

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



Will **BREXIT** Tarnish the US-UK Special Relationship?

**Twin Disasters
Strike Indonesia**

Five Issues that Will Decide
the 2018 Midterm Elections

**100 Years After WWI: How the “War
to End War” Never Really Ended**

Cracks in the
Christmas Legacy

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VOL. XVI | NO. 6 | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

A R T I C L E S

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■ Residents and rescuers walk in front of a washed out passenger ferry in Wani, Indonesia, following an earthquake and tsunami (Oct. 7, 2018).

PHOTO: MOHD RASFAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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FRONT COVER: British Prime Minister Theresa May walks with U.S. President Donald Trump in Aylesbury, England (July 13, 2018).

PHOTO: JACK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Articles on pages 6-8, 26, 30-31 contain information from The Associated Press.

HOW THIS MAGAZINE IS PAID FOR:
The Real Truth[™] is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of The Restored Church of God[®], and by the offerings and donations of co-workers and donors around the world. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax deductible in the U.S. and Canada. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support the Work of God in preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations are gladly welcomed as co-workers. Contributions may be sent to the following address:

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The preparation and production of this magazine involved the work of editors, proofreaders, graphic artists, illustrators, writers, researchers and those who support the Work of God.

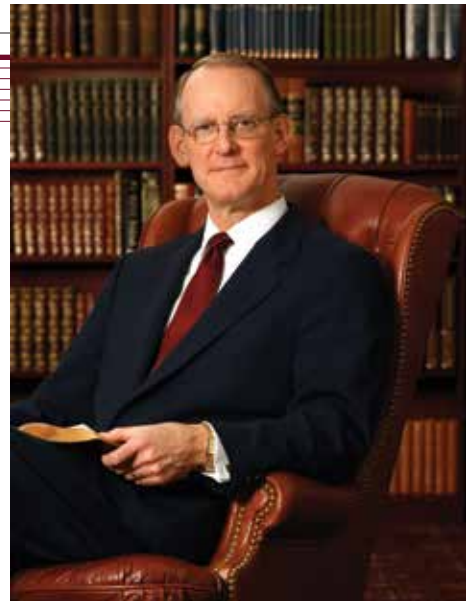
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



How God's Kingdom Will Come

CONSIDER TODAY'S world! Advances in technology and industry have never been greater. What was once *science fiction* is now *everyday reality*. Material prosperity abounds for millions of people across the Western world. But what about the half of mankind—billions!—who have little or nothing? And what about mankind's rapid decline in values, morals and CHARACTER—once believed to be the most vital underpinnings of any society? Is the human race *equipped*, and are its leaders collectively *willing*, to solve the greatest challenges of civilization—or must a greater unseen power intervene?

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your Kingdom come!” The next thing He instructed was directly related: “*Your will* be done on earth as it is in heaven.” A loving God must SOON send His Kingdom to END man's failed experiment or there will be no world to receive it!

Christ, at His First Coming, came as a first-century NEWSCASTER, bringing advance GOOD NEWS of staggering events to occur just beyond the horizon, and all the *bad news* occurring throughout today's world. This climactic

news involves you—and eventually every human being on Earth!

The word gospel is an old English word meaning “god spell” or *good news*. The word *kingdom* is also an Old English term, simply meaning “government.” Therefore, it is accurate to say that Christ preached “the good news of the government of God.”

The Kingdom of God is the dominant theme of not only the New Testament, but of the whole Bible. Yet, incredibly, most know little or nothing of it. This world's ministers are oblivious to this gospel, and never preach about it. Therefore, virtually the whole world stands in complete ignorance of the single greatest truth in God's Word!

Jesus Christ's Return—His “Second Coming”—is central to Christianity. Billions are waiting for it. Scoffers deny it. But those who know anything of God's Word know Jesus *is* returning. Every indicator suggests His Coming cannot be far away. The Bible speaks extensively about *how* Jesus will establish the Kingdom of God, sometimes called the Kingdom of Heaven. Few things could be more important. Jesus Himself plainly described *how* God's Kingdom will begin—and it is *not* what you have learned. This Personal contains knowledge *never before explained!* And it represents only a tiny fraction of

all the biblical proof throughout the Old and New Testaments of how the Kingdom of God will arrive in a manner *no one* is hearing about!

God's Kingdom will bring His marvelous way of life to those living in it, which will one day include the whole world. But not at first...

Multiple "Comings"

The universally held belief is that Jesus Christ will return to Earth *in Jerusalem*, and this will follow three-and-a-half years of *Great Tribulation*—involving the *seven seals* of Revelation. Vast numbers of mankind will die. He will then immediately establish a world supergovernment. THE BIBLE SAYS NONE OF THIS! While all of these things *will* happen in their time, and will in every way be worse than anyone imagines, God's Word is most plain that Christ's Return will come in an *entirely different manner* than what ANYBODY is looking for!

Let's ask a surprising question, one that no one seems to consider. How many comings of Jesus does the Bible describe? Contrasting verses hold the surprising answer. The prophet Haggai wrote of Jesus' Return: "Thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake *all nations*, and the *Desire of all nations* [long understood to be Jesus Christ] *shall come...*" (2:6-7). Vast numbers today *are* looking for and desiring Christ's coming. While most understand little about His arrival, the Christian masses do *desire* it, with greater reason every day to hope for it more than the day before because of worldwide character breakdown!

Here's the problem—and it's big! The book of Revelation speaks of a very different reaction to Jesus' appearance: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our LORD, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever...the nations were *angry*, and Your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged...and [You] should destroy them which destroy the earth"

(11:15, 18). A picture of angry nations is incompatible with Haggai.

These passages cannot refer to the same time!

Lacking knowledge of Christ's *multiple* comings, many assert He comes and immediately vanquishes all enemies, establishing His Kingdom. Revelation appears to say this, but consider I Corinthians 15:25, which shows something entirely different, saying Christ "must reign, *till* He has put all enemies under His feet." Those who would suggest He arrives, reigns for a split second, then annihilates all enemies are simply ignoring this verse, with many others.

Understand. The start of God's Kingdom has *nothing* to do with the false Protestant belief that Christ secretly "raptures" His servants to heaven. *Nowhere* does God's Word say Jesus takes Christians back to heaven with Him. (Many verses prove this.) You will see plain passages showing He establishes God's Kingdom *on Earth*, using servants that are *here*. This will become clear.

The establishment of the Kingdom of God is our focus. No true Christian doubts *that* Christ is coming. But no one is explaining *how* He will come—*when* He is coming (under what conditions)—*where* He will arrive—*why* He must come—and *how* He will ultimately set up His Kingdom. They simply do not know.

Mustard Seed Kingdom

Everyone knows Jesus spoke often in parables. In Matthew 13 alone, He presented *seven*—most very short. Each illustrates aspects of the Kingdom, collectively painting a full picture. The place to start is verse 31: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a *grain of mustard seed*, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the *least of all seeds*: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (vs. 31-32). The mustard seeds Jesus' audience was familiar with were extremely small—very hard to see. This is why He called them the "*least* [meaning *small*

in size] of all seeds." God's Kingdom is akin to *microscopic* when it arrives! No one focuses on this. It *eventually* grows into a WORLD GOVERNMENT, becoming the "greatest among herbs"—a "tree"—but it does not *start* that way. This parable is never mentioned because nobody truly understands it.

So there could be no doubt of the Kingdom's small beginning, the next parable confirms this: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and *hid* in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (vs. 33). The Greek word "hid" is *egkrupto*, meaning *concealed in*. Think of the modern equivalent—*encrypted*. Jesus says—literally—He is bringing an ENCRYPTED KINGDOM. It is initially hidden but it *expands* because leaven always spreads.

Jesus underscores this in a *third* parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure *hid* in a field; the which when a man has *found*, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field" (vs. 44). "Hid" here comes from *krupto*, meaning "to conceal by *covering*." Christ's message is again made clear: God's Kingdom starts tiny, hidden—and covered. One must go and *find* it!

Yet another parable confirms this: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls" (vs. 45). Rare and precious, naturally occurring pearls are hard to find. "Who, when he had *found* one pearl of great price [it was hidden and he had to look for it], went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (vs. 45-46). Besides reinforcing the mustard seed and leaven parables, the hid treasure and pearl parables also add focus to the *value* of entering the Kingdom.

Before looking at the three remaining parables of Matthew 13, realize that every kingdom on Earth today has *four necessary components*: (1) Land, property or territory—however large or small. There must be clear boundaries establishing the size of the kingdom. (2) A ruler or king leading the government. (3) People—subjects—living within the

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Should You Celebrate Thanksgiving?

For many in North America, the yearly celebration of giving thanks is reduced to gorging on a big meal, excessive drinking, or snoozing in front of a football game. For others, Black Friday—a day of frenzied shopping to capture the best market deals of the year—overshadows the holiday altogether.

Given all of the media hype, excess and sensational commercialism surrounding it, the original meaning of Thanksgiving can

easily be lost for Americans and Canadians. Yet citizens of these prosperous nations should have every reason to keep the day as it was intended.

Although the national holiday was not instituted in the Bible, the scriptures have much to say about thankfulness. The article “Should You Celebrate Thanksgiving Day?” provides historical and biblical insight into this holiday that can help you better appreciate everything that you have.

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Will

BR

Tarnish the US-UK Special Relationship?

The United Kingdom's official exit from the European Union is less than six months away. How it will affect bonds between Washington and London remains to be seen.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

BEFORE THE Brexit vote on June 23, 2016, United States President Barack Obama offered his thoughts on whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. Soon after a slim majority of Britons voted to leave the power bloc, then-candidate Donald Trump stated his view.

Unsurprisingly, their opinions were polar opposites.

Mr. Obama wrote in *The Telegraph* that Britons should vote Remain, stating

that the EU “magnifies” the nation’s influence. At another time, he stated that leaving the union would put the UK “at the back of the queue” for trade negotiations.

In July of the year, Mr. Trump praised Brexit, stating that the vote “took their country back” and called the move “brave and brilliant.”

Despite contrasting opinions, both men have praised the long-held “special relationship” between America and Britain.

It is easy for American leaders to weigh in on the thorny issue of Britain’s divorce from the European

Union. The fierce debate is an ocean away from Washington and can seem to have minimal impact on the average U.S. citizen.

With the Brexit deadline looming—the official date for the UK to leave the union is March 29, 2019—all eyes are on whether Britain and the EU can strike a deal. This tunnel-vision view on whether the two parties can pen an agreement means the wider effects of the divorce go underreported.

Yet what effect will Brexit have on the United States? More specifically, could it strain the U.S.-UK special relationship?

■ British Prime Minister Theresa May walks with U.S. President Donald Trump in Aylesbury, England (July 13, 2018).

PHOTO: JACK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES

EXIT

Messy Divorce

Before discussing how Brexit will affect America, it helps to understand how difficult the negotiations are.

Everything in politics can be labeled “complicated.” Yet those involved in the Brexit negotiations know this label is a gargantuan understatement. Britain’s divorce from the European Union has been a disastrously messy process since day one.

There is what Britain wants: a *better* deal than it currently has with the EU.

There is what Europe wants: a *worse* deal for the UK than it currently enjoys.

Immovable object, meet irresistible force.

At its core, this is the rub. British Brexiteers asserted that leaving the EU would be good for the nation. UK politicians are pushing to deliver on this promise to remain in power.

The last thing Brussels wants, however, is to allow the UK to leave with a bevy of perks EU nations cannot have. Such a move would send the wrong message to any nation thinking of canceling its EU membership. Europe’s leaders want to preserve the union. With this thinking, Britain must accept the negative penalties of leaving.

This whole scenario—one wanting a worse deal and the other a better—is complicated. Yet it drastically oversimplifies the Brexit negotiations.

What does Britain *really* want? According to recent polls, over half of the nation now wants to remain in

the European Union. Of the half that does want to leave, the answers are all over the map. One extreme is a slightly modified version of staying in the EU, the other is a hard Brexit where the UK leaves with no plan in place.

Even within Prime Minister Theresa May’s Conservative Party, disagreement abounds. The governing party is deeply divided over the country’s impending departure from the EU, with pro- and anti-EU camps both criticizing the prime minister’s negotiations with the bloc.

What does the EU *really* want? Again, disagreement abounds. The 27 other nations in the European Union each have different economic and diplomatic relationships with the UK. Germany, for example, is most concerned with trade—wanting to ensure easy imports and exports after Brexit. Eastern Europe, however, does not care as much about the flow of goods. Half of the UK’s immigrants come from these nations, which means they want to preserve the freedom of travel to and from Britain. These former Soviet states also value the UK’s ability to take a tough stance against Russia—as it has the military might to do so and does not use Russian natural gas.

Even if an agreement is reached by the negotiators, then comes ratification. The European Council and European Parliament must both approve. And any individual EU nation may decide to put it to a public vote. Similar for Britain. The agreement must pass through Parliament with potential additions and amendments.

Unless an extension is agreed upon, all of this must happen before the end of March.

Unintended Consequences?

When the U.S. is brought into the sphere of Brexit negotiations, the first issue usually brought up is trade.

Many Brexiteers hope to negotiate free trade with the U.S. once Britain is out of the union.

An opinion piece in *The Times of London* made this case: “With six months and counting before the UK-EU divorce becomes official, Britons understandably are frustrated by the absence of post-Brexit clarity. Genuine concern, lingering misgivings about the referendum, and a series of government missteps have invited justified criticism, but also heaps of hyperbole and fear-mongering from politicians and opinion leaders across the ideological spectrum.”

The author attempted to cut through the pessimism: “The US and UK are natural candidates for a state-of-the-art, comprehensive trade agreement. British and US companies account for nearly \$1.3 trillion of direct investment and employ 2.6 million workers in each other’s economies.”

True enough, a free trade agreement would be hugely beneficial to both parties.

Such an agreement may never happen, however, because the UK also wants to preserve trade with Europe. Currently, Brussels wants London to remain in its customs union and be accountable to the European Court of Justice. Remaining in the customs union (or a modified form of it) would mean Britain could not negotiate trade deals with other nations such as the U.S.

Also, while American investors currently use British companies as a gateway to free trade with the EU,

Please see BREXIT, page 27

TWIN DISASTERS *strike* INDONESIA



■ A boy stands in front of a stranded ship in Donggala after a deadly tsunami struck Indonesia (Oct. 2, 2018).

PHOTO: ULET IFANSASTI/GETTY IMAGES



SHE LAY INSIDE a medical tent in the stifling midday heat, wincing in pain at the gashes and cuts that cover her body. But all Anisa Cornelia could think about was the love of her life—the man she was supposed to marry in the coming days.

She had not seen him since a tsunami smashed into an Indonesian island, separating the pair possibly forever as they strolled along a sandy beach at twilight.

“Where is my fiance? Please, do you have any news?” the badly bruised 22-year-old pleaded as medical staff came to check on her in the courtyard of the main hospital in the coastal city of Palu.

“Everyone is still searching for him,” replied Dr. Andi Sengrengrele, pursing her lips in sympathy. “You have to be patient, OK?”

■ Top, a search and rescue team uses heavy equipment to recover bodies from the debris in Petobo (Oct. 8, 2018). Bottom, people carry their belongings through a damaged area in Palu (Oct. 5, 2018).

PHOTOS: MOHD RASFAN/AFP/ (TOP); ULET IFANSASTI/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES



■ Left, a resident shows portraits of his missing family members in Perumnas Balaroa village. Right, a woman stands among pulverized remnants of her village in Petobo (Oct. 6, 2018).

PHOTOS: MOHD RASFAN/ (LEFT); YUSUF WAHIL/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Without Warning

On September 28, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

Within three minutes of the quake, a wall of water from the ocean swept away buildings and people in coastal cities attempting to escape the effects of the earthquake.

Disaster officials said the wave could have been 20 feet or higher based on a man who survived by climbing a tree. A tsunami warning issued after the quake predicted waves of up to 10 feet.

Palu's location at the end of a narrow, 6-mile-long bay worsened the tsunami's effects.

"When water comes into a horse-shoe-shaped area like that, instead of the wave increasing just because the ocean is getting shallow, you also have the bowl effect, where the waves are going to reflect off the shoreline around it," Jess Phoenix, a U.S. geologist who has studied in Indonesia, told *BBC News*. The effect doubled the size

of the tsunami by the time it reached land.

Toll

The earthquake and subsequent tsunami left countless people desperate to find their loved ones—either alive or dead.

The government counted more than 2,000 dead after the twin disaster. They eventually called off rescue efforts after two weeks, leaving around 5,000 still missing. Many likely drowned, were swept out to sea, or were swallowed up in two Palu neighborhoods where the ground liquefied as the quake's shaking condensed loose, wet soil into mud. Some bodies were buried as deep as 10 feet.

Lisda Cancer, who heads the local police's Department of Victim Identification, said about 600 of the bodies buried in mass graves in Palu alone were unclaimed. Authorities had been photographing them in hopes that relatives could identify them later.

"But we had to stop because the corpses we're recovering now have

decayed too much," Dr. Cancer said. "They've become a public health hazard, and the new instructions are to bury them immediately."

The areas affected by the disaster, which now look like vast wastelands, will be turned into memorial parks to remember the victims, and survivors will be relocated to safer locations.

The quake and tsunami destroyed more than 65,000 homes and buildings, and displaced more than 70,000 people. Thousands are still living in temporary shelters and tents across Palu.

"He's Still Alive"

Miss Cornelia said she met her fiance, 25-year-old Iqbal Nurdiansyah, seven years earlier through friends at school. She was attracted to his warm personality, his bushy eyebrows and his handsome face.

Three years ago, he took her to her favorite restaurant, on Palu Bay, and proposed. A two-week wedding

Please see **INDONESIA**, page 26

5 Issues that Will Decide the 2018 Midterm Elections

Considered to be the most consequential election in decades, the 2018 midterm elections will have a major effect on the time ahead.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

FOR MONTHS, pundits have pushed the importance of this year's midterm election cycle. Some unabashedly called it the most important election in American history.

Is this all hyperbole in an effort to "get out the vote"? Maybe. But November's elections to select members of U.S. Congress are unquestionably significant. The results will clearly reveal voter's opinions on the current direction of the country.

The outcome will also portend America's ominous political climate for the final two years of President Donald Trump's first term.

The contentious U.S. Supreme Court nomination this fall dominated the news cycle and left the nation transfixed. In truth, the confirmation of a justice to the Supreme Court is somewhat trivial to the lives of everyday Americans. Yet for weeks citizens baldly showcased the implacable division between Republicans and Democrats. Warnings of assassination attempts, calls for violence, and disputes over

what constitutes an "angry mob" versus a constitutionally protected protest ensued.

Despite the hype, midterms are notorious for their low voter turnout. According to the Brookings Institution, only about 40 percent of the population typically votes in a midterm election cycle. Comparatively, presidential elections motivate 50-60 percent to cast a ballot.

With elections increasingly being decided by a relatively small number of votes—a reported 80,000 votes across three states placed Republican Donald Trump in the White House—neither side can afford for their voters to stay home.

The other characteristic of the midterms is the president's party usually *loses* congressional seats. The loss is even greater when the president is unpopular. President Trump's public approval rating has never reached 50 percent, according to Gallup polls.

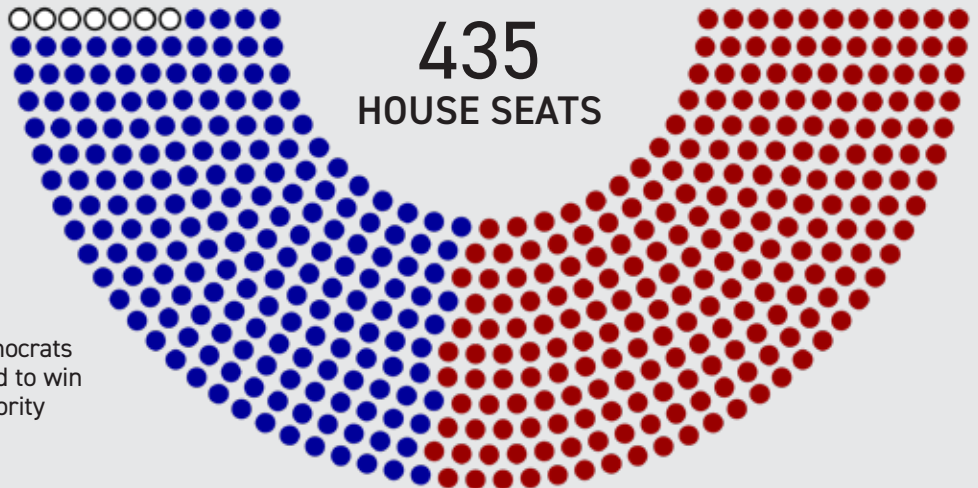
This helps explain why Democrats have been so fired up. If precedent holds, their dreams of a "blue wave" may come true.

CONGRESSIONAL BALANCE OF POWER

CURRENT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- 193 Democrats
- 235 Republicans
- 7 Vacant

218 needed to control the House SEATS
23 Democrats need to win majority SEATS



CURRENT SENATE



In the current political climate, a liberal-controlled Congress co-existing with a conservative-controlled White House could prove catastrophic. Such a scenario could very well leave the nation longing for the “good old days” of the vitriolic exchanges on display during the last Supreme Court nomination.

Several national polls have identified five key issues that divide the country. It is believed that these issues will decide the midterm elections. America is nearly split down the middle on each of them.

The opposing views on how to address each of these problems prove that citizens of the *United States* are becoming less so. These differing perspectives are also an indicator of the politically and culturally charged environment that lies just ahead.

The Real Truth never takes political sides. The following descriptions are included to show how those on the left and right generally view each of the five issues.



1. HEALTHCARE

Healthcare consistently ranks as the number-one issue in the minds of midterm voters.

70%
VOTERS

Seven out of 10 voters in competitive House districts believe healthcare would be very important to their vote—more so than the Supreme Court nomination results, immigration or guns (*CBS News/YouGov*).

[LEFT] Democrats have long been seen as the party of healthcare and view the issue as an election winner this November. They generally would like to see the government, not individuals, bear more of the burden for rising healthcare costs.

A *Fox News* poll found that 49 percent of Americans believe Democrats would do a better job on healthcare compared to just 34 percent for Republicans. Democrats are spending more money on political ads focused on healthcare—about half of their total ads are about this issue. Liberals fear that if conservatives maintain control of Congress, they will renew their efforts to repeal Affordable Care Act (Obamacare).

Conservatives are somewhat divided on the issue. The president would like to see the Obamacare dismantled and Medicaid transferred from federal to state control. He and his political allies believe the move would save significant money in an economy burdened by debt—a key issue for his base. Opponents worry this will lead to no coverage for preexisting conditions and overall diminished health coverage protections.

Some Republicans believe that following through on the president’s plan is a political risk given healthcare’s importance to voters. As a result, Republicans in key races have chosen to soften or eliminate their hard stances on healthcare to potential voters.

[RIGHT]



2. GUNS

A June *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll found that guns are a major issue for a quarter of voters in the midterms.

608
MASS
SHOOTINGS
IN 2 YEARS

Gun Violence Archive defines a mass shooting as a single incident in which four or more people are shot and killed. These incidents are increasingly occurring in schools.

[LEFT] Democrats typically avoid campaigning heavily on gun control due to the Second Amendment and fears of alienating those in conservative districts. However, their reluctance is waning in the wake of incidents including mass shootings in Las Vegas in 2017 and Parkland High School in Florida. The left is hoping to capitalize on what it frames as conservatives’ inaction on gun control.

Strong efforts to control guns are seen by conservatives as an infringement on Americans’ Second Amendment rights. The right believes it is taking appropriate action on gun control. For instance, the conservative governor of Florida, a largely pro-gun state, signed a new law raising the minimum age to purchase a gun to 21 and imposed a three-day waiting period for purchases. Conservatives say they sympathize with victims and their families yet maintain that it is most appropriate to blame the perpetrator for gun violence, not the weapon itself. They believe that there are already adequate gun controls in place that simply need to be enforced.

[RIGHT]



3. IMMIGRATION

Immigration pushed to the forefront of the national conversation after an outcry that the current administration was separating children from parents illegally crossing the border. Though the White House has backed off this tactic, immigration remains a key issue.

5 STATES WITH THE MOST ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS:

- ILLINOIS • TEXAS • FLORIDA • NEW YORK • CALIFORNIA

4 of 5 have Senate elections

5 of 5 have House elections

[LEFT] Liberals generally see the nation’s immigration policy as harsh and mean-spirited. They see themselves as the party of compassion and believe the right is only perpetuating fear on the issue. They support immigration programs such as DACA, which is a path to citizenship for children of immigrants. To them, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) is a force of deportation and family separation whose actions are discriminatory and do not make Americans safer. They point to the fact that the nation was built through and by immigrants and that Americans should welcome people from abroad, especially those who lived under oppressive circumstances in their home nations.

Conservatives are confident they can sway voters on this issue. They say they are against *illegal* immigration, not immigration overall. Conservatives want strong borders to protect the United States from violent criminals. They want funding for the wall along the border with Mexico, the defunding of sanctuary cities, and are against the abolishment of ICE. Those on the right believe more of the nation's resources should instead go to its own homeless and veterans.

[RIGHT]



4. ECONOMY

The economy is typically viewed as a key issue for presidential elections, not congressional cycles. This year may be different.

UNDER PRESIDENT TRUMP:

3% GDP GROWTH **3.9** MILLION more Americans employed **27%** STOCK MARKET JUMP

[LEFT] Those on the left acknowledge recent economic progress but believe there is a long way to go to full recovery. Problems such as economic inequality and low wages remain a concern. There is also concern over whether the economic gains over the last 18 months are sustainable. Progressives believe the president's tough stance on tariffs and international trade relations are leading to a decrease in American jobs. They see the tax cuts for corporations and other high-income earners as proof of the "rich getting richer," while those on the lower side of the income bracket continue to suffer.

Conservatives see the economy as the strongest indicator of success under the current Republican-controlled White House and Congress. They are calling it an "economic miracle," and see the midterms as key to sustaining the momentum. The nation is experiencing record unemployment numbers. Retailers report increased foot traffic and sales. Housing prices are up while inventory is down. The right points to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 as a major factor for the growth. They would like to see conservative leaders do a better job of selling their role in the nation's economic successes to voters.

[RIGHT]



5. CONTROL OF CONGRESS

Control of the legislative branch of government is the fifth and arguably the most crucial concern for voters. It will determine how the nation moves forward for the remainder of President Trump's term and will determine the outcome of the previous four issues. Spending on political ads was up a third over the 2014 midterms, all in an effort to move the needle.

All 435 House of Representative seats are up for grabs this midterm election cycle. Since the majority party needs 218 seats for control, Democrats need to pick up 23 seats. The left also needs to make gains to overcome the Republicans' current 51 to 47 edge in the Senate (independents hold two seats).

[LEFT] Democrats see their control of Congress as a thumbs down on President Trump's agenda. Many progressives feel that Mr. Trump's victory in 2016 was illegitimate and that they can finally set things in order in the midterms. They see the president's policies as detrimental and believe he promotes racial and gender division. They believe taking control of Congress is the only way to stop what they see as regression in the nation. Democratic control of Congress could lead to presidential impeachment hearings.

A victory for conservatives will allow the president to double down on his vision for the country. The right points to Democrats' efforts to impeach and perpetually investigate opponents as signs that Democratic victory in the midterms will only lead to political gridlock.

[RIGHT]

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The 2016 presidential election results taught the nation to expect the unexpected. Few predicted a career businessman would go on to hold the nation's highest political office. Two years later, Democrats hope their voters will not repeat the overconfidence of the presidential election and assume their victory is sealed. Meanwhile, Republicans hope to end the streak of the non-presidential party gaining seats in the midterm, similar to what occurred in 2006 during President George W. Bush's tenure or in 2010 during Barack Obama's presidency.

In the end, the results come down to what happens at ballot boxes across the country. Once the votes are counted, all the predicting and prognosticating is over. One party celebrates, leaving the other to pick up the pieces and hunker down for the next vote.

What is known is that, somehow, the citizens of this single nation have managed to hold onto completely divergent views. Several political leaders are now verbalizing that they want the country to get back to the days of cooperation and collaboration. Yet, shockingly, they also say they will do whatever it takes—some even resorting to violence—to defeat opposing views!

All indications are that things will get worse before they get better. A rapid descent toward chaos can happen very quickly.

The current political trends prove that solutions to the nation's problems will not come from the governments of men. Man by himself CANNOT solve the issues facing the United States—or any other nation. □



LOST UNDER CITY LIGHTS

Masked by man-made light, the vast treasure trove beyond our skies is slipping out of view. But why should you be concerned?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

AS I LOOK up from the front yard of an average suburban U.S. home at about 10:30 p.m. on an overcast night, the cloudy sky radiates an odd shade of pink.

Trucks roar by on an interstate highway a tenth of a mile due north, with an exit ramp visible just to the east.

Sprouting up around this freeway/state route intersection are the typical landmarks of an American Midwest highway exit: several fast-food restaurants, a gas station/convenience store, a strip mall anchored by a grocery store, a big-box retailer and a large home supply center, three banks, a donut shop, two auto parts stores, a paint outlet, a few motels, and an office building.

The lighted signs, parking lots, and interiors of these businesses, particularly the blazingly bright bulbs that flood the gas station's array of fuel pumps, seem to bounce their electric rays off the cloud cover to create the odd, hazy glow.

From horizon to horizon, the light is more reminiscent of a cheap night-light than the starry tapestry traditionally called to mind by the phrase "night sky."

For contrast, I reflect on a trip to northern New Hampshire with my wife some years ago. Taking a break from driving just south of the White Mountains, we stepped out of the car to marvel at countless brilliant points of light, spread across a midnight-blue backdrop like diamonds on a velvet blanket, illuminating a dense, evergreen-dominated forest.

The suburban landscape I now see, bathed in artificial light, almost seems like a different planet.

A *Men's Journal* article documented this phenomenon nationwide: "Across the country, as cities sprawl into suburbs and suburbs metastasize into exurbs, with the amount of artificial lighting exploding alongside every new McMansion, strip mall, and superhighway, the night sky, in its purest form, is increasingly becoming

an endangered species. If you live in a decent-size metropolitan area, chances are you rarely glimpse any but a handful of the brightest stars and planets. A clear view of the solar system—and that awesome, unmooring, sublime, occasionally terrifying feeling that comes over us when we bear witness to the vastness of the universe and recognize our infinitesimal place in it—had been a routine nocturnal experience for the bulk of human history. Now it's become rarefied and, for some, unimaginable."

A freeway exit compared to the North Woods is a poignant illustration of the natural versus the manmade, with one setting far more inspiring than the other. But are pure beauty and aesthetics the end of the story?

Another Form of Pollution

The average 21st-century man or woman spends life taking the convenience of artificial light—present in many forms in virtually any set-

PHOTO: ED JONES/AFF/GETTY IMAGES

ting—for granted. Only when a power outage abruptly plunges us into darkness might we consider that most generations never saw a single light bulb.

Of course, being able to “create daytime” at all hours can increase productivity, improve safety, and bring other benefits. But there are downsides.

A *National Geographic* article stated: “[Artificial light’s] benefits come with consequences—called light pollution—whose effects scientists are only now beginning to study. Light pollution is largely the result of bad lighting design, which allows artificial light to shine outward and upward into the sky, where it’s not wanted, instead of focusing it downward, where it is. Ill-designed lighting washes out the darkness of night and radically alters the light levels—and light rhythms—to which many forms of life, including ourselves, have adapted. Wherever human light spills into the natural world, some aspect of life—migration, reproduction, feeding—is affected.”

As with many repercussions of modern technology, light pollution is an unforeseen byproduct. Modern lighting patterns and trends have brought unintended costs.

Men’s Journal continued: “Our indiscriminate overuse of outdoor lighting is the main cause of light pollution. We light our driveways, our porches, our parking lots, our billboards and storefronts, our streets and highways, our parks and public spaces—at times for the purpose of commerce, but often because, on a gut level, it just feels safer to have bright lights around at night. But much of our outdoor lighting is poorly designed, blasting light into the sky rather than onto the sidewalk or city street we’re actually meaning to illuminate.”

“In certain obvious, unfortunate ways, light pollution has simply evolved alongside our lighting technology. As Paul Bogard points out in [his] book *The End of Night*, a single 75-watt incandescent bulb burns 100 times brighter than a candle. Satellite images of North America at night, with various intensities of light represented

by glowing yellows and oranges, are startling, with just about everything east of the Mississippi looking like a graphic representation of a toxic spill. Sky glow has transformed the color of night, for many of us, into perpetually dizzying gradations of pink and blue. A 2001 study co-authored by scientists from Italy and the U.S. found that for 80 percent of the U.S. population and two-thirds of the European Union population, night-sky brightness equaled full-moon conditions all month long.”

Losses and Negative Effects

In most developed nations, the view from the ground is very different from what our ancestors saw. Constellations—planets—meteor showers—shooting stars—the faint blur of the Andromeda Galaxy, which is most easily discerned using peripheral vision—all are now obscured.

The *National Geographic* article put this loss in perspective: “In most cities the sky looks as though it has been emptied of stars, leaving behind a vacant haze that mirrors our fear of the dark and resembles the urban glow of dystopian science fiction. We’ve grown so used to this pervasive orange haze that the original glory of an unlit night—dark enough for the planet Venus to throw shadows on Earth—is wholly beyond our experience, beyond memory almost. And yet above the city’s pale ceiling lies the rest of the universe, utterly undiminished by the light we waste—a bright shoal of stars and planets and galaxies, shining in seemingly infinite darkness.”

An anecdote from Southern California paints a startling picture: “So foreign are the real night skies to Los Angeles that in 1994, after the Northridge earthquake jostled Angelenos awake at 4:31 a.m., the observatory received many calls asking about ‘the strange sky they had seen after the earthquake.’

“‘We finally realized what we were dealing with,’ [Griffith Observatory director Ed] Krupp said. ‘The quake had knocked out most of the power, and people ran outside and they saw the stars. The stars were in fact so

unfamiliar; they called us wondering what happened’” (*Los Angeles Times*).

These urbanites were seeing the Milky Way—the galaxy in which they live—for the first time!

But light pollution’s effects are more than just emotional, psychological or philosophical. There are tangible, measurable physical repercussions as well.

National Geographic continued: “Light is a powerful biological force, and on many species it acts as a magnet... The effect is so powerful that scientists speak of songbirds and seabirds being ‘captured’ by searchlights on land or by the light from gas flares on marine oil platforms, circling and circling in the thousands until they drop. Migrating at night, birds are apt to collide with brightly lit tall buildings; immature birds on their first journey suffer disproportionately.”

But does this modern problem affect only birds and other lesser species? What about *you*?

Human beings *do* respond to light!

“For the past century or so, we’ve been performing an open-ended experiment on ourselves, extending the day, shortening the night, and short-circuiting the human body’s sensitive response to light. The consequences of our bright new world are more readily perceptible in less adaptable creatures living in the peripheral glow of our prosperity. But for humans, too, light pollution may take a biological toll. At least one [2009] study has suggested a direct correlation between higher rates of breast cancer in women and the nighttime brightness of their neighborhoods” (*ibid.*).

Another form of light pollution makes its way indoors: the ever-present glow of electronic screens—computers, tablets, phones, televisions and the like. These can have effects on the human brain even after they have been switched off.

Studies have documented “the effects of LED backlit screens and their emission of a certain blue-light wavelength on melatonin levels, an essential hormone that makes you drowsy and kicks in your sleep cycle.

Melatonin is released naturally at the onset of darkness, preparing your body for rest, and then continuously throughout the night as part of your natural circadian rhythm—your body’s daily biological clock. However, melatonin can be partially curbed by exposure to light, and the abnormally bright glow of backlit computer screens seems to be especially disruptive to its release. Suppression of melatonin then has the opposite effects, increasing alertness and arousal, and even altering REM sleep patterns when you finally do nod off,” the journal *Nature* reported.

Modern man’s reliance on electric lighting, with most unable to function without the power grid, puts him in an incredibly precarious position.

During a speech at Hillsdale College’s Allen P. Kirby Center for Constitutional Studies and Citizenship (which was adapted and published in the college’s monthly bulletin *Imprimis*), author and national security expert Brian T. Kennedy stated: “America’s electrical grid is vulnerable...to an electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) attack—a nuclear explosion in the high atmosphere, creating an electro-magnetic pulse that destroys electrical wiring and hardware across the affected area. Such an explosion placed over the center of the U.S. could destroy the infrastructure that distributes electricity to consumers and industrial users in every state except Alaska and Hawaii.”

“What we know from work performed in the 1990s by a Congressionally-mandated EMP Commission is that without electricity, the U.S. has the industrial infrastructure to provide for only 30 million of its over 300 million citizens. If an EMP attack occurred right now, the lights in this room would go off and most of us would be walking home, since many cars and gas pumps would be disabled. Our cell phones and iPads are likely to turn on, but not our computers and laptops—and in any case, cellular networks and the Internet will have likely been destroyed. Those of us able to reach home would have no lights or refrigeration. Most water is pumped electronically as well. So we would have only the food and bottled water we

have stored in our houses—normally about three days’ worth.”

Considering all of this, we must ask: how advanced are we, really?

Two Possibilities

Our dependence on electric light is firmly entrenched, and studies regarding its effects are usually unheeded. Nevertheless, one fact is indisputable: blotting out the stars with incandescent and fluorescent bulbs robs us of some of the most stunning vistas and mind-expanding sights found in the human experience.

Why does a clear night’s sky—unobstructed by pollution—have such an effect on us?

If the universe is, as many believe, simply a huge, ancient accident—born of laws of physics and chemistry that are themselves an even more ancient and improbable accident—then we could conclude that in the long run, it does not matter whether we can see beyond Earth’s atmosphere.

But if the Earth, human beings, and all that exists are the Creation of a Creator, everything changes!

If the universe is here by design, why is it so vast? With no other signs of physical life having been found beyond Earth, what is the purpose of billions of galaxies holding trillions of stars? Why did the Creator make a portion of it visible to us at night and give us the creative capacity to build telescopes to peer many light-years into it?

The Bible makes plain that the Creator—God—is the Author of the universe. Many proofs confirm that this Book is not just ancient literature but rather God’s inspired Word.

In it, God makes clear how He feels about mankind destroying the Earth (Rev. 11:18).

Light pollution is one more way in which humankind has degraded its environment. And just as this form of pollution takes a physical toll, it has a spiritual effect as well. It pushes us further into an artificial, tech-saturated cocoon, insulating us from reality, making our world smaller, and diminishing our ability to see God’s Creation—which testifies to His existence: “For

the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead...” (Rom. 1:20).

Consider the words of the biblical and historical King David, and picture him looking up at a pristine Middle Eastern sky: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof” (Psa. 19:1-6).

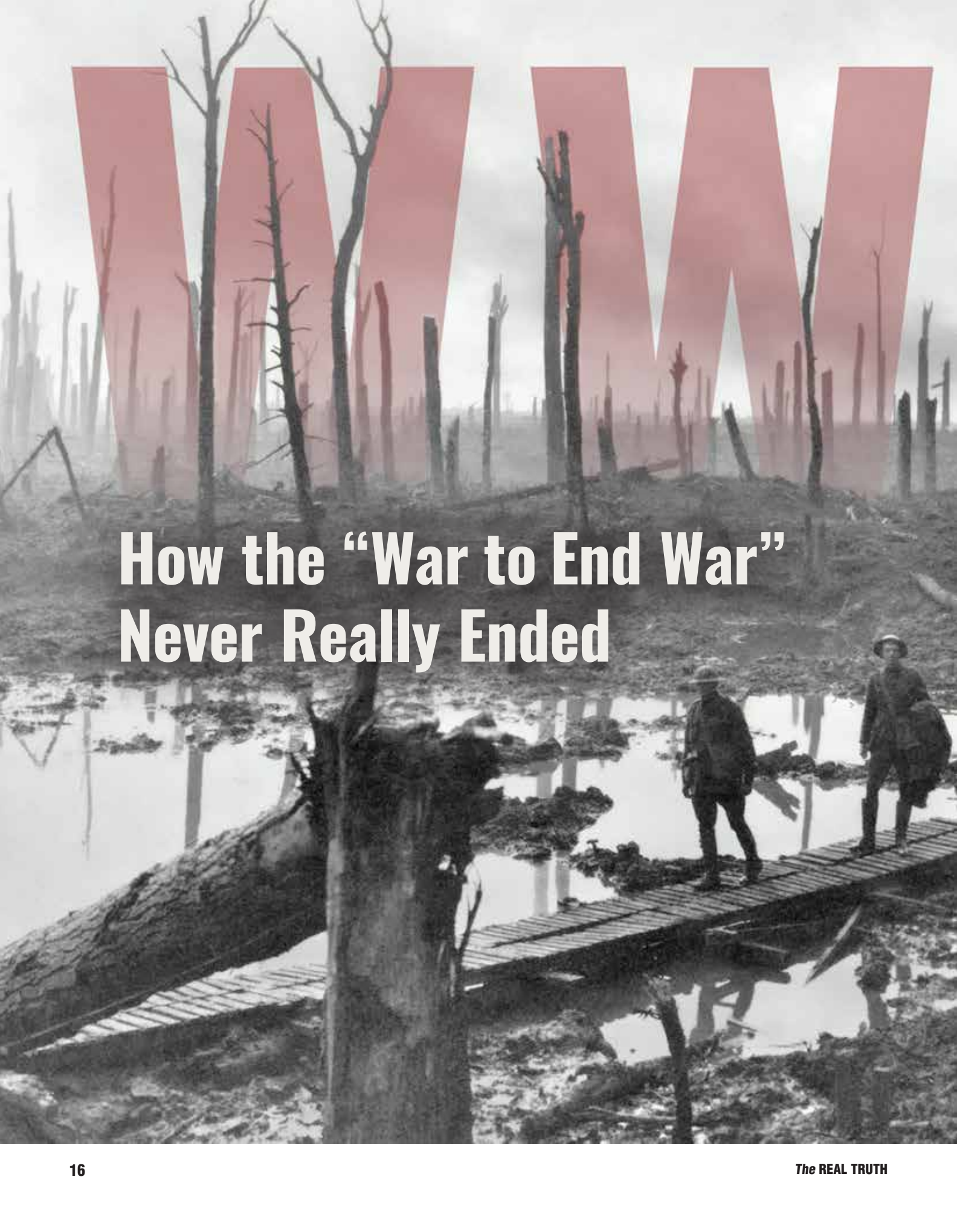
Elsewhere, David was inspired to write, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet” (8:3-6).

Some translations render “all things” as “the universe.” The context goes on to show that this has not yet taken place—mankind has not at this time been given rule over the entire universe.

But this will happen!

This is where the vastness of outer space crosses paths with your future and the reason you were born. Since God does not create in vain (Isa. 45:18), we can be assured that the universe is not destined to remain an uninhabited, lifeless place.

To see how the purpose of Creation is directly connected to YOUR purpose, order your free copy of Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack’s book *The Awesome Potential of Man* at rcg.org/tapom. It will forever change your view of the universe—and your place in it! □



How the “War to End War” Never Really Ended



A century since the end of World War I, mankind has not ceased to fight. Why haven't we learned our lesson?

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

MORE THAN 14,000 white crosses stud a densely wooded, verdant park in northeastern France. Each headstone has a name, military rank, and date of death engraved on it.

There are too many names to recount: Even just spending 30 seconds at each stone would take a visitor six days straight to visit them all.

But simply looking across the aligned rows, one can begin to visualize the scale of death that occurred in the area 100 years ago.

Thousands were shredded by machine gun bullets, obliterated by artillery shells, burnt up by flamethrowers, suffocated in chlorine or mustard gas. Many others rotted from rampant disease in the mud-filled trenches, some before they ever got to see a battle.

The cemetery commemorates American soldiers lost in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of 1918. It was the nation's deadliest battle in its history, with 26,000 soldiers killed, tens of thousands wounded and more ammunition fired during the two-month engagement than in the Civil War.

During seven weeks of combat, 1.2 million American troops led by General John J. Pershing fought to advance on the entrenched positions held by about 450,000 Germans in the Verdun region. The offensive was one of several simultaneous Allied attacks that brought World War I which started in 1914 to an end, leading the Germans to retreat and sign the armistice on November 11. By then, more than 110,000 Americans had been killed after mere months of combat.

The surviving doughboys—the informal term for U.S. Army or Marines infantrymen—had to carry emotional and mental turmoil for the rest of their lives. Most struggled to reintegrate into society. The question that loomed in soldiers' minds: Where do we go from here?

In the 1920s, the American Legion reported that two veterans committed suicide each day to escape the effects of post-traumatic stress and shell-shock.

But Americans—even today—scarcely comprehend how the war affected Europe.

■ Australian soldiers walk across a duckboard track passing through the devastated Chateau Woods park at Ypres, Belgium, where the frontline moved back and forth throughout the war (Oct. 29, 1917).

PHOTO: FRANK HURLEY/AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



■ Australian infantry wear small box respirators in Ypres, Belgium (Sept. 1917).

PHOTO: FRANK HURLEY/AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

The 110,000 Americans lost pales in comparison to Europe's war dead: 9.5 million. More than half of them have no known graves—their bodies vanished either from artillery blasts or being buried alive in mud.

Another 21 million soldiers returned to their families in Germany, Britain, Russia, France or elsewhere mutilated—blinded or missing toes, fingers, legs, arms and even faces.

It was the greatest slaughter the continent had experienced. A generation forever scarred because of the whims of kaisers, kings and czars.

Life on the continent is still not the same. "The contrast between American and European perceptions of the world order in the 20th and 21st centuries is incomprehensible without considering the catastrophe of 1914-1918," *The*

Atlantic reported. "Ever since, Europe has felt an underlying pessimism, a sense of danger and disorder that the United States hasn't shared. Americans have continued to believe that progress is built into history. Most Europeans, other than Marxists, dropped this notion once the Great War began."

The Armistice

A new world emerged on November 11. German leaders—realizing defeat was imminent—met with French and British personnel in a railroad car parked near the frontline in France. It was agreed that hostilities would end at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.

When the moment came, millions of shell-shocked troops waiting in trenches experienced a range of emotions—from

relief to bitterness. All experienced the awkwardness of sudden silence.

Feldwebel Georg Bucher, a German soldier waiting in a dugout for the barrage to end, wrote about his experience. "The minutes seemed an eternity," *Newsweek* quoted him. "I raised my head and listened, though I could feel far more distinctly than my ears could tell me that the shellfire was decreasing like rain easing off. The din became less and less violent, then it ceased—ceased altogether over our sector..."

"Then there was a great silence. We stood motionless, gazing at the shell smoke which drifted sluggishly across no man's land... The hour had come. I turned round: 'Armistice!'"

In the great silence, soldiers and citizens both began to deal with a different kind of bombardment in their minds as they questioned: What did we fight for?

How did a petty battle between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, started when Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a 19-year-old Bosnian peasant, draw in the world's greatest powers?

And why couldn't those in absolute authority prevent it from happening? After all, Britain's King George, Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Russia's Czar Nicholas II were connected by a common grandmother: Queen Victoria of Great Britain.

Were millions sacrificed just to protect royal bloodlines and politicians safely kept behind closed doors?

The final six hours of the war served as a microcosm of the war's futile bloodshed: "Out of 16 commanders of US divisions who received early-morning news of the armistice, seven chose to stop fighting," *The Independent* reported. "But nine pressed on through blood, right down to the wire.

"The crossing of the Meuse alone that morning cost the Americans 1,130 casualties." It continued: "On that ultimate morning, the Western Front witnessed 10,944 casualties, with 2,738 deaths. Astonishingly, that casualties total exceeds Allied losses on D-Day."

It was this kind of senseless bloodshedding that resulted in the Great War's nickname, "The war to end war,"

which originated from British author H.G. Wells' book *The War that Will End War*.

Idealists at the time felt the unprecedented horrors of the first world war would persuade mankind to abandon armed conflict altogether.

Instead, it served as the very catalyst for even greater turmoil and conflict a mere generation later.

At the very outbreak of the war, Italy's political left split into antiwar socialists and pro-war nationalists including Benito Mussolini. He would give rise to fascist Italy.

Russia dropped out of the war in 1917 as the Bolshevik Revolution ousted czarist authority and established the Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union.

And Adolf Hitler, a German dispatch runner on the Western Front who expressed frustration at Germany's surrender, rose to lead the nation and pull the world's powers into an even bloodier war.

Breeding Conflict

Beyond sowing the seeds to the next great conflict, even much of today's instability stems from the armistice.

The volatile Middle East, a powder keg for extremism and terrorism, is one example.

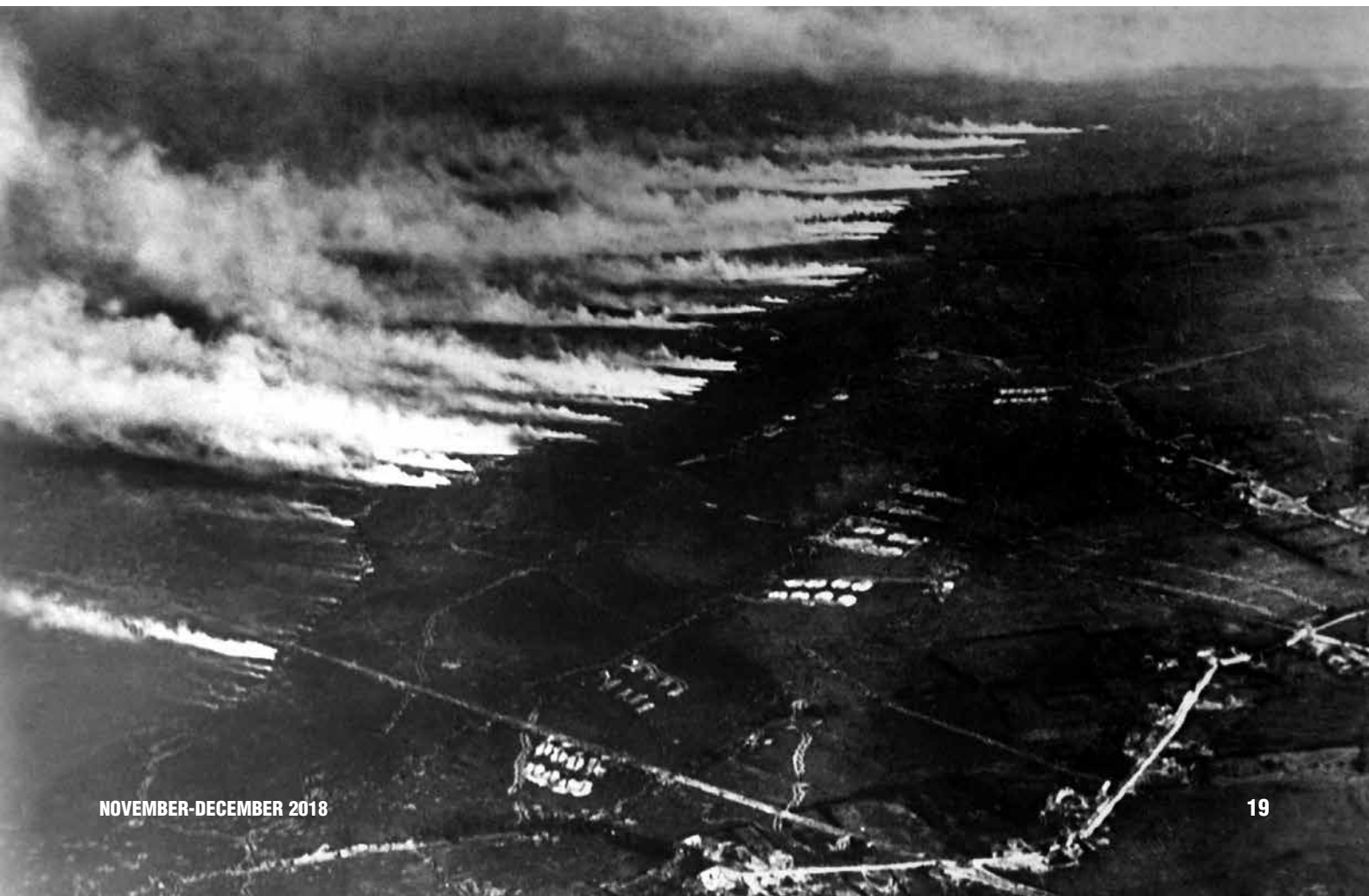
The Atlantic explained: "In 1915, the British high commissioner in Egypt promised the keeper of the holy sites in Mecca independence for Arabs in return for their participation in fighting the Ottoman empire. Two years later, Britain's Balfour Declaration promised Zionists the opposite: a Jewish homeland in Palestine. And these incompatible promises were complicated even more by the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, which divided the post-Ottoman Middle East between French and British spheres of influence and drew arbitrary borders—in Iraq, for instance—that have caused instability and conflict ever since."

In addition, the Great War led to America's conflicts in the Far East.

"The extent to which the war fueled the continuing hostility between China and Japan is rarely recognized," *The Atlantic* continued. "The problem arose from the Treaty of Versailles. Both nations, traditionally rivals, were among the victorious delegations. China, however, was the weaker power, plagued by internal strife after its 1911 revolution. Japan had helped the Allies during the war, by convoying Australia's and New Zealand's troops across the Indian Ocean and by sending naval cruisers to protect the west coast of Canada. At Versailles, Japan tried to exploit its newly acquired leverage, proposing that the charter of the League of Nations include a commitment to racial equality. President Wilson, as a southern-born politician, knew that any such language would ensure the treaty's defeat in the U.S. Senate. To prevent the Japanese from walking out of the peace nego-

■ French soldiers attack German trenches with gas and flames in Flanders, Belgium (Jan. 1, 1917).

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION





■ A Salvation Army worker writes a letter home on behalf of a wounded soldier.

PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

tiations once their request was turned down, the leaders of Britain, France, and the United States backed Japan's proposal to grant it temporary control—until 1922, as it turned out—of the Chinese of Shandong, south of Beijing, which the Germans had controlled during the war.”

Not only did this stoke Japanese naval power and aggression leading to its involvement in the second world war, the Chinese responded in protest by forming the anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement, from which came China's Communist Party. The U.S. has had tense diplomatic relations with Communist China ever since.

New Kind of Battle

Undoubtedly the Great War created more war. But it also changed the nature of war itself.

For one, it was the first modern war in which the distinction between

civilian and military targets was blurred.

The “Rape of Belgium” in 1914 set the tone for this new kind of conflict. German forces killed 6,000 Belgian civilians, destroyed 25,000 homes, and caused another 17,700 to die from deportation or imprisonment—despite Belgium's neutrality status.

Such an event was a far-cry from Napoleonic era war-watching—when non-combatants could safely enjoy a picnic while observing the calculated movements of field armies firing volleys at each other.

In addition, internment camps cropped up to house any ethnicity of people suspected of disloyalty. The 20th century's first genocide occurred in the Ottoman Empire—Turkey's predecessor—which systematically exterminated up to 1.5 million Armenians.

The war also eliminated any notion of safety behind the frontlines. Artillery

and airplanes brought the war to cities and towns far beyond the trenches. Naval blockades brought entire nations to their knees through famine and widespread disease such as the Spanish influenza—which killed as many as 100 million across the globe between 1917 and 1918.

By the war's end, seven million bystanders lost their lives—more than any other single conflict by that time. And since WWI, civilian casualties have been an inseparable statistic from war: 10-25 million Chinese civilians killed during Japan's assault on China before the second world war, seven million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, 500,000 German citizens lost from U.S. day and British night bombing raids over Dresden, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Berlin and so forth, and hundreds of thousands of Japanese completely vaporized in the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Historians generally label WWI as the first *total* war, in which entire nations' populations and resources—not just their militaries—are involved in the effort.

Most major conflicts of the 20th century have followed this example. *Britannica* detailed just a few: “During the Vietnam War (1954–75), the communist leadership of North Vietnam regarded the conflict as one of total war and acted accordingly. The Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), though fought with limited resources in that neither side had a large industrial base or much airpower, was very close to a total war for both belligerents.”

Both of these conflicts resulted in civilian casualties in the hundreds of thousands. Compare that to America's worst conflict fought on its own soil—the Civil War—in which 50,000 civilians died.

Weapons of Deterrence

A reason for the excessive loss of life in total war is a focus on developing more destructive weapons.

In the first world war, “Terrorizing the ground, machine guns had a firepower that equaled 80 rifles,” *National*

Geographic reported. “Advances in artillery rained down explosives on soldiers in the trenches. Armored cars and tanks first rolled their way into battle in World War I. Chemical warfare, in the form of chlorine, mustard gas, and phosgene, poisoned hundreds of thousands of soldiers.”

“Advances in technology led to battles taking place almost anywhere on Earth. Devastation threatened from above and below, with dirigibles prowling the skies and submarines prowling the seas. Observation balloons were used for gathering intelligence, and zeppelins were used in bombing raids. World War I was the first major war to be fought in the air; British, French, and German flying aces engaged in famous dogfights over Europe. In the seas, Germans held the advantage: Their U-boats were state of the art, a submarine more advanced than any other nation’s. A U-boat could carry 35 men and 12 torpedoes and travel underwater for two hours at a time.”

Such developments were intended to shock enemies into submission, more quickly bring an end to battle, and subsequently reduce the need to waste more lives.

Yet it wrought more casualties and damage. By 1918, one in every four shells fired on the western front contained poison gas. Around 124,000 tons of chemical agents were used.

“Many survivors suffered from lung and respiratory problems for the rest of their lives. Some were left permanently blind,” *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

“After the war, horror over the weapons’ impact resulted in the 1925 Geneva Protocol ban.” Nevertheless, “The U.S. and the Soviets developed large stockpiles of weapons during the Cold War. Saddam Hussein’s Iraq used mustard and nerve gases, first against Iran, then against Iraq’s own Kurdish minority in 1988.

“The effects of World War I’s gas attacks still resonate. When Syrian forces were accused of using chemical weapons in August 2013 against antigovernment strongholds outside

Damascus, the U.S. threatened military force against the Assad regime for the first time in Syria’s bloody civil war.”

“Even a century after Ypres, armed conflicts continue to spur technological advances,” *Spiegel Online* reported. “Wherever wars are fought, money flows into military innovations. The United States’ War on Terror, for example, resulted in the addition of billions to the defense budget and also led to the development of killer drones and vastly complex surveillance technologies.”

A tragedy of history is that technological advances seem to only spur a race between opponents for greater destructive powers.

Shadows from the Past

“The dead were and are not,” historian G.M. Trevelyan wrote in his autobiography. “Their place knows them no more and is ours today. Yet they were once as real as we, and we shall tomorrow be shadows like them.”

All those who experienced World War I are no longer with us. But the reminders of it are plain.

In France and Belgium, civilians are *still* dying from war munitions. Farmers and shell clearers yield what they call the “Iron harvest”—unexploded ordnance, shrapnel, bullets and barbed wire.

Because about one in three shells fired during the war did not detonate, more than 630 *demineurs* (French for de-miners) have died from handling unexploded munitions since 1945. More than 200 civilians died from stumbling upon them just around Ypres, Belgium. The Securite Civile agency reports that no less than 700 *more years* are needed to completely clean the “red zone”—an area deemed after the war to be too damaged to be inhabited by humans.

Britain is still grappling to answer why it ever participated in the war. “The sense that the war was futile and unnecessary still hangs over a lot of discussion in Britain,” Lawrence Freedman, a professor of war studies at King’s College, London, told *The New York Times*.

In addition, the UK just finished paying off its WWI bonds to the

United States in 2015. Germany, too, had not finished paying off its war debts and reparations until 2010—*two years after* the last surviving German WWI veteran died at age 107.

The pattern is clear. Man has not learned the lesson: WAR DOES NOT SOLVE PROBLEMS—rather it ensures future generations are embroiled in more problems and more war.

Gas weapons are still used in Syria. Governments and extremist groups raise armies to fight over ideologies. Civilians are targeted. Overcharged nationalistic sentiments prolong civil wars and revolutions such as the ones in Ukraine or Yemen. Nations arm themselves to the point of mutually assured destruction.

And through each bloody engagement, the cries to bring an end to war become louder. But no solution, whether restraint and appeasement or meeting a threat head on, seems to stop it.

Why is the genius of human beings—capable of producing nuclear weapons that can destroy the world many times over—utterly incapable of stopping violence?

A rarely quoted passage in scripture gives a summary of human behavior throughout the ages: “Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:15-17).

Man does not know the way—the path or means—to peace.

This is a depressing statement. No matter how many lives are lost, no matter how many wars are fought, man is doomed to repeat history. He cannot progress to break the pattern.

David C. Pack’s book *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems* more clearly details the ultimate reason man cannot yet know the way to peace.

However, rest assured. It is not all bad news. The reason we cannot find solutions to our greatest problems is actually a key to understanding how they *will* eventually be solved.

Read more at rcg.org/uun. Do not miss out on the life-changing lessons of the past. □

Cracks in the Christmas Legacy

BY DAVID C. PACK



CHRISTMAS IS thought to be a wonderful time, focusing participants on giving, family togetherness, beautiful music and decorations, feasting on special foods, and singing traditional carols. All of this is supposedly centered around the worship of Jesus Christ, and His birth on December 25.

Where did Christmas originate? What is the origin of Santa Claus—mistletoe—Christmas trees—holly

wreaths—Yule logs—and exchanging gifts? Many seek to “put Christ back into Christmas.” Was He ever there? Surely the Bible instructs to do all these things. Or does it?

I grew up keeping Christmas, and it was a big event in our family every year. We left out none of the usual trimmings of this occasion. On Christmas Eve, excitement grew with every passing minute. After going to bed, I could neither sleep nor wait until morning to see all that “Santa” had brought me.

Christmas certainly *felt* wonderful to me. I trusted what my parents told me.

I had no reason to doubt them. I was not taught to question the true origin of Christmas!

Most never reflect on *why* they believe what they believe or do what they do. We live in a world filled with customs, but few ever seek to understand their origin. We generally accept them without question. Most people basically do what everyone else does—following the crowd because it is easy!

Let’s look at the roots of Christmas. Let’s see *why* people follow the customs associated with it. Why is it kept on December 25? The early New Testament Church never kept it. Why?

This article introduces facts from history and Scripture that, when placed together, paint a complete picture. Let's avoid all assumptions and only accept what can be *proven*!

The truth of this holiday celebration will shock you!

True Origin

Nearly all aspects of Christmas observance have their roots in Roman custom and religion. We will look at many respected sources (all emphasis will be mine), starting with the following admission from *The Buffalo News*.

"The earliest reference to Christmas being marked on Dec. 25 comes from the second century after Jesus' birth. It is considered likely the first Christmas celebrations were in reaction to the Roman *Saturnalia*, a harvest festival that marked the winter solstice—the return of the sun—and honored Saturn, the god of sowing. *Saturnalia* was a rowdy time, much opposed by the more austere leaders among the still-minority Christian sect. Christmas developed, one scholar says, as a means of replacing worship of the sun with worship of the Son.

"By A.D. 529, after Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire, Emperor Justinian made Christmas a civic holiday. The celebration of Christmas reached its peak—some would say its worst moments—in the medieval period when it became a time for conspicuous consumption and unequalled revelry."

Think. It was 300 years after Christ when the Roman church began keeping Christmas!—and not until hundreds of years after this that it was mandated to be kept throughout the empire as an official festival honoring "Christ."

Consider these admissions from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, under "Christmas": "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church...the first evidence of the feast is from *Egypt*." Further, "Pagan customs centering around the January calends [the early days of each month] gravitated to Christmas." Under the topic "Natal Day," Origen,

an early Catholic writer, admitted, "In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on [Jesus'] birthday. It is *only sinners* (like Pharaoh and Herod) who make great rejoicings over the day on which they were born into this world."

Encyclopedia Americana reveals: "Christmas...was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian church, since the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the *death* of remarkable persons rather than their *birth*...a feast was established in memory of this event [Christ's birth] in the 4th century. In the 5th century the Western church ordered the feast to be celebrated [forever] on the *day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of the Saturnalia*, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed."

Here are more facts from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under the heading "Christmas": "In the Roman world the *Saturnalia* (December 17) was a time of merrymaking and exchanging of gifts. *December 25 was also regarded as the birth date 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."

Stunning information! I ask: Do you care?

Consider what *The Democrat and Chronicle* admitted regarding who mandated the celebration: "The Roman festival of *Saturnalia*, Dec. 17-24, moved citizens to decorate their homes with greens and lights and give gifts to children and the poor. The Dec. 25 festival of *natalis solis invicti, the birth*

of the unconquered sun, was decreed by the emperor Aurelian in A.D. 274 as a Winter Solstice celebration, and sometime (later)...was Christianized as a date to celebrate the birth of the Son of Light."

Dr. William Gutsch further publicly confirmed the true origin and nature of Christmas with this: "The early Romans were not celebrating Christmas but rather a *pagan feast* called the *Saturnalia*. It occurred each year around the beginning of winter, or the winter solstice. This was the time when the sun had taken its lowest path across the sky and the days were beginning to lengthen, thus assuring another season of growth.

"If many of the trappings of the *Saturnalia*, however, seem to parallel what so many of us do today, we can see where we borrowed...our holiday traditions. And indeed, it has been suggested that while Christ was most likely *not born in late December*, the early Christians—then still an outlawed sect—moved Christmas to the time of the *Saturnalia* to draw as little attention as possible to themselves while they celebrated their own holiday."

Let's understand. *Saturnalia* simply means "festival or celebration of Saturn." Saturday derives from the name of this god, as do all the other days of the week from pagan gods—Sun's day, Moon's day, Tiws day, Woden's day, Thor's day, Frigga's day, and Saturn's day.

But who was Saturn? Saturn was the god of sowing—or planting—the fire god—because heat from the sun was required to allow for planting and growth of crops. He was also worshipped in this dead-of-winter festival so that he would come back (remember, he was the "sun") and warm the earth again so that spring planting could occur. The planet Saturn was later named after him because, among all of the planets, with its rings and bright red color, it best represented the god of fire!

Virtually every civilization has a fire/sun god. The Egyptians (and sometimes Romans) called him Vulcan. The

Greeks named him Kronos, as did the Phoenicians—but they also called him Saturn. The Babylonians called him Tammuz, Molech or Baal, as did the Druids. These were all simply the various names for *Nimrod*, the infamous biblical rebel of Genesis 10. Nimrod was considered the father of all the Babylonian gods.

There is no mistaking the origin of the modern Christmas celebration. And many more sources could be cited. Let's tie in other facts.

Christmas Tree

The modern Christmas tree originated in Germany. But the Germans got it from the Romans, who got it from the Babylonians and the Egyptians.

The following quote from *Curiosities of Popular Customs* demonstrates what the Babylonians believed about the origin of the Christmas tree: "An old Babylonish fable told of an evergreen tree which sprang out of a dead tree stump. The old stump symbolized the dead Nimrod, the new evergreen tree symbolized that Nimrod had come to life again in Tammuz [a false god condemned in Ezekiel 8 as abominable]! Among the Druids the oak was sacred, among the Egyptians it was the palm, and in Rome it was the fir, which was decorated with red berries during the *Saturnalia*!"

The book *Answers to Questions* by Frederick J. Haskin states, "The Christmas tree is from Egypt, and its origin dates from a period long anterior to the Christian Era." How many know the Christmas tree long preceded Christianity? Did you?

What the Bible Says

Most aspects of Christmas are not referred to in the Bible. Of course, the reason is that they are not from God—they are not part of the way He wants people to worship Him. The Christmas tree, however, is mentioned in the Bible! Read Jeremiah 10, verses 2-5, "Thus says the Lord, *Learn not the way of the heathen*, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them [I

ask: why do countless millions ignore God and read their horoscopes every day?] For the *customs* of the people are *vain*: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne [carried], because they cannot go [of themselves]. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good."

This description of the modern Christmas tree is plain. God directly refers to it as "the way of the heathen." Just as directly, He commands: "Learn *not* the way of the heathen," calling these customs "*vain*." (Remember this word "*vain*." It will return.)

Next, the *Encyclopedia Americana* states, "The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log...are relics of *pre-Christian times*." In other words, paganism! The Yule log was commonly used in a rite of Teutonic nature worship.

Frederick Haskin further states, "The use of the *Christmas wreath* is believed by authorities to be *traceable to the pagan custom* of decorating buildings and places of worship at the feast which took place at the same time as our Christmas."

Britannica exposes the origin of the holly wreath, under the topic "Celastrales," which are flowering plants: "European pagans brought holly sprays into their homes, offering them to the fairy people of the forests as refuges from the harsh winter weather. During the *Saturnalia*, the Roman winter festival"—how many times have we seen this celebration directly referenced in relation to Christmas?—"branches of holly were exchanged as tokens of friendship. The earliest Roman Christians apparently used holly as a decoration at the Christmas season."

There are dozens of types of holly. Almost all come in *male and female varieties*—such as "Blue Prince and Blue Princess" or "Blue Boy and Blue

Girl" or "China Boy and China Girl." Female holly plants cannot have berries unless a nearby male plant pollinates them. It is easy to see why the holly wreath found its way into pagan rituals as a token of friendship—and *fertility*!

Christmas is incomplete to many unless it involves "kissing under the mistletoe." This also pagan custom was natural on a night that involved much revelry during what were *drunken sex orgies*. Just like Christmas today, this "kissing" usually occurred at the beginning of the *Saturnalia* celebration. Mistletoe was considered to have special powers of healing for those who *reveled* under it.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under "Santalales," states, "The European mistletoe is thought to have had special ritual significance in Druidical ceremonies and lives in folklore today, its special status as the Christmas mistletoe having come from Anglo-Saxon times."

Mistletoe is a parasite that lives on oak trees. (Recall the Druids worshipped in oak tree groves.) The ancient Celts—associated with the Druids—used to give mistletoe as an herbal remedy to barren animals to make them fertile. This herb is still referred to as "all healer" in Celtic.

Like mistletoe, holly berries were also thought to be sacred to the sun god. The original "sun log" came to be called the *Yule log*. "Yule" simply means "wheel," which has long been a pagan representation of the sun. No wonder people today commonly speak of the "*sacred yule-tide season*."

How interesting—and sobering!—are the facts of history.

The most common justification one will hear regarding Christmas is that people have *replaced* old pagan intents and customs by asserting that they are now "focusing on Jesus." I have heard many say they are "honoring Christ" in their Christmas-keeping. The problem is that God does not say this is acceptable to Him! *We saw He plainly commands against it!* Keeping Christmas *dishonors* Christ!

First, Jesus made a stunning statement—but how many believe it? He said in Matthew, “But in *vain* they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (15:9). Christmas is not a command of God, it is a tradition of men—a vain one, meaning empty or useless. Christ added this in Mark: “Full well you *reject* the commandment of God, that you may keep your *own tradition*” (7:9). Every year, throughout the world, on December 25, hundreds of millions do just that! No wonder Jesus asked this in Luke: “Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (6:46).

We saw God plainly commands, “Learn not the way of the heathen.” But most people do not fear God, and He allows them to make their own decisions. Human beings are free moral agents—free to learn or not learn what God instructs—free to obey or disobey Him!

God Warned!

Notice how specific God’s warning was to ancient Israel in Deuteronomy 12—and *why* His warning! “When the Lord your God shall cut off the nations from before you...and you succeed them, and dwell in their land; take heed to yourself that you be not snared by following them...and that you *enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise.* You shall *not* do so unto the Lord your God: for *every abomination* to the Lord, which *He hates*, have they done unto their gods...” (vs. 29-31).

Let this passage sink in. Then read Deuteronomy 20:18, which bluntly labels any practice of pagan customs to be sin. Many similar verses condemning the practices of false gods should be studied. Read Exodus 34:10-17 and chapter 23:23-33, as well as Leviticus 20:22-26, among others. These passages are so clear, so strong—and so *many!*

In the Second Commandment—forbidding all forms of idolatry—and in other passages, God declares He is a jealous God. He wants His people

doing what *HE* commands, not what false gods say!

Men want to observe their own holidays—including New Year’s and Easter, Halloween and Valentine’s Day—in place of God’s annual Holy Days, and then tell themselves that they are pleasing and worshipping the true God.

Deuteronomy 12:32 makes clear that God does not want us to mix His ways with any *false* ways: “What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: you shall not *add* thereto, nor *diminish* from it.” In other words, do *exactly* what I say—nothing more, nothing less!

These are God’s *plain words* to all who say they can mix the horrible customs of outright paganism with a supposed “focus on Jesus.” Am I a scrooge for reporting the truth? Then what about God, who declares He hates the pagan customs associated with a pagan celebration? Will you listen to confused, deceived ministers—or to *God*?

The real Jesus Christ was *never in and never will be in* Christmas! Nor can He be put back into where He never was. You cannot re-enter a house you never entered. But the “god of this world,” Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4), has *always* been in Christmas. In fact, he is seen to be its author!

The God of the Bible commands that His true worshippers “*MUST* worship Him in spirit *and in truth*” (John 4:23-24). This does not mesh with all the pagan Christmas lies.

There is no “safety in numbers” for those who keep Christmas because Satan, the Bible states, “deceives the *whole* world”! (Read Revelation 12:9.) He is also called the “father of lies” (John 8:44). Recognize that Christmas is truly a testimony to the tremendous power of deception.

Christ calls His Church a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). Other verses show this. This

Church does not have the large numbers of the respected, established brands of what can only be called humanly devised *Churchianity*. But it does obey God!

Whatever you do this season, read the booklet *The True Origin of Christmas*. You will learn Christ was not born on or near December 25—whether it is scriptural to exchange gifts—the origin of Santa Claus—about Christmas’ roots in child sacrifice, and how this connects to parents today with the Santa Claus and Christ-is-in-Christmas falsehoods—about religious leaders the Bible warns will change times and laws—and how the day is associated entirely with “another Jesus,” the one the apostle Paul directly warned against.

Jesus said twice that “you shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16, 20). Everything that people say or do, good or bad, has fruits. The *fruits* of Christmas are terrible. Christmas is about getting for the self—and pure commercialism.

This season also leads the entire year in adultery, loneliness, jealousy, drunkenness and drunk driving, family arguments (and worse), and accumulation of debt that often lasts until March. This problem is so significant that almost all churches report that their incomes *drop* during this period as people recover from all their spending!

Obey God!—and *save your money!* Reject the falsehoods about the supposed right, purpose-driven Christmas. Do not be fooled by Christian-sounding names pasted over rank paganism and idolatry.

God declares it is *sin* to observe the customs of false gods! Make yourself read this in Deuteronomy 20:18, before reading I John 3:4.

But you have only *begun* to learn the *real* origin of Christmas. I repeat, read *The True Origin of Christmas* before getting caught up in the “holiday spirit” this year. □



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INDONESIA

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ceremony was set to begin October 15, culminating in a reception at a hotel called the Swiss Bell, which also overlooked the beach.

On September 28, the couple was walking along the sandy shore after an early dinner with eight members of Mr. Nurdiansyah's family. Mr. Nurdiansyah remarked how beautiful the sunset was, and he organized a group photo.

Then, suddenly, the ground shook under their feet.

People who had been playing volleyball and relaxing in cafes along the shore began screaming, "Earthquake! Earthquake!"

As terrifying as the tremor was, Miss Cornelia and her husband-to-be thought they had escaped the disaster unharmed.

■ Quake victims are buried in a mass grave in Poboja (Oct. 2, 2018).

PHOTO: JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Shortly afterward, though, she heard a roar and turned to see a huge wave rushing toward them—the largest she had ever seen in her life. All of them began to run. The last time she saw Mr. Nurdiansyah, he was trying to scoop up two of his young nieces to save them.

Miss Cornelia, who could not swim, swallowed salt water as she was sucked beneath the powerful wave and flipped upside down, "left and right, like a spinning ball."

Somehow she found herself still somewhere on the beach, largely unscathed and able to stand up. But then a second wave struck, this one lower and much faster. The wall of water dragged her at least a mile inland, shredding her entire body—head to toe—among smashed blocks of concrete, broken wooden planks and swirling garbage.

When the water finally began to retreat, she found herself alone—pinned between a metal fence and the stage of a soccer field. A man helped her up and she limped in the darkness, past

smashed cars that had been thrown onto piles of debris and a naked man whose clothes had been ripped off by the waves.

Of the nine others who had been on the beach with her that day, only one is known to have survived—a 5-year-old niece of Mr. Nurdiansyah. Two others have been confirmed dead, while six are still missing.

At the hospital, Miss Cornelia's 44-year-old mother, Ray Djangaritu, tried to console her.

Friends had searched hospitals without luck, but maybe he was taken to another city as other wounded survivors had been, she said. Cellphone networks had been down or limited for much of the week, making it hard to communicate. "I believe he's still alive," she said.

Tears seeping from her eyes, Miss Cornelia held onto that hope.

"I still want to marry him, even if God returns him with a disability, no hands or blindness," she said. "I can see for him, as long as I am healthy." □



BREXIT

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Brexit may push them to move to an EU nation.

While the economy is a concern for the U.S.-UK special relationship, other matters may take greater importance—namely security and defense.

A report from nonprofit think tank RAND Corporation explored what post-Brexit could bring for the UK, EU and U.S.

“The US will greatly miss the influence and global perspective that the UK brings to EU decision-making, particularly around security and defense,” said Charles Ries, a vice president at RAND and lead author of the report.

He continued: “In fact, the UK’s EU membership often ensured that EU measures did not undermine NATO and the strong transatlantic partnership. The economic impact from Brexit is very much a secondary concern for the US.”

No matter how good the deal Britain receives from the EU, it will have to give up its influence on EU decision-making. It will no longer be able to debate and vote on Europe’s policy.

The RAND report stated: “Moreover, by many accounts British influence in Brussels helped restrain other EU member states’ efforts to create EU-only operational headquarters for fledgling common defense initiatives, which might have undermined parallel NATO structures.”

In addition, the report covered Russia: “Brexit could also affect the balance of EU policies towards Russia. Among important EU member states, the UK is unique in having no dependence on Russia for natural gas supplies, a result of its North Sea hydrocarbon discoveries. This strategic independence, its nuclear deterrent and the UK’s global outlook as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, have allowed it to support strong and consistent policies with respect to Russia.”

After Brexit, the U.S. will no longer have Britain’s political and military weight in Europe to advocate a strong stance against Russia.

Brother Nations

Of course, it will take more than Brexit to sever the bond between London and Washington. It may even push the UK to rely more on the U.S. in a post-Brexit world. Certainly, there will be growth pains, but the “special relationship” first formalized by Sir Winston Churchill will continue.

Churchill used this term aside the phrase “fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples” to describe the friendship between the U.S. and UK during an address at Missouri’s Westminister College in 1946.

“British Brexiteers asserted that leaving the EU would be good for the nation. The last thing Brussels wants, however, is to allow the UK to leave with a bevy of perks EU nations cannot have.”

These two nations helped defeat Nazi Germany, stood in lockstep during the Cold War, and London offered its unwavering support in the early days of the war on terror in the early 2000s.

“Historian Anthony Seldon, who is currently writing a book on the bond entitled *Special*, tells TIME that the two countries have been intimately bound together over the past century by shared history, government structures, ideals and defense cooperation,” *Time* reported.

Mr. Seldon told the magazine: “It is the norm to be close, and it happens

because of the overlap of three set of factors: a common enemy, personal chemistry and common ideological outlook.”

Yet the relationship between the U.S. and UK is anything but normal. Its ties run much deeper than typical international bonds.

There is little debate among historians that Great Britain had the largest empire the world has ever seen. And, by all measures, the United States is the wealthiest, most powerful and influential single nation of all time.

Yet few know *why* these two nations reached such heights.

The answer comes by rewinding history back before both world wars, before the American Revolution, before the Saxons invaded Britain, before the Roman Empire, before the Israelites settled in the Fertile Crescent...

Going way back to ancient times, the answer is found in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, God bestowed a special blessing upon the patriarch Abraham for his obedience. This decree passed to his son Isaac, then Jacob, who was told his descendants would become “a nation and a company of nations” (Gen. 35:11).

Scripture states that a *nation* and *company of nations* would rise on the world scene. This has only ever happened once in all of world history.

Add to this that these two world powers would come from brothers. The Abrahamic birthright blessing was passed to Jacob’s grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph. It was from this pair of siblings that would later emerge the single-greatest nation and biggest-ever company of nations of all time: the United States of America and the British Empire.

This alone explains why these two nations rose to such great heights—and why they have such an unshakable relationship.

However, the Bible also explains in detail what the future holds for these peoples. While we cannot know how Brexit will specifically affect the U.S. and UK, there is a lot we *can* know.

Read David C. Pack’s book *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabip for more. □

PERSONAL

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territory governed. And (4) a system of laws and rules with a basic structure of government.

Despite its size, when the mustard seed Kingdom arrives, it does have all four elements. When Christ repeatedly spoke of the Kingdom being “tiny” and “hidden,” He was referring to the numbers of *subjects*—which would grow dramatically in the *second* and *third* “measures of meal.” Christ’s power and the territory He will govern will be anything but tiny.

It is a literal Kingdom. Do not spiritualize it away as a church, or something “in the hearts of men.”

Three More Parables

A fifth parable shows expansion of God’s Kingdom from a small beginning, as well as something else no one seems to notice: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea...” (vs. 47). The net starts out empty. Over time it fills with fish of “every kind”—people from all nations. But not all “fish” belong: “When it was full, they drew to shore, sat down, and gathered the *good* into vessels, but cast the *bad* away. So shall it be at the end of the world [or age, when Christ moves to Jerusalem]: the angels shall come forth, and sever the *wicked* from *among the just* [note this!], and shall cast them into the furnace [or oven] of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (vs. 48-50). (The end of the wicked is incompatible with an ever-burning afterlife. For more on this, the reader will want to read our booklet *The Truth About Hell* at rcg.org/ttah.)

Abandon any notion that the Kingdom of God begins with only divine spirit beings. This parable dispels that misconception. The wicked can get into the Kingdom and must at a point be removed!

Yet another Matthew 13 parable describes wheat and poisonous tares initially growing *together* in the Kingdom of Heaven. Obviously the Kingdom is not *in* heaven. Christ instructs that

the tares must remain *with the wheat* until the *harvest*—when He shifts to Jerusalem. He explains that, at this point, as when the net is pulled to shore—after the mustard seed Kingdom has been on Earth for some time—angels gather “out of the kingdom” the tares and “all the things that offend and do iniquity,” repeating that these are burned in a furnace.

So then, the Kingdom is such that, as it grows, the wrong kinds of people can get in. Christ said this twice, using easy illustrations so the point cannot be missed. Verse 43 calls the harvest the time when the righteous in the Father’s Kingdom “shine forth as the sun.” The Greek means “become resplendent.” Other passages make clear it is at this point many more saints, people who qualified for rule in God’s Kingdom, join Christ and the Father in Jerusalem where He will superimpose His Kingdom over all nations. It will have by then sprouted into the large mustard tree that started from the smallest seed.

The very first parable in Matthew 13 brings yet another perspective, showing those who ultimately succeed in the Kingdom. Jesus spoke of a sower that cast seed, with some falling on good ground, some on stony ground, some where thorns could choke it, and some falling by the wayside. As with the wheat and tares, Jesus went on to interpret it for us: “Hear you [or understand] therefore the parable of the sower. When any one hears the *word of the kingdom*, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one [Satan], and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word [of the Kingdom], and...with joy receives it; yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word [many do not want to hear of the Kingdom], by and by he is offended” (vs. 18-21).

Notice also that tribulation and persecution are associated with subjects in the Kingdom! Yet the rewards will be awesome. No one ever hears that such a thing is possible.

Continuing the parable, “He also that received seed among the *thorns* is he that hears the [same] word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (vs. 22).

Here is the last category: “He that received seed into the *good ground* is he that hears the word [of the Kingdom], and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirty” (vs. 23). This is the only category of hearer who survives—and these thrive.

Matthew 13 alone is enough to understand that all popular Kingdom narratives are woefully incomplete—and often totally wrong! Be careful of rejecting or spiritualizing away PLAIN TEACHINGS about how God’s Kingdom will come simply because you have never heard them before—because no one else teaches them. God has *His* Church and this is where He reveals His truth.

But there is much more to learn.

The “Little Flock”

Jesus used a fascinating term to describe a group that would be the early administrators in His tiny Kingdom. Like the Kingdom itself, this group will not be large to start. In Luke 12, Jesus instructed His servants to “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to *give you the kingdom*” (vs. 32). “Little” is *mikros* in the Greek. It is a *micro*-flock that takes a *tiny* Kingdom—how logical and easy to understand!

Another parable in Luke 19 describes a nobleman (Christ) who went to a far country (heaven) to “get for himself a kingdom” (vs. 12). This parable carries an extraordinary message for Christians. It describes a judgment, a reckoning, that comes to a group of “servants” when Christ brings His Kingdom. Notice: “...when He was returned [from heaven], having *received the kingdom*, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading” (vs. 15). Some servants had passed God’s test, others failed it.

Reading the whole account reveals that those who succeed are placed over cities on Earth (not yet the entire Earth).

God has been working with people all over the world, preparing them for leadership positions in the initial phase of the Kingdom. Only after a reckoning of past performance before Christ's judgment seat (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10) will these specially called and trained servants be permitted to rule.

Matthew 25 contains a related account, in which some are told, "Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: *enter you into the joy of your lord*" (vs. 21). The "joy of the Lord" involves what is the first phase of salvation as well as receiving a part in governing what will be a fast-growing Kingdom—a role with the purpose of helping others enter the Kingdom during its first short phase, so that they also can qualify to rule at a point a little later. Anyone desiring to come into and under the Kingdom will have opportunity.

Christ as King

Jesus Christ, as King of the mustard seed Kingdom, also Himself starts "small" in how He manifests Himself in the phase leading up to His rule. The account of Christ's ascension to heaven holds an eye-opening clue that no one ever notices. The apostles asked the question: "Lord, will You at this time restore again the Kingdom to

Israel?" (Acts 1:6). After His answer it adds, "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel" (vs. 9-10). These two men, actually angels, asked, "Why stand you gazing up into heaven? This *same Jesus* [a man, *not* a spirit being in glorified form], which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come *in like manner* as you have seen Him go into heaven" (vs. 11).

The phrase "this same" in reference to Jesus is an all-important KEY. The angels were emphasizing that Jesus would return in the identical human form He had when He ascended.

It is not surprising then that Christ is so often called "the Son of Man." This is because He intends to continue (initially) His *first-century form* when He returns. Let's see more proof.

The prophet Jeremiah described Christ in His expanding Kingdom by an unusual name, while also calling Him its *King*: "Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous *Branch*, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days [at a point, but not right away] Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (23:5-6). The Hebrew for "Branch" is *sprout*. Like mustard seeds, sprouts are also tiny to begin. This "sprout" depiction is completely incompatible with

an all-powerful Jesus Christ returning in glorified form.

Ten chapters later Jeremiah adds more, confirming something crucial about sprouts: "I [will] cause the *Branch* [sprout] of righteousness to *grow up* unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness..." (33:15). The Hebrew "grow up" is simply the verb form of *sprout*. God is saying, literally, He will cause the *sprout to sprout*. Ponder the enormity of what we are being told. Jesus' role will grow from small to large.

Both accounts in Jeremiah tie the "Branch" to King David. Notice another prophecy about Christ from the angel Gabriel to Mary: "He [Christ] shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto Him 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). After His mustard seed coming, Christ sits on *King David's* throne before later assuming His *own* throne in Jerusalem (when David comes up to receive the vacated throne Jesus had just occupied).

Ponder all that you have read. Now consider that this is only a fraction of the proof—the TRUTH—of how God's Kingdom will come. Do not allow yourself to blindly hold to old beliefs or traditions. Read *How God's Kingdom Will Come – The Untold Story!* available at rcg.org/hgkwc. Take the time to prove for yourself what the Bible says about the most important events to take place in the very near future. □

How God's Kingdom Will Come *The Untold Story!*

Billions await Jesus Christ's Return to set up the Kingdom of God. But few know *how* He will do this. It will *not* happen the way most expect. This booklet contains the incredible, *never-before-told* story of how God's Kingdom will be established over all nations!



WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

Florida Panhandle, Carolinas Suffer After Unprecedented Storms

Crews with backhoes and other heavy equipment scooped up splintered boards, broken glass, chunks of asphalt and other debris in hurricane-flattened Mexico Beach as the mayor held out hope for the 250 or so residents who may have tried to ride out the storm.

The Florida Panhandle town of about 1,000 people took a direct hit from Hurricane Michael and its 155-mph winds.

Days after the storm struck, a large swath of the Panhandle was suffering, from little beach towns to the larger Panama City to rural communities miles from where the hurricane came ashore.

In downtown Marianna, Florida, the facades of historic buildings lay in pieces on the ground across from the courthouse. Some victims stranded by the storm managed to summon relief by using logs to spell out “HELP” on the ground.

For the few residents remaining in Mexico Beach, conditions were treacherous.

Resident Steve Lonigan and his wife returned after evacuating to Georgia. Seawater surged into his home, leaving a soggy mess of mud and leaves, even though the house stands 12 feet above ground on concrete blocks.

The single-story house had broken windows, and part of its roof and front steps were missing. Mr. Lonigan used a ladder to climb inside.

“We’ve got a lot more left than other people,” he said. “We were able to sleep in the bedroom last night.”

Poor Building Codes

Unlike in South Florida, homes in the state’s Panhandle did not have tighter building codes until just 11 years ago; it was once argued that acres of forests would provide the region with a natural barrier against the savage winds of a hurricane.



■ Top, damaged homes in Mexico Beach, Florida, in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael (Oct. 12, 2018). Bottom, the Lumber River overflows onto an interstate stretch in Lumberton, North Carolina (Sept. 18, 2018).

PHOTOS: AP/DAVID GOLDMAN/ (TOP); AP/GERRY BROOME/ (BOTTOM)



Many of those structures did not withstand the fury of Hurricane Michael, which slammed into the area with winds of up to 155 mph, leaving acres of flattened houses and other buildings in its wake before roaring across the Georgia border inland.

“We’re learning painfully that we shouldn’t be doing those kinds of exemptions,” said Don Brown, a former legislator from the Panhandle who now sits on the Florida Building Commission. “We are vulnerable as any other part of the state. There was this whole notion that the trees were going to help us, take the wind out of the storm. Those trees become projectiles and flying objects.”

Though Michael’s winds were particularly fierce, any boost in the level of safety requirements for builders could help homes better withstand hurricanes.

Tom Lee, a homebuilder and legislator, says past hurricanes have shown time and time again that the stricter codes help. He said after such previous storms, he could see during flyovers which homes were built before the new code.

“The structural integrity of our housing stock is leaps and bounds beyond what it was,” Mr. Lee said.

The codes call for shatterproof windows, fortified roofs and reinforced concrete pillars, among other specifications. But it was not until 2007 that homes built in the Panhandle more than one mile from shore were required to follow the higher standards. Hurricane Michael pummeled the region with devastating winds from the sea all the way into Georgia, destroying buildings more than 70 miles from the shoreline.

Mexico Beach, the Gulf Coast town destroyed by Michael, lacked a lot of new or retrofitted construction, said Craig Fugate, the former director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and a former emergency management chief for the state of Florida. The small seaside community had a lot of older mobile homes and low-income year-round residents working in the commercial fishing and service industries.

“Quiet, idyllic, what I call ‘Old Florida,’” Mr. Fugate said. “This is not a bunch of high rises or brand new developments.”

Ill-prepared for Florence

After battering Florida, Hurricane Michael pushed deeper into the American South, which was still recovering from flooding leftover from Hurricane Florence.

One meteorologist calculated Florence as the nation’s second-rainiest storm in 70 years. The slow-moving cyclone dumped nearly three feet of rain in parts of North Carolina and nearly two feet in sections of South Carolina. For weeks after the storm passed, floodwaters and swollen rivers blocked roadways, complicated rescue efforts and kept many evacuees from returning.

Many residents chose to stay behind when meteorologists downgrade the storm from a powerful Category 4 to a Category 1 with 90-mph winds.

People can be lulled into thinking a hurricane is less dangerous when the rating of a storm is reduced. But those ratings are based on wind strength, not rainfall or storm surge—and water is responsible for 90 percent of storm deaths.

Several meteorologists and disaster experts said something needs to change with the 47-year-old Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale to reflect the real risks in hurricanes. They point to Florence, last year’s Hurricane Harvey, 2012’s Sandy and 2008’s Ike as storms where the official Saffir-Simpson category did not quite convey the danger because of its emphasis on wind.

“The concept of saying ‘downgraded’ or ‘weakened’ should be forever banished,” said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd. “With Florence, I felt it was more dangerous after it was lowered to Category 2.”

Hurricane Florence’s death toll stands at 48 in three states—with the most in South Carolina. According to most recent number, Hurricane Michael killed 35 people. □

HEALTH ISSUES

Excessive Drinking Killed Over 3 Million in One Year

Geneva (AP) – Drinking too much alcohol killed more than 3 million people in 2016, mostly men, the World Health Organization said.

The UN health agency also warned that current policy responses are not sufficient to reverse trends predicting an increase in consumption over the next 10 years.

In a report, the agency said that about 237 million men and 46 million women faced alcohol problems, with the highest prevalence in Europe and the Americas. Europe has the highest global per capita alcohol consumption, even though it has already dropped by 10 percent since 2010.

Around a third of alcohol-related deaths were a result of injuries, including automobile crashes and self-harm, while about one in five were due to either digestive disorders or cardiovascular diseases. Cancers, infectious diseases, mental disorders

and other health conditions were also to blame.

“Far too many people, their families and communities suffer the consequences of the harmful use of alcohol through violence, injuries, mental health problems and diseases like cancer and stroke,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of WHO. “It’s time to step up action to prevent this serious threat to the development of healthy societies.”

The average daily consumption of alcohol by people who consume it is about two glasses of wine, a large bottle of beer or two shots of spirits. Globally, about 2.3 billion people are current drinkers.

“The policy responses which are currently in place in countries are definitely not sufficient to reverse the trends, which we observe in several parts of the world, or to improve significantly this situation,” Dr. Vladimir Poznyak,

coordinator of WHO’s management of substance abuse unit, told reporters.

“When we look at the trends of alcohol consumption in many countries from 2000, you can see ups and downs—which are determined by different factors,” said Dr. Poznyak, citing countries’ levels of social development, economic backdrops, policy measures and cultural trends.

He said the data showed, for example, that alcohol consumption tends to drop in countries facing an economic crisis.

The Distilled Spirits Council, which advocates for the industry in the U.S., said in a statement it supports the WHO’s goal to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.

“However, we are concerned that some policy recommendations such as increasing alcohol taxes are misguided and don’t effectively address harmful consumption,” it said. □

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

South Africa’s Murder Rate Up Nearly 7 Percent

Johannesburg (AP) – South Africa’s already high murder rate has increased by about 7 percent, prompting the police minister to compare the situation to a “war zone.”

Police released crime statistics showing 20,336 people were murdered in South Africa between April 2017

and March 2018, compared to 19,016 in the previous year. The new total represents an average of 56 murders a day.

The murder rate was 35.2 per 100,000—more than six times the rate of the United States.

The police minister, Bheki Cele, says the high murder rate “borders

close to the war zone—while there is peace and there is no war.”

Many murders were linked to gang violence in Western Cape province, whose capital is Cape Town.

A parliamentary committee says police efforts to deal with the problem have been ineffective and that commanders should strengthen the law enforcement presence in crime hotspots.

Bloomberg reported: “Efforts to fight crime were hampered by repeated changes to top management at law enforcement agencies during former President Jacob Zuma’s almost nine-year tenure, while a stagnating economy and inflation-beating increases for state workers left little room in the budget to retain and hire officers.”

South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world, and it has been steadily increasing since 2011. □

■ People walk the streets of an impoverished and gang-ridden suburb of Cape Town, South Africa (July 14, 2016).

PHOTO: RODGER BOSCH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Isolated and Unseen, Yemenis Eat Leaves to Stave Off Famine



PHOTO: ESSA AHMED/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cairo (AP) – In a remote pocket of northern Yemen, many families with starving children have nothing to eat but the leaves of a local vine, boiled into a sour, acidic green paste. International aid agencies have been caught off guard by the extent of the suffering there as parents and children waste away.

The main health center in Aslam district was flooded with dozens of emaciated children during a visit by *The Associated Press*. Excruciatingly thin toddlers, eyes bulging, sat in a plastic washtub used in a make-shift scale as nurses weighed them one by one. Their papery skin was stretched tight over pencil-like limbs and knobby knees. Nurses measured their forearms, just a few centimeters in diameter, marking the worst stages of malnutrition.

In one nearby village, a 7-month-old girl, Zahra, cries and reaches with her bony arms for her mother to feed her. Her mother is undernourished herself and is often unable to breastfeed Zahra. She cannot afford formula for her baby.

“Since the day she was born, I have not had the money to buy her milk or buy her medicine,” the mother said.

Zahra was treated at the health center. Now at home, she is dwindling away again. With no money, her parents cannot afford to hire a car or motorbike take her back to the clinic.

If they do not, Zahra will die, said Mekkiya Mahdi, the health center chief.

“We are in the 21st century, but this is what the war did to us,” Ms. Mahdi said. After she tours villages and sees people living off the leaf paste, “I go home and I can’t put food in my mouth.”

The worsening hunger in Aslam is a sign of the gaps in an international aid system that is already overwhelmed and under pressure from local authorities. Yet outside aid is the only thing standing between Yemen’s people and widespread death from starvation. The conditions in the district may also be an indication that the warnings humanitarian officials have sounded for months are coming true: In the face of unending war, hunger’s spread is outstripping efforts to keep people alive.

Malnourished children who were previously treated return to clinics in

even worse condition—if they make it back at all.

“Deaths happen in remote villages where people can’t reach the health units,” Mr. al-Shamshan said. “It’s a steady deterioration and it’s scary,” he said.

Yemen’s civil war has wrecked the impoverished country’s already fragile ability to feed its population. The war pits Shiite rebels known as Houthis, who hold the north, against a Saudi-led coalition. The coalition has sought to bomb the rebels into submission with an air campaign in support of Yemeni government forces.

Around 2.9 million women and children are acutely malnourished; another 400,000 children with severe malnourishment are fighting for their lives, which are only a step away from starvation.

The number of people nationwide who would starve if they did not receive aid grew by a quarter over the past year, now standing at 8.4 million of Yemen’s 29 million people, according to UN figures.

“Aslam is just another picture of Somalia,” said Saleh al Faqih, a worker in a mobile Health Ministry clinic, comparing it to the Horn of Africa nation often hit by famines.

Aslam’s main health center has no pediatricians, no electricity, no oxygen cylinders. At night, medics use flash lights because there is no fuel for generators. Fathers beg in the nearby market for 300 riyals—around 50 U.S. cents—to buy a diaper for their child going into the center.

Before the war, the center would see one or two malnourished children a month. In August alone, it received 99 cases, nearly half of them in the most severe stages, the center’s nutrition chief Khaled Hassan said. Even after treatment, children often deteriorate once again when they go home to villages with no food and contaminated water. □



The Missing Ingredient for Good Health

The human body needs a certain amount of nutrients, vitamins and minerals every day to function well. But there is one essential element of physical wellbeing that is largely ignored: GOD'S WORD. Its pages contain vital guidelines on good health that, if followed, will help you to be happy and brimming with life.

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