reminder that we were created in God's image.

But why?

The answer relates directly to the purpose for human life and why God created man in the first place. Read *The Awesome Potential of Man*, available at rcg.org/tapom, to learn the full answer. The eye-opening book uses plain language and irrefutable verses from the Bible. You can know why you were born!

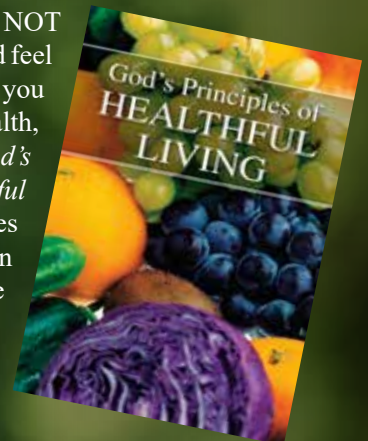
Reconnecting with nature by cooking goes far beyond just staying healthy. It helps you to remember God's Creation, why you were created, and ultimately, what your future holds.

How thankful are you for all that God has provided, including the many sights, sounds and tastes of His Creation? Strive to never forget God by focusing more and more on the food that *He* directly created, as opposed to the many "foodlike" substances created by man.

Experience the joy and satisfaction of preparing and eating meals at home—and never forget who made the variety of plants and animals you consume! □

Are You Happy with Your Health?

The human body was NOT designed to become ill and feel run-down! To learn how you can experience good health, request the booklet *God's Principles of Healthful Living*. It details guidelines from the Bible that, when applied, can reinvigorate your health! Order your free copy today at rcg.org/glohl.



AMERICA

Continued from page 7

of God...” (1 Pet. 2:13-15). Verse 17 of the same chapter summarizes: “Honor all men...Fear God. Honor the king.”

Realize that around the time Peter made these statements, the leader of Rome was Nero—an emperor with a brutal legacy of killing Christians.

Peter told those in the Church to honor Nero, so long as it did not contradict God’s Law. These conditions are a far cry from the unparalleled personal freedoms Americans experience today.

While Peter’s instruction may seem counterintuitive, it is necessary to help establish order. If this is true for “the king,” how much more those holding lower seats of power—a president, governor or congressman?

Honoring the king does not mean condoning everything the government does. Rather, it is a way to show respect for those in authority—something God clearly desires.

Notice that the instruction to give deference to those in authority is paired with another command: “Fear God.” Deuteronomy 6:2 ties fearing God to obedience: “That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you...”

Ecclesiastes 12:13 confirms this: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Obedying God leads to promised blessings, one of which will allow you to cut through the uncertainty of America’s future.

God calls those obedient to Him servants. Servants receive a reward for their work. Employers offer their employees wages, while housemaids are often provided food, housing and other benefits by those who hire them.

Yet God promises a reward that no man can provide to those who serve Him: an understanding of the future. Notice Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He reveals

His secret unto His servants...” Also read the beginning of Revelation: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to *show unto His servants* things which must shortly come to pass...” (1:1).

The Bible declares that God will do *nothing* unless He first reveals it to His servants. This means He must have a clear way to reveal what future years will bring.

He does this through Bible prophecy.

God’s Plan

World leaders have long felt that God has been working out a purpose on Earth. UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated during an address to Congress: “...some great purpose and design is being worked out here below of which we have the honor to be the faithful servants.”

Churchill, however, did not know what exactly that purpose was. He stated, “It is not given to us to peer into the mysteries of the future.”

How does this common idea that we cannot know harmonize with what you just read in Amos and Revelation? The answer: THEY DO NOT!

God *wants* everyone to know what future years will bring—and His ultimate purpose for mankind. This is even true for the greatest nations of all time, including America.

Most Bible readers skip over the prophetic books of God’s Word. Without guidance, the likes of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Revelation are difficult to understand. This is not helped given the cacophony of personal interpretations of these texts.

Yet God outlines basic principles on how to understand His Word. These tools—and how to apply them to the future of the U.S.—are all explained in *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

The introduction to the book states: “When related Bible passages are placed together in clear and concise form—the Bible is a jigsaw puzzle, and it must be permitted to interpret itself—the prophecies about America and Britain (and certain other Western countries) are not difficult to understand. In fact, you will wonder why so few have been able to comprehend them.

“God has left a PLAIN MESSAGE in His Word—a clear path—for those *willing* to read and understand, and willing to accept blunt warnings, impossible to misunderstand. If this is you, it is necessary to read the whole book, through the final chapter.

“May God help you comprehend all you are about to learn!”

Read the rest of *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp. You need not remain hopeless, frustrated or uncertain about all that is to come! □



■ **GOING FORWARD:** House Speaker Paul Ryan shows Mr. Trump and his wife Melania the view from the Capitol (Nov. 10, 2016).

PHOTO: ZACH GIBSON/GETTY IMAGES

TRUE JESUS

Continued from page 15

Because of sin, of lawlessness, humanity is already separated from God. Death is the ultimate state of being cut off from our Maker. This is twice reiterated in the Old Testament: “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20).

There are two ways to satisfy the wages of breaking the laws of God:

(A) One can die for his own sins and thus pay the penalty. But there is the obvious problem: Once a sinner is dead, he *stays* dead.

(B) Another living being can die in that person’s stead. However, the rest of Ezekiel 18:20 shows that a human being cannot pay for the sins of others; each person can only pay for his or her own transgressions.

It takes the death of a supreme, innocent, eternal God-being to satisfy the penalty for the sins of all human beings—past, present and future.

Humanity needed a Savior!

Christ’s Pre-existence

Read the full context of what the apostle John wrote: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). Two divine Beings, both called God.

In Genesis 1:26, it was God—*Elohim*, a uniplural term in the original Hebrew, indicating more than one were present—who said, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness.” So few seem to notice the three plural pronouns.

Through the Word, “All things were made...and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3)—“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

The Word voluntarily decided to be born of a woman, to become God in

the flesh. Because He was the Supreme Creator, His divine life far out-valued His creation. And because He was physical—subject to pulls of the flesh—He was capable of committing sin. Yet if He never strayed, never broke God’s laws, as a God-Being in the flesh, He could offer His sinless, innocent life as the ultimate and perfect sacrifice.

Man would have a Savior.

Incomplete Emphasis

But human beings, who love to go to extremes, focus almost exclusively on Jesus’ role as Savior—and ignore that He was born to be a king! False religious leaders, whether knowingly or unknowingly, assert that Christ’s role as Savior is the “climax of the plan of God for humanity.”

This is not the climax—it is the beginning of God’s Plan and purpose for mankind. A Divine Savior is necessary for sins to be forgiven, for people’s lives to be wiped clean, no longer under the penalty of death. Yet religionists and theologians leap to the conclusion that “the forgiveness of sin will solve man’s problems.” The trends, problems, troubles and ills saturated throughout man’s governments and societies will not suddenly disappear if everyone simply said, “I accept Jesus as my Savior,” and asked God to forgive their sins.

Something else must take place, and Christ set the pattern to follow: One must conform to the laws and ways of the Kingdom of God. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He was sent to qualify to replace Satan as world ruler. After His arrival to Earth the second time, Christ will establish God’s government on the Earth to rule all nations.

During His First Coming, Jesus represented God’s Kingdom and instructed all whom His Father would call (John 6:44). He taught them how to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16; II Thes. 1:8; I Pet. 4:17)—to come out of the world’s ways and become ambassadors of God’s government of peace, following Christ’s command

to, “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

Before Christ was conceived, Gabriel told Mary that God would give her Son “the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

At the end of His ministry, Jesus said before Pilate, “My kingdom [government] is not of this world” (John 18:36). When asked by Pilate if He were a king, Christ responded, “You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause [reason] came I into the world” (vs. 37).

This was foretold in the book of Isaiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (9:6-7).

For this reason, Herod and “all Jerusalem with him” were troubled. They feared losing their positions of civil and religious leadership that Rome permitted them to enjoy. They were also fearful of how the Roman Empire would react to the appearance of a “rival king” claiming rulership over Judea. Yet these carnal minds did not understand that Christ would not set up His Kingdom from Jerusalem in their lifetimes.

Jesus Christ was born into humble circumstances, yet His life and ministry laid the groundwork for man’s incredible future and potential!

To continue learning the complete, TRUE story of Jesus Christ—His earthly upbringing, His message about the Kingdom of God, and so much more—request the comprehensive book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity* at rcg.org/ttjc. □

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. Fears Strained Relationship with Philippines

American diplomats and Pentagon officials raised concerns over Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's threats of cutting military and diplomatic ties. "I want, maybe in the next two years, my country free of the presence of foreign military troops," Mr. Duterte stated, according to *Reuters*. This comes despite the Philippine military's continued reliance on U.S. military forces.

President Duterte "has the executive power to abrogate the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, a 10-year deal signed in 2014, which allowed the United States to deploy conventional forces in the Philippines for the first time in decades, rotating through five bases," *The Washington Post* reported. "The deal was heralded as a key element of Obama's strategic rebalance to Asia."

The Pentagon considers the Philippines, one of America's oldest allies in Asia, a strategic location to counterbalance Chinese expansion in the South China Sea. Removing U.S. forces from the area could result in Chinese expansion. In addition, the Philippines leader declared an interest in building ties with China,



■ **MILITARY TIES:** United States Marines and Philippine armed forces engage in a joint military exercise in Capas, Philippines (Oct. 10, 2016).

PHOTO: TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

further straining the seven-decade alliance between America and the Philippines.

Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, stated: "...the succession of

controversial statements, comments and a real climate of uncertainty about the Philippines' intentions has created consternation in a number of countries, not only in mine, and not only among governments." □

HEALTH ISSUES

Use of Dating Apps Linked to Rise in STDs in UK

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV reported that the use of dating applications has led to increasing rates of syphilis and gonorrhea.

Dating apps such as Tinder and Happn have gained widespread popularity in the United Kingdom in recent years. These are designed to help their users find everything from long-term romantic relationships to casual sexual encounters. According to the Online Dating Association, between 25 to 40 percent of current relationships in the UK are developed through such apps.

This has coincided with the rise in STDs. Public Health England recorded that the number syphilis cases rose 33 percent and gonorrhea increased 19 percent in 2014 over 2013.

According to the *BBC*, the head of Happn—one of the UK's most popular dating apps—believes that dating "apps are following wider social trends and changing behaviors that have been unfolding for decades." She purports that "a liberalization of attitudes towards the number of partners, the status of rela-

tionships, towards marriage, divorce, etc." is the underlying cause of the problem.

A similar trend is occurring in the United States, where, based on federal data, cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis all hit record highs in 2015. Some U.S. healthcare experts contend that this is largely driven by online dating apps, as they "lead to more casual sex among people 25 and younger, who are the most likely to be infected and also the least inclined to seek testing," the *Los Angeles Times* reported. □

Holiday Shoppers Expected to Spend Record Amount

In the United States, the average holiday shopper is projected to spend an all-time high of \$936, the National Retail Federation estimated. This figure stood over \$100 more than the amount consumers were projected to pay in 2015.

Many shoppers battle debt in the aftermath of holiday shopping. According to a 2014 post-Christmas survey by Magnify Money, 28 percent of Americans said their debt would require more than five months to pay off. Another 27 percent of Americans stated they could only afford minimum payments on their holiday debt, and that it would require up to 10 years to pay off.

Last year, the credit reporting agency Experian Consumer Services found that 41 percent of consumers “felt obligated to spend more than they could afford” during the holiday season.

“Our parents viewed debt as a shame and accumulating a nest egg as the right thing to do,” Robert Manning, a senior research fellow at the University of Houston, stated. “The young see that as ‘old school’ and have been convinced that going into debt is fine.”

The consequence, Mr. Manning stated, “will hurt, in mounting debt and higher interest rates and higher fees.” □

RELIGION

Vatican Reports Surge in Exorcisms Worldwide



The Catholic Church reported a meteoric uptick in the number of demonic possessions its priests are encountering. To tackle the surge, the Vatican is offering what it calls “a week-long course on how to perform exorcisms, expounding on the nature of angels and demons,” *News Target* reported. The course has attracted over 1,000 students and claims to educate them on the difference between genuine demonic possession and psychological disorder.

Symptoms of possession, according to the guidelines of the course, include: speaking in languages the person was not previously familiar with, moving objects with the mind, and dramatic mood shifts that cannot be attributed to psychological causes.

The Real Truth looks at such activity through a biblical lens. While this publication does not endorse the views of professing Christianity, it is clear that spiritism is on the rise.

To find out the trends, history and true reasons from the Bible regarding the rise of demonic activity, read *The Real Truth* article “Demystifying the Spirit Realm” at realtruth.org. □



■ **MAD DASH:** Shoppers purchase items at an electronics retailer during Black Friday in San Diego, California (Nov. 26, 2015).

PHOTO: SANDY HUFFAKER/GETTY IMAGES



How This Magazine Is FREE

The Real Truth is made possible by the voluntary contributions of The Restored Church of God members, co-workers and donors from around the world. The readership of this one-of-a-kind publication recognizes and understands the importance of restoring plain understanding and explaining why man cannot solve the growing problems that plague him—all while pointing to the only real solution, now just over the horizon.

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