

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2020

THE

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# REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



# CHINA'S IDENTITY CRISIS

**Is God Liberal or  
Conservative?**

History or Hatred?  
*The War Over Confederate Statues*

**Life in Mosul:  
Inside a Proxy Battle**

Depressed or Not,  
This Is for You

THE  
**REAL TRUTH**<sup>™</sup>  
A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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■ A police officer photographs the statue of Colonel Charles Didier Dreux, a Confederate officer, after it was pulled from its pedestal in New Orleans, Louisiana (July 10, 2020).

PHOTO: MICHAEL DEMOCKER/GETTY IMAGES

**History or Hatred?  
*The War Over Confederate Statues***

The fight over racial equality in the United States is prompting the removal of statues of controversial historical figures. Is this all about making amends or erasing history?

**Page 8**

**FRONT COVER:** Soldiers march in front of the flag of the Communist Party of China.

ILLUSTRATION: SARAH O. VIDAL

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***Personal from the Editor-in-Chief***  
**Why Bible Prophecy?**  
**Page 1**

**Is God Liberal or Conservative?**  
Politicians often use the Bible to prove a point. Here's the problem with that...  
**Page 4**

**Life in Mosul: Inside the Proxy Battle that Keeps an Iraqi City on Its Knees**  
**Page 12**

**China's Identity Crisis**  
How much longer can the Asian nation straddle socialism and capitalism?  
**Page 16**

**The Allure of Witchcraft**  
Witchcraft has been on the rise over recent years. What drives people to yearn for the dark arts?  
**Page 20**

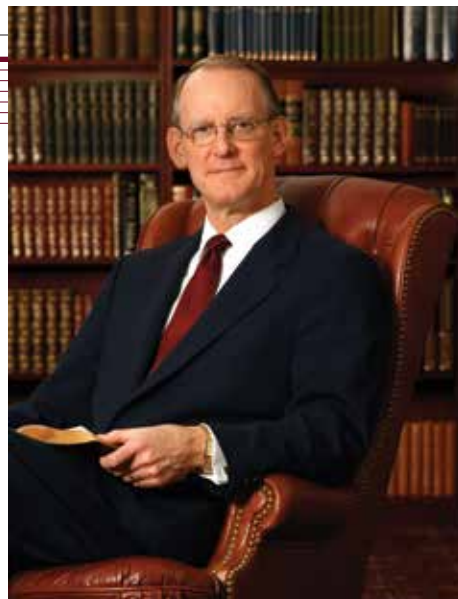
**Back to the Marriage Basics**  
**Page 24**

**Depressed or Not, This Is for You.**  
Are you depressed? Is someone you know depressed? How do you know? Understanding this mood disorder is important for all of us.  
**Page 26**

**World News Desk**  
**Page 33**

## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Why Bible Prophecy?

**E**VERYONE WANTS to know what the future holds. Most have *no idea*. So many are *confused*, not knowing where to turn for *answers* to the GREAT QUESTIONS about the future!

Suppose you could know the direction and *conclusion* of world events—*world history*—before the outcome. What if you could know the courses of nations in advance? Imagine knowing tomorrow’s biggest headlines before they come to pass, and how events will affect *you*, and all human beings, *personally*.

About one-third of the Bible is prophecy—history written in advance. Over four-fifths of this *future history* is yet to be fulfilled. Tragically, most Bible readers are unaware of awesome, impending world events, soon to involve all nations. Vast sections of Scripture remain outside their understanding—completely hidden to them.

Here is why God records prophecy in His Word—and the keys to unlocking it!

### Who Is It For?

Many have opinions about Bible prophecy, but few know how to find real answers. Others think they already understand prophecies of the Bible, but are ignorant of vital *life-changing* knowledge.

Any study of prophecy begins with the definition of what it is. Most lack even this most basic knowledge.

Bible prophecy is “the inspired, divine revelation or foretelling of historical events, written *in advance* of those events, pertaining to the unfolding of God’s Plan for mankind.” A shorter definition is “foretelling the future.”

Prophecy is factual history *recorded in advance*! God foretells major events *before* they happen. He wants His servants to know what the future holds—what lies ahead for the world. The Bible is about 750,000 words. This means 250,000 are devoted to prophecy. With over 80 percent unfulfilled, many major events must yet come to pass.

Let’s ask: What purpose would God have for devoting so much of His divine Word to a subject, and then leave mankind in the *dark* about it?

What keys unlock Bible prophecy?

The **FIRST KEY** is that prophecy is for God’s servants—no one else. Many have been taught or believe that God’s intention is to leave all prophecy *sealed*, closed from understanding. Yet the introduction to the book of Revelation shows God’s intent is to reveal to “His servants” what lies ahead for all nations. The apostle John records, “The Revelation [meaning a *revealing*] of Jesus Christ [not John]...to show unto *His servants* things which must shortly come to pass...signified...unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ...Blessed is he that *reads*, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: *for the time is at hand*” (Rev. 1:1-3). The end of Revelation states for emphasis: “*Seal not* the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (22:10).

How many have known this? More important, how many have concerned themselves with whether or not they truly are God's servants? Be careful assuming who is.

Obviously, none can keep the prophecies of Revelation, or any others, unless they understand them. God must provide the necessary *clues* to make this possible. You are about to learn them.

Notice that Matthew 24:15 concludes referring to "Daniel the prophet" and the admonition "whoso reads, let him understand." Most will never understand the events soon to smash into civilization. Here is one big reason. God's servants obey Him (Acts 5:32). Understanding flows from obedience to God. Notice: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a *good understanding* have all they that do His commandments" (Psa. 111:10).

Grasp this. All real understanding of God's Plan and spiritual truth comes from God. It is only the action of His Spirit that opens one's eyes. Notice: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ... give unto you the *spirit of wisdom* and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the *eyes* of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:17-18).

All who yield themselves in obedience to God, wishing to be His servants will come to understand all the great prophecies to be fulfilled in the last days—prophecies now almost upon us! Professing Christianity refuses to obey God, rejecting His authority over them—and remains blind as a result. No amount of puzzling over prophetic passages will unlock God's purpose to those who ignore His commands.

The great *first* key then to grasping the meaning of biblical prophecies—small and large—is that they are intended for, and will only be understood by, God's people—those who truly obey Him. All others will remain in confusion, mangling and misunderstanding the great, world-shattering events that will soon directly impact every person on the planet!

### All Prophecy Sealed Until "the End"

A crucial SECOND KEY must be identified by all seeking to grasp God's end-

time purpose. Without it, nations have remained in *total blindness* regarding even the question of human survival. Scales cover their eyes. Of course, unable to understand, cynics and skeptics have dismissed all the prophecies of the Old Testament as dusty, antiquated, "old Hebrew literature and poetry, of no use to us today."

They will soon learn how terribly wrong they have been—and how they should have done much more homework while they could!

Note this second *key* well, for few have understood it. Most major prophecies of the Bible have been sealed by God until the "time of the end"—the "last days." This key speaks to the group that says prophecy is sealed. Close to the truth, they have missed a central point. All the great prophecies are no longer sealed!

You do not need to take my word for it. The prophet Daniel makes this point plain—for all who will believe it. Recognize as we read in a moment that God is speaking through Daniel, rather than Daniel giving some personal opinion about future events.

Daniel's book spans over 2,500 years, detailing the fulfillment of events then *all* yet to occur. Generations of Bible students, unwilling to believe God—and of all stripes of belief and practice contrary to God—have attempted to interpret Daniel's prophecy. All have failed, resulting in endless disagreement and confusion.

An angel instructed Daniel at the end of his prophecy: "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the *time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:4). (Seven times, in just this one chapter, it speaks of the "end," "time of the end," or when all things would be "finished.")

Unsatisfied, and not grasping what he was told, Daniel again sought to understand: "I heard [he writes], but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the *end of these things?*" (vs. 8).

The angel repeated: "Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many

shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; *but the wise shall understand*" (vs. 9-10). Remember Jesus was citing Daniel when He repeated that "the wise shall understand" events to occur at the end of the age. And also remember, God says obedience brings understanding. No wonder Daniel adds, "none of the *wicked* shall understand." Any who rebel against God's Law, regardless of how they see themselves, fall into this category.

Daniel foretells a time when "knowledge shall increase." His book reveals the compelling—electrifying—story of what God plans to do in our time. Daniel's message had no application for his own time!

God's promise was to *unseal* the prophecy when the end time arrived!

So, the SECOND VITAL KEY to properly understanding Bible prophecy is that *all previous generations*—of even God's true servants—had *no chance*—none!—to comprehend events in Daniel's book, or passages related to it.

The Bible's greatest prophecies now thunder a powerful warning to all who will hear—and heed!

### A "Sure Word"

The apostle Peter wrote how God intends that prophecy illuminate the understanding of those who study it: "We have also a more *sure word of prophecy*; whereunto you *do well* that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place..." (II Pet. 1:19). This verse reveals God's purpose—His "sure word of prophecy," bringing "light" to "dark places"—so people will "take heed." You must be willing to heed what is written.

Now continue: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (vs. 20). This is crucial. No single verse—or even any two or three passages—is enough to bring full, correct prophetic understanding on big events.

Grasp this. *All* verses on every aspect of prophecy must be carefully

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 31

**HUMAN SUFFERING, VIOLENCE,  
WAR, CRIME, DISEASE, TERROR,  
FAMINE, POVERTY, RELIGIOUS  
CONFUSION, POLLUTION, FLOODS,  
UNREST, POLITICAL UPHEAVAL,  
FIRES, VANDALS, DROUGHT,  
OVERPOPULATION, ILLITERACY,  
CORRUPTION, CONVERSION,  
WEATHER, CLIMATE  
CHANGES**



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# IS GOD LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?

Politicians often use the Bible to prove a point. Here's the problem with that...

**W**HO DOES THE Christian God side with in U.S. politics? Perhaps the makeup of Congress can help reveal the answer. In the House of Representatives, among the members who identify as Christian, 279 are Democrats and 258 are Republicans. In the Senate, 46 have a “D” next to their name, and 66 have an “R.”

Added up, the Democrat-Republican divide is 325 to 324, respectively. Nearly split down the middle—and no help to answer the question at hand!

What about looking at the teachings of specific denominations in modern Christianity? When looking

at each one's view on specific political issues, does God land on the left or right?

We will find little help here either. Ever since Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation and groups broke off from the Catholic Church, Christianity has fractured into hundreds of separate groups, each with their own ideas.

Even *within* specific branches of Christianity, there is a diversity of political leanings. Just look at Lutherans in the United States. The three main synods are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. ELCA takes a liberal view that women can be ordained, does not condemn homosexuality, and believes

the Bible should not always be taken literally. LCMS is somewhere in the middle. It condemns same-sex relations and believes God's Word is literal. WELS is the most conservative and does not even recognize the other two synods as Lutherans.

It gets even more complex from here on out. The biggest wrinkle comes when attempting to define what liberal and conservative even mean.

Both political ideologies came into their own around the time of the American Revolution, with their main goals to remove tyrant rulers. Historically, conservatives stick to long-held traditions and distrust sudden change to society. This viewpoint tends to steer clear of what are seen as abstract, “high-minded” ideas, and favors limited government. Liberals

also originally believed in small government, while emphasizing the rights of the individual. Liberalism is more receptive to societal change due to technological advances and shifts in morals.

Simplified, conservatives continue with what has worked in the past, slowly offering new changes. Liberals tap into intellectual arguments and theories to bring about swifter change and “justice for all.”

Many of America’s Founding Fathers borrowed from both camps. On some issues, they leaned conservative. On others, they shifted liberal. Much of early United States history was formed along this line of thinking.

The rift between these viewpoints suddenly widened in the early 20th century. Many liberals felt limited government intervention allowed the wealthy to grow too rich, perpetuating a societal imbalance and exploiting the poor.

To correct this, a new form of liberalism was born: the social liberal. This meant government intervention was necessary to take from the rich (usually through higher taxes) and redistribute the funds to the poor. This thinking was behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society program, which gave rise to Medicare and Medicaid.

With each passing year, ideals of both conservatives and liberals evolve into increasingly varied and complex forms. Rather than reaching a consensus, individual ideas continuously result in the birth of disagreeing factions. Now there are neo-conservatives, classical liberals, libertarians, green liberals, traditionalist conservatives, and so on.

There are even liberal conservatives and conservative liberals!

When examining the modern religious and political landscapes, the answer to the titular question becomes painfully obvious: NEITHER. The God of the Bible transcends political squabbles and interdenominational wrangling.

Yet just because God does not skew right or left, it does not mean you cannot know who and what He is—and

His view on the many problems facing mankind.

### God’s Perspective

As recorded in the Old Testament, God revealed His Law to ancient Israel. Comprised of commandments, statutes, judgments and precepts, God’s Law evidences His viewpoints on a wide range of civic, social, environmental and other issues.

In revealing the Ten Commandments to the Israelites (Ex. 20:1-17), God established that there is right and wrong behavior. He also explained there are penalties—swift punishment!—when one breaks His laws (Lev. 26:14-39). All this would seem to align God’s views with traditional conservative ideas.

On the other hand, God also explains that He is merciful and gracious (Psa. 116:5). He promises to bless and care for those who heed Him (Deut. 28:1-14). He also says that He watches over the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners among His people. This would seem to place Him strongly in the camp for the “social justice” Christians.

In addition, God proclaims His love for all human beings and countries (John 3:16), going so far as to promise that, one day, *all nations* will be blessed (Gen. 26:4). His love and compassion extend so far that He promises to do away with all pain, sorrow and death (Rev. 21:4).

However, this same God who explains that He *is love* (I John 4:8) also announces that He will bring His furious wrath upon those who disobey Him (Nah. 1:2). He will “by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7) and will bring destruction on the wicked (Psa. 37:20).

God’s unique and perfectly balanced combination of compassion and swift justice is unseen in the political philosophies of men.

### Using Moderation

To those reared in traditional Christianity, many of these verses might seem to contradict the concept of God they have been taught all their lives—a deity who has never matured

beyond the point of a moody teenager. The world’s ministers, pastors and religionists teach either an out-of-control, fire-and-brimstone “God” who devours those who upset Him—or a pacifist, weak, “come as you are,” permissive “God” who allows everyone to do whatever they please, as long as they “just have love.”

Both extremes completely contradict the true God of the Bible, who exercises perfect moderation, judgment and discernment in all His decisions. In every aspect of life—whether personal, social or educational—God demonstrates both liberal and conservative thinking. If this sounds strange, recognize this: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

God does not limit His ability to make correct and just decisions by locking Himself into any of man’s political ideologies.

### Fiscal Responsibility and Service

Citing III John 1:2, many churches correctly teach that God wants Christians to be blessed and prosperous. Yet these same religious organizations often neglect to teach that He requires people to do their part—to work hard, save their income and be wise stewards (or managers) of their personal finances.

Few today understand God has a detailed financial system that, when obeyed, yields blessings. The core component of this system is tithing. God wants men to demonstrate their ability to save money and “stretch a dollar” by giving Him the first 10 percent of their income. In return, He promises those who trust Him wonderful blessings and a significant gain on investment (Mal. 3:8-10).

God’s financial system also includes mercy upon the poor and those who struggle with economic difficulties. He commands men to not oppress the impoverished by exacting interest from them (Ex. 22:25), and to mete out debt relief by a fair and forgiving standard

(Deut. 15:1-2). In addition, all citizens are to do their part in taking care of the poor by making sure their needs are met (vs. 7-11).

For instance, God required farmers to leave enough crops during the harvest season “for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow” for their food (Deut. 24:19-22). However, these same disadvantaged people had to labor—they had to work in the fields and glean the crops for themselves.

Clearly, *both* sides of the political and social spectrum—conservative investment and fiscal responsibility on the one hand, relieving the poor on the other—are simultaneously reflected within God’s view on money.

### Crime and Punishment

Modern criminal justice systems struggle with how to effectively uphold the laws of the land. Some governments follow a permissive course, such as tolerating illegal drug use and other social ills. Other governments exact terrible punishment for the simplest infractions—and even punish victims of the crimes along with the criminals who committed them.

Many legal systems find themselves powerless in punishing criminals, with the most horrific offenders sometimes released without punishment.

Even those who are imprisoned live comfortable lives often better than those in ghettos and other dying com-

munities that inspired them to a life of crime in the first place.

As well, the slow process of court systems, legal battles and appeals often takes years—allowing criminals to gloss over the whole purpose of reform. As a result, Ecclesiastes 8:11 becomes reality: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

In contrast to these extremes, God designed a balanced system of justice and equity. He explains that the penalty for any crime should be as serious as the original infraction (Ex. 21:23-25), and that some crimes require the perpetrator to restore more than the initial damages (22:1).

# RELIGION **AND THE** 2020 ELECTION

**P**RESIDENT DONALD Trump’s appeal to religious conservatives is a cornerstone of his political identity. But Joe Biden is a different kind of foe than Mr. Trump has faced before: one who makes faith a central part of his persona—often literally wearing it on his sleeve.

In fact, Mr. Biden’s practice of carrying a rosary that belonged to his late son Beau caught the attention of one of his Democratic presidential rivals when the two were awaiting a debate last year. Standing backstage next to Mr. Biden, Pete Buttigieg asked the lifelong Catholic about the prayer beads and fell into a conversation about loss, family and faith.

Mr. Biden “often talks about the comfort and meaning that he’s drawn from faith,” said Mr. Buttigieg, Mr. Biden’s primary rival-turned-endorser. “That’s something that will resonate with Americans a lot more than usual.”

Democrats are betting on Mr. Biden’s evident comfort with faith as a powerful point of contrast with Mr. Trump. The faith-focused work underway within Mr. Biden’s campaign suggests that, while he may not significantly undercut the president’s popularity among white evangelicals, he could chip away at Mr. Trump’s base by appealing to pockets of conservative faithful.

Mr. Biden’s identity as “a very devout Catholic and person of deep faith,” deputy political director John McCarthy said, is “baked into the core messaging and core functions of the campaign.”

Mr. Biden has framed his presidential bid as a fight for “the soul of the nation,” a subtle invocation of the Catholic beliefs that have guided his life. His campaign has released three digital ads focused on faith, including one crediting his religious practices with instilling a “sense of solace.”

It is a notable contrast with Hillary Clinton, who lost in 2016 after a campaign that largely sidelined her Methodist faith.

As Mr. Trump promises to be evangelicals’ “champion” on policy, Mr. Biden is making a less transactional play for religious support, betting that a beliefs-focused brand will be more persuasive than agreement on an agenda.

“For faith and values voters,” Mr. McCarthy said, Mr. Biden’s spiritual authenticity is “the quality they’re looking for.” They might disagree on a particular issue, he added, but can connect with Mr. Biden through a shared worldview.

That often may depend on the issue in question. The presumptive nominee’s shift leftward on federal funding for abortions is a potential liability with evangelicals as well as many Catholics, for example.

But Mr. Biden has used moral language and quoted Pope Francis when discussing other issues that many Catholics do support, such as immigration reform, expanding health care access and tackling climate change.



## Natural Resources

The world's religions and philosophies often profess extreme and opposing opinions regarding the environment and wildlife. Some believe the entire Earth is sacred and therefore man should not harm it—even going so far as to not eat animals or tap natural resources. At the other extreme are those who believe animals can be slaughtered without cause, and that all the Earth's resources are man's to squander without repercussion.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God says that He gave man dominion over the Earth and over all the animals (1:26-30). This includes the Earth's natural resources. God also gave certain

animals for man's diet, and explicitly outlined which animals can and should not be eaten (Lev. 11).

Concerning natural resources, God also set a clear example for using these resources by commanding that Noah's ark, as well as articles in the Holy Tabernacle, be constructed of fine wood, precious metals and the best materials available (Gen. 6:14; Ex. 25-27).

Along with using natural resources, mankind is charged with taking care of the Earth (Gen. 2:15). Part of this responsibility includes giving the land a rest from farming every seventh year (Lev. 25:1-4).

Clearly, God's view is to conserve the land. He created the Earth to be properly used, not abused.

## No More Doubt

Religionists of traditional and modern Christianity selectively choose which of God's views and laws to preach, and which ones to ignore. So do those of the conservative right and liberal left who turn to churches and religious leaders for political support.

Thankfully, the God who hates evil (Prov. 8:13) and yet is reasonable—who says to all who are willing, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18)—will soon establish His government upon the Earth. It will administer true justice and equity for all nations.

And there will never again be any doubt as to whether God is liberal or conservative in His ways. □

"My faith teaches me that we should be a nation that not only accepts the truth of the climate crisis, but leads the world in addressing it," Mr. Biden wrote in a *Religion News Service* editorial.

As the coronavirus pandemic and unrest over racial injustice roil Mr. Trump's presidency, Mr. Biden's team sees an opening to claim the moral high ground. Joshua DuBois, who led religious outreach for former President Barack Obama, described the political climate as "the perfect storm" for the president.

Mr. Biden could make "small but meaningful gains" among white evangelicals, whose support for Mr. Trump has fluctuated by as many as 15 points in recent polls, by contrasting himself as "the type of person who's going to speak to our better angels," Mr. DuBois said.

The campaign has yet to match the denomination-level outreach that Mr. Obama's 2008 team deployed, beyond releasing a specific agenda aimed at fellow Catholics, but insiders say that is by design. Mr. McCarthy said the campaign bakes religious elements into other programs, holding faith-focused calls with LGBTQ, Asian American, African American, Latino, Jewish and Muslim communities, among other constituencies.

As for evangelicals, Mr. McCarthy said the campaign is targeting three subgroups that may be more on the fence: Latinos, white suburban women and youth, whom surveys have shown to lean less conservative.

The campaign signaled its seriousness in July with the hiring of Josh Dickson to oversee faith engagement. Mr. Dickson, a former Republican who declared in 2012 that "I'm a Democrat because of my evangelical faith," previously worked on religious outreach for the Democratic National Committee and President Obama's 2012 campaign.

"Faith-motivated voters—including those traditionally more moderate and conservative—are especially eager to see a President who both shares and leads with the values important to them," Mr. Dickson said in a statement. "Vice President Biden has stood and fought for these values—loving our neighbor, caring for the poor and vulnerable, fighting against injustice and oppression—his entire career."

It is a strategy that aims for marginal gains with evangelicals.

"We are going to go after every vote, but I do not think we will suddenly win the evangelical vote with 80 percent," Mr. McCarthy acknowledged.

Indeed, in a recent survey by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center, 7 in 10 evangelicals approved of Mr. Trump's handling of the presidency.

Meanwhile the GOP is stepping up efforts to court evangelicals of color. Thousands of Hispanic faith leaders and congregants have participated in Trump Victory Committee events, with specific programming focused on evangelicals, Republican National Committee spokeswoman Mandi Merritt said.

Tony Perkins, a prominent conservative evangelical Trump backer, said evangelicals backed the GOP overwhelmingly in 2016 not "because they embraced everything about the president [but] because they embraced what he was going to do."

"Evangelicals are focusing on the policy," added Mr. Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.

Mr. Biden's team has also worked with African American pastors in multiple states, building on a connection that helped vault him to the nomination. It hired a Muslim outreach director in March and a Jewish outreach director in July. □



# HISTORY OR HATRED?

## The War Over Confederate Statues

The fight over racial equality in the United States is prompting the removal of statues of controversial historical figures. Is this all about making amends or erasing history?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

**T**HE CONDEMNATION of Confederate statues and monuments in the United States technically started the moment they began appearing shortly following the Civil War.

Yet the smoldering debate was rekindled in 2015, when a Confederate-flag-promoting white

supremacist murdered nine black church members in Charleston, South Carolina. The perpetrator's stated motive was to start a race war in America. Things heated up further in 2017 when white nationalists clashed with protesters over the removal of General Robert E. Lee's statue from a park in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Everything exploded in 2020 following the death of George Floyd—a black man killed by a white police officer—all caught on video.

Floyd's death pushed people over the edge. They were no longer willing to just rely on impassioned demonstrations for such memorials to be removed. Citizens of all races took it upon themselves to pull down or deface Civil War monuments all over the United States.

■ The American flag flies behind the statue of Confederate General Thomas Stonewall Jackson at the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia (Aug. 16, 2017).

PHOTOS: TY WRIGHT/GETTY IMAGES

The mayors of New Orleans and Baltimore removed every Confederate monument from their cities in reaction to the national outcry. Other leaders of towns in Alabama, Kentucky, Florida and Virginia did the same. But statues are not coming down fast enough for many protesters. Citizens are skipping the legislative rigmarole and ripping them down themselves.

Of course, this comes with obvious dangers. There is the hazard of getting hurt taking down the gigantic structures or being injured during the vandalism and rioting that often accompanies these demonstrations.

Yet others feel this mob justice carries other dangers: that the movement could go too far and wipe out history.

Needless to say, this conflict is far from over. A 2019 study by the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 780 Confederate statues or monuments at county courthouses, town squares, state capitols and other public venues in 23 states and the District of Columbia. Most are in the 11 Southern states that seceded from the Union prior to the Civil War.

Scores of these monuments promote Civil War battles or the heroism and valor of soldiers fighting for the South. Some, however, go further by glorifying the core values of the Confederacy.

An example is a memorial in Abbeville, South Carolina, erected in 1906, with this inscription: “The world shall yet decide, in truth’s clear, far-off light, that the soldiers who wore the gray, and died with Lee, were in the right.”

Few quotes better summarize the dispute over Confederate monuments as “symbols of heritage” versus “symbols of hate.”

### **Symbols of History?**

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, professor of history, race and public policy at Harvard University, explained to *Time* what drives the thinking of the protesters pulling down statues: “Activists and organizers and people who are part of these racial-justice movements, including young white people, rec-

ognize that we can’t change policing in America until we change the culture of America, and the culture of America has been deeply steeped in white supremacist celebration and racist norms, of which Confederate monuments are the most visible symbols.”

“The point of removing the monuments is to move from symbolism of racism to the substance of racism,” he added.

But not all Americans are on board with these radical changes. Many Southerners see it as a blatant attempt to eliminate their history and identity.

“Confederate monuments are important to Southerners, and that’s because...from my Southern point of view, the history that has been taught in our schools is history from the victors’ point of view,” James Ronald Kennedy of the Sons of Confederate Veterans told *Business Insider*. He believes these monuments represent Southern values and disagrees that slavery was the principle cause of the Civil War.

“Those monuments were to honor the memory of men who fought for their principles—for the principles of constitutional liberty, the principles of which this country was founded. Just because they didn’t win, that doesn’t mean they weren’t right.”

“When slanderous accusations are made against the South” he continued, “they’re made against us personally, it’s personal.”

Amanda Chase, a Republican state senator from Virginia, was more blunt: “It’s all about shoving this down people’s throats and erasing the history of the white people,” she said in a Facebook video (ibid.).

Proponents of Civil War memorials lean heavily on the argument of preserving history. To them, attacks on monuments to the Confederate cause is just the first wave of attacks on *all* monuments under threat once the people or subjects they represent fall out of favor.

### **Where Does It End?**

President Donald Trump echoed this concern of the anti-statue movement

expanding beyond Confederate monuments. When asked about the issue in a press conference, he stated: “This week it is Robert E. Lee. I noticed that Stonewall Jackson’s coming down. I wonder is it George Washington next week? Is it Thomas Jefferson the week after? You really do have to ask yourself where does it stop?”

Protesting the Confederate statues has expanded into a push to rename military bases bearing the names of Southern generals such as Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Fort Benning in Georgia.

Mr. Trump stated on Twitter that he is working with military officials who “WILL NOT be changing the names of our great Military Bases and Forts, places from which we won two World Wars (and more!).” The president added that he is not “a believer in ‘Cancel Culture.’”

John Curtis, a Utah Republican and senior GOP lawmaker, said he welcomed civil debate on what historical figures should be commemorated on public lands but decried the vandalism accompanying the removal of statues.

“I hope we all agree that vandalism is never the answer, especially when there is a legal route to change,” Mr. Curtis said.

The White House is accusing activists who want to remove monuments of American leaders altogether of conducting “a merciless campaign to wipe out our history, defame our heroes, erase our values and indoctrinate our children.”

A July 2020 executive order on Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes condemns the pulling down of memorials: “To destroy a monument is to desecrate our common inheritance. In recent weeks, in the midst of protests across America, many monuments have been vandalized or destroyed. Some local governments have responded by taking their monuments down. Among others, monuments to Christopher Columbus, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Francis Scott Key, Ulysses S. Grant, leaders of the abolitionist move-

ment, the first all-volunteer African-American regiment of the Union Army in the Civil War, and American soldiers killed in the First and Second World Wars have been vandalized, destroyed, or removed.

“These statues are not ours alone, to be discarded at the whim of those inflamed by fashionable political passions; they belong to generations that have come before us and to generations yet unborn.”

A Baltimore statue of Christopher Columbus, who protesters believe was responsible for the genocide and exploitation of native peoples in the Americas, was recently pulled down

and flung into the city’s Inner Harbor. Two Columbus statues in Chicago were likewise toppled. Statues of Presidents George Washington and Ulysses S. Grant have also been painted over and destroyed.

This blanket condemnation of historical personalities is giving even supporters of anti-racism protests pause. Cultural critic Thomas Chatterton Williams, the author of *Self-Portrait in Black and White*, said he understood removing Confederate monuments but is uncomfortable with vandalizing statues honoring the Founding Fathers and American Union Civil War figures.

“Mobs in the street tearing down Ulysses S. Grant statues is a really chilling sight,” Mr. Williams said. “We should understand the context [of history]. But erasing these men from the public sphere seems like a bad road to go down to me.”

A still more puzzling rebuke came against Abraham Lincoln, widely considered the man chiefly responsible for freeing American slaves.

“The Emancipation Group” monument, installed in 1879 in the northern U.S. city of Boston, features the sixteenth U.S. president standing above a kneeling black man. Its inscription reads: “A race set free / and the coun-



■ Left, the statue of Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart is removed from Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia (July 7, 2020). Right, a statue of educator Sophie Bell Wright, whose father served in the Confederate Navy and Army, is covered with a white hood and spray-painted with the initials of Black Lives Matter in New Orleans, Louisiana (July 10, 2020).

PHOTO: RYAN M. KELLY/AFP/ (LEFT); MICHAEL DEMOCKER/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

try at peace / Lincoln / Rests from his labors.” Members of the Boston Art Commission voted unanimously to remove this 141-year-old sculpture from public view based on testimony that it made residents feel uncomfortable and reinforced a racist and paternalistic view of black people.

A spokesman for Baltimore’s mayor says that America is experiencing a national and global reexamination of monuments “that may represent different things to different people.”

### **Symbols of Oppression?**

Advocates of racial equality would enthusiastically agree that Confederate

monuments mean “different things to different people.”

Richmond, Virginia, mayor Levar Stoney said the removal of Confederate statues from his city—which served as the capital of the South during the Civil War—is “long overdue” and sends a message that Richmond is no longer a place for symbols of oppression and white supremacy.

“Those statues stood high for over 100 years for a reason, and it was to intimidate and to show black and brown people in this city who was in charge,” Mr. Stoney said. The mayor’s point is that the history these statues represent is one in which blacks knew

their place in society—below that of whites.

The fact that most of these monuments were erected during a particularly racially heated period is proof they are rooted in white supremacy and institutional racism, civil rights advocates say. The majority appeared well after the Civil War ended, during two distinct periods.

The first began around 1900 and lasted into the 1920s as many states were enacting Jim Crow laws that segregated the first generation of blacks born outside of slavery. This time saw the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and the rise of Lost Cause ideology—the romanticized belief that the Confederate war effort was not about slaves but about Southern autonomy and state’s rights. The increase in monuments during this time took many in the South back to its “glory days.”

The second period of monument-building began in the early 1950s and lasted through the 1960s. It was part of pushback to progress being made in the civil rights movement.

“It’s not just that the statues represent white supremacy, but the purpose of building the statues was the perpetuation of white supremacy,” James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association, told *Time*. “This is why they put them up in the first place; to affirm the centrality of white supremacy to Southern culture.”

Frank Smith, director of the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, D.C., described the Civil War tributes as a daily affront to black Americans.

“Every time I pass by one of these, every time I drive down Robert E. Lee highway, it makes me think the republic has done...an injustice,” Mr. Smith told lawmakers.

When it comes to authorities finally doing something about removing public symbols of the Confederacy, he said that “it’s taken us so long to get that done, [citizens are] starting to take that into their own hands.”



Please see **STATUES**, page 30

# LIFE IN MOSUL

## Inside the Proxy Battle that Keeps an Iraqi City on Its Knees

**T**HREE YEARS ago, the world rejoiced when Iraqi forces backed by the United States and Iran liberated this ancient city from the brutal rule of Islamic State. The people of Mosul hoped to rebuild their shattered lives.

Today, a different battle plays out.

Taking place largely behind the scenes, from legislative halls that overlook the city's bombed-out streets to hotel meeting rooms in Baghdad, it is a power struggle among parties, politicians and militiamen. Some are backed by Iran. Others favor the United States.

At stake: political control of Nineveh province, of which Mosul is capital—a region rich in natural resources and a link in a supply route from Tehran to the Mediterranean. The route serves Iran-backed militias, Washington's fiercest enemy here since the defeat of Islamic State.

Iran's allies had been winning. They installed a governor favored by Tehran a year ago. But then anti-government protests, U.S. sanctions and the assassination of Iran's military mastermind Qassem Soleimani challenged Iranian influence. The pro-Western camp replaced the Nineveh governor with a longtime U.S. ally.

The contest mirrors a wider struggle over the future of Iraq itself.

Speaking to *Reuters* over the span of a year, around 20 Iraqi officials involved in the political tussle over Nineveh described how Iran and its allies developed the networks to influence local government, how pro-Western officials tried to hit back, and how this tug of war has crippled Mosul's recovery. If any side prevails, many of these insiders believe, it will ultimately be the side aligned with Iran. Iran helps its allies with money, political backing and sticks with them, explained Nineveh councilor Ali Khdeir. The United

States, in contrast, "has left no real mark on Iraq."

Mosul, meanwhile, lies largely in ruins. Traffic snarls across battered bridges and disabled war victims sell tissues, cigarettes and tea at junctions—the kind of misery that Iraqi officials fear is the perfect breeding ground for Islamic State to reemerge.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State accused Iran of working "overtime to dominate every aspect of Iraq's political and economic life." The United States is committed to helping Iraq build its economic prospects and improve stability and security, said the spokesperson, Morgan Ortagus.

A spokesperson for Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York, Alireza Miryousefi, insisted: "Iran does not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs."

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi told *Reuters* in response to a question about Mosul that corruption and political infighting hampered the





city's recovery, but denied it was part of a proxy contest.

### **"We Had a Modest Life and Simple Dreams"**

Rasha Saeed's young family is one of thousands suffering from the failures of city hall.

Still mourning the death of their nine-year-old son, killed in a U.S. coalition air strike in 2015, the family returned to their neighborhood after its liberation from Islamic State. They found their home had been destroyed by bombs and bulldozed over. Rasha, her husband Luay Shaker and their three remaining children live in debt and in limbo in a partially repaired rented flat nearby. They watch grass grow on the earth where their old house stood. Residents say Islamic State fighters' bodies are buried beneath.

Luay, a manual laborer who ferried supplies before the war to stores in Mosul's historic Old City markets, cannot work while he recovers from an operation to remove a tumor from behind his ear. Limited space at the West Mosul medical complex nearby—where a new hospital was meant to go up—means follow-up treatment is sporadic and slow. "It can be a long wait between appointments because Luay's doctor can take only three patients on site a week," Rasha said.

The medical complex is a cluster of portacabins on a vast bombed-out site that once boasted five fully-equipped hospitals with hundreds of beds. It currently has around 80 emergency ward beds for a population of more than a million people living in the area, doctors say. They describe a lack of equipment and medicine, including masks and gloves.

Rasha's temporary home stands alone amid destruction on a hill above the Tigris River, overlooking Mosul.

"We had a modest life before Islamic State, simple dreams to live without violence, for our children to be educated and maybe one day to afford a bigger home. That is now impossible," Rasha said.

### **A Change in City Hall**

The political contest for Nineveh is part of a wider picture across Iraq's northern Sunni-majority provinces, former strongholds of dictator Saddam Hussein which hold strategic value for Tehran—and where Washington wants to curb Iranian influence.

The fertile plains of Nineveh flank Syria to the west, where Iran's Revolutionary Guards have fought alongside President Bashar al-Assad's forces. Beyond is Lebanon, home to Shiite Iran's Hezbollah allies. The provinces of Anbar, bisected by the vast Euphrates River, Salahuddin, home to

■ An Iraqi child walks to school on the first day of classes in Mosul (Oct. 21, 2019).

PHOTO: ZAID AL-OBEIDI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



■ Laborers recover scrap metal from a destroyed building in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul (March 3, 2020).

PHOTO: ZAID AL-OBEIDI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

an important Shiite shrine, and Diyala, which borders Iran, form the rest of that mostly Sunni land corridor. Many of the 5,000 U.S. troops in Iraq have been deployed at bases dotted through three of these provinces and are regularly harassed by rocket attacks that U.S. officials have blamed on Iranian proxies who want U.S. troops to leave.

Iran firmly established dominance over Baghdad and Iraq's southern Shiite provinces after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that ousted Saddam. But the country's Sunni areas, home also to minority groups of Kurds, Christians, Shiite Turkmen and Yazidis, presented more of a challenge. They became hubs for a Sunni insurgency against U.S. forces in the mid-2000s and strongholds for Islamic State, which made Mosul its capital in 2014.

After Iran-backed militias helped drive Islamic State from Mosul in 2017, the militias stayed put. Their flags fly throughout northern Iraq, next to banners and billboards that honor their leaders, including the late Soleimani.

Twenty local government officials, Baghdad lawmakers and tribal leaders interviewed by *Reuters* described how Iran then deepened its political

influence until it had allies in almost every provincial administration.

Central to such efforts in Nineveh, these sources said, were two powerful Sunnis—Khamis al-Khanjar, an Anbar businessman turned politician, and Ahmed al-Jabouri, widely known as Abu Mazen, a former governor of Salahuddin province, now sitting in the Iraqi parliament.

Mr. Khanjar was an outspoken opponent of Iran. He supported Sunni protests against the Iran-backed Baghdad government in 2013 and later accused Iran-allied Shiite militias of human rights abuses. Abu Mazen was once a U.S. ally. He described working closely with U.S. forces after the 2003 invasion.

In 2018, Mr. Khanjar and Abu Mazen unexpectedly joined a bloc of Iran-backed parties and militia leaders in the Iraqi parliament. Explaining this shift, Mr. Khanjar said: "The strongest on the ground can get things done...I go with the bloc that's [strongest] on the ground. If that coalition has Iranian links, that's not on us." He denied being an ally of Iran.

Then, in May 2019, Mr. Khanjar and Abu Mazen intervened in the selection of Nineveh's new governor, according to nine sources, including several

members of the regional administrative council and relatives of the two men. A majority of Nineveh's 39 counselors, tasked with electing the new governor, initially favored a candidate critical of Iran, these sources said. But two days before the council was due to vote, Abu Mazen and Mr. Khanjar invited nearly two dozen council members to a meeting in a hotel in nearby Erbil, said several people, one of whom attended.

The council members were promised local government posts or payments of up to \$300,000 apiece from the men or their offices if they voted for a different candidate, Mansour al-Mareid, a Sunni favored by Iran and its allies in Baghdad, these people said. One council member told *Reuters* he accepted money and used it to buy a new home.

Mr. Mareid was duly elected with the votes of 28 of the 39 council members.

Mr. Khanjar confirmed he and Abu Mazen met with councilors in Erbil to agree on the governor and negotiate over provincial posts. He also confirmed he supported Mr. Mareid, but denied that votes were bought. "I didn't pay a single dinar," he said.

Mr. Mareid, the winning candidate, said he had no knowledge of bribes being given to counselors and he



denied any loyalty to Iran, but he added: “Council members can be bought, so it wouldn’t surprise me, and nothing can happen in this country without Iran approving it.”

### U.S. Pushes Back

Within a few months the pendulum had swung again.

The United States imposed sanctions on Iran-aligned militia leaders and on their Iraqi Sunni allies—among them Abu Mazen in July and Mr. Khanjar in December.

The U.S. Treasury said it was freezing Abu Mazen’s assets because he had protected “his personal interests by accommodating Iran-backed proxies that operate outside of state control.” It targeted Mr. Khanjar in a round of sanctions against Iran-backed militia leaders, accusing him of bribery and saying he had spent “millions of dollars in payments to Iraqi political figures in order to secure their support.”

Abu Mazen and Mr. Khanjar denied any wrongdoing at the time and condemned the U.S. sanctions as interference in Iraq’s internal affairs.

Abu Mazen felt under pressure as a result of the U.S. move, said a relative and five Nineveh counselors. The measures helped persuade Abu Mazen, these sources said, to withdraw support for Mr. Mareid and back a former military commander and U.S. ally, Najm al-Jabouri, to replace him as governor. In November, 23 of the council’s 39 members voted to dismiss Mr. Mareid and appoint Mr. Jabouri.

Pro-U.S. officials in Mosul hope that the government of Prime Minister Kadhimi, who is accepted by both the United States and Iran, together with fractures among Iran-backed militias following the death of Soleimani, will turn the tide against Tehran’s influence. But they also complain that Governor Jabouri is mostly ham-

strung against Iran’s militia and political allies in Mosul.

“Jabouri is weak politically,” said Mosul council member Ali Khdeir. “Because of their power on the ground, he’ll have to deal carefully with the militias at first.”

Mr. Jabouri told *Reuters* that any governor would face criticism and he defended his record. He conceded that political rivalries were impeding progress in rebuilding the city. “It makes my work harder,” he said.

### Enduring Influence

Across the rest of the Sunni provinces that lie between Nineveh and Baghdad, regional counselors, tribal chiefs and members of Iraq’s parliament say Iran’s efforts to entrench local political allies will likely outlast the U.S. tactics of air strikes and economic sanctions.

*Please see MOSUL, page 29*



■ An Iraqi boy gets a haircut amid rubble in Mosul ahead of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday (June 28, 2020).

PHOTO: ZAID AL-OBEIDI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



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# China's Identity Crisis

How much longer can  
the Asian nation straddle  
socialism and capitalism?

BY NESTOR A. TORO AND  
DAVID J. LITAVSKY

**F**OUR DECADES after the U.S. established diplomatic ties with Communist China, the relationship between the two is quickly souring.

In retaliation for the U.S. closing China's consulate in Houston, Texas, Beijing ordered the closing of the U.S. consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu. China called the Houston event an "unprecedented escalation" of tensions, while the White House cited economic espionage and attempted theft of scientific research as the reason for the original move.

When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asked aloud if relations could stay on track, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

■ A 1971 propaganda poster for the Chinese People's Liberation Army (color lithograph) showing defensive measures being taken against atomic, chemical and bacterial warfare amid fears of attacks from Western powers.

PHOTO: GRAPHICAARTIS/GETTY IMAGES

delivered an answer: The time has come to change course.

“President Nixon once said he feared he had created a ‘Frankenstein’ by opening the world to the [Communist Party of China],” Mr. Pompeo said in a speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in Southern California. He said China’s military had become “stronger and more menacing” and the approach to Beijing should be “distrust and verify,” adapting President Ronald Reagan’s “trust but verify” mantra about the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

“The old paradigm of blind engagement with China simply won’t get it done,” Mr. Pompeo added. “We must not continue it. We must not return to it.”

Since President Nixon’s 1972 visit to China—the first by an American president since the Communists took power in 1949—icy relations between the two had thawed and diplomatic ties flourished. Some in the U.S. even hoped that Beijing would slowly move to be more in line with Western-led democracies.

Yet the Asian nation remains a walking contradiction to the West. It seems to seek trust, but also power. It seeks global partnerships, but also competition. It seeks business with democracies but will not conform to their regional demands.

Rather than undergoing a slow revolution, the Asian nation has been head-deep in a crisis over its identity: Is it better off with democratic freedoms or strong authoritarian control? Thriving on capitalist business models or a socialist market? Is the United States its ally or enemy?

President Xi Jinping has made strides toward the latter on each. He has received the power to rule for life, makes blunt remarks on plans for controlling Taiwan and Hong Kong, and does not shy away from calling out U.S. military posturing in the South China Sea. He has been labeled the most powerful leader since Red China’s founding father, Mao Zedong.

But many citizens and businesses are decrying the de-democrati-

zation of the nation. Surprisingly, even editorials in state-run media outlets have spoken out. *Nikkei* reported that *Xinhua News Agency* ran an article that spoke negatively about Chairman Mao’s 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution, a sociopolitical movement that resulted in an estimated 500,000 to 20 million deaths.

Both within and without, China is grappling with an epic IDENTITY CRISIS. And it appears the time of straddling socialism and capitalism may be coming to an end.

### A Third Way?

Just before the Cultural Revolution, approximately 45 million people starved to death in Mao’s Great Leap Forward—a socialist experiment that left a large majority of the population impoverished. How did the nation go from this low point to now being an absolute economic powerhouse?

“Today, China is the world’s leading export nation, ahead of the United States and Germany,” *Forbes* reported. “Above all, never before in history have so many people escaped poverty in such a short time as in the past decades in China. According to official World Bank figures, the percentage of extremely poor people [living on less than \$1.90 a day] in China in 1981 stood at 88.3%. By 2015 only 0.7% of the Chinese population was living in extreme poverty. In this period, the number of poor people in China fell from 878 million to less than ten million.”

The stark difference in only a few decades, the article argues, was solely from freeing markets.

“Under Mao, the state had an omnipotent grip over China’s economy,” *Forbes* continued. “What has happened over the past few decades can be summed up in a few sentences: China has progressively embraced the tenets of free-market economics, introduced private ownership, and gradually reduced the influence of the once all-powerful state over the Chinese economy. That the state still plays a major role today is simply because China is in the midst of

a transformation process that began with complete state dominance of the economy.”

But analysts question whether China will continue to go down the path that leads to free markets.

“The process of reform has never been a smooth and consistent one—rather, it has been marred by frequent setbacks, especially in recent years, when instances of governmental intervention in the economy have set back the reform process.”

Ultimately, the article posits that China’s greatest danger is believing it has found a “third way”—a unique balance between capitalism and socialism. According to this thinking, it was state control that caused the nation’s unprecedented economic rise, which could make its leaders more prone to seize tighter control.

It is this difference in thinking that lies at the core of the nation’s identity crisis.

### “Freedom Could Go Too Far”

*The New York Times* interviewed 37-year-old Hong Kong scholar Tian Feilong, who had once identified with “the liberal political ideas he had studied as a graduate student” at Beijing’s traditionally liberal Peking University.

But after years of protests in the semi-autonomous Chinese city, he began to see how “freedom could go too far.”

“Tian has joined a tide of Chinese scholars who have turned against Western-inspired ideas that once flowed in China’s universities, instead promoting the proudly authoritarian worldview ascendant under Xi Jinping, the Communist Party leader,” the news outlet reported. “This cadre of Chinese intellectuals serve as champions, even official advisers, defending and honing the party’s hardening policies, including the rollout of the security law in Hong Kong.”

After witnessing protests in the city since 2014, Mr. Tian has “rethought the relationship between individual freedom and state authority.”

President Xi, too, has fully embraced the “freedom could go too far” notion—at least in theory. His reestablishment of stronger state authority has been careful and calculated. Move too fast, and he risks everything Chinese businesses have benefited from free markets.

Yet, helping his case, both the 2007 global financial crisis and the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic “have reinforced Chinese views that liberal democracies are decaying, while China has prospered, defying predictions of the collapse of one-party rule,” *The New York Times* wrote.

Since Mr. Xi took power in 2012, he has sought to discredit democratic ideals and push central authority as a necessity. For example, education authorities generously fund pro-party scholars for topics such as how to introduce security laws in Hong Kong.

As with the millions of Hong Kong residents, the 1.4 billion Chinese citizens are left with a choice.

“We have to choose what side we’re on, including us scholars, right?” Mr. Tian stated in the interview. “Sorry, the goal now is not Westernization; it’s the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”

### Going Back to Roots

Unlike Mr. Tian, many Chinese struggle with the idea of going back to a pre-Westernized China. And recent exposure of the government’s poor response to the coronavirus pandemic is only strengthening their distrust.

“It is already clear that Chinese politics and governance will not be the same after the COVID-19 outbreak,” *The Japan Times* stated. “The myth that Xi and his supporters have sustained about the virtues of centralized control has been demolished.”

The final words of Li Wenliang—the Chinese doctor whose early whistleblowing warnings about the coronavirus got him a swift admonishment from Wuhan police for “spreading rumors”—echo this sentiment.

He stated, “A healthy society should not have only one voice.”

Those words “will remain etched in the minds of hundreds of millions of

Chinese, who have seen for themselves that censorship can endanger their lives,” *The Japan Times* continued.

The government’s cover-up of early warning signs of the disease, along with Dr. Li’s mysterious death in February, roiled public distrust of the Communist Party’s motives.

But China’s identity cannot remain in limbo forever, and the government’s “great rejuvenation” of the nation involves helping its 1.4 billion people to remember their national past.

In his book *You Will Be Assimilated: China’s Plan to Sino-form the World*, author David P. Goldman explained: “It is a delusion to believe that the ‘good Chinese people’ will rise up and overthrow the ‘wicked Communist Party.’ For millennia, China has been ruled by an imperial caste of administrators selected by standardized exams. The Communist Party is simply another incarnation of the Mandarin caste. The character of China’s government corresponds to the character of its people. The emperor is not a revered demigod on the Japanese model, or an anointed sovereign claiming divine right, but simply the emperor whose job it is to prevent all the other emperors from killing each other...”

Authoritarian leaders appeared “in the tragic periods when imperial dynasties collapsed. Civil war, foreign invasion, famine and plague often reduced China’s population by one-tenth to one-fifth, until a new dynasty sorted itself out.”

“America isn’t competing with the government of China or China’s Communist Party, but rather with 1.4 billion Chinese.”

### Another Cold War?

The Bible asks a rhetorical question in the book of Amos, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” The answer is NO!

Other verses show it is impossible for a lone person to take on a hybrid personality. Jesus Christ stated: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the

other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matt. 6:24).

He went on to explain, “You cannot serve God and mammon [wealth].”

Though this statement applies to individual humans, the consequence is the same for entire nations made up of millions of individuals.

If this concept were applied to China’s current identity crisis, Matthew 6:24 could read, “You cannot serve a government authority and capitalism.” Otherwise, the nation will find itself “holding to the one” and “despising the other.”

Eventually, prolonged division leads to instability, division, civil war and ultimately separation.

Most of the world seems to think China will end up capitalist like the West. Despite the last few decades of it trending that way, the nation has spent far too many centuries under strict authoritarian rule. As it addresses its identity crisis, thousands of years of history strongly indicate what path the Asian nation will choose.

While the Bible clearly defines human nature, it also helps see what is coming for the world through prophecy, which can be viewed as history written in advance. In Matthew 24:7, Christ said there would come a time that “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” *Strong’s Definitions* defines the word rise as “to awaken” and “rouse...from sleep.”

We are in a time now of nations beginning to remember who they are, where they came from, what they value, and their *true identities*. When that happens, nationalistic pride stirs up and conflict arises.

The U.S. and China are just two nations beginning to look more inward—the trade war, spats in the South China Sea, and barbed rhetoric between Beijing and Washington are all clear examples.

Should China fully recommit to its true old ways, the West should prepare itself for adversarial, Cold War relations with it all over again—except this time with a China far bigger, more powerful and more rich than it ever has been. □

# The Allure of Witchcraft

Witchcraft has been on the rise over recent years. What drives people to yearn for the dark arts?

BY JUSTIN M. FRAZIER



**A** GREEN-SKINNED woman with a hooked nose points her finger at a frightened girl wearing ruby slippers. After tossing in the eye of newt, a woman stirs a cauldron before she jumps on a broomstick to fly off into the night. A blonde housewife from the early 1960s wiggles her nose to magically finish housework.

These and similar images accompany the idea of a “witch” as much

as clouds do the sky. But not every cloud is in the sky, and not every witch fits these categories. Some do work hard to stand out from the crowd with eccentric clothing and jewelry, but many witches today look just like everyone else. The old lady who offers milk and cookies to neighbors is just as likely to practice magic as the sullen teenager who wears all black. People you work with, interact with and even love may now practice witchcraft.

For decades, what was once considered taboo and unseemly has slowly become more and more mainstream.

An article by *Quartz* explained that as “occult references have crept into pop culture and our tolerance for different religious practices has increased, witchcraft has become more and more normalized. We can see this in teens’ appetite for *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, a ‘witchy’ aesthetic creeping into fast fashion, and Ouija boards being sold as toys. Barnes & Noble even has entire sections on witchcraft and the occult

now. In this way, magic is becoming both popularized as an aesthetic choice, as well as a recognized form of spirituality.”

As witchcraft has become more accepted, its many different traditions have also come to the fore. Everything from Native American religions, Wicca, paganism and general spiritualism falls under the category of witchcraft.

This exposure has translated into a spike in practitioners: The American Religion Survey found that the numbers in the U.S. surged from about 55,000 in 1990 to almost 1.3 million in 2008—and the number continues to increase.

Why the rising attraction to mysticism and the occult?

### **The Witch as Woman**

The most common image of a witch is that of a woman, but this was not always so.

Before the Inquisition, men and women were accused equally of witchcraft. It was not until two Dominican inquisitors published *Malleus Maleficarum* (“Hammer Against Witches”) in 1486, which became an instruction manual for witch-hunting, that claimed “all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable.”

So began almost 300 years of persecution of those accused of witchcraft, most of them women.

Women’s suffragist Matilda Joselyn Gage called out this oppression in her 1893 book *Woman, Church and State*. She claimed that the “witches” the European Christian churches tortured and killed were simply scientists and people who worked with plant extracts to do things that the dominant church did not understand. “The so-called ‘witch’ was among the most profoundly scientific persons of the age,” she wrote.

She was perhaps the first modern person to cast witchcraft in a good light. Her influence extended to her son-in-law L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. This book became the well-beloved movie, whose characters and costumes formed the

popular caricatures of witches still used today.

Other films and television shows followed, casting witches in more regular or even glamorous settings. Modern witchcraft stories typically have strong female characters taking control of their lives. Such stories appeal to those who feel helpless.

But witchcraft is more than just entertainment. It promises to give the half of humanity that has felt oppressed, held back, or shamed for simply being

**“Witchcraft is more than just entertainment. It promises to give the half of humanity that has felt oppressed, held back, or shamed for simply being born a woman the opportunity to control their destiny.”**

born a woman the opportunity to control their destiny. It tells them they can have power if they reject the status quo.

Painted in this light, witchcraft can seem to be a noble cause—yet this view completely overlooks the darker side of these practices.

Gage pushed for women to rebuff the roles assigned to them. She wrote, “A rebel! How glorious the name sounds when applied to a woman. Oh, rebellious woman, to you the world looks in hope. Upon you has fallen the glorious task of bringing liberty to the earth and all the inhabitants thereof.” She believed that if women collectively fought back, they could change the world for the better.

Along with Gage, other writers spoke openly of rebelling against church, state and any traditional expectation of women’s behavior. From that point on, witchcraft and politics have gone hand in hand.

“Witchcraft is feminism, it’s inherently political,” Gabriela Herstik, a witch and author, told *Sabat* magazine. “It’s always been about the outsider, about the woman who doesn’t do what the church or patriarchy wants.”

“But the fact that there are no set criteria for being a witch is, for many, precisely the appeal,” *The Atlantic* reported. “Witchcraft beckons with the promise of a spirituality that is self-determined, antipatriarchal, and flexible enough to incorporate varied cultural traditions.”

Looking at the corruption, scandals and resistance to change in governments and traditional religions today, is it any wonder witchcraft has grown in popularity?

### **Injustice Breeds Rebellion**

Both real and perceived injustice leads people to feel powerless to effect change in their own lives or society. This has pushed many away from traditional institutions.

The Public Religion Research Institute compiled statistics on Americans’ religious affiliations and found that from 1971 through 1991 only 6 to 8 percent considered themselves “unaffiliated” with organized religion. By the year 2000, it had doubled to 14 percent and reached 25 percent by 2016. While most stopped believing what their congregation taught, women cited off-putting views about homosexuality and clergy sex abuse scandals as reasons for leaving their affiliations twice as often as men.

Governments are faring little better. In multi-party democracies, citizens of a government can rebel when they feel that their voice is not heard by simply changing political parties. Those drawn to witchcraft tend to leave the political parties supported by traditional churches, moving to those that allow more personal choice—one

of the appeals that attracted them to mysticism in the first place.

Nearly every period of social unrest sees an increase in witchcraft adherents. In the same *Atlantic* article referenced previously, Arinze Stanley noted that American interest in witchcraft has risen with “plummeting trust in establishment ideas.” Spikes in interest came during the women’s suffrage movement, Woodstock, the Anita Hill hearings in the ‘90s, after Donald Trump’s election and during the #MeToo movement.

But women are not the only ones who feel oppressed by religion, government and society.

A Pew study found that the number of adherents of pagan, Wicca, Native American and other New Age religions who made less than \$30,000 per year grew 15 percent from 2007 to 2014 and represented over half of all followers. In addition, the number of women rose from about half to close to two-thirds, and the number of mil-

lennials increased by 13 percent to just under half.

“The more frustrated people get, they do often turn to witchcraft, because they’re like, ‘Well, the usual channels are just not working, so let’s see what else is out there,’” self-professed witch and author Pam Grossman told *The Atlantic*. “Whenever there are events that really shake the foundations of society...people absolutely turn towards the occult.”

This response is natural, since any form of practicing magic promises power to the powerless and acceptance of the outcast. University College Cork lecturer Miranda Corcoran described witchcraft “as a means for the marginalised to grasp a small sliver of power, or for the disenfranchised to exert a tiny semblance of control. After all, unlike many other forms of ritual magic, witchcraft has traditionally been associated with women, the poor, and those on the periphery of society.”

Ms. Grossman linked her idea of magic with protesting, saying, “I’m doing magic when I march in the streets for causes I believe in.”

She is not alone in that belief. People who call themselves witches around the world gather to cast spells against, or hex, what they see as abuses of power, including the “patriarchy,” presidents, prime ministers, corporations, people accused of crimes, stock markets and even bars.

One group organized a gathering on Facebook in 2018 to hex a public figure accused of rape. They claimed to embrace “witchcraft’s true roots as the magik of the poor, the downtrodden and disenfranchised and [its] history as often the only weapon, the only means of exacting justice available to those of us who have been wronged,” *The Hill* reported. (Witches will often use the term magik or magick to differentiate between stage magic and “real” magic.)

An article by *Quartz* confirmed this sentiment: “Today, spirituality and reli-



■ Wicca practitioners participate in a ritual at a witch school in Hoopeston, Illinois (Oct. 25, 2006).

PHOTO: SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES



gious practice are still finding a place in politics. Quakers protested the Vietnam War for almost two decades, Tibetan monks protested the Chinese occupation of Tibet by lighting themselves on fire, and the Satanic Temple engages in all different forms of theatrical and ‘legislative’ protest. When you couple the current political climate with the building popularity of witchcraft, no wonder witchy protests are on the rise.

“The notion of ritual is integral to both witchcraft and protest. The act of protesting—of chanting and carrying signs—is already ritualistic in and of itself. The way we say something over and over again as a group in order to give power to a thought is structurally similar to magic’s incantations.

“When we protest, aren’t we all taking part in one huge, unwitting ritual?”

### Seeking Power

Protesting and witchcraft indeed share an explicit link with what people seek—power. It offers the ability to change their circumstances or as a group to alter the course of events to what they think is right.

When the traditional institutions of church, state and societal norms fail to provide, many will want to take power back to themselves. Many are departing from Christianity because it has failed to give them what they desire. Yet, ironically, the Bible has more to say about the problems seen in society than they think—just the religious leaders of today fail to teach their parishioners what God’s Word actually says.

First, God sees the hypocrisy, injustice and oppression in governments and religious institutions around the world, and He indicts the leadership: “For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are *destroyed*” (Isa. 9:16).

Realize what God is plainly stating. It is poor leadership—whether in politics or religion—that causes the problems seen in society.

While there are some in charge who work hard to make life better for those they rule, many do not. Throughout history, there have always been those

in power who seek their own gain at the expense of others.

To be clear, no church that claims to follow Jesus Christ can excuse or support the oppression of women or minorities. One verse from Paul describes how God sees His people: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, *there is neither male nor female*: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). God sees every race, social and economic class, and gender as equal.

**“Protesting and witchcraft indeed share an explicit link with what people seek—power. It offers the ability to change their circumstances or as a group to alter the course of events to what they think is right.”**

(It is beyond the scope of this article to examine how God views women. Our article “The Role of Women—Widely Misunderstood!” explains why women are so special to God.)

But even though God understands the outrage of those who feel suppressed under unjust leadership, He instructs us to show respect to those in authority: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore

resists the power, resists the ordinance of God...” (Rom. 13:1-2).

The rest of the chapter in Romans explains that, rather than going out to riot and push back at authority figures, adherents ought to obey God’s commandments and treat others respectfully.

Yet God promises He will not leave those who are obedient powerless. It is actually the opposite. In time, He promises to give those who are faithful INCREDIBLE power.

Notice what is said in Revelation 2: “To him that overcomes, and keeps My works [the things He has instructed us to do in our lives] unto the end, to him will I *give power over the nations*” (vs. 26). God also explains that those who follow Him will be made kings and teachers (5:10), and He will give them “*power to become the sons of God*” (John 1:12; 10:34).

This is the great purpose God has for each of us! There may be difficulties and suffering we must endure now, but He ultimately wants you to become as He is—a glorious, all-powerful being who will bring lasting change and correct the wrongs in this world.

Instead of seeking to *take* power to ourselves, He wants us to seek Him so He can *give* it to us.

I Samuel 15:23 shows that rebellion—resistance and rejection of authority—is the *same* as witchcraft to God. That is because both refuse His guidance and both involve taking power *to yourself*.

The problem with taking power to yourself, though, is that it denies the opportunity and true purpose God has for each individual—which is granting power far beyond anything witches can experience.

But to obtain this incredible ability to effect change, there are certain guidelines to be met and instruction that we must follow. God would never give this kind of power to someone who is not qualified to receive it. Read our book *The Awesome Potential of Man* to learn more. □



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# Back to the Marriage Basics

**“11** WAYS TO Stay Married Amid Coronavirus Concerns”—“Will Coronavirus Infect Your Marriage?”—“How to End Pandemic Fights with Your Partner.” These and similar articles flooded newspapers and magazines almost immediately as the historic COVID-19 crisis began to take root. Shelter-in-place orders pushed relationships to their breaking points.

Many divorce lawyers expect splits to skyrocket when quarantine guidelines are eased.

Of course, any coronavirus contentions are symptoms of deeper marital problems. These rifts were there before COVID-19—and the pandemic just brought them to the surface.

Yet, even for healthier marriages, being cooped up together can be wearing. *Time* magazine explained: “Have you recently noticed how loud your partner chews? That her placement of items in the fridge is illogical? That his consumption of toilet paper/soap/the

good snacks is remarkably high? That parenting is not one of his or her core strengths? If so, you might be married during a pandemic.”

Whenever marital problems arise—whether during a global pandemic or no—husbands and wives have two options: allow the annoyances and issues to fester until they explode, or address them head on and forge an *even stronger* union.

The Restored Church of God, the publisher of this magazine, offers more helpful material and truth—ALL FREE!—on marriage and the family than any other church on Earth. The rest of this article is adapted from that literature and offers a taste of the tools you and your spouse can use to get back to the basics.

## Fine Art of Right Communication

Miscommunication, bad communication, or lack of communication is one of the leading causes of divorce. Husbands should take the lead in proper communication with his wife.

Husbands must understand that the wife has often been home all day with the children. She may be frustrated and in desperate need of conversation with someone above the age of 12—or maybe even three. The husband who comes home from work not wanting to talk, but rather to just sit down, have a beer, read the paper, and watch the news, has effectively cut off his wife from communication with another adult.

Do not forget about her needs. Talk to her. Find out about *her* day. Allow her to open up. Show interest in what she has accomplished and what may have happened with the children.

Wives, be sure you *do* open up to your husband. You may be by nature “*more* verbal” or “*less* verbal” than he is. Depending on which is the case, strive to do a little more listening, or a little more talking. The couple should strive to find a balance in communication, with each expressing an opinion about the things on their minds.

Husbands and wives should both always remember to discuss their problems with each other, while relying on

God for ultimate spiritual understanding. All problems should always be discussed with God. Wives, in particular, should discuss their spiritual problems with their husbands while never neglecting to remember that God is the One ultimately guiding and helping them spiritually. Your husband cannot grant you salvation.

Also, avoid arguing *at all costs*. Nothing productive *ever* comes from heated exchanges. The devastating effect of this kind of “communication” lasts longer, and bites deeper, than the couple doing it even begins to realize.

If you are wrong, always apologize. Defending the indefensible is silly—and unproductive. Never store up feelings, and then dump them in a heated moment of release. The Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”—is also the greatest rule of communication within marriage!

### Manage Your Finances Together

All wage earners are paid a specific amount of money. Whether large or small, this is the amount they must live on. Financial problems—usually caused by couples living beyond their means—along with poor communication and sexual problems—form the “big three” causes for marital break-up.

A few helpful points:

■ First, develop the habit of systematic, monthly saving early in your marriage.

■ Next, avoid credit-buying. It is a trap far deeper than it appears. If you do use credit cards, pay them off immediately every month.

■ Finally, plan your purchases. Develop *priorities* so that you do not try to buy everything at once. Then, determine to buy quality as much as possible. Practice patience. Be willing to wait. You will be glad you did!

### The Truly Happy Marriage

God tells husbands: “*Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of [your] life*” (Ecc. 9:9). For this to be possible, the wife must be doing the same—and this should

be the daily goal of every married couple. None of the principles in this article will bring true, complete happiness unless *both* mates are diligently applying them. Successful marriages are always the product of *two* people working *together* toward the same purpose in the same way—with the same understanding.

If you have a wonderful husband or a wonderful wife, you are truly blessed—and are much more unusual than you may think. But if you do not have a good husband or a good wife, then strive to grow as much as you possibly can, understanding that your mate may follow your example.

God says this to husbands who have been blessed to have found a

**“Successful marriages are always the product of two people working together toward the same purpose in the same way—with the same understanding.”**

wonderful wife: “Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the LORD” (Prov. 18:22).

A virtuous wife *is* wonderful—“a good thing”—and wise husbands-to-be will diligently search for such a woman before getting married. Special favor from God is just one benefit that comes from marrying a woman of great character.

Wives, strive to be special in every way that you possibly can. Husbands, strive to be worthy of such a woman. You may discover that God has sent you one.

The couple that *works* at their marriage will find that their marriage *works!*—and far better than they had ever dreamed!

On your wedding day, you promised—probably vowed!—before God to spend the rest of your life married to the same person. Do not let this commitment wane or blur in your mind. It was “for better or for worse.” It is easy for a couple to remain committed when times are “better,” but not so easy during a “worse” phase. A close relationship with God, based on a deep recognition that He knows how to produce all the best and most wonderful things in both marriage and life, has no substitute. No matter what difficulty your marriage is facing, bring God into it. He has all the true and lasting solutions.

Commitment is the bedrock foundation of every strong marriage. Remember, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” The rewards that flow from dedication to your wedding vows will bring joy beyond words.

Happiness depends far more on what *you* do than on what your mate or anyone else does. No matter the current state of your marriage, you *can* improve it. Take responsibility. You can grow—and it can get better. Remember, GOD instituted the marriage covenant—and the *principles* governing its success. Without them, *real* happiness is impossible! With them, *you* can experience a boundless *joy* you have never known!

The place to start is our essential booklet *You Can Build a Happy Marriage* ([rcg.org/ycbahm](http://rcg.org/ycbahm)). We also have material regarding keys to childrearing, proper dating and courtship, the God-ordained purpose of sex, the family unit, and divorce and remarriage. Also examine our extraordinary magazine for teenagers and another for families, plus seven Bible story books and lessons in seven levels—ALL vital for teaching the truth of God’s Word to children and teenagers of all ages. All of this is available at [rcg.org](http://rcg.org).

The family is under assault as *never* before. Take time to explore the vast cornucopia of truth we have available on every conceivable question you could ask about these subjects—but also many, many others. You will be so very glad that you did. □

“I’M NOT good at anything.” “I’m just not worth anything.” “I’m always sad.” “I’m constantly tired, even when I get enough sleep.”

These kinds of statements and thoughts can be more important than meets the eye. Persistent sadness, a lack of energy, and several other symptoms can be signs of depression.

As a physician, about 30 percent of patients during my 10 years of private practice suffered with various mental health diagnoses, which affect people of all genders, socioeconomic statuses and ages. For this article, we will consider “Jane”—a composite of former patients suffering from depression.

Jane has been having thoughts of depression off and on for years, yet she has been persistently suffering from them over several months. She hides it as much as possible. This is primarily because of the social stigma associated with depression. A common reaction from others is: “What’s wrong with you?! Just pick yourself up and move along.”

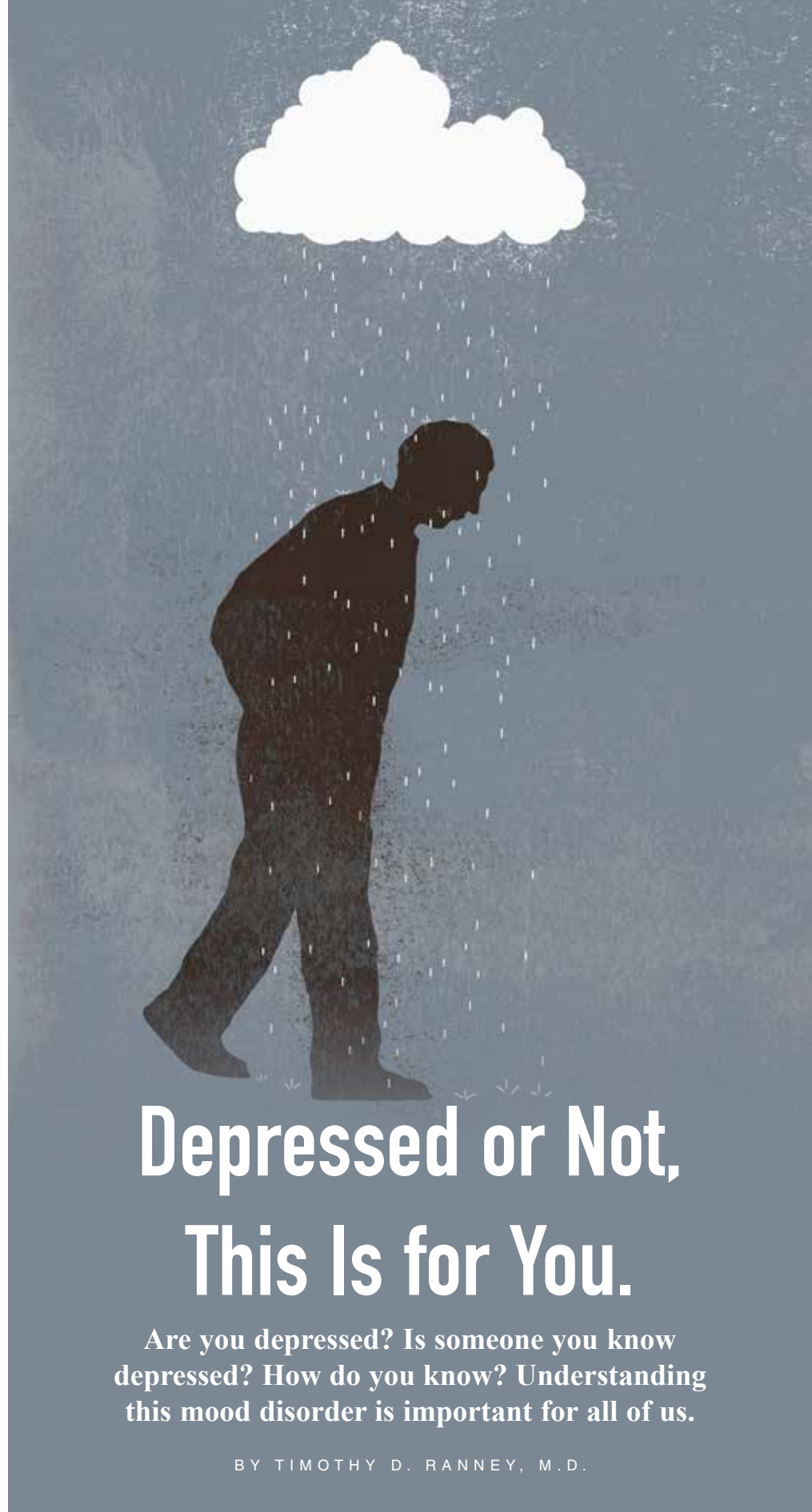
It is typical for those with symptoms of depression to try to hide it. From friends. From family. From spouses. Even from doctors.

Jane is someone you know. A family member perhaps? She could also be you. Did you know most people experience at least mild depression sometime during their life? Yet those who have not personally experienced depression often have difficulty understanding those who do.

Experts say that about 20 percent—1 in 5—of the U.S. population experience *major* symptoms of depression at any point in time.

This statistic alone means that we all likely know at least one person who has some of the persistent, nagging thoughts and feelings of depression.

Depression can go from self-doubt to self-mutilation or all the way to self-murder. Depressed people can get so used to telling themselves of all their



# Depressed or Not, This Is for You.

Are you depressed? Is someone you know depressed? How do you know? Understanding this mood disorder is important for all of us.

BY TIMOTHY D. RANNEY, M.D.

problems, it becomes addicting. It feels normal—even good—to dwell on how miserable their lives are!

While this article aims to help those who are personally struggling, the primary focus is on those who are not currently affected—but need to understand it to be helpful to those who are. You may not realize it, but there is at least one “Jane” in your life.

### What Exactly Is Depression?

Jane has now been persistently sad for several months. She believes this is without a “real reason.” It is difficult to explain to others, and she is embarrassed. Every time she thinks about how she feels or attempts to discuss it, she tears up and sometimes outright cries. It hurts deep in her heart. A lot. More than any physical pain she has ever had.

She feels alone, worn out, tired and sleepy. She has gained 15 pounds of extra weight and cannot stick to a weight reduction diet for more than a few hours. She wonders if life is even worth living any more.

The Mayo Clinic website states the textbook definition of clinical depression: “Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think, and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may feel as if life isn’t worth living.”

### What Causes It?

Jane is smart. She has read up on depression. She found that alcohol can cause it, so she stopped drinking. And although she knows that other things like illicit drug use and even some prescription drugs, such as narcotics are often associated with similar symptoms, she has never had a problem with these things.

Sighing, she thinks, “At least if I did struggle with chemical dependence, there would be a reason I feel bad and I could try to fix it, or doctors could help me.”

The natural grieving process can sometimes be confused with depression. Grief is a normal response to personal loss such as losing a job, a loved one’s death, a miscarriage, or other losses. Depression is something more permanent.

WebMD confirms this: “When you lose someone or something dear to you, it’s natural to feel pain and grief. The grief process is normal, and most people go through it. But when grief takes over your life and you begin to feel hopeless, helpless, and worthless, then it’s time to talk to your doctor about telling the difference between normal grief and depression.”

But passing grief does not apply to Jane, which discourages her. She is reluctant to confide in any type of health care professional. Despairing, she thinks, “Nothing is really wrong with me, so they can’t help me anyway.”

However, we can and should encourage Jane and those like her to involve a physician in the evaluation of possible depression. Underlying medical problems can increase the risk of developing depression or, in some cases, can be the *cause* of depression. Here are a few:

- Brain disorders such as Parkinson’s disease

- Following major medical events such as heart surgery or a stroke

- Certain metabolic conditions

A physician can perform an evaluation and recommend appropriate, individualized treatment options. This is important to prevent depression from getting worse. So, someone like Jane should be encouraged to get help as soon as possible.

However, for people with a diagnosis of depression, these conditions are the exception, not the rule. This means that most people who are depressed *do not* have a medical condition as the cause of their depression.

That is what happened to Jane. The evaluation was “normal.” The doctor did not think laboratory evaluation was even needed but did it on her insistence. The results showed everything was normal.

But she is not normal. Everything about her behavior shows she is depressed.

### Mood and Sleep

Jane remains sad. Virtually all the time. On the now rare occasion when she does not feel sad, she is never happy. She is only *blah*—at best neutral. Despite this, she says she is getting by.

According to Family Practice Notebook, an online reference tool used by physicians who specialize in family medicine, a “depressed mood” is one of the most important criteria used to diagnose major depression. Different from the intermittent sadness and short-lived discouragement people can feel from the struggles of life, a depressed mood lasts for many days and, without intervention, can go on for weeks, months and years.

There is often no discernable cause of this disorder. Having unremitting depressed mood for two weeks or longer without a major life event like the death of a loved one or a job loss should prompt more intense evaluation.

Depression affects mood but not all mood disorders cause depression. Medical science has long known that the hormones associated with some women’s menstrual cycles can bring mood fluctuations—some so severe they require professional medical treatment. But this is not necessarily tied to depression.

Jane falls asleep through the day, which she attributes to poor sleep at night. “Insomnia,” she thinks.

Sleep disturbance, often interrupted sleep from early morning waking, is another symptom of clinical depression. While occasional awakening without an ability to return to sleep occurs for many other reasons, persistent insomnia often accompanies depression.

Some experience the opposite—excessive tiredness resulting in a need for much more sleep.

It can be difficult for individuals to determine the cause of their sleeping problems. Is it due to factors

such as stress? Or *unremitting* sleep disturbance over time due to possible depression? Therefore, it is again crucial to seek professional evaluation.

### Interest, Worthlessness and Fatigue

Jane is not interested in much of anything. She used to be an avid walker, and she enjoyed going out to dinner with friends at restaurants.

But not now. For months she has just wanted to sit at home and flip through television channels. And many times, she just stares at the ceiling without much thought. Just lying there—for hours.

This persistent, decreased interest in her usual activities is another important symptom of depression. It is normal to have a reduced interest in activities from time to time, but not day after day.

Jane also feels guilty about her weight—her diet—and letting family down. “If I could just quit it!” she thinks.

Feelings of guilt or worthlessness are not always a sign of clinical depression. But, if accompanied by other symptoms, these feelings can be from depression—especially if they are strong and unrelenting.

Jane’s tiredness is debilitating at times. She calls in to work sick a few days every month. And work is starting to question her being absent. But some days she cannot hide it, and employers and co-workers just think it is fatigue.

For others who see someone going through this, it can be difficult to know how to help. But realize that simply listening and encouraging such people to get professional help goes a long way.

### Concentration, Appetite and Motor Skills

You notice Jane has had difficulty finding her words at times and she often forgets what others just said. This difficulty concentrating exhibits as cloudy thinking and feeling foggy mentally. Her ongoing inability to focus is noticeable.

Also, her clothes are tighter, more wrinkled—signaling a change in

**“Realize that talking with a depressed person about suicidal thoughts does *not* necessarily lead to an increased risk of suicide.”**

appetite that has led to weight gain. Like many with clinical depression, she is eating more “comfort food.” This can create or complicate other illnesses.

Unlike Jane, some lose the desire to eat and begin to lose a significant amount of weight. This is especially problematic for normal or already underweight individuals.

Jane just sits looking at you without much movement. She *looks* tired.

While some people act agitated with depression, it is more common for affected individuals to show slowed movements and speech, termed “psy-

chomotor retardation.” This results in unusual social interactions and can cause others to avoid depressed individuals.

But this is when they need human contact the most.

### Suicide

Jane is so discouraged, she thinks the world might be better off without her. Fortunately, she is not seriously thinking about suicide. However, if you know of someone who has suicidal intent—is developing a plan or has already developed a plan to commit suicide—get *immediate* professional help. This means right *now*—refer to the contact information contained in this article.

In Jane’s situation, like many others, suicidal thoughts occur in what experts term “suicidal ideation.” This is a preoccupation with one’s own death, dying or even just a preoccupation with being dead.

There is a common misconception that talking about suicide with a person considering it somehow encourages them to go through with it. Realize that talking with a depressed person about suicidal thoughts does *not* necessarily lead to an increased risk of suicide. It can help a depressed person for a friend to listen through such thoughts, and then refer that person to a professional.

### Helping Someone Cope

Jane is now well on her way to resolving her depression. You have noticed improvement following the treatment and counseling you have encouraged her to receive and maintain. Support

## Where to Find Help

This article is *not* a substitute for professional help. If you or someone you know is experiencing depression, get professional help as soon as possible. If you or someone you know is contemplating or has a plan to commit suicide, *immediately* call 911 or your local emergency services phone number. Do not delay getting needed help.

### SAMHSA’s National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

SAMHSA’s National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

from friends and family has been instrumental.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, there are beneficial actions we can encourage depression sufferers to implement as we encourage them to seek professional help.

First, remember that telling someone to “just get over it” is discouraging and can make them feel even worse. Never say that to anyone.

Instead, refer to this list on coping with depression adapted from the United Kingdom’s National Health Service:

■ **Stay in touch.** Do not withdraw from life. Socializing can improve your mood. Keeping in touch with friends and family means you have someone to talk to when you feel low.

■ **Be more active.** Take up some form of exercise. There is evidence

that exercise can help lift your mood. If you have not exercised for a while, start gently by walking for 20 minutes every day.

■ **Face your fears.** Do not avoid the things you find difficult. When people feel low or anxious, they sometimes avoid talking to other people. Some people can lose their confidence in going out, driving or traveling. If this starts to happen, facing up to these situations will help them become easier.

■ **Do not drink too much alcohol.** For some people, alcohol can become a problem. You may drink more than usual as a way of coping with or hiding your emotions, or just to fill time. But alcohol will not help you solve your problems and could also make you feel more depressed.

■ **Try to eat a healthy diet.** Some people do not feel like eating when

they are depressed and are at risk of becoming underweight. Others find comfort in food and can put on excess weight.

■ **Have a routine.** When people feel down, they can get into poor sleep patterns, staying up late and sleeping during the day. Try to get up at your normal time and stick to your routine as much as possible. Not having a routine can affect your eating. Try to carry on cooking and eating regular meals.

Do your best to encourage the *Jane’s* in your life who you believe or know are suffering from depression. Ultimately, they have to learn to help themselves, but the guidance and encouragement of a friend goes a long way in showing that they *are* worth something, they *are* good at something, and the world *is* a better place with them in it. □

## MOSUL

Continued from page 15

Potential friends of America lament what they see as a lack of U.S. interest or ability to blunt Iran’s influence in the country allied troops invaded 17 years ago. In February 2019, the head of Salahuddin provincial council, Ahmed al-Krayem, traveled to Washington to drum up U.S. support for his region and help counter Iran.

“The visit wasn’t fruitful,” said a senior Iraqi lawmaker, a relative of Mr. Krayem.

“Whoever he met didn’t seem interested in his proposals for a bolstered U.S. troop presence and U.S. investment.”

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which hosted Mr. Krayem at a private event during that trip, declined to give details about the gathering. Mr. Krayem also declined to comment.

A Salahuddin official said that by contrast, “the Iranians, including their diplomats at the embassy, reach out to people you’d never expect them to, at a local level.”

Asked about U.S. engagement in Iraq, Department of State spokesper-



■ U.S. Brigadier General Vincent Barker shakes hands with Iraqi General Mohammed Fadel during the handover of Qayyarah Airfield West from U.S.-led coalition forces to Iraqi security forces, in Mosul (March 26, 2020).

PHOTO: REUTERS/THAIER AL-SUDANI

son Morgan Ortagus said: “We will continue to stand with the Iraqi people in support of their calls for reform and change, and to help them achieve an Iraq that is economically prosperous, a pivotal country in the region, and free of foreign meddling.”

Other Salahuddin Sunni chieftains have met Shiite paramilitary officials to plead over the return of Sunni families displaced by the war with Islamic State and scattered in camps and tem-

porary homes across northern Iraq. They worry about the drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq, saying it opens up their regions to the danger of a resurgent Islamic State.

“A few years ago I would never have dealt with Iran-backed officials,” said Sheikh Khalid al-Nasseri, a senior leader in Saddam Hussein’s clan. “Now I’ll work with anyone to get services for our people and return families to their homes from miserable camps.” □

# STATUES

Continued from page 11

## What Next?

As monuments and statues fall across the United States and around the world, cities and towns are left wondering what to do with the empty spaces that once honored historic figures tied to Confederate generals and colonizers.

The opportunity to reimagine these spaces has created a new discussion: Whose history should the U.S. now honor and why?

Brett Chapman, a Tulsa, Oklahoma, attorney and descendant of Standing Bear, a Ponca chief and civil rights leader, said he would like to see the fallen statues replaced by largely unknown social justice advocates.

“There are so many people we can honor that will show how we’ve overcome oppression,” Mr. Chapman said. “It’ll be a chance for us to learn and reflect.”

Others want to take a different tact: Leave the podiums empty.

A world with no statues. Is this even possible? Believe it or not, this is not only possible but is *going to happen soon*.

In the second of the Ten Commandments, God said: “You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:4-6).

Most read this prohibition to idolatry and only focus on the part about not bowing down to idols. But God also condemns creating these images in the first place.

What the Confederate monument debate helps prove is that people tend to make objects of metal and



■ A decapitated statue of Christopher Columbus at Christopher Columbus Park in Boston, Massachusetts (June 10, 2020).

PHOTO: JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

stone and honor them—whether it is a notable figure in history, a Greek god, a totem pole, or Jesus Christ Himself. But most do not stop to think that there is a *reason* the Bible does not give a detailed description of what Christ looked like. God knew that, if He had provided a full description of His physical appearance, people would make images of His likeness and attempt to worship it.

God remains invisible because He wants people to recognize that He “is a Spirit” and He wants them to “worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

The truth on this matter is that the soon-coming Kingdom of God will not have statues for men to argue and debate over. While history will be a very important element within this coming utopian society, this history will not be represented by graven images.

For more on the Ten Commandments and how they will impact the world to come, order David C. Pack’s free book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* You will be surprised at how much more this book reveals. □



Order a **Free Copy!**  
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## PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

assembled first. And building the truth begins with the most clear and obvious passages. These are two of the greatest rules of Bible study when exploring any of this Book's topics. Sadly, these rules, and the rest of the 12 rules of Bible study, are not followed by, or even known to, almost any who read God's Word. Supposed prophecy experts are no exception.

Back to II Peter: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (vs. 21). In short, prophecy comes from God, through His servants, as He inspires them to record His words.

Many of the Bible's greatest servants were prophets. These men held high office. In fact, most whom God worked through in the Old Testament held this office. And their names jump from Scripture.

Acts 3:19-21 shows prophets announce the coming Kingdom of God. Every prophetic Old Testament book records something about God's coming Kingdom, with only one exception, Jonah. Most prophets also delivered powerful warnings.

### Proof of God's Existence—and Power

Prophecy can be summarized as having four distinct purposes. Yet first you must realize there is only one source for true prophetic knowledge—the Holy Bible. Psychics and seers can sometimes see elements of the future, but their visions invariably have errors alongside any correct elements—because they are connected to the wrong side of the spirit realm.

Despite this, few go to the one infallible source, which foretells—and with astounding, absolute accuracy—all the important events that will soon come upon the entire world! So plain is the proof, you can easily learn it! And afterward, you can rest assured that what you have learned will occur—that it is no less certain than tomorrow's sunrise. You need

never again doubt the authority of *anything* in the Bible—including all subjects discussed in its other half-million words.

So then, the FIRST PURPOSE is that, when proven to have been fulfilled, prophecy becomes undeniable evidence of the *existence* and *power* of God. God alone can fulfill prophecy. No human being has even the *knowledge* of what are world-shattering future events, let alone the power to bring them to pass centuries or even millennia beyond his lifetime. For this reason, it has been said that prophecy is the challenge skeptics *dare not accept!*

How true!

God openly taunts skeptics. This is from Moffatt's translation: "The Eternal cries, bring your case forward, now, Jacob's King [God] cries, state your proofs. Let us hear what happened in the past, that we may ponder it, or show Me *what is yet to be*, that we may *watch how it turns out*; yes, let us hear *what is coming*, that we may be sure you are gods; come, do something or other that we may marvel at the sight! You are things of naught, you can do nothing at all!" (Isa. 41:21-24).

This passage is God's challenge to disbelievers.

Now another bold statement in Isaiah: "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and *new things* do I declare: *before they spring forth I tell you of them*" (42:9).

God is careful to ensure the credit for foretelling events goes to *Him alone*, not any false prophet or false god. Again from Isaiah: "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, *and they came to pass*. Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to you; before it came to pass I showed it you: lest you should say, My idol has done them, and...has commanded them" (48:3-5).

God does not guess the future. He is not just a good or the best *forecaster* or *prognosticator*. Acting deliberately,

He brings to pass what He says will happen. If He tells us something—anything—is to occur, it will occur! Moffatt renders verse 3, "What has occurred *I foretold long ago*; it fell from My lips, I predicted it, then suddenly *I acted—it was done*."

Now Isaiah once more: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me. *Declaring the end from the beginning*, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (46:9-10).

Prophecy is simply God telling human beings what He will do!

God has a steady hand in the affairs of men. He is capable of thwarting and overthrowing the purposes of governments and nations. Notice: "The Eternal wrecks the purposes of pagans, He brings to nothing what the nations plan; but the Eternal's purpose stands forever, and what He plans will last from age to age...The Eternal looks from heaven, beholding all mankind; from where He sits, He scans all who inhabit the world; He who alone made their minds, He notes all they do" (Psa. 33:10-15, Moffatt translation).

Yes, men may have their plans about how to solve the big, complex problems facing civilization, but God "wrecks" them, "bringing them to nothing." God has plainly told us how He plans to do this at the end of 6,000 years of human affairs.

### A Means of Encouragement

A SECOND PURPOSE for prophecy is to *encourage* Christ's true followers. Jesus understood that the Christian way involves trials and difficulties throughout life. This is an inescapable fact for those in whom God is working. These are essential to the character-building process.

One of these trials is persecution. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus warned, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). He had just reminded His disciples, "I have chosen you out

of the world, therefore the world hates you” (vs. 19). Of course, Jesus was persecuted, horribly tortured and crucified.

The apostle Paul recorded, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). “All” means what it says! Jesus said His servants would be hated! But He reassured them, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

Another element of encouragement flows from *prophecy itself*.

Some may assume that all biblical prophecy is “gloom and doom” and “fire and brimstone.” This is not true! In fact, far from it. The ultimate message of prophecy is the most *positive* news in all history. Hundreds of verses preview a time of universal peace, prosperity and happiness—drawing closer daily—that all people will have an opportunity to experience.

Those who choose to yield to God and learn His way of life now *look forward* in a special way, and draw encouragement from these prophecies.

### To Warn and Call to Repentance

A careful study of the Bible demonstrates that God always warns before punishment—whether it be the destruction of cities such as Nineveh, or Sodom and Gomorrah—or of individuals such as wayward kings of Israel and Judah—or of the whole inhabited world before the Flood.

God gives us *this* certain promise of what will happen in advance of events He intends to fulfill: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He *reveals His secret* unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). God keeps His promises. He always reveals major events *before* they happen. And they are recorded in the prophets.

So a **THIRD PURPOSE** of prophecy is that a loving God gives human beings—free moral agents who must choose between right and wrong—space to repent.

Ancient Israel has been the main recipient of such admonitions. Notice: “If My people...shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive

their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

When giving the prophet Ezekiel his commission, God stressed what His servants were to do: “Son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel [these are today modern nations descended from ancient Israel]; therefore you shall hear the word at My mouth, and *warn them* from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul” (33:7-9).

It has been my long and sad experience that most people will not truly listen to what God says. They cannot seem to make themselves take *seriously* His commands, instructions and warnings.

With each warning through the ages, some few do heed and repent. Those who do not—having been warned!—bear responsibility for their choices and actions.

### Powerful Motivator

A **FOURTH PURPOSE** of prophecy is to *motivate* those who wish to seek God and claim His promise of protection. Knowledge of what is ahead—both the terrible and wonderful elements—motivates true Christians to serve God more fully.

The most serious events just before Christ’s Return will descend like a *snare* on an unsuspecting world—except for those who “watch,” “pray” and “escape” (Luke 21:36). Let’s read: “As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (vs. 35). It becomes clear then that a group is promised to be *protected* during the times just ahead.

Paul wrote this sobering warning: “Of the *times and the seasons*, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they

shall say, Peace and safety; then *sudden destruction comes* upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief... Therefore let us not sleep, *as do others*; but let us watch and be sober” (I Thes. 5:1-6).

Those who take the Bible seriously know what is coming, and live their lives accordingly.

Isaiah explained that God’s Word is written, “*Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little...*” (28:13). Nowhere is this Bible pattern more true than of prophecy. The passage continues with God explaining why His Word is this way: “That they [readers] might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.”

Again, Revelation is written to God’s servants—to show them—not others—what must “shortly come to pass.” Isaiah underscores that prophecy *cannot be understood* by those who do not seek to serve and obey God. God has scattered bits and pieces of information on prophecy (and all other subjects) throughout His Word in a way that will cause the mere casual reader to “fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken”—how?—by false understanding!

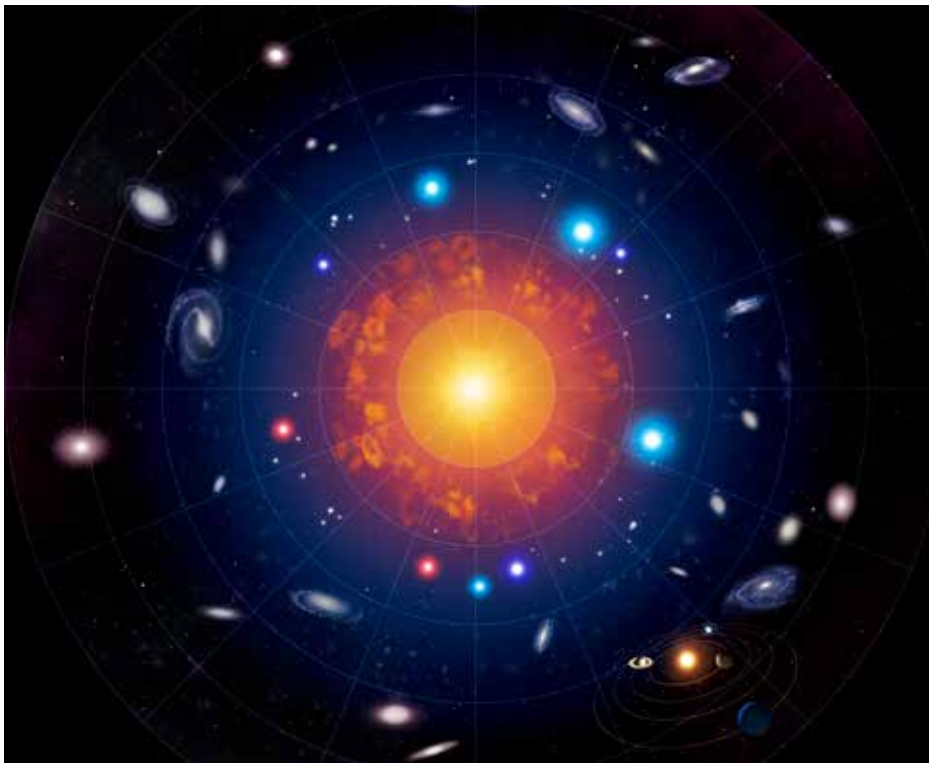
They will not comprehend. Visit [rcg.org](http://rcg.org) and look at all the titles we offer *just on prophecy*—the truth of prophecy, and that are all free—not the confusing gobbledygook by so many who write books for sale—for money—who pretend to understand prophecy in order to make a living. These men do not know what they are talking about and do not speak with God’s authority.

In just a handful of minutes, you have learned more about prophecy than most will ever know.

This article ought to sober each reader, who should now be asking, “How serious am I about understanding—and acting on—Bible prophecy?” Now is the time to consider this question. □

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# New Research of Oldest Light Confirms Age of the Universe



light made by the Planck satellite. This adds a fresh twist to an ongoing debate in the astrophysics community, says Simone Aiola, first author of one of the new papers on the findings posted to *arXiv.org*.

“Now we’ve come up with an answer where Planck and ACT agree,” says Dr. Aiola, a researcher at the Flatiron Institute’s Center for Computational Astrophysics in New York City. “It speaks to the fact that these difficult measurements are reliable.”

In 2019, a research team measuring the movements of galaxies calculated that the universe is hundreds of millions of years younger than the Planck team predicted. That discrepancy suggested that a new model for the universe might be needed and sparked concerns that one of the sets of measurements might be incorrect.

The age of the universe also reveals how fast the cosmos is expanding, a number quantified by the Hubble constant. The ACT measurements suggest a Hubble constant of 42 miles per second per megaparsec. That means an object 1 megaparsec (around 3.26 million light-years) from Earth is moving away from us at 42 miles per second due to the expansion of the universe. This result agrees almost exactly with the previous estimate of 41.9 miles per second per megaparsec by the Planck satellite team, but it is slower than the 45 miles per second per megaparsec inferred from the measurements of galaxies.

Science confirming the age of the universe can seem to contradict to the idea that the Earth was created by God 6,000 years ago. But science and the Bible are more in agreement than most think.

*The Real Truth* article “Is the Earth 6,000 Years Old?” proves this. Read it at [rcg.org/realtruth](http://rcg.org/realtruth). □

**J**ust how old is the universe? Astrophysicists have been debating this question for decades. In recent years, new scientific measurements have suggested the universe may be hundreds of millions of years younger than its previously estimated age of approximately 13.8 billion years.

Now new research published in a series of papers by an international team of astrophysicists, including Neelima Sehgal, PhD, from Stony Brook University, suggest the universe is about 13.8 billion years old. By using observations from the Atacama Cosmology Telescope (ACT) in Chile, their findings match the measurements of the Planck satellite data of the same ancient light.

The ACT research team is an international collaboration of scientists from 41 institutions in seven countries. The Stony Brook team from the Department of Physics and Astronomy in the College of Arts and Sciences, led

by Professor Sehgal, plays an essential role in analyzing the cosmic microwave background (CMB)—the afterglow light from the beginning of the universe.

“In Stony Brook-led work we are restoring the ‘baby photo’ of the universe to its original condition, eliminating the wear and tear of time and space that distorted the image,” explains Professor Sehgal, a co-author on the papers. “Only by seeing this sharper baby photo or image of the universe, can we more fully understand how our universe was born.”

Obtaining the best image of the infant universe, explains Professor Sehgal, helps scientists better understand its origins, how we got to where we are on Earth, the galaxies and where we are going.

The new ACT estimate on the age of the universe matches the one provided by the standard model of the universe and measurements of the same



**17,670,000,000,000  
miles**

The night sky has a way of making us ponder our existence. The stupendous grandeur of stars, planets and galaxies—or the Bright Pillar in the Carina nebula pictured here—can make us feel tiny and insignificant. This feeling is nothing new. Millennia ago, ancient Israel's King David wrote this in Psalm 8:3-4: "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?"

What is your purpose? While most never find a concrete answer to this question, you CAN know! To learn about your incredible human potential, read the eye-opening book *The Awesome Potential of Man*.

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