

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2016

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



CAN EUROPE STOP TERRORISM?

**What the World
Missed in 2015**

Ten Traits of a Valuable
Employee

Easter Island's Collapse
A Cautionary Tale for Mankind

What's Wrong with
Valentine's Day?

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VOL. XIV | NO. 1 | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2016

A R T I C L E S

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**Easter Island's Collapse
A Cautionary Tale for
Mankind**

The fate of the small Polynesian island stands as a stark reminder of the outcome that can result when wrong choices are made.

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FRONT COVER: A photo compilation shows some of Europe's most historically significant structures, including from top left to bottom right, the Tower Bridge in London, England; the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France; the Coliseum in Rome, Italy; the Reichstag parliament building in Berlin, Germany; a statue atop the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin; and a section of the Grand Place in Brussels, Belgium.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU/THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD

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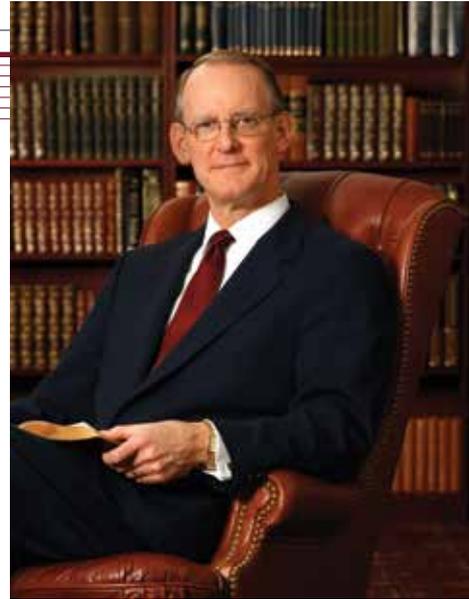
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Your Awesome Potential!

(Part 1)

INCREDIBLE TRUTH has been hidden—in fact held back—from all humanity for 2,000 years. A deceived world has been kept from knowing the vital MISSING DIMENSION to resolving all mankind’s problems. Scientists, theologians, educators and philosophers have remained ignorant of the truth of why man exists. And yet this AWESOME TRUTH—this AMAZING KNOWLEDGE—has always been available. But most have not known where to look.

Jesus Christ came as a NEWSCASTER revealing *future* events—explaining in advance GOOD NEWS for all mankind. This astounding story involves YOU! Prepare to be stunned beyond belief!

The hope of every Christian is to eventually receive salvation, with most assuming that “going to heaven” is the final and greatest reward attainable for every person on Earth. This is seen as the pinnacle—the supreme

achievement and ultimate fulfillment!—of the human destiny.

But is this true? Or is there something greater ahead for every human being ever born?

Hope of Salvation

The “bound for heaven” idea is based on a long-held *assumption*—on what most have been told that the Bible says about life after death. The result has been that few who think about the afterlife talk of any other potential. Even fewer are willing to take the time to get the FACTS!

The awesome truth is that the Bible teaches something *entirely different*—and INFINITELY GREATER!—than this popular supposition believed by the vast majority of people attending all the well-known, mainstream churches.

Most people at some point wonder why they are here—why they were born—what’s the purpose of human life. Yet they live and die never knowing the truth—or even that they could have known.

But here is another reason. Most never concern themselves with life's GREATEST QUESTIONS until confronted with death—their own or of someone close. Even then, most only take a superficial interest. The few who are willing to look closely at how they will spend eternity do not know where to find plain answers. They either do not know how to study the Bible for themselves or believe they should merely accept the answers of “learned men” who have “been trained”—and who “know about these things.” And they are instructed to “accept on faith” those things about the afterlife they are told *cannot be understood*.

Tragically, taking the easier path, most remain willingly blind, accepting non-answers without resistance.

The nations of Earth are speeding toward a time of final, terrible world trouble—the crisis foretold to occur at the close of this age. The growing fear of war, terrorism, famine, disease, crime, pollution, breakdown of the family, and a host of other worsening and seemingly insoluble problems have gripped great and growing numbers, including whole nations.

Evidence abounds that the end of this present civilization is *near*. Those who wonder “Where is this all going?” “What is God doing?” and “Is this all there is?” want clear—PLAIN!—*provable* answers to these and related questions.

The very greatest question is, “Does God have a MASTER PLAN?” If so, what is it? The answer is that He does, and it carries many exciting details—all of which YOU can know. You will learn that God's purpose is immutable, that it cannot be overthrown or defeated.

You can also know of *your place within it*. In fact, if you read this two-part article series, you will. It answers every one of the most important questions that should be on your mind, including others you would not know to ask—but need to understand. None of the answers are what you expect. Neither are they what educated so-called scholars and theologians teach, because none can teach what they were never taught—what they never learned.

You were put on Earth to fulfill an ASTONISHING PURPOSE—you hold a potential far surpassing your very *greatest expectations*. Prepare to be INSPIRED beyond imagination!

Held Back for 2,000 Years!

The truth of the gospel has been withheld from the world. Billions are deceived. Previous billions have been. Even you have been lied to. A complete seduction has taken place, and all the world's religions have played a part in it. Knowledge of your *incredible future* has been kept from you!

The world has believed a false gospel for 2,000 years. It has generally supposed that Jesus *is* the gospel rather than the Messenger *of* it. The message—the centerpiece—of the gospel is *not* Jesus. By focusing on the Messenger, religious deceivers suppress His message!

The result is that man does not know the way to peace, abundance and all of life's good things. The gospel would have shown the solution to man's most insoluble problems. Yet, except for the apostle John, all of the original apostles were *martyred* for teaching the truth of God's incredible purpose. Think. Jesus Himself was crucified because people did not want to hear His message!

A correct knowledge of the true gospel involves a dimension of understanding that cannot be discovered by scientific inquiry. Every supposed “great religion” of the world has helped hide it. Their leaders neither comprehend nor are willing to teach it. And ministers have held back the great *key* that unlocks your purpose for being!

How did this happen? Who is behind this suppression of knowledge?

The Super Deceiver

To the unlearned, the Bible is a book of shocking statements. It reveals startling truths, completely unknown even to those who profess to understand it. But there are few statements more astonishing than Revelation 12:9. This verse directly states that Satan the devil—who does exist!—“*deceives the WHOLE world*.” As “prince of the POWER of the air” (Eph. 2:2), he has

influenced, guided, deceived and controlled the unsuspecting masses.

This is staggering knowledge—so much so that most simply ignore or reject it, believing it cannot be true. But it is in your Bible. The entire world remains deceived about the very fact that it *is* deceived! (To learn more about this being, read our free booklets *Who Is the Devil?* at rcg.org/witd and *A World in Captivity* at rcg.org/awic.)

The Bible says that, since his rebellion prior to man's creation, Satan has “weakened the nations” (Isa. 14:12) and “deceived the nations” (Rev. 20:3) in both understanding and critical knowledge explaining God's purpose. His deception has been complete.

Greatest Kidnapping

Many know something is wrong—but do not know what. Most assume that things are the way they are because man has *evolved* to his present state. This thinking permeates modern education, but it is a false—an entirely WRONG—premise. Evolution is outright fiction created by men who were led to this theory by the one who blinds all the inhabitants of Earth to God's awesome purpose for mankind.

Those holding to the evolutionary theory are prevented—actually blocked!—from comprehending *why* conditions on Earth are as they are. And many statesmen, leaders and thinkers feel trapped by trends and conditions, and the general flow of world events, unable to do anything about them. Indeed, they *are* trapped. We must understand *why*.

This is *not* God's world. The whole world is *cut off* from Him and held hostage by an unseen SUPER KIDNAPPER. All humanity has been deceived into believing the soothing words of this CAPTOR, thinking themselves better off under his care and leadership. Six thousand years ago, the devil hijacked Adam and Eve and all inhabitants of Earth ever after! The world has remained a *willing* captive.

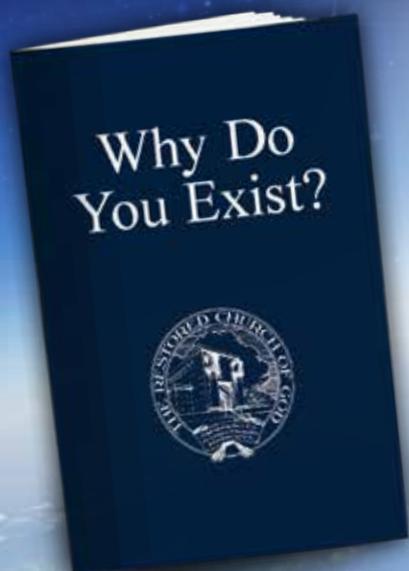
Here is modern man's predicament: Imagine picking up a 20-chapter book

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 29

WHY WERE YOU BORN?



Does your life have a purpose?



- **Atheists** refuse to know.
- **Cynics** scoff at the possibility of knowing.
- **Scientists** cannot discover this knowledge through laboratory analysis.
- **Philosophers** cannot discern it through meditation or discussion.
- **Educators** cannot teach what they themselves were never taught.
- **Theologians** offer humanly devised counterfeits.

What about you?

The booklet *Why Do You Exist?* is one of the most important pieces of literature you will EVER read.

Order your free copy at rcg.org/wdye.

Can Europe Stop Terrorism?



After Islamic terrorists struck Paris again, Europe and the West are struggling with one of their worst crises since World War II.

A TYPICAL SOCCER MATCH between Germany and France in Paris: Players pass the ball while the crowd whistles and hollers. Even after an explosion is heard, everything continues as normal. A television announcer says it is “firecrackers being let off in and around the stadium,” as the game continues.

Little do they know it is a suicide bomber outside the stadium who killed himself and a passerby.

Two explosions later—one at a different entrance and another at a nearby fast-food restaurant—it becomes clear what is occurring. Officials lock down the stadium. French President Francois Hollande, who is among those attending the game, has to be evacuated.

A rock concert across the city: Fans sing along and hold up beer glasses as a band launches into another song.

Minutes later, gunmen linked to the Islamic State terror group (ISIS) kill 89 people.

The story is the same across the city that evening. November 13 started as a routine Friday, filled with hundreds of thousands of people dining out. Yet that ended when restaurants Le Petit Cambodge, Cafe Bonne Biere, La Casa Nostra pizzeria, and La Belle Equipe bar all experienced shootings. Le Comptoir Voltaire was also ripped apart by a suicide bomber.

The attacks, which killed 130 and left over 100 in critical condition, were labeled an “act of war” by Mr. Hollande. The Paris police chief reported that three coordinated teams were behind the killings.

Following the attacks, Brussels, Belgium, went on lockdown for six days—at a cost of \$55 million per day—as authorities searched for suspected gunmen.

On November 14, award-winning British author Ian McEwan, who was in Paris during the attack, wrote this in a post for *edge.org*: “The death cult [terrorists] chose its city well—Paris, secular capital of the world, as hospitable, diverse and charming a metropolis as was ever devised. And the death cult chose its targets in the city with ghoul-ish, self-damning accuracy—everything they loathed stood plainly before them on a happy Friday evening: men and women in easy association, wine, free-thinking, laughter, tolerance, music...”

In other words, Islamic terrorists are threatening everything the Continent holds dear.

Mr. McEwan continued: “Paris, dazed and subdued, woke this morning to reflect on its new circumstances.”

“What are those changed circumstances? Security will tighten and Paris must become a little less charming. The necessary tension between security and freedom will remain a challenge. The death-cult’s bullets and bombs will come again, here or somewhere else, we can be sure. The citizens of London, New York, Berlin are paying close and nervous attention.”

Attacks on Paris mean all of Europe must reflect on its new circumstances. If such an event can occur in France’s capital, Berlin, Rome, Brussels or Athens could be next. And given the setup of the European Union, a coordinated *multinational* terror plot is now in the realm of possibility.

The EU is loath to give up borderless travel, multiculturalism and the rights of individual nations. Yet terror

continues to push the power bloc in that direction.

Make no mistake. More attacks *are* coming. An operative from ISIS claims the organization has already smuggled thousands of covert terrorists into Western nations.

Can Europe protect itself against such threats? Even more, what will it be *forced* to do to protect its freedoms?

Growing Problem

The November 13 attacks came while other terror attacks were still fresh in Parisians’ minds. On January 7, 2015, two masked men armed with assault rifles stormed the offices of satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* before making a successful escape, leaving 12 dead and 11 severely wounded. While the suspects were still at large, other related attacks in Paris killed five more.

In August, three Americans, including two members of the armed forces, overpowered a man that began to open fire on passengers in an Amsterdam-Paris train. The attacker injured two before being subdued.

All across Europe, the threat of Islamic extremism continues to ratchet up. Germany averted a bomb attack in April that was modeled after the 2013 United States Boston Marathon bombing.

Also, in September, a 41-year old radical Islamist was shot dead by police after he stabbed a policewoman in Berlin.

In February, an extremist in Denmark shot and killed two victims and injured five police.

Belgian police thwarted two attacks in 2015—and the country has quickly become notorious as a hotspot for jihadists.

The Guardian reported: “More than 250 Belgians have left the country to fight alongside jihadis in Syria and Iraq; about 75 have died in combat and 125 have returned. According to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, Belgium has the highest rate of foreign fighters per capita of all Europe.”

■ **WAR AT HOME:** A French soldier stands guard in front of the Eiffel Tower, which is illuminated with the colors of the French flag in tribute to the victims of the November 13 terror attacks in Paris, France (Nov. 18, 2015).

PHOTO: JOEL SAGET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Worryingly, Belgium's capital, Brussels, is the headquarters of the EU and home to many NATO agencies.

In addition, due to Belgium's central location in Europe, open borders, and a low level of security, the nation is prime ground for extremists to live in obscurity, collaborate with sympathizers, hatch plans, and base operations.

Terrorists across Europe are taxing the continent's intelligence officers. A former counterterrorism investigator in France told *CBS*, "On the whole, during the last few years, we realized that we are not coping anymore." He said that intelligence agencies in his nation are overloaded, and that dozens of attacks this year were only thwarted by "pure luck."

The situation is similar throughout the EU.

Complex Problem

The main reason for the continued uptick in Islamic extremism in Europe is that there are no easy solutions. Any effort to truly solve the problem would require not a change of one policy or leader, but an entire overhaul of its system.

The European Union itself has an incredibly complex structure. There are

28 member states with 28 heads of state. There are four different presidents: the European Parliament president, the European Commission president, and the European Council president, who is not to be confused with the rotating presidency of the European Council, which is shared between member states for six-month terms. Any sweeping change to the power bloc must be agreed upon by differing nations with very unique cultures and ideas.

As a result, every attempt to stem the growing tide of terrorism is a mess of complications.

If the EU decided to close all national borders, for example, it would effectively reverse the free-travel Schengen Agreement.

Migration expert Matthieu Tardis explained to *AFP* why this is a problem: "Calling Schengen into question is a risk because each state deals with the issue in a very national way based on public opinion—and in the end what is called into question is the crossing of national borders."

Open borders cannot go away without other problems. The agreement has been a boon to Europe's single market by reducing costs of goods, and has increased a sense of unity among

Europeans. Reinstating borders and customs would reverse these effects.

It could also force thousands of nationals to relocate. For instance, a Spanish native living in Belgium would potentially have to change his citizenship, get a visa, or move back to his country of origin. This does not even get into the logistical nightmare of figuring out what citizens are currently where.

Another issue is how to handle those fleeing to the EU from wars and environmental disasters. If the power bloc stops accepting the downtrodden from war-torn areas of the Middle East, it will be seen as harsh. Yet among the many legitimate evacuees, there could be terrorists in refugee clothing as was the case with one perpetrator in the latest bombing in Paris.

While Europe celebrates being a melting pot of cultures, this love of multiculturalism is being tested by a continuing increase in the number of Muslims there. In Germany and France, they make up 5.8 percent and 7.5 percent of the population, respectively.

If governments crack down on adherents to Islam, many innocent Muslims may be affected or be inadvertently radicalized.

Other Muslims have chosen radical Islam because of impoverished conditions in EU nations such as France.

"Islam is a permanent part of France now. It is not going away," Soeren Kern, an analyst at the Gatestone Institute and author of *Islamization of France* told *The Washington Times*. "I think the future looks very bleak. The problem is a lot of these younger-generation Muslims are not integrating into French society. Although they are French citizens, they don't really have a future in French society. They feel very alienated from France. This is why radical Islam is so attractive because it gives them a sense of meaning in their life."

No matter the decision, European leaders are stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Greatest Threat

Upholding EU ideals in the midst of this turmoil has proven to be an impos-



■ **MULTICULTURAL TENSION:** A woman walks with a child in Marche Barbes, an outdoor market in a Muslim community in Paris, as normal life resumes in the area. Days before, security checks had been increased due to terror attacks in the city (Nov. 18, 2015).

PHOTO: FREDERIC T STEVENS/GETTY IMAGES

sible juggling act. The power bloc cannot do either very well. The true threat may be against the EU as we know it. This is a predicament that is dividing the continent.

“Even before Paris, Schengen was crumbling under the pressure of what some have called the great migration from the Middle East and Africa into the EU...many [after the Paris attacks] will no doubt conclude that not only do the foreigners arriving on this continent threaten their culture and livelihood, some of them pose a physical threat too.

“To state the obvious...European feelings about immigration were already red-hot. The great migration has set neighbouring states against each other—the east-west split in the EU over accepting migrants is arguably the biggest threat to the union’s future—and shaken up settled political systems: even Angela Merkel, who has for so long looked like a near permanent feature of German politics, now looks mortal” (*The Telegraph*).

Ms. Merkel’s decade-long and powerful position as German chancellor is under severe threat as a backlash to her continued approval of more Syrian refugees into her nation.

The Telegraph article summarized where this appears to be heading: “So no one should be surprised if passport checks and checkpoints start reappearing and borders that previously existed only on paper start again to take physical form.”

But what of the European ideal?

Open borders and individual nations functioning as one is at the core of what EU founders had in mind so many decades ago. These values cannot simply go away and the union remain intact.

“Pressure is growing on countries to act,” Josef Janning, head of the Berlin, Germany, office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, told *The Wall Street Journal*, “but the ability to do so in a European framework is not.”

In the past, those calling for closed borders as a way to maintain national sovereignty and control may have been a faint whisper against the overwhelm-

ing voice of those pointing to the benefits of unity. But in the wake of recent attacks there has been a shift.

Notice the challenge leaders now face: “Politically, [leaders] must convince the public that openness works despite the cross-border movements of the Paris attackers. Practically, they must find ways to improve joint European security mechanisms that have proved to be of limited efficacy” (*ibid.*).

In other words, those seeking to have borders remain open are simply asking for the enforcement of laws that clearly do not work.

Yet there are advocates for measures beyond closed borders. Others are calling for Europe to turn away refugees and anti-Islamic sentiments are brewing across the continent.

The difference in responses between France’s January *Charlie Hebdo* attack and the November Paris attacks brings this to life.

“Unlike the response in January after attacks at the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and elsewhere left 17 dead, there were no grand public appeals for solidarity with Muslims after the Friday attacks that left 129 dead in Paris. There were no marches,

few pleas not to confuse practitioners of Islam with those who preach jihad,” *The New York Times* reported.

“Instead, there was a palpable fear, even anger, as President Francois Hollande asked Parliament to extend a state of emergency and called for changing the Constitution to deal with terrorism. It was largely unspoken but nevertheless clear: Secular France always had a complicated relationship with its Muslim community, but now it was tipping toward outright distrust, even hostility.”

EU leadership, including European Council President Donald Tusk, also appears ready to act.

“Speaking in Strasbourg, President Tusk said the crisis threatened to transform the EU and destroy principles such as border-free travel between Schengen zone countries. ‘This challenge has the potential to...cause tectonic changes in the European political landscape,’ he said.”

“Mr Tusk said these were ‘extraordinary times’ that required ‘extraordinary measures, extraordinary sacrifices and extraordinary solidarity’” (*BBC News*).

These “extraordinary times” dictate that more of the same will not get the



■ **PLANNING FOR SECURITY:** Members of European Parliament attend a debate in Strasbourg, France, on police and military operations following the terrorist attacks in Paris (Nov. 25, 2015).

PHOTO: FREDERICK FLORIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

job done. Europe is being forced to truly approach the problem in a special or remarkable way. Otherwise, they can expect the same—if not worse—results.

Forcing Europe’s Hand

The only two solutions are individual nations breaking off from the union to protect themselves or, more likely, nations giving up more power to a centralized European Union. The latter solution allows citizens on the continent to better maintain their current standard of living.

Terror experts make clear what it will take for the EU to combat radical Islam, as demonstrated by a few examples from think-tank Carnegie Europe. The top solutions are increased intelligence gathering, better intelligence communication between nations, and more military intervention in countries with large terrorist presences such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

■ Francois Heisbourg, special adviser at the Foundation for Strategic Research: “At the EU level, the union should energetically implement the measures that interior ministers defined in December 2014. In particular, the European Parliament should approve an EU no-fly list and passenger name recording to hinder ‘jihad tourism.’ The EU’s border agency Frontex should revise its role and resources, for the same reason. All countries within the EU’s passport-free Schengen area—indeed, all EU members—should join the Prum Convention, which aims to step up cross-border cooperation, particularly in combating terrorism.”

■ Rem Korteweg, senior research fellow at the Centre for European Reform: “The [Paris] attacks show that foreign policy and internal security are intimately connected. The West has been hesitant in responding to recent crises in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, and parts of these countries (and others

in North Africa) are now incubators for jihadist terrorism. The West can ill afford to ignore such safe havens.

“Several thousand Europeans are fighting in the ranks of the Islamic State. Some will return home. Europe’s leaders must agree on a common strategy to make life difficult for returning jihadists, including by creating barriers to travel, sharing intelligence better, and stemming the flow of small arms on Europe’s black markets.”

■ Stephen Szabo, executive director of the Transatlantic Academy: “The EU and its member states can protect themselves against terrorism, but only if they coordinate closely with each other and with the United States, and if they take actions to fix the longer-term social problems that are the root causes of violence.

“The horrible events in Paris on January 7-9 have put the U.S.-European rift over the NSA spying scandal into a broader perspective. Intelligence sharing is now at the top of the agenda. Certainly, Europe must maintain civil liberties and the right balance between individual freedoms and national security, but without security, there will be little meaning to civil liberties.”

Note the common themes: the EU needs more robust intelligence forces, a united army to address both foreign and domestic concerns—and the willingness to use it—as well as an overall closer union to make this all work. In other words, they will have to give up some freedoms to ensure national security.

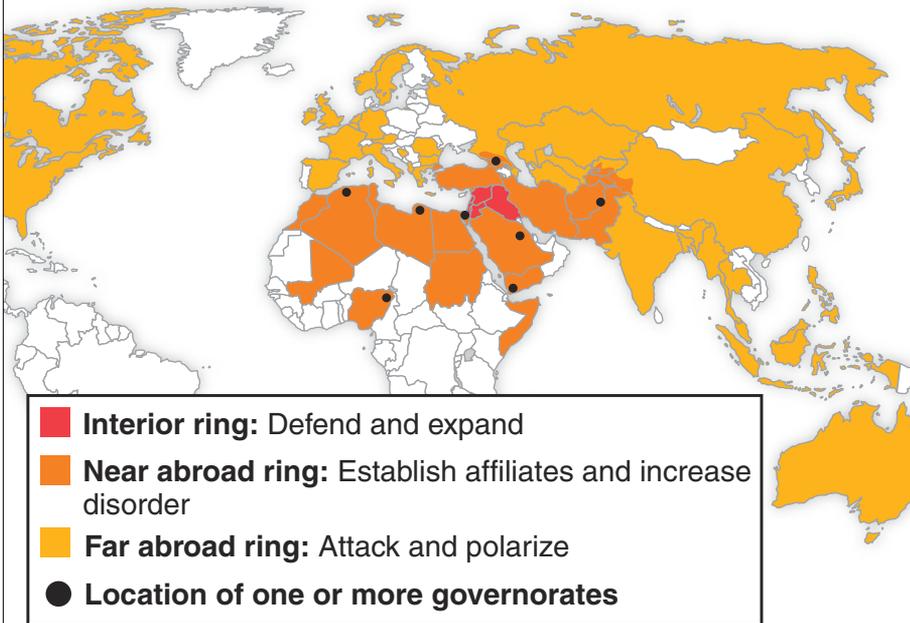
A continued series of terror crises *will* trigger action by individual nations and the EU as a whole. This is already beginning. The governments of France and Britain are already bombing ISIS targets in Syria. Germany has agreed to send military assistance for the campaign.

Terrorism is compelling the continent to work together like never before. Other economic and social problems will also push nations to give more and more power over to a central authority.

Soon, this will be seen as the only way Europe can protect itself. □

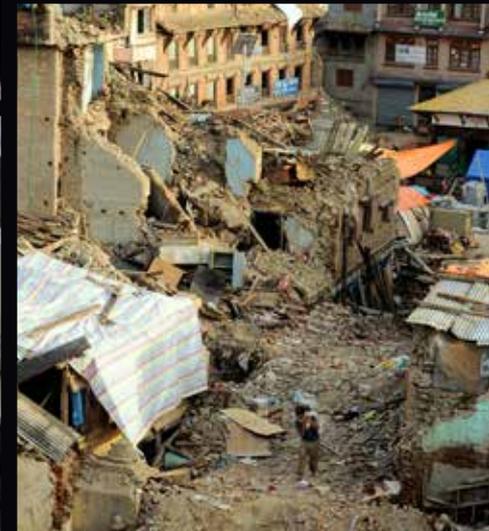
ISIS Global Strategy

ISIS continues to defend its terrain within Iraq and Syria, foster affiliates in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, and encourage and provide resources for terror attacks worldwide.



Source: ISW
Graphic: Staff, Tribune News Service

What the World Missed in 2015



An examination of the previous year shows that something was lacking in humanity's ability to solve its problems.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER, DAVID J. LITAVSKY, AND STACEY L. PALM

AS WITH ANY NEW YEAR, 2015 started with loads of promise. We were ready to take on the most pressing problems of the day. We could survey the entire planet and see where our actions caused negative effects. Armed with the lessons of 2014, we determined to

■ **YEAR OF HOPE:** Top left, refugees arrive on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey (Nov. 10, 2015). Bottom left, Pope Francis delivers a sermon during Mass in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Sept. 27, 2015). Top middle, Prime Minister-elect Alexis Tsipras shakes hands with Greece's exiting President Karolos Papoulias (Jan. 26, 2015). Bottom middle, demonstrators gather in Paris to protest Boko Haram Islamists after a large-scale attack in Baga, Nigeria (Jan. 18, 2015). Top right, from left to right, German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere, Tunisian Interior Minister Mohamed Gharsalli, and British Home Secretary Theresa May lay flowers at the scene where 38 people were killed on Marhaba beach in Sousse, Tunisia (June 29, 2015). Bottom right, a Nepalese man walks past damaged houses in Kathmandu, Nepal, following an earthquake that struck the Himalayan nation (May 26, 2015).

PHOTOS: ARIS MESSINIS/ (TOP LEFT); VINCENZO PINTO/ (BOTTOM LEFT); ARIS MESSINIS/ (TOP MIDDLE); PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/ (BOTTOM MIDDLE); JEFF J MITCHELL/ (TOP RIGHT); ISHARA S. KODIKARA/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); AFP/ GETTY IMAGES



succeed where we had previously fallen short.

New leaders took the stage. In January, Greece elected Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras who promised to resist European bailout money in return for implementing austerity measures.

As the debt crisis developed over the summer, though, it ended with a return to the status quo. Greece accepted an austerity package and received funds from the EU.

The West, too, looked forward to change—America’s Congress swung to the right as a Republican majority filled the Capitol. Canada tilted to the left in its election of Justin Trudeau for prime minister.

In addition, the 2016 U.S. presidential race heated up, forcing citizens

to focus on selecting a new leader of the free world. Australia replaced Prime Minister Tony Abbott with Malcolm Turnbull, a staunch supporter of same-sex marriage and climate change policies.

2015 was also expected to be a year of global economic growth—a final spring out of the lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis. Lithuania became the 19th country to join the euro, and the Eurasian Economic Union came into effect, linking Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Despite high hopes, international markets went into turmoil just weeks later.

During the year, China’s economy logged the weakest growth since 2009 and Saudi Arabia’s decision to increase oil output to reduce Iran’s oil profits cost OPEC half a trillion dollars—significantly harming members with smaller economies.

In addition, increased worldwide tragedies brought the reality of society’s security situation crashing down. During the first month of the year, masked gunmen affiliated with Islamic State stormed *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris, killing 12 and wounding several more. That same month, Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram razed the town of Baga, Nigeria, with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles, massacring over 2,000 people.

In response to worldwide terror threats, the United Nations adopted Resolution 2199, which forbids member countries from providing resources—including ransom payments—to extremist groups.

Yet this did not stop other acts of terror: the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians in Egypt, a series of shootings across Copenhagen—Denmark’s worst terrorist attack in 30 years—the killing of 20 at a Tunisian museum and subsequent slaughter of dozens more at a beach resort, a man opening fire at a Charleston, South Carolina, church, killing nine, a Muslim gunman taking the lives of four marines in Tennessee, a bomb exploding in Bangkok, Thailand, a Mali hotel attack by an al-Qaeda affiliate, the deadliest bombing in Turkey, the Taliban capturing the first city in Afghanistan in 10 years, and a shooting in California by a married couple with ties to ISIS that left 14 dead and 21 wounded.

Amid these problems, a weary world continued to cling to hope regarding climate change. The overall plan: limit the global rise in temperature to 2 degrees Celsius. Each nation was required to devise a strategy throughout the previous year and report it to the international body by December 2015.

As leaders scrambled to reach environmental solutions, China’s smog reached record levels. Indonesia and the western United States endured their worst bout of forest fires. In addition, about 50,000 square miles of forest worldwide were lost over the 12 months.

News report after news report further eroded hope that 2015 would



■ **MOVING FORWARD:** Top, a representative shows attendees a drone at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada (Jan. 8, 2015). Middle, Supreme Council member Shaikh Hamad bin Mohammad Al Sharqi attends a session of the Arab League summit in Egypt (March 29, 2015). Bottom, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivers a speech in memory of late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated 20 years ago by a Jewish extremist (Oct. 26, 2015).

PHOTOS: ETHAN MILLER/ (TOP); MOHAMED EL-SHAHED/AFP/ (MIDDLE); GALI TIBBON/AFP/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES

bring real change. More than 23 shootings on U.S. college campuses took place. Latin America's worst fiscal year since the global recession occurred. Even Ebola fears resurfaced in November when a 15-year-old Liberian boy became the first victim since the country was declared free of the disease two months earlier.

Society watched as all too familiar situations played out. Each news broadcast made the world's plight feel bleaker.

With all of man's advancements, it seems almost incomprehensible that the year should have been this way. Technology allows us to examine the long-term record of history as never before. We should be able to comb the pages of the past to learn from the trial and error of our ancestors—and fix them.

Clearly, humanity missed a crucial lesson from the previous year: that mankind alone cannot solve its problems. A closer examination of various aspects of society in 2015 reveals this in vivid color.

While this knowledge can make the world seem *hopeless*, understanding this concept is a first step to securing a *hopeful* future.

Media

Media is a major driver of society. Used correctly, it allows the world to be more connected than ever before, drives advancements in every field of knowledge, and helps humanity see where it is off-track.

More often than not, however, media is improperly used. It strains relationships, blurs the truth, pushes radical agendas, incites violence, and encourages people to become more self-focused than ever before.

The year 2015 was *the* year for political correctness. This was evidenced in discussions about race such as the case in which an African American man in Baltimore taken into police custody died, setting off a chain of riots throughout the city. Everyone, from newscasters to educators to the average citizen had an opinion.

In addition, the concepts of “microaggressions” in education—that what is being taught could be considered offensive for some students—and “safe rooms”—where students could retreat to drink milk and eat cookies or play with Playdoh if they felt a particular topic was not one they wanted to discuss—came into view.

Because of the convenience of the Internet and society's push to rush headlong into the digital age, we are just starting to see the long-term effects of an Internet-entrenched society in which 95 percent of the world's population—just under 7 billion people—are covered by a cellular signal.

Even Oxford Dictionaries' choice for 2015's word of the year aptly summed up the use of media in the modern age. The company chose an emoji—an icon used in text messages—commonly known as “face with tears of joy.”

The organization explained their reasoning: “Emoji have come to embody a core aspect of living in a digital world that is visually driven, emotionally expressive, and obsessively immediate.”

This age *is* visually driven, usually to a fault, the emotions expressed are often shallow, and the obsessive immediacy of the online world robs offline relationships.

Analytics companies regularly find that many only read (mostly skim) articles—yet this does not stop them from sharing it on social media or posting their own thoughts in the comments section.

A lack of deep reading transfers to a lack of deep *thinking*, which leads to an incredibly myopic worldview. Nowhere is this more prevalent than with political ideals.



■ **TRIUMPH AND LOSS:** Top, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull answers a question after announcing his new cabinet at a press conference in Canberra, Australia (Sept. 20, 2015). Middle, residents of Roseburg, Oregon, gather at a candlelight vigil for victims of the Umpqua Community College shooting (Oct. 1, 2015). Bottom, NASA personnel unveil the last and sharpest image of Pluto captured during the closest approach of the New Horizons spacecraft at Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland (July 14, 2015).

PHOTOS: PETER PARKS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); MICHAEL LLOYD/GETTY IMAGES (MIDDLE); BILL INGALLS/NASA VIA GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)



In April 2015, *The New York Times* reported: “With the presidential race heating up, a torrent of politically charged commentary has flooded Facebook, the world’s largest social networking site, with some users deploying their ‘unfollow’ buttons like a television remote to



silence distasteful political views. Coupled with the algorithm now powering Facebook’s news feed, the unfollowing is creating a more homogenized political experience of like-minded users, resulting in the kind of polarization more often associated with MSNBC or Fox News. And it may ultimately deflate a central promise of the Internet: Instead of offering people a diverse marketplace of challenging ideas, the web is becoming just another self-perpetuating echo

chamber.”

To make matters worse, trust in the news media is at an all-time low. A Gallup poll found that only four in 10 Americans have a “great deal” or “fair amount” of trust in journalists to report current events fairly and accurately. Pew Research found that 65 percent of Americans feel news media has a “negative effect” on the nation.

This distrust and disdain is fueled by a constant skewing of truth. No matter the topic, it is difficult to know what is *actually* happening in the world.

This was apparent in what was covered throughout 2015. While certain stories received endless coverage, others were only a mild blip on the world’s radar.

At one point during the year, nearly 1,500 lives were lost in the deadliest stampede ever to occur during the hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia—one of Islam’s holiest

events. Neighboring countries such as Iran blamed the host nation for the disaster, claiming the Saudi government had not done anything to improve the site following deadly stampedes in the past.

Such tragedies, however, were hardly covered by Western nations.

Science & Technology

To be fair, not all 2015 news was negative. The fields of science and technology continued to boom throughout the year, showing that while man may not be able to solve *all* of his problems, he is indeed capable of incredible feats. Advancements included a light-bending microchip with the ability to operate quantum computers and a jet-propelled drone that flies at record speeds, which was built by a 3-D printer.

This is on top of a successful expedition to Pluto. Launched by NASA in 2006, the spacecraft made its closest passage in July of this past year, capturing photos and collecting data. The images revealed large areas of flat surface, which could imply geological activity on the planet.

While the trip to the dwarf planet showed off the genius of mankind, other news revealed the dual nature of man: incredible advancements coupled with terrible ills.

Early in the year, a synthetic biology company used lasers to edit DNA—a procedure that allows it to customize living creatures.

“In the works or on the market are color-changing flowers, cow-free milk, animal-free meat, tests that detect diseases from one drop of blood and pills that tell doctors whether you have taken your medicine,” *SFGate* reported.

With the excitement came a stern warning from bioethicists who believe this could be taken too far. *Wired* magazine explained: “We now have the power to quickly and easily alter DNA. It could eliminate disease. It could solve world hunger. It could provide unlimited clean energy.”

But the article cautioned, “It could really get out of hand.”



■ **PLAGUED BY VIOLENCE:** Top, Christians take part in a symbolic funeral in Jerusalem for Coptic Christians beheaded by Islamic State on a Libyan beach (Feb. 18, 2015). Middle, members of the Danish parliament observe a minute of silence to commemorate the victims of attacks in Copenhagen, Denmark (Feb. 17, 2015). Bottom, Prince Charles of Wales shakes hands with Prime Minister David Cameron during a parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of VE Day in London, England (May 10, 2015).

PHOTOS: AHMAD GHARABLI/AFP/ (TOP); NILS MEILVANG/AFP/ (MIDDLE); STEVE PARSONS - WPA POOL/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES

“It could at last allow genetics researchers to conjure everything anyone has ever worried they would—designer babies, invasive mutants, species-specific bioweapons, and a dozen other apocalyptic sci-fi tropes. It brings with it all-new rules for the practice of research in the life sciences. But no one knows what the rules are—or who will be the first to break them.”

In February, Britain voted to allow the world’s first three-parent in vitro fertilization. The process involves using the parents’ normal DNA and substituting unhealthy elements of it with another egg cell’s DNA. Although doctors claim this could prevent some inherited diseases, there are fears it paves the way to eliminating those perceived to have “inferior” genes. (Think Hitler’s “master race.”)

As is always the case, last year, significant resources were invested in technology created for military purposes—to wage war. Boeing collaborated with the U.S. Army to develop a vehicle that can stop projectiles—missiles, drones and mortar shells—with a laser cannon. Once an object is detected, it takes the laser just seconds to lock onto the target and destroy the missile.

“We want to be able to run it [with] a single guy from a single laptop with an x-box controller, something that he doesn’t have to go to school to learn for years and years...” a Boeing representative said.

Business & Economy

Supporting science and technology is the economy. Every idea needs funding for research and development, followed by cash to make products and services available to the public.

As a general rule, with business and economy, though, good news for one party is usually terrible news for another.

Look at the United States: 2015 was a great year for the dollar, according to *investorguide.com*. The website explained: “Although the US economy has had its ups and downs, the US dollar is still strong. Part of the reason

why is how miserable the rest of the world has been doing, but another part is how well the economy has weathered the storm.”

The economies of China, Russia and Brazil all had a “miserable” year, which boosted America’s financial standing. The Canadian dollar and Mexican peso also struggled to keep up with U.S. currency.

In June, Zimbabwe discarded its fiduciary system to stem ongoing hyperinflation. Citizens began trading Zimbabwean dollars for U.S. ones, with the maximum amount that could be exchanged 175 quadrillion ZD to 5 USD. The switch, however, has done little to ease the country’s woes.

Another fiscal problem was corruption. Five large world banks—JPMorgan, Barclays, Citigroup, RBS and UBS—were fined \$5.7 billion for manipulating money markets.

While some businesses prospered, others brought scandals on themselves. Volkswagen hired a new CEO after the German automobile company was caught cheating on diesel emissions tests in order to pass its vehicles off as eco-friendly cars. As a result, the company lost billions of dollars and VW was forced to recall 8.5 million cars.

Even non-profit groups were subject to corruption. FIFA’s president stepped down after seven executives within the company were indicted on money laundering. The U.S. Attorney General determined that corrupt FIFA officials pocketed \$150 million in bribes extending from offers to select which country would host, televise and organize the World Cup soccer games.

Government

Political upheavals and governmental change



■ **COPING WITH PROBLEMS:** Top, Indian school children and social activists hold candles and posters during a rally for AIDS awareness on the eve of World AIDS Day in Kolkata, India (Nov. 30, 2015). Middle, Eric Chu (left), chairman of Taiwan’s ruling party, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China (May 4, 2015). Bottom, residents of Bhubhoyi, South Africa, who have been affected by a severe drought, collect water from a free water point (Nov. 8, 2015).

PHOTOS: DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/ (TOP); STR/ (MIDDLE); MUJAHID SAFODIEN/ (BOTTOM); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



worldwide also revealed that we had failed to learn lessons from previous years and further supported the idea that mankind as a whole is incapable of solving its problems entirely.

In the U.S., ideological clashes and political vitriol—over immigration, economic problems, climate change, and so on—became more rampant than ever before. A Santa Fe Institute study published in research journal *PLOS One* in April 2015 found that “partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

Across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom made clear its dissatisfaction with its place in the EU when it reelected Prime Minister David Cameron who promised to hold an in-out referendum on whether the UK should remain in the bloc.

In addition, governmental conflicts spawned global problems. The four-year civil war in Syria between its current president and rebel groups was further complicated by attacks from the Islamic State.

Both ISIS and the Syrian conflict have caused thousands of refugees to flock to Europe. After an overcrowded ship capsized in the Mediterranean Sea in April, killing over 800, however, nations on the world put pressure on Europe to open its borders. According to the most recent data by the UN Refugee Agency, close to 60 million people have been displaced due to conflict, persecution, generalized violence, or human rights violations—the highest number ever recorded.

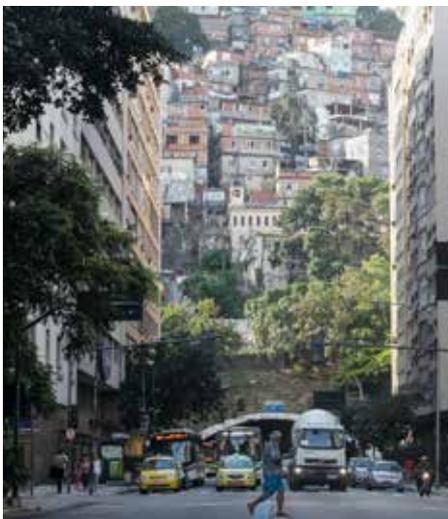
“To those that think that it doesn’t matter because humanitarian organizations will be there and able to clean up the mess, I think it’s important to say that we are no longer able to clean up the mess,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres warned at a press briefing. “UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross—we no longer have the capacities and the resources to respond to such a dramatic increase in humanitarian needs.”

This issue was laid out by the Wilson Center in a report released at the beginning of the year: “The biggest threat of 2015 is from extremists who have taken control in places where peaceful change dissolved into violence, notably Syria, Iraq and Libya, from the Islamic State and al Qaeda franchises such as al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula and al Nusra Front. These groups have redefined the region both politically and geographically; they now control territory and have drawn international support of more than 18,000 foreign fighters. The impact has also created the world’s worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, producing 3.8 million refugees that have spilled over into Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq—with no end in sight to either the war or its consequences in the region.”

Throughout the year, these words rang truer than any could have imagined. According to *The Economist*, more were killed in Europe by Islamist attacks this past year than the past five years combined. In 2015 alone, the Islamic State enslaved 3,000 to 5,000 women.

Another thorny issue for the world was relations between Israel and Palestine. In March, following a controversial speech to the U.S. Congress, Israel reelected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The prime minister promised “that no Palestinian state would be established as long as he remained in office,” *The New York Times* reported.

Please see **YEAR IN REVIEW**, page 24



■ **LOOKING BACK:** Top, Guatemalan Interior Deputy Minister Elmer Sosa shows a picture of Mexican drug trafficker Joaquin ‘El Chapo’ Guzman Loera during a press conference in Guatemala City (July 12, 2015). Middle, a view of the plenary room during an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Belgrade, Serbia, where Turkey and Russia’s top diplomats were set to meet for the first time since Moscow’s warplane was shot down (Dec. 3, 2015). Bottom, a man walks in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where residential real estate prices dropped for the first time since 2008 (Oct. 20, 2015).

PHOTOS: JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/ (TOP); JONATHAN ERNST/AFP/ (MIDDLE); MARIO TAMA/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES

The West's Cooperation with Russia Raises Concerns

EASTERN EUROPEAN nations—Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, and the Czech Republic—fear that growing diplomatic ties between Moscow and the West may threaten the safety of their borders.

“Russia’s seizure of Crimea and support for pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine last year has alarmed Baltic and eastern European states,” *Reuters* reported.

“Leaders of the NATO alliance have also expressed concern at what they see as Moscow’s growing military presence from the Baltics to Syria, after Russia launched air strikes in support of President Bashar al-Assad...”

The nations are worried that Russia’s stronger Western ties could cause those countries to turn a blind eye if the Kremlin were to overrun their borders.

“Russia’s military activities in our neighbourhood are undermining European security architecture,” the leaders said in a joint statement at a meeting of the nine Eastern European countries.

Relations between the West and Russia have strengthened in recent years, but increasing military collaboration between the two against terrorist forces has brought them to a new level. This has been viewed by some as a move by President Vladimir Putin to “repair frayed relations with the West,” according to *The New York Times*.

Eastern Europe, however, interprets Mr. Putin’s actions as a step to persuade “the West to lift sanctions on his wobbly economy imposed because of the Ukraine dispute” (*ibid.*).

The sanctions were put into effect in February 2014 by the European Union and the United States in response to Russia’s military actions in the Ukraine.

In late January, European Union leaders will review the status of the sanctions. They will be dropped if all parties agree to it—an outcome many Eastern European leaders do not want.

Poland’s Prime Minister Beata Szydlo expressed fear that if the sanctions were dropped, Moscow would be able to better afford military campaigns in Eastern Europe.

Similarly, Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Roivas remarked in another *Reuters* article, “Cooperation elsewhere does not mean for Europe concessions in its neighborhood,” and urged the West to keep sanctions on Russia as long as it had a military presence in the Ukraine.

In addition to diplomatic and economic alignment, Moscow’s military buildup has mounted fears of a possible invasion. According to the nation’s news agency, *TASS*, Russia increased the number of contract servicemen from 230,000 in the spring of 2014 to 350,000 by November 2015, and the defense budget swelled from \$25 billion to \$28 billion during the same period.

The Council on Foreign Relations said that this show of force is a clear sign “that President Vladimir Putin is prepared to use military might to reestablish Russian hegemony in its near abroad.”

Despite this, Mr. Putin senses that the West is more interested in working with the Kremlin than harboring Cold War tensions.

“Geopolitically, Russia has a great opportunity to play a geopolitics game and come out of isolation,” Laurynas Kasciunas, head of Eastern Europe Studies Centre, told *Reuters*. “A great challenge to European unity is ahead of us.” □

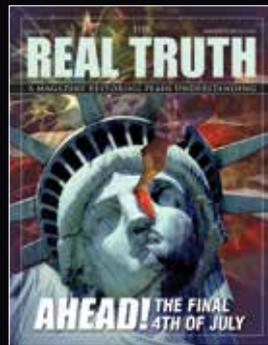
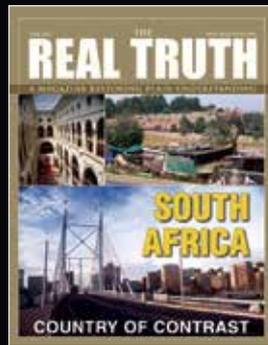
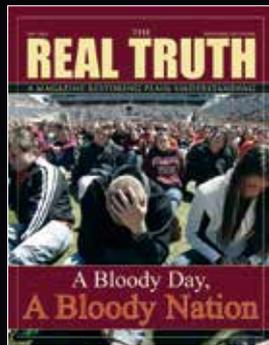
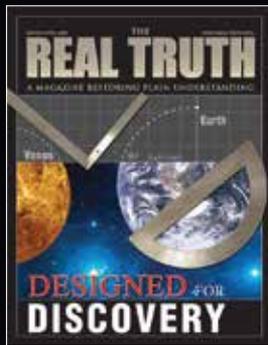
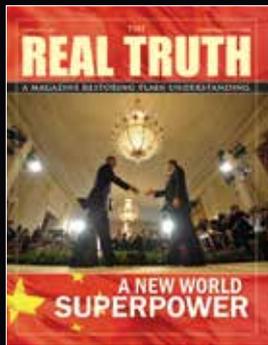
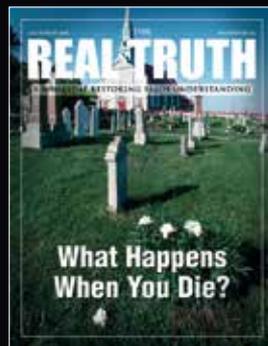
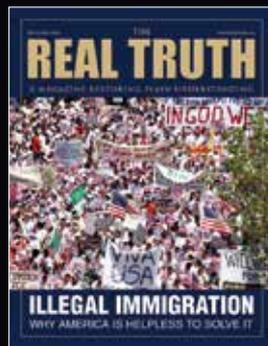
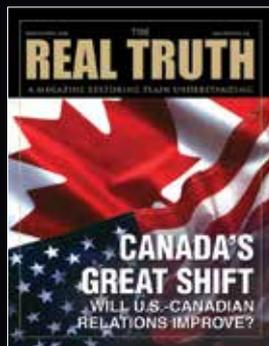
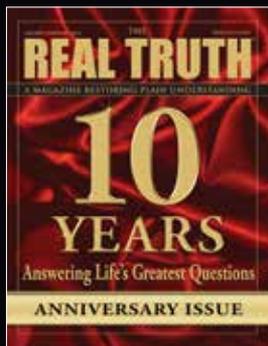
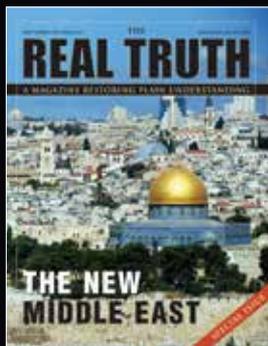
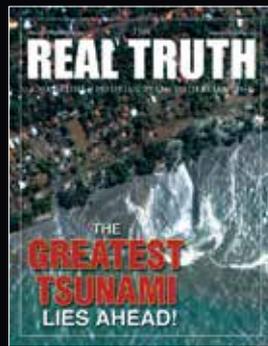
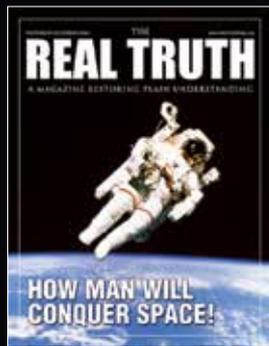
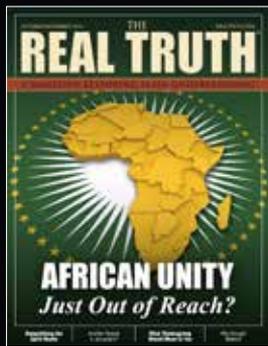
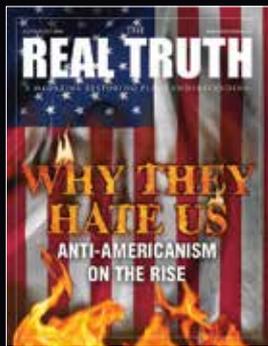
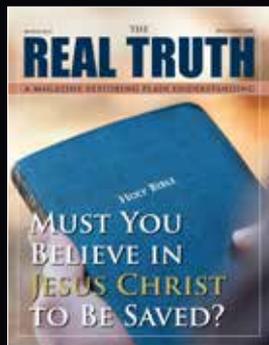
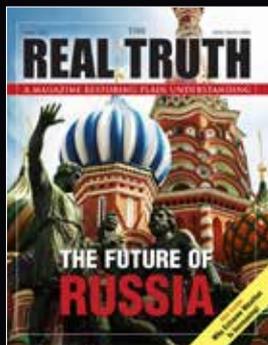
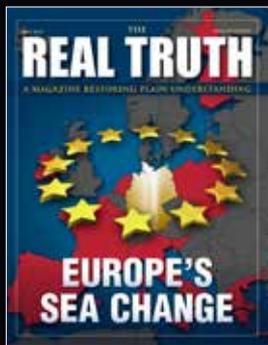


■ **BUILDING TIES:** French President Francois Hollande welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin prior to their meeting at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris, France (Oct. 2, 2015).

PHOTO: THIERRY CHESNOT/GETTY IMAGES

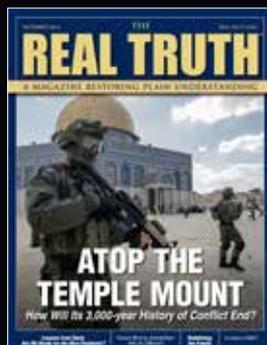
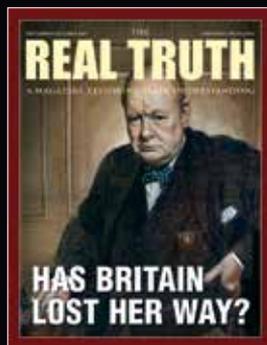
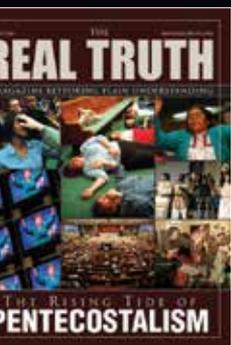
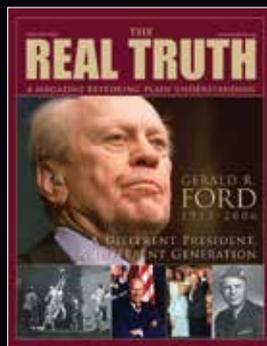
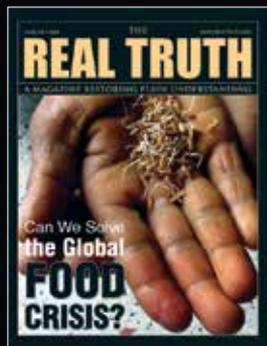
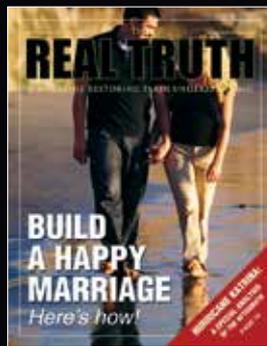
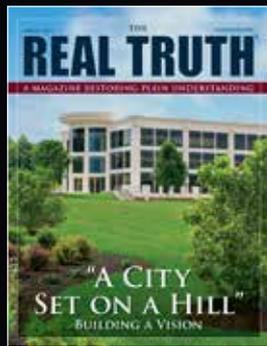
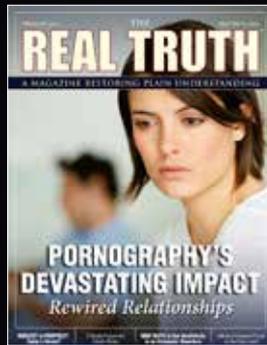
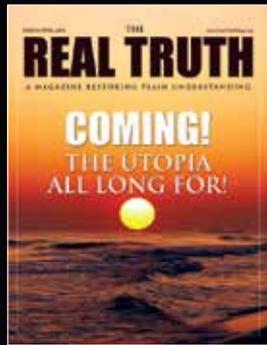
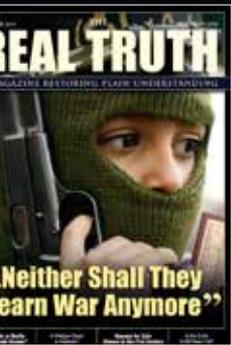
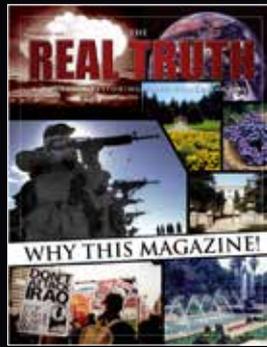
How Your Subscription

Who produces *The Real Truth* and how is it provided free of c



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OFTEN *THE REAL TRUTH* staff receives letters and emails filled with questions: What is this magazine? Who supports it? How can it all be free? What is the catch?

The Real Truth, which provides in-depth articles and news analysis, not only details society's rampant problems, it also explains their solutions. Tailored after the former *Plain Truth* magazine of decades past, *The Real Truth*—its successor—continues to tackle seemingly unanswerable topics, providing solutions from a spiritual perspective.

While using the Bible as a lens to view world events is a perspective many find odd, there is a reason it is so effective. Unlike other publications, *The Real Truth* brings God's perspective to the issues of the day. Each edition covers a range of topics including the root cause of war, what is wrong with the weather, what will come of events in Europe, why earthquakes and devastating weather events are increasing, why science fails to bring the utopia all desire, what lies ahead for all nations, the value of right ethics and rearing proper families, what is wrong with modern education, the definition of true success, and much more.

The magazine is produced by The Restored Church of God, a nonprofit organization devoted to practicing God's way of life—the way of give—of outgoing concern for others. It is dedicated to teaching Christ's true gospel—the good news of the coming KINGDOM OF GOD (Mark 1:14-15)—to “all the world for a witness unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14). The Church operates the largest biblically based websites on Earth, offering a vast array of tools to guide people seeking plain answers to the greatest questions.

Unlike other religious organizations, however, there is nothing to buy. Following Christ's instruction, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8), everything is offered free of charge. This is made possible by tithes, offerings and freely given contributions by members and other supporters of our international Work.

The Bible teaches, “Buy the truth, and sell it not...” (Prov. 23:23). Accordingly, we do not, and will never, solicit donations from the public. In faith, we believe that Christ always provides for the Work He is doing through His servants. All our co-workers and donors give as they feel compelled.

The Restored Church of God understands the need to spread a clear, plain message—and to reach out to a struggling, suffering world. This magazine serves as a vehicle to deliver that message!

Through the publishing power of the Internet and other means, *The Real Truth* provides millions of people in every nation and territory on Earth with in-depth news analysis and access to sound, proven principles—all of which help them lead happier lives. □

Ten Traits of a Valuable Employee



By becoming a better employee, you will have a greater chance of landing the job you *really* want!

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

THE GREAT RECESSION is behind us. While debate lingers as to when the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression officially ended, the economy appears to be bouncing back.

Employment numbers in the United States support this. According to a report issued by the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment plummeted to 5 percent in October 2015, the lowest since April 2008. Exactly six years before, unemployment *peaked* at 10 percent.

Despite an improving job market, however, those seeking positions or currently working must still focus on employability—skills and attributes necessary to acquire and retain jobs.

Businesses openly express that they want employees to not only do their jobs well, but also possess less tangible attributes—referred to as soft skills—

which are usually more personality-driven and harder to quantify.

“When companies are assessing job candidates, they’re looking for...someone who is not only proficient in a particular function, but also has the right personality,” Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer at career resource and job-listing site CareerBuilder, told *Business News Daily*. “It’s important to highlight soft skills that can give employers an idea of how quickly you can adapt and solve problems, whether you can be relied on to follow through, and how effectively you can lead and motivate others.”

Managers and companies desire certain key qualities in their workers. By knowing, practicing and incorporating the following 10 traits, you can dramatically increase your worth to current and future employers.

(1) Character-driven

Character is the virtue of knowing right from wrong, turning from the

wrong, and doing what is right, even in the face of negative pressures. It requires one to be honest and upright in everything he or she does.

Sadly, though, good character in the workplace has all but disappeared. Comparing today’s society to that of even 20 years ago makes this plain. People tend to do what is most expedient for themselves or a given situation.

Put yourself in the place of an employer. Employees are a representation of your company. How they conduct and present themselves, interact with customers and fellow employees, and the quality of their work, reflects directly on your organization.

If you had to choose between an employee who was upstanding, trustworthy, honest and truthful in his dealings with others, one who goes above and beyond, and does excellent work—and one who lacks these qualities—which would you keep on the payroll?

The answer is obvious.

(2) Multi-skilled

Sound advice for those looking to further themselves in their careers is to “always increase the value of the real-estate.” Instead of being a reference about land, property, homes or buildings, it is actually an analogy about increasing your value as an employee.

Think about a house. When it is remodeled and invested in, its value increases. So too will your value to an employer as you improve and upgrade yourself.

This can be done in a variety of ways.

First, identify skills you already have. Many people are unable to identify what they do well. If you do not know what you are capable of, how can you expect anyone else to recognize it?

Once you have identified your skills, seek to improve them. Employers love to see workers who are willing to go the extra mile to better themselves.

Also strive to gain more than one skill set. Make it your business to broaden the number of tasks you can perform.

For example, an automotive technician who can repair anything on a car has more value than one who can do only routine maintenance tasks. Likewise, a carpenter who can not only do rough framing, but also siding and roofing, along with installing windows and doors, stands a better chance of holding on to his job than others with only one specialization.

Learn all you can and avoid complacency. The more you can do, the greater value you will have to an employer. In turn, you will also have more opportunities for advancement.

(3) Reliable

Few things are as aggravating to an employer as dealing with a worker who does not carry out instructions. As a result, the company misses crucial deadlines, makes mistakes, and produces faulty products or provides poor service—all of which result in unhappy customers.

Failure to follow instructions accurately is often because employees either

do not pay attention to directives or do not care enough to carry them out.

Most misunderstandings and miscommunications at work can be avoided by simply applying a basic biblical instruction: “Let every man be swift to hear, [and] slow to speak” (Jms. 1:19). Human nature tends to speak and react immediately, rather than patiently listen first.

A person who waits and listens, and then carries out directives is rare. Yet many mistakes and accidents could be greatly reduced or even eliminated by simply listening to and following instructions.

A willingness to be attentive also shows respect for your superior, which will not go unnoticed. He will see that you patiently listen without interrupting, which will assure him that you take your duties seriously and can handle more responsibility.

(4) Positive Attitude

Individuals with positive attitudes are well-liked by their co-workers. They are easy to get along with and people enjoy being around them. Why? No one wants to be around someone who is unhappy. Pessimism and negativity breed more of the same.

Cheerful attitudes are contagious. They have a positive effect on the workplace.

Similar to everyday life, things can go wrong at work. Employers want workers who approach issues with an upbeat attitude and work toward devising and implementing solutions.

Consider. The purpose of every profession is to solve some type of problem. Problems need solutions. Wages offered in any industry are generally proportional to the degree of difficulty and complexity of problems employees must solve on a daily basis. The more problems you solve—large or small—the more valuable you will be to your employer.

Realize that one who is prone to complaining is often the first to get replaced. Instead, be an employee that quietly and efficiently does his job day after day.

Have the type of positive attitude about your job spoken of by Martin Luther King, Jr.: “If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry” (*The Seattle Times*).

He continued by saying that you should work in such a manner that people will say, “Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well” (*ibid.*).

(5) Responsible

In the past, craftsmen used to take great pride in their work. They were accountable and felt an obligation to be the very best. Often they would pour hours into their crafts.

Today, many employees barely do enough to rightly earn a paycheck. This is reflected by the lack of quality in goods produced and services rendered.

If you want to become a more valuable employee, understand your particular job responsibilities and attempt to go above and beyond what is required. The more care you put into every detail of what you do, the more your manager will be able to focus attention elsewhere. He will know he can rely on you to get the job done, which will provide him with peace of mind.

In addition to this, realize that your job duties affect others. Your mistakes can cause more work for fellow employees. Understand that you can make your coworkers’ jobs more difficult if you perform work in a slipshod manner.

Also keep in mind that when things go wrong, most people blame others. A responsible employee, however, is not afraid to admit his mistakes. An employer appreciates such honesty.

(6) Proactive

There are two types of employees—those who wait to be told what to do and those who take initiative and find innovative ways to be productive to benefit their employer. Managers notice a self-motivated worker and will seek him out for advancement.

Avoid the tendency to wait for someone else to address or fix an issue. Give your company the most “bang for its buck” in what they spend on your salary. This can be done by anticipating problems and being willing to help resolve them.

There is an old saying: “If you want it done, give it to a busy person.” Those who productively use their time are more likely to be given increased responsibility or even promotions.

(7) Dependable

Often, employees repeatedly arrive late, call in sick, or do not show up at all. When someone fails to show, the impact is felt beyond the person. Others must pick up the slack.

Dependability comes down to trust. Managers must be able to know for certain that employees will do what is expected of them. They cannot afford to handhold and coddle workers who agreed to do a job when they were hired—and then do not do it.

What if the tables were turned? Imagine if you worked hard for two weeks and when it was time to get paid your employer paid you late or not at all. What if you had to constantly remind a boss to provide you with the tools and resources needed to do your job? You would be extremely unhappy.

Strive to be a dependable employee. Legitimate issues do occasionally occur that can force you to miss work or have to adjust deadlines, but this should be the exception not the rule.

By your actions, show people that you keep commitments. A dependable and productive worker stays on the payroll.

(8) Diligent

Few today are willing to finish what they start. Yet a diligent person applies constant effort and is persistent in what he does without waning. He does not give up at the first sign of adversity.

There is a reason employment is called work. It takes effort. If anyone could do your job, then it probably would not be a paid profession.

Give your employer a *full* day’s work for the *full* day’s pay you are given. In other words, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Ecc. 9:10).

Be known as a hard worker. Often this quality will take you much further than intelligence or “who you know.”

Become known for being an employee who exercises constant diligence in whatever you do!

(9) Self-disciplined

Distractions in the modern world can make it difficult to focus while on the job. If not careful, we can allow concerns outside of work to creep in and steal away “attention” that is actually being bought and paid for by your employer.

“Keep in mind that if your motto is, ‘That’s not my job,’ you may soon find yourself out of a job!”

A good employee is one who stays on track despite issues that everyone faces from time to time. He manages his life and strives to keep problems at home. He also does not become distracted by modern technology, such as the Internet or a cellphone. He focuses his attention on his work.

A diligent employee does not waste his employer’s time and money. Instead, while at work, he *works*!

(10) Dedicated

Consistently *exceeding* an employer’s expectations and being willing to take on any task shows dedication.

Many employees feel as though they are “above” a given task and voice their complaints. They fail to consider that if those tasks did not exist, they would not have jobs. Keep

in mind that if your motto is, “That’s not my job,” you may soon find yourself *out of a job!*

Jesus Christ spoke about dedication and doing what is expected. Notice His words from the *Contemporary English Version* of the Bible: “If your servant comes in from plowing or from taking care of the sheep, would you say, ‘Welcome! Come on in and have something to eat’? No, you wouldn’t say that. You would say, ‘Fix me something to eat. Get ready to serve me, so I can have my meal. Then later on you can eat and drink.’ Servants don’t deserve special thanks for doing what they are supposed to do. And that’s how it should be with you. When you’ve done all you should, then say, ‘We are merely servants, and we have simply done our duty’” (Luke 17:7-10).

This is drastically different from the prevailing attitude of workers today!

Avoid an entitlement mentality. Be a worker who shows he is dedicated to his job by doing more than is expected—not just the bare minimum.

Employ the Laws of Success

While many more traits could be added to this list, there are seven laws of success, which every person, regardless of his or her position in life, should follow. These proven rules will help you prosper not just as an employee, but in all aspects of your life.

These include setting the right goals, getting a proper education, maintaining good health, being driven, and employing resourcefulness.

David C. Pack’s booklet *The Laws to Success* provides insight into these often-overlooked laws. This publication (available at rcg.org/ilts) clearly explains the keys to true and lasting success in all areas of life.

There are hallmarks of a valuable employee. By systematically and consistently applying the principles covered, you will increase your value in the job market and provide yourself greater job security in the future. □

Seven Laws that Guarantee

SUCCESS!



1

Set Proper Goals

Circumstances generally dictate the course of people's lives. To be a success, you must set goals—with the *right* goal being all-important.



2

Get the Right Education

People do not instinctively know how to function in life. Right education involves understanding how to *live*, not just how to earn a living.



3

Maintain Good Health

Poor health can rob a person of true success. If you lack energy and are sick, you will never accomplish as much as you would like.



4

Develop Drive

In order to move toward success, you must have drive—the ability to push yourself to achieve. This is not natural and must be developed.



5

Practice Resourcefulness

Things can and will go wrong. One must be able to maneuver around and overcome obstacles that are sure to appear along the path to true success.



6

Apply Perseverance

Achieving lasting success requires stick-to-it-iveness—the ability to never give up because of unforeseen circumstances.



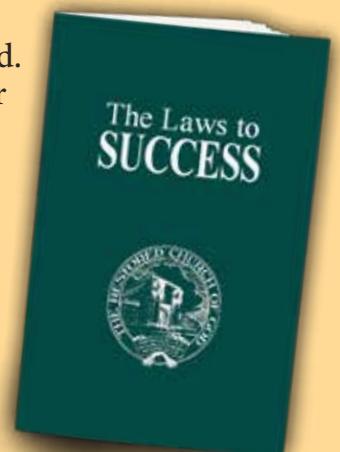
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The Final Law—the Hidden Key to Success

The all-important seventh law is one few really understand. Learn how this law will give purpose and meaning to your life by reading *The Laws to Success*.

*Begin changing
your life today!*

Order your free copy at rcg.org/tlts.





EASTER ISLAND'S COLLAPSE

A Cautionary Tale for Mankind

The fate of the small Polynesian island stands as a stark reminder of the outcome that can result when wrong choices are made.

BY RYAN L. CASWELL

THE COLD FACES of stone stare silently over the barren landscape. Standing at attention, each stoic face resembles the one beside it. On a tiny Polynesian island in the eastern Pacific Ocean, these sentinels are the only immediately recognizable sign of life.

This is Easter Island.

A closer inspection reveals abandoned villages, gigantic stone quarries, and hundreds of platforms used for religious rites—all built by a once-thriving society.

Throughout a 600-yard quarry known as Rano Raraku, stone picks, chisels and axes lie in dusty disarray. Situated on a dormant volcano, the quarry provided material for Moai, the giant stone statues that dot the island. The only human presence in the mine is a crushed finger bone trapped under a toppled Moai, perhaps remnants of a miner's accident.

Many of the Moai remain unfinished, partially carved and frozen in time. Finely chiseled features adorn some groups; others are without defined shape, ranging from 13 to 75 feet tall.

The REAL TRUTH

The stone army grimly stands watch at the abandoned mines and gapes at deserted scars in the earth.

Just east of the quarry lie vast stretches of fields, flat, brown and scorched. Dried hay forms a thin veneer over layers of volcanic rock. Sandy soil, drained of all nutrients, no longer supports even small shrubs and trees.

The flat terrain offers little resistance to strong winds sweeping the plains. The few remaining trees are no taller than 10 feet and offer little protection for indigenous animals. Only a handful of islanders remain there.

Without firsthand descriptions of historical events, scientists have relied on pollen samples, archeological digs, and geological tests to understand what happened to the ecosystem. While various theories abound, Easter Island is hailed as one of the most haunting cases of environmental collapse ever seen. It serves as an isolated eco-survival study of mankind's "worst-case scenario"—a possible testament to destruction on a grand scale.

Early Easter Island

Situated off the coast of Chile, Easter Island was presumably once a lushly forested subtropical paradise. The tiny triangular nation supported a society of up to 30,000 people. Separated from the rest of the world by roughly 1,300 miles of Pacific Ocean, the early Polynesian inhabitants most likely migrated from the neighboring Pitcairn Islands and the mainland of South America.

The climate was well-suited for habitation; three long-dormant volcanoes left rich deposits of fertile soil across the terrain. Open grasslands covered the island in between Easter Palm forests, which grew to over 70 feet tall. The volcanic deposit at Rano Raraku to the southeast provided plentiful stores of volcanic tuff for construction.

Tribes that migrated to the island formed a loose collective government that created a unique culture. These groups, which relied primarily on farming and seafaring, had a structured tribal society, with a leading chief and a class of priests, along with farmers and tradesmen. The religious

pantheon included hundreds of animistic gods.

Chiefs raised the Moai, each weighing an average of 10 tons, to prove their status with the gods, and exercise power over their followers. The chiefs' elite status allowed a ruling class to run society and maintain order among tribes.

Under chiefs, vast projects were organized. Trading harvested resources from the 66-square-mile island encouraged construction on a broad scale. Large plantations produced food surpluses, which aided population growth. Religious worship, fueled by ever larger Moai and elaborate funeral services, united the tribes.

For a time, the society blossomed in an era of prosperity and peace.

Unknown Reason

After several generations, though, available resources began to be consumed. Forests were cut down to be used for canoes, ropes and firewood. Farms producing sweet potatoes, taro and sugarcane stripped soils of available nutrients. Bird, fish and porpoise populations dwindled to extinction.

A massive migration was impossible due to the great distance from the nearest landmass. The isolated island was unable to draw needed resources from other continents and was forced to continue on its own.

The arrival of Europeans did not help the situation as they brought diseases such as syphilis and smallpox, as well as rats that may have decimated millions of trees. The Europeans may have also forced some inhabitants into slavery—leaving the island even more vulnerable.

The population soon began to die out. Easter Island descended into civil war as chiefs-turned-warlords vied for leftover resources.

Internal conflict and violence turned into anarchy. The island was no longer unified and cooperation between peoples ceased. Any attempt to find an organized solution to catastrophic problems was nullified.

Great amounts of forest had been cut for materials to erect the gigantic Moai. While scientists today do not

fully understand how these ancient people raised the monoliths, they agree that strong lumber and ropes were necessary.

Instead of planning for the future, chiefs squabbled over who could erect the largest Moai. In their lust for power, they sought to maintain their god-like statuses with great feats of architecture and dazzling sacrificial pyres.

The population slowly overextended itself and 90 percent of all plant and animal life on the island became extinct. By the time the people realized what was occurring, it was too late.

Picture of Earth?

Many today see Easter Island as a metaphor of the modern world. With haunting and obvious parallels, Earth is a tiny island floating in the vastness of space. Globalization, trade and communication have united various "tribes" on our "island." With "tribes" of nations bound together in a global network, humanity is responsible for planning, controlling and using its valuable—and limited—resources.

Yet Easter Island is not the only example to have a hand in its own destruction. The early civilization of Sumer in Mesopotamia is another clear example of agricultural breakdown. Many archaeologists point to aggressive irrigation tactics (leading to salinization of the soil) as a major cause for the fall of this empire. Even today, the area remains desolate!

Misuse of resources also contributed to the demise of the Roman Empire.

In *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright demonstrated the truth of the anonymous quote, "Each time history repeats itself, the price goes up."

He wrote: "The collapse of the first civilization on earth, the Sumerian, affected only half a million people. The fall of Rome affected tens of millions. If ours were to fail, it would, of course, bring catastrophe on billions."

Easter Island, Sumer and Rome all stand as a stark reminder for Earth's inhabitants—a testament to mankind's inability to solve its problems and a historical example of Proverbs 29: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (vs. 18). □

YEAR IN REVIEW

Continued from page 14

Months after Mr. Netanyahu's new term began, beginning with Jewish Rosh Hashana celebrations, Palestinian stone throwers met Israeli police in a show of aggression after Jewish radicals attempted to assert their right to pray there—something forbidden by Palestinian authorities and adhered to by most Israelis. Since then, the conflict has spread throughout the region, with a spate of stabbings sparking increased security measures throughout the nation.

To confront challenges in the region, nations of the Arab League formed a military coalition for the first time. Spearheaded by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Saudi government, the joint armed force was used to counter the Iran-backed Houthi, who ousted Yemeni president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi from the capital of Sanaa in January.

The deterioration of relations between Russia and Turkey did not make the Middle East's situation any better. In November, a Turkish warplane shot down a Russian combat jet during an airspace dispute, an action President Vladimir Putin claimed was a "stab in the back" by the "accomplices of terrorists." Russia responded by imposing economic sanctions on Turkey.

For political successes of 2015, many would turn to the multi-national agreement regarding Iran's nuclear program and renewed relations between America and Cuba.

Yet even both of these were not without controversy.

Proponents of the Iran deal contend that it will prevent the nation from producing nuclear weapons. Others feel it will only *delay* Tehran from obtaining them—and still others question if the nation will deliver on its promises at all.

Regarding the U.S. and Cuba, citizens of both nations watched with amazement as Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama announced that

after more than 50 years, they were reestablishing diplomatic relations. Opponents of the shift say it evidences growing American weakness on the world stage.

To the surprise of many, Pope Francis played a significant role in the policy change between Havana and Washington. His letter to both presidents urging them to "initiate a new phase in relations" essentially jump-started the entire process and led to the reconciliation.

Religion

The steady stream of unsettling news pushed many to look beyond the physical for answers. With the occurrence of four consecutive lunar eclipses in April and September of 2014 and 2015, dubbed "blood moons," talk even turned to the "end of the world."

One writer purported that each "tetrad" was a sign of serious consequences on the horizon. A bout of severe Palestinian terror attacks in Jerusalem throughout September and October added to the theory.

This, coupled with significant natural disasters occurring or intensifying this year, made the concept that we were in the end-times more believable.

For example, in April, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Nepal, killing more than 8,000. On May 12, another earthquake in the nation caused 390 additional deaths. In June, a severe heat wave in India, resulting in temperatures as high as 118 degrees Fahrenheit, killed over 2,300—one of the deadliest recorded in the nation.

This is in addition to extreme droughts in California, Brazil, Zimbabwe, and North Korea, a typhoon in the Philippines, a cyclone that hit Vanuatu islands, a Guatemalan landslide that killed dozens, the largest earthquake to hit Chile in years, a South Asian earthquake that killed hundreds in multiple countries, and the strongest Pacific hurricane to make landfall in history.

While such events drive some toward religion, the state of the world is also increasingly driving many away from it. A May 2015 Pew

Research Center report found that among Americans born between 1981 and 1996, 35 percent claim to have "no religion," a group also known as "nones." This number is only 11 percent for those born between 1928 and 1945.

The Telegraph reported on the news: "While America still remains outwardly far more religious than Europe, the sudden rise of the 'nones'...has raised the question of whether the US is on the cusp of a dramatic sea-change in attitude towards religion in public life."

Such a substantial move away from religion has led many to question long-established morals and values. The changes can be seen in the 2015 Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage in all 50 states and more widespread acceptance of those who identify as transgender.

Mainstream religions have been struggling with how to reach a society that differs so greatly from traditional beliefs.

Catholic leader Pope Francis—who heads the largest denomination of professing Christians on Earth—has succeeded in capturing public attention. But even his parishioners are moving away from traditional doctrines of the church.

Among U.S. Catholics, Pew found that 84 percent believe unmarried parents living together is an acceptable way to raise children. Also, 87 percent feel the same about single parenting, 83 percent for divorced parents, and 66 percent for same-sex couples.

Shifts in societal values have also changed how family is defined, which presents a host of challenges. A joint study from Princeton University and the Brookings Institute stated: "Research clearly demonstrates that children growing up with two continuously married parents are less likely than other children to experience a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and social problems, not only during childhood, but also in adulthood."

Such positive effects—which include higher education, income,

occupational status, and employment rates—are even more pronounced when children are raised by their biological fathers and mothers.

The move away from a nuclear family means society must identify and attempt to counteract the negative effects of nontraditional living arrangements.

In an effort to emphasize traditional family values, Francis visited the United States in September—the fourth pope to visit the nation. He followed this with a trip to Africa just two months later, during which he became the first pope to travel to an active warzone.

Missing Element

The theme of mankind not able to solve its problems runs through all aspects of society.

Consider what the world endures, a cycle of seemingly endless adversity coupled with prosperity. While man continues to achieve, he also continues to suffer.

Examining history is a crucial first step to understanding this. When looking back through the centuries, a curious pattern emerges: the PARADOX OF MAN. He is capable of incredible advancements, yet they are always coupled with terrible ills.

Notice three examples:

■ The Romans built the magnificent Colosseum—and then watched gladiators and animals hack, gouge and tear each other to pieces.

■ The Mayans were producing durable rubber products 3,000 years before American Charles Goodyear filed for a patent in 1843—yet their religion revolved around grotesque bloodletting and human sacrifice.

■ The U.S. sent men to the moon—yet also invented and used atomic weapons to take human life.

Man has longed for peace for millennia. With all the time and effort put into this pursuit, history should reveal a clear path to prosperity and happiness. Instead, it is an endless record of warfare, religious clashes, and failed governments. It brims with cautionary tales about what *not* to do.

It shows that there is truly nothing new under the sun.

Real Truth Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack expounded on this concept in his book *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems*: “While the world is suffering from ‘information overload,’ none of this knowledge increase is truly addressing mankind’s growing number of complex, insoluble problems. With all of man’s creative ingenuity and intelligence, he cannot solve the most important problems—those that threaten his very existence on an earth he is systematically destroying.”

WHY?

Mr. Pack answers: “Every effect can be traced to one or more causes. Unwanted or illegitimate pregnancies, crime, drug addiction, bankruptcy and a thousand other effects, can all be linked to specific causes. Create your own list. You may find it to be almost endless.

“The King James Version of the Bible teaches, ‘...the curse *causeless* shall not come.’ Two other translations of this verse are ‘...the *undeserved* curse will never hit its mark’ (Jerusalem Bible), and ‘...the *baseless* curse never goes home’ (Moffatt). This scripture is saying that every difficulty carries a reason—there is a CAUSE for every EFFECT!

“Why can man not see this law at work when he looks at the world as a whole? Why is it that no one is looking for the cause of this world’s ills and evils? Why are educators not teaching this most important of all principles? As you look at the world around you, are you concerned with it? Do you ever wonder *WHY* it is filled with misery, unhappiness and discontent? And why has even the Christian religion ignored this important relationship between cause and effect?

“The cause of all the world’s troubles began in the Garden of Eden. As simple as this sounds, it is true. The world has lost sight of a decision

made by Adam and Eve. They chose not to eat of the *Tree of Life*, choosing instead to eat of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Have you ever wondered what would have happened if those two people had chosen the Tree of Life? Think of how this would have changed the entire world! *Everything* would be different.

“There would be no armies, wars, death, devastation or displacement of peoples. There would be no famine or hunger because there would be plenty of food for everyone. There would be no doctors, because there would be no illness. All of the hospitals and clinics would never have existed. Neither would the prisons, jails, judges, courts and police forces that exist to punish lawbreakers.

“Universal happiness, abundance, prosperity and peace would have been experienced worldwide. All people would get along—neighbors, families, individuals and nations. Can you imagine such a world?

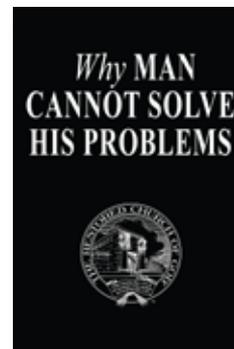
“When Adam and Eve made the wrong decision, it directly affected *you* and *me*! They brought untold effects upon humanity, because of their single wrong CAUSE—and this has not been understood prior to the 20th Century.”

This is vital knowledge the world has missed! If it had understood this in 2015, it would have seen that only by turning to God could it solve its problems and really make this year better than the last.

The Real Truth is the only magazine of its kind on the face of the Earth that reveals this knowledge.

To understand more of what society misses, keep reading this publication. Its world news analysis through the lens of the Bible keeps its readers abreast of what is happening, why it is happening, and what is to come.

True knowledge from God’s Word is accessible to you if you are willing to seek it! □



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WHAT'S WRONG WITH VALENTINE'S DAY?

The backstory of this holiday reveals that true love is not the real reason for it.

BY VIDAL N. WACHUKU

MISTING COLOGNE into the air, a husband grins in the mirror with satisfaction. Everything has been set: a bundle of roses adorns the dining room table, tea light candles glimmer in the entryway, and tucked inside his pocket is an ivory gift box with a diamond bracelet for his wife. He straightens his tie, confident it will be the perfect Valentine's Day.

Down the street, a club is packed with partiers guzzling specialty drinks and gyrating to the *thud, thud, thud* of overcharged bass. At the bar, a muscled male exchanges seductive glances with a green-eyed brunette

until they end up on the dance floor together.

Ten blocks away, a third-grader sits at home, holding a card given to her by a boy in her class earlier that day. While students had munched on chalky candy hearts and colored pictures of cupid, the teacher told them about the day's origins.

Across the world, people consider Valentine's Day a time to celebrate what is called love, in any form. It is a day for grandparents to show affection to grandchildren, husbands to wives, brothers to sisters, boyfriends to girlfriends.

In the Philippines, thousands of couples participate in the world's largest kissing event. In Nigeria, husbands and wives dine at restaurants with family.

In Brazil, concerts featuring romantic samba music occur nationwide.

While wearing hearts, being "in love," and showing a "special someone" how much you care by gifting a teddy bear, chocolates or flowers may *seem* perfectly innocent, there is another side to this "Day for Lovers" most fail to consider.

Modern-day Look

Valentine's Day is a booming multi-million-dollar industry. The Greeting Card Association says approximately 190 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, excluding the hundreds of millions that schoolchildren exchange. Also, it is the number one holiday for florists, with more than 198 million roses produced yearly for it.

According to the National Retail Survey, the average person spent an estimated \$142.31 for Valentine's Day on candy, flowers, apparel and more in 2015—up from \$133.91 the previous year. Total spending approached \$19 billion—the highest yet for the holiday.

But where did Valentine's Day originate—and how did cards, the heart symbol, and cupid become associated with it?

One legend purports Valentine was a Roman priest: "It is believed that the young priest rose to distinction after betraying Emperor Claudius in 270 AD by conducting illegitimate wedding ceremonies in the capital," *BBC* reported. "Emperor Claudius claimed that married men made poor soldiers and consequently decreed that all marriages of younger citizens would be outlawed. Bishop Valentine, however, maintained that marriage was part of God's plan and purpose for the world. He continued to conduct marriages in secret between young people, sometimes as young as twelve, in the name of love.

"His success gained him unwelcome notoriety, which became Bishop Valentine's downfall. He was jailed and ultimately beheaded, but not before he fell in love with the jailer's daughter. It is thought that on the evening of his execution the bishop passed her a note which read 'from your Valentine'. This story has blossomed into the defining tradition of Valentine's Day" (*ibid.*).

The customs related to this day, however, began much earlier than AD 270. Since ancient times, mid-February has always been linked to sex and fertility. Ancient Athenians celebrated February as the month of Gamelion to commemorate the marriage of the Greek god Zeus to Hera—the goddess of women, marriage and childbirth.

"More than a Hallmark holiday, Valentine's Day, like Halloween, is rooted in pagan partying," *National Geographic* reported.

"The lovers' holiday traces its roots to raucous annual Roman festivals where men stripped naked, grabbed goat- or dog-skin whips, and spanked young maidens in hopes of increasing their fertility, said classics professor Noel Lenski of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"The annual pagan celebration, called Lupercalia, was held every year on February 15 and remained wildly popular well into the fifth century A.D.—at

least 150 years after Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire."

On the eve of Lupercalia, February 14, a holiday in honor of Juno, queen of the gods and patroness of marriage, was held. As part of the celebration, a "love lottery" took place, in which the city's bachelors drew a young maiden's name from a jar and became paired with her for the duration of the festival. The new couples were then often sexual partners for the rest of the year.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Pope Gelasius I incorporated a form of the festival as the Feast of the Purification in AD 494. Yet it was not until 1415 that the custom started to become widespread—when Charles, the Duke of Orleans, sent the oldest-known recorded Valentine message to his wife while imprisoned in the Tower of London.

As the Catholic Church gained influence throughout Rome, the pagan custom of finding a sexual companion by lottery was abrogated. Despite the ban, the mid-February holiday in honor of St. Valentine was still used by Roman men to seek the affection of women. A tradition for the men to give loved ones handwritten messages of affection containing Valentine's name was born.

The church attempted to "Christianize" Lupercalia even further. Instead of putting the names of girls into a box, the names of "saints" were drawn by both boys and girls. It was then each person's duty to emulate the life of the saint whose name he or she had drawn.

Innocence Lost

Today, the holiday continues as a time to promote manufactured love—filled with trite greeting cards and ubiquitous heart-shaped candies. Many people feel obligated by societal expectations to buy gifts and send Valentine cards to loved ones. Others mark the day by indulging in casual sex.

Condom sales skyrocket before the "day for lovers," which is also known as National Condom Day. One condom producer reported that retail sales increase by 25 to 30 percent around this time.

The effects linger during the following months. In the second, third and fourth weeks of March, spending on at-home pregnancy and infertility tests is higher than usual.

The sexual side of Valentine's Day shows its face even in the seemingly harmless parts of the day.

A common symbol of this day is Cupid, often pictured as a chubby, winged baby that shoots arrows to make people fall in love. This Roman god's name derives from the Latin word *cupido*, meaning "desire."

Today, Cupid's arrow has become an accepted symbol of love. His name and image are frequently associated with Valentine's Day cards, romantic gifts, and dating services, as well as is the heart symbol, which is said to be the seat of emotion.

But is this really the case?

Of cupid's arrow piercing the heart symbol, Jack Santino wrote in the book *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life*, "It can also be seen as a symbolic representation of the male and female principles, the round and open heart shape indicating the female, the arrow through it a phallic male symbol. The heart and arrow would then represent the union of these two forces in sexual coition."

Love, Not So Trivial

The harm of the day runs deeper than ancient pagan sex-rites. Minds sucked into this "mandated" celebration often grow up with a wrong understanding of love.

In the book *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension*, David C. Pack explained this widespread misconception.

"Most in the modern age have been sold a false concept of love. This concept is perpetuated in literature, film and music, with endless intoning of lyrics about 'love'—'I love you, You are my one and only love, Let's make "love," I want to love you tonight,' etc. Love has been mistakenly equated with romantic feelings, physical attraction or sexual desire—and illicit sexual relations. It is invariably confused with simple lust!

"All forms of lust are *selfishly* motivated. It is a desire to 'have' another

person sexually, in order to gratify one's own senses.

"This is the opposite of true love!

"The language of the New Testament, Greek, includes three distinct words that may be translated 'love.' We will briefly examine each of these words.

"*Agape* is spiritual love. This is the word used in Scripture to describe the love of God. It is pure, completely selfless love, which can only enter the human mind through God's Spirit (Rom. 5:5). When God says that He is love, He is speaking of *agape*.

"*Philia* or *Philadelphia* can be translated as 'brotherly love.' This is natural human love between family members or friends.

"*Eros* is sexual love, as intended by God to exist within the confines of marriage. This is love that is expressed by the physical means of affection and sex.

However, this is not the same as lust, which is expressed by different Greek words.

"True, mature love can be defined as genuine concern that is directed outwardly toward another. Love is unselfish. It is not focused on getting or taking, but rather is interested in the welfare of others, and is centered on the desire to give.

"Those motivated by love believe Christ's statement, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Though many have heard or read these words, very few actually apply them. To do so is contrary to human nature, which is essentially selfish."

Valentine's Day has always focused on getting: from getting a sex partner for the year in ancient times to getting affection, getting love—getting sex—today!

No matter how hard a person tries, or how sincere one is, the lust-filled pagan origins of Valentine's Day cannot be ignored. God does not—and would never—condone such a holiday. Notice: "Thus says the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen... For the customs of the people are vain..." (Jer. 10:2-3).

True love cannot be expressed once a year as part of a superficial holiday. Nor can it be found in a one-day affair of free sex that so often results in unwanted pregnancies, abortions, STDs, pain, depression or suicide. Instead, true love is focused on continually giving another person what he or she needs with no ulterior motives—in the way God commands (Rom. 13:9-10).

To learn more, read the books *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension* at rcg.org/siud and *Dating and Courtship – God's Way* at rcg.org/aadac. □

“I DON'T WANT TO BE YOUR VALENTINE!”



If you knew the true origins of the customs surrounding this celebration, you might not find it so romantic. To learn the real story of this mid-February holiday, read "The Truth Behind St. Valentine's Day" at rcg.org/ttbsvd.

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

and trying to understand it by starting with the last chapter. You would be lost, completely unable to understand the persons and events described. In the same way, none can understand events *in the modern world* because they do not have proper background of what has happened in the previous chapters of mankind's existence. The very *first* chapter of the story of humanity is the key to *all* 19 chapters that follow.

World Before Man

Examining prehistory, the time before the appearance of man on Earth, unlocks *how* Satan came to be as he is. This prehistory relates to man's future. The Bible opens stating, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This scripture sets the stage.

The book of Job best describes the time God created the Earth billions of years ago. God asked Job a series of questions: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?...Or who has stretched the line upon it?... When the *morning stars sang together*, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-5, 7). The "stars" were angels (Rev. 12:4), also described as "sons of God." (Of course, literal stars do not sing.) Notice it says "all" of them "shouted" and "sang together."

This remarkable passage shows that at the time of the physical creation there was peace, harmony and happiness. But this is not the actual beginning of God's creation—it recounts the beginning of the *physical* creation—of all things made of *matter*.

The *true* beginning of everything—where the account of God's creation *really* begins—is *not* found in Genesis 1, but rather in the New Testament. John is where the Bible records who or what existed before the creation recorded in Genesis. Here is how he writes of the earliest time that the Bible records: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things* [some Bible

translations say "the universe"] *were made by Him*; and without Him was not ANYTHING made that was made" (1:1-3). This is all-encompassing.

Now, who is "the Word"? John answers: "The Word was *made flesh*, and *dwelt among us*, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father)..." (vs. 14). The only God-being who ever became flesh and dwelt among men is Jesus. He was not flesh until He came to Earth to become the Savior of mankind.

In the original Greek, "the Word" means "Spokesman." While Jesus only became the Son of God at His human birth, He was an eternal Being—Paul wrote, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Heb. 7:3).

Plainly, these verses speak of Christ both before and after His human birth. But John reveals more! It says Christ, the Word, was God and was also with God (1:1). This is only possible if two Beings are being described. These two eternal Personages existed before any of the physical universe.

Ephesians 3:9 confirms John 1: "...God...created all things by Jesus Christ." Having been the Spokesman for all eternity, Jesus said many times throughout His ministry that He declared only what God sent Him to say. Since Jesus was "the Word," no wonder Psalm 33 states: "By *the Word* of the LORD were the heavens [the universe] made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it was done" (vs. 6, 9). This is expanded in Colossians 1, which speaks of the Father and of "His...Son...who is the image of the invisible God...for by Him [Christ] were all things [the universe] created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him [Christ], and for Him [the Father]; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist [or the Greek means "are held together"]" (vs. 13, 15-17).

We have just summarized the Bible's statement about persons and conditions that existed through the entire period of

prehistory, when no angels or physical matter existed with God. Only these two Supreme Beings existed—ALONE—for all previous eternity.

They were God, having infinite power of both mind and creative ability. This is why They created man—long after the physical universe was made—to have creative mind power. This fits the pattern of God's own creative power and ability. Human beings can design, plan and build almost anything they choose. The enormous power to reason, think through, make judgments, and proceed toward goals differentiates human beings from animals.

Even if God had never made anything else, just think of how enormous must be His POWER—that He (They) could create the human mind, with its seemingly *unlimited potential*.

Job 38:7 reveals that angels were created *before* the physical universe, which preceded the appearance of man by billions of years.

Angels are composed of spirit. They are literal beings, but not made of matter. They received immortal life from the moment they were created. Though less powerful than God, these spirits have far *more* power than physical human beings. They were the pinnacle of God's creation throughout billions of years of prehistory.

Creation of Man

We must now examine the creation of man and what God said about His product after it was finished.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. Its 50 chapters span 2,000 years, so it is not written to show detail. Rather, it represents a look at the critical *high points* of human history. The creation week and the time immediately following are described in the first three chapters.

Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God..." But who is the One speaking—calling Himself God? The Old Testament is recorded in the Hebrew language. "God" is *Elohim*, a word similar to team, group, family or church. God is one Family—one God—composed of TWO Beings.

God and Christ enjoy complete harmony and agreement. They reflect per-

fect outgoing love, concern and cooperation. The Father is the supreme leader of a Family that both chose to expand. First God created the angels and then the whole universe, including Earth.

Next came man.

God said, “Let Us [plural] make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Clearly more than one person was involved. Verse 25 shows each animal was made after his kind: “God made the beast of the earth after *his kind*, and cattle after *their kind*, and every thing that creeps upon the earth after *his kind*: and God saw it was good.”

Verse 27 continues, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” This verse is key to understanding that God’s purpose is to reproduce Himself. The human family and human reproduction is a type of this plan. Next comes an important statement: “*God blessed them*, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (vs. 28).

The next two verses explain that God entrusted the entirety of His Creation (animals, plants and everything else) to man’s dominion—his overall control. Genesis 2:19 describes how God brought all the animals to Adam “to see what he would call them.” The account concludes with the vitally important: “God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was *very good*” (Gen. 1:31).

Next God presented Adam and Eve with the choice they would soon face between the Tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The choice would be between God’s “divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4)—building and developing His character—or taking on Satan’s sinful nature.

Had Adam obeyed God, he could have qualified to replace Satan and help restore the government of God to Earth.

Is God’s Creative Power Limited?

We might ask, with the seemingly unlimited capacity of His creative genius, is there anything even God

Himself could not create *immediately*? Has God any limits? Is there a single item, of any kind, beyond His ability to create *instantly*?

Yes—one thing! And it is ALL-IMPORTANT.

God cannot create the holy, righteous, perfect character possessed by both the Father and Christ. Get this vital piece of understanding clear in your mind. God cannot impart perfect character overnight—*by divine fiat*. And yet this most important quality must be present in a human being for God to achieve His ultimate creative purpose.

This kind of character involves the ability to choose, to *do* and to *live* the right way, even against the pulls and temptations of self-desire. It is a complete yielding, on the part of a free moral agent, to God and His perfect way of life—voluntarily and unconditionally. It is submitting to God’s government and His Law.

This quality of mind—CHARACTER!—*cannot be built overnight*. It is a lifelong process. Character must be developed through *repeatedly* choosing (with God’s *help*) to live and do what is right. God cannot automatically instill this into anyone. It is built through tests and trials of every sort. Free moral agents must *continually* yield to God and choose to do right, over and over, until it is their fundamental, intrinsic CHARACTER! This truly crucial understanding cannot be overstated.

Angels were created with free moral agency. They were given minds capable of making decisions, reasoning and thinking through problems, and of setting their will. God revealed the true way to these free moral agents, and allowed them to *choose* which way they would go.

Jude 6 shows God placed the angels on Earth as their “first estate... their own habitation.” His intention was they use our planet as a *testing* ground—a *proving* ground—to build character.

The pre-Adamic world was populated by giant prehistoric creatures. This *was* prehistory as far as man is

concerned. Men were created later, after Satan ruled the Earth as Lucifer with his one-third of the angels.

God saw His supreme creation, Lucifer, had rebelled and disqualified himself as Earth’s ruler. Though surely disappointed, God was not surprised. He understood in advance this possibility. He had planned ahead, knowing what this could mean.

God knew He and Christ were the only Beings who *could not* and *would never* sin. He purposed, through His Son, to expand His Family by creating perfect character in man.

But He knew that He could not initially make man of spirit—and immortal—like angels. He had to ensure there would be no more immortal beings who could turn, in rebellion, and become deceivers and destroyers.

His Plan for man would have to take into account that those offered the opportunity of building His character must have free moral agency. They *could* rebel and practice sin as their chosen way of life. God understood this would always be a possibility with *every* free moral agent. But He had to preclude that they could live forever, like Satan and his demons, in continuing misery and unhappiness, spreading it to all those around them. He could not have a member of His Family possessing the very power of God running amuck throughout the universe.

God had to consider all of this within His Plan. So He made man of flesh—the dust of the ground—simple dirt. This incredible purpose—carrying such AWESOME POTENTIAL!—is beyond the comprehension of the most brilliant human intellects to discover on their own!

Plan to Replace Satan

Satan demonstrated he could not be governed by God. Therefore, a successor had to qualify to replace him, because Satan’s government was still in place on Earth. He was still in office—as “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4).

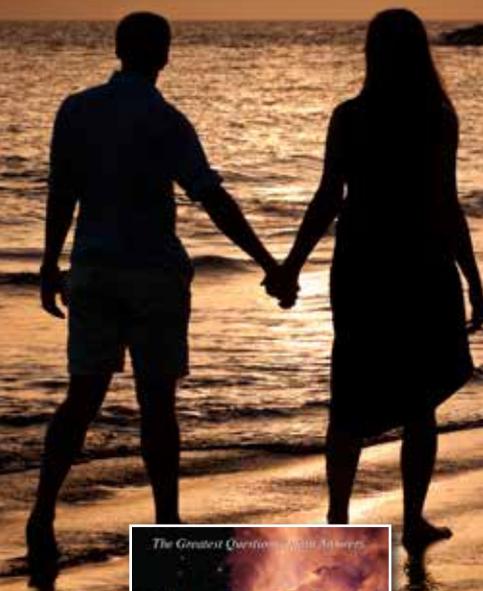
Of course, God understood that Satan, as deceiver (Rev. 12:9), would do all in his power to defeat God’s

WHY DO YOU EXIST?

Most everyone hopes there is a grander purpose to their lives. Yet daily life often makes it seem like there is nothing beyond the here and now.

But is this true? Or is there a greater reason for human existence?

Learn the answer by ordering your free copy of the book *The Awesome Potential of Man* at rcg.org/tapom.



Master Purpose by destroying His new creation—man.

Understanding human beings would have freedom to choose, God had to plan, with “the Word,” that this only other Member of the Godhead must be made flesh and come to Earth to become Savior for all who would sin (Rom. 3:23) and need redemption from the penalty of eternal death (6:23).

God knew He could resurrect Christ after He had paid the death penalty for all mankind. These were critical facets of a Plan God thought through in every detail. Part of His Plan had to include imparting into men’s minds a tiny bit of His own nature through begetting of His Spirit into all who would be converted to His way.

God’s Holy Spirit contains and reflects the perfect character that is His and Christ’s, and His marvelous Plan would allow God—composed of Spirit—to place a little of His own character into human beings, only made in His physical image and likeness. We will learn in Part 2 of this Personal *how* God’s Spirit enters and works in the human mind.

Purpose of Today’s World

Almost immediately after Christ’s baptism by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9-11), He entered an extended battle with Satan. Successfully resisting the devil’s temptation was key to Jesus overcoming sin and qualifying to remove him at the setting up of the kingdom of God. Matthew 4 contains the account.

Though Jesus qualified to replace Satan 2,000 years ago, there are several reasons for the long delay in establishing God’s kingdom. God’s Plan encompasses 7,000 years. The sixth day is nearing its close, with the final 1,000-year day just ahead. Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:2). But this cannot happen before the 6,000 years are complete.

Man was given this time to try his own ways, governments, religions, philosophies, value systems, forms of education—and wrong methods to solve the world’s greatest problems. Under Satan’s sway, he has practiced

sin—disobedience to God’s commands—all this time. Then he has tried to treat all the ill *effects* instead of addressing the *cause*—breaking God’s spiritual laws! Hard lessons are being learned. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, are having to see that their own solutions do not work!

Not yet bound, Satan does everything within his power to thwart God’s Plan. His deceived ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15) teach, in effect, that God has failed to save the world. But only by God’s *permission* does Satan hold sway over this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4; I John 5:19). God is not losing a kind of cosmic “wrestling match.” He has full control. He knows exactly what He is doing, and the genius of His Plan *can* be known. No true God would ever condemn humanity without offering salvation to EVERYONE!

There are other reasons for the delay in Christ’s Return. He had to first call and train the original apostles—to be part of the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20) and to take the gospel to the world. Then, throughout the New Testament period, He had to train the rest of an administrative team to rule with Him when He returns.

Jesus did not establish His kingdom immediately because He had to ascend to heaven to become High Priest of those God calls. Christians are reconciled to God by Christ’s death, but they are saved by His LIFE—His Resurrection (Rom. 5:10). Also, while still human, Jesus could not install Himself as Satan’s replacement. Daniel 7:13-14 reveals that He had to return to heaven to be CROWNED with power and glory before He could return. (Read the first half of Luke 19.)

Most people have absolutely no idea WHY they exist. This is spiritually *revealed* knowledge, unattainable to all whom God has *not* called to learn His truth (John 6:44, 65). In Part 2, we will explore how God is working within the minds of those He calls! But in the meantime, read our free book *The Awesome Potential of Man* at rcg.org/tapom. □

Pollution Problem

Smog in Chinese cities is more than 50 times higher than the level deemed safe by the World Health Organization. The polluted air, which is filled with carcinogenic particles spewed by coal-burning power plants, causes 1.6 million deaths per year and affects 38 percent of the population. □

New Frontier

Astronomers discovered an Earth-sized planet with a thick, Venus-like atmosphere 39 light-years away—the nearest one found outside our solar system to-date. Due to its relative nearness to Earth and the small size of the star around which it revolves, the planet is expected to give researchers more accurate insight and data regarding the nature of planets outside our solar system. □



■ **POISONOUS EMISSIONS:** A Chinese worker rides his bike as smoke billows from smokestacks at a steel factory in the industrial province of Hebei, China (Nov. 19, 2015). PHOTO: KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES



■ **CHEAP COMMODITY:** The price of regular gas is displayed for \$1.89 a gallon at a Sunoco station in Flint, Michigan, after the price of oil dropped below \$50 a barrel (Jan. 6, 2015). PHOTO: JOSHUA LOTT/GETTY IMAGES

Unsustainable Practice

Most Middle Eastern countries in OPEC will run out of cash reserves within five years, including Saudi Arabia, if the price of oil remains at its current price of around \$50 a barrel, the International Monetary Fund reported. The organization revealed that these nations are using “emergency funds” to cover the massive loss of revenue caused by the reduced price of oil. □

Worsening Threat

Tuberculosis surpassed HIV/AIDS as the deadliest infectious disease, the World Health Organization reported. In 2014, the international organization said 1.5 million died from TB as opposed to 1.2 million from HIV/AIDS in the same year. □



Potential Rain

California stands to get above normal amounts of rain from January to March 2016 because of El Nino.

Chance of above normal precipitation

- 33% – 39%
- 40% – 49%
- 50% – 59%
- 60% – 69%



Source: NOAA, Climate Prediction Center
Graphic: Los Angeles Times, Tribune News Service

Water Crisis

Brazil's drought—the worst in 85 years—is expected to intensify throughout the nation's upcoming dry months, which could cut off potable water supplies to tens of millions. Although Brazil has 12 percent of the world's freshwater reserves, 80 percent of the country's untreated sewage is dumped into its water sources. This fact, coupled with prolonged drought and governmental mismanagement of resources, has reduced the amount of drinkable water in the nation. □



■ **PARCHED LAND:** Grass peeks through the dry bed of Aleixo Lake in the rural area of Manaus, Brazil (Oct. 23, 2015).

PHOTO: RAPHAEL ALVES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Overconsumption

Reducing a child's sugar intake by at least 10 percent improves health conditions such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and weight within 10 days, according to researchers at the University of California-San Francisco and Touro University. *The Washington Post*, which reported on the study, stated that American children consume three times the amount of sugar recommended by federal dietary guidelines, but cutting back on sweets increases metabolism and significantly reduces the risk of long-term complications such as diabetes. □

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2016



■ **HOMELESSNESS:** Nigerians salvage their belongings from demolished homes following a court ruling that forcefully evicted residents in Lagos, Nigeria (Sept. 18, 2015).

PHOTO: PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

No Place to Go

The United Nations urged Nigeria to halt large-scale evictions that have displaced over 10,000 citizens in Lagos, the country's largest city. In a statement on the UN website, Leilani Farha, who reports to the organization on housing conditions in the country, said that those evicted are living in "makeshift shelters or churches, facing routine harassment, with the situation getting worse every day, and without any adequate response by the local or federal authorities..."

One third of the population in Lagos is homeless. With the rainy season coming, authorities are especially concerned that moist, muddy conditions in overcrowded shelter camps could cause an increase in the spread of disease. □

STD Unmasked

A newly identified sexually transmitted disease, *Mycoplasma genitalium*, is estimated to have infected one percent of the British population ages 16 through 44. Although it often causes no noticeable symptoms, it can result in female infertility. □

Welfare Nation

Over half of U.S. immigrants receive at least one welfare benefit, such as Medicaid, food stamps, or housing assistance, a study by the Center for Immigration Studies showed. The report also found that 76 percent of immigrant households with children and 52 percent of native-born American households with children are on welfare—a higher figure than was originally believed. □



■ **NEW FACE:** Argentine President-elect Mauricio Macri speaks to the press at the Olivos presidential residence in Buenos Aires, where he arrived to meet outgoing president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (Nov. 24, 2015).

PHOTO: JUAN MABROMATA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Political Shift

Argentina is poised for significant change after electing conservative leader Mauricio Macri as president—marking the end of the left's 12 years in office. The new leader vows to endorse more pro-business policies, rid controversial government-imposed price caps on supermarket items, and make it easier for Argentinians to convert their currency from pesos to dollars. He also pledges to shift relations away from anti-American governments such as Venezuela and Iran, and develop better ties with the U.S. □



“WE SHALL BEAT OUR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES”

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

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