

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

WATCH

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DESTINATION: PERSIAN GULF

COMMENTARY

IRAN ON NOTICE

by Mark Armstrong

The United States has sent the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier group to the Persian Gulf after getting some warning that Iran is plotting to attack American interests in the region. The warning came (reportedly) from intelligence gathered by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence organization. There is not yet any detail on what Iran may be planning, but a floating military base bristling with warplanes may be the answer to every question.

In April 2019, the U.S. announced the end of exemptions from sanctions for nations continuing to buy Iranian oil. India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey all buy oil from Iran, but China accounts for half of Iran's oil sales. All five have profitable trade relationships with the United States, presumably of much greater importance than the importation of Iranian oil. Any that continue buying from Iran will be liable for fines or other trade sanctions from the U.S., possibly even banishment from U.S. markets.

Iran is said to earn \$50 billion annually from the sales of oil,

some 40% of their annual revenue. The Iranian economy is already struggling with shortages of imported necessities and high inflation. Once these new sanctions kick in, Iran may experience even more severe difficulties.



Saudi Arabia is an ally of the United States and long-term enemy of Iran. It is one likely source of oil for nations that will have to stop buying from Iran. American media is highly critical of Saudi Arabia, more-so since the alleged murder of U.S. resident Khashoggi at the Saudi embassy in Islamabad, Turkey.

At this writing, no one is sure who or what group is responsible for the sabotage of four oil tankers anchored in Persian Gulf ports.

Two were Saudi tankers, one Norwegian and one owned by the UAE. Preliminary investigations point to Iran or its proxies as the culprits. Iran wildly claims that it was the U.S. that blew holes in the ships so that the action could be blamed on Iran as a pretext for hostilities. In other words, Trump did it. That sounds about right, just like all the bluster we've heard from the radical Islamic regime since 1979.

Iran has for years been threatening to "close" the Strait of Hormuz, a move that would cripple the world economy if oil couldn't exit the Middle East by that route. We've heard this threat repeatedly over the years, make that decades, and it's not entirely clear that Iran is able to make good on that threat, particularly with an American carrier on the scene. The "narrow choke-point" is after all 20 miles wide, but the shipping lanes are only about three miles wide. It's not as if sinking one or two ships in the straight would make passage impossible, but you wouldn't know that by reliance on mainstream media reports. However,

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FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Find the 2019 Festival Brochure on page 22!



HATE

... but Why?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

THE HUMAN HEART

There is only one source to which you can go to learn, really, about human nature. That is the handbook about human nature—the Bible.

Man is God's creation. God invented man. And it is God who put within man a certain nature.

Philosophers, psychologists, "scalp pickers" and "analysts" by the thousands have striven vainly to understand this greatest of all enigmas—man. And they have miserably failed. As one psychiatrist said to a group of his own kind recently, "We all became interested in psychiatry because we knew we ourselves had some mental problems!"

God reveals the truth about human nature in His Holy Word, the Bible! Listen to the shocking truth about every human heart:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Paul wrote, "The carnal mind [the unconverted, unchanged, "natural" human mind] is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither can

bel!" (Rom. 8:7). Solomon wrote, when speaking about the basic make-up of the human heart and mind, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; All is vanity!" (Eccl. 1:2). James said, "Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain, 'the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?'" (James 4:5).

The Bible is the handbook about man. It and it alone explains the basic reason for our racial, political, spiritual, chaos of today!

Make no mistake! The real cause of today's race violence and increasing hatred is not ascertainable only at the end of a laborious study of hideously complex social pressures and psychological factors. All too many people are too willing to believe the real answers to today's problems are terribly complex.

They are not. They are simple.

HUMAN NATURE MUST BE CHANGED

Dr. Robert M. Page said, "So long as we have human nature, we shall have war." The late General

Douglas MacArthur, in his dramatic speech before Congress after his arrival in the United States from having been fired during the Korean conflict, said, in urging our peoples toward peace, that we must totally change. And, he said, that change "must be of the spirit, if we are to save the flesh!"

Ever seen a riot? Ever taken part in one? Ever been mad—so mad you had totally lost control of your senses and your mind? Possibly. Most have.

Think back to that time. Were you in any "mood" to be reasoned with? Would a calm, patient "psychological" argument have appealed to you at that time?

How would you like to try to "reason it out" with a mob? It's utterly impossible.

THE CAUSE OF HATE

But why so much hatred today? Why are curses and venom so much on the lips of so many? Why do even "dignified" men seek to solve their various differences with their fists? Almighty God reveals, in His Word, that man's basic nature is one of great,

swelling, egotistic, self-centered vanity! Other basic aspects of vanity are lust, selfishness, and greed! The opposite of vanity is love. Not the watered-down, misconstrued, totally altered and false idea commonly accepted as “love” (which is really lust) today—but the love of God. The love of God is altogether outgoing. It is selfless. It is an outgoing concern, a deep regard, a sense of compassion and servitude toward others! It is the antithesis of vanity.

Yet the human heart is basically vanity. Since love is the exact opposite of hatred, and hatred is the result of jealousy, greed and vanity, then it is vital you come to understand that human beings hate—naturally!

Regardless as to how many like to “kid” themselves about being devoid of hate and various baser qualities of human nature—unless they have been totally conquered of God, totally converted by the receiving of His Spirit—they will just naturally have hate in their heart.

It’s natural to hate. It’s human!

YOU WERE MADE TO OVERCOME

But does this mean every human being should learn to hate? Of course not—he will hate without having to learn.

The Great God, in His wisdom, has made human nature what it is. But He has made human nature to be overcome. Man is a creature of free moral agency. Only man has the ability, through the human senses and the mind of

man, to observe, measure, weigh, discern,—and to arrive at decisions, based upon his observations. Only man is a calculating, deciding creature! Man is not an animal. Man is on a plane and a level far above that of animals.

The mind of man, the nature of man, were created for a great and awe-inspiring purpose!

HOW GOD DEALS WITH MOBS

Today, God is keeping hands off this evil, rotten, topsy-turvy, sin-sick, crime-ridden, hate-filled world! But not for long.

Soon, and a lot sooner than we may wish to kid ourselves

and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron....”(Rev. 19:11-16).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth is coming back to this earth in all the awesome splendor of the Great God of the universe! He is coming with armies—and He is coming to fight! God’s tolerance has about run out. God’s patience is about exhausted. God’s wrath and His great anger are almost ripe.

The time is just around the corner from us in world events when God’s Kingdom will be set

**The Great God, in His wisdom,
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into believing, Almighty God is going to send Jesus Christ in the all-powerful splendor of the Great Creator of heaven and earth back to this earth. And Jesus is coming to deal with a mob! Read it in your own Bible:

“I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns;... He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white

up on this literal earth! And then Jesus Christ will deal, and deal awesomely, forcefully and swiftly, with mobs!

Jesus urged every Christian, in the Sermon on the Mount, to pray “thy Kingdom come”! (Matt. 6:10.) That means every Christian, like righteous Lot, should be sincerely praying for the Kingdom, the rule, the power and authority of the Kingdom of God to come to this earth!

It’s time you came to see, and see clearly and thoroughly, that man is totally incapable of solving his own problems.

That’s why Almighty God must send Jesus Christ to save us from ourselves! 



THE PERVERSION OF EMPIRES

by John Mitchell

At the end of World War II, the Allies discovered some film footage of Adolf Hitler that had not previously been seen. In this footage, Hitler could be seen playing with his dog, a German Shepherd named “Blondi”; kissing Eva Braun, laughing with his comrades, and doing a jig. The Allies determined that they could not release this footage to the public. Why? He did not appear as the monster who unleashed six years of murderous hell on Poland, the devil who exterminated 6 million Jews, the barbarian who sent children to the gas chambers, or the mass murderer who sent his killing squads into Eastern Europe and Russia on a war of extermination.

No, the film revealed something else entirely. The film revealed that Hitler was all too human, reminding us of the familiar words of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Hitler not only approved of, but relished in, the whole-sale genocide and infanticide

practices he and his henchmen put in place. He embraced the demonic world of the occult.

Central to the Nazi’s mystical beliefs was the “World Ice Theory,” propounded in the 1912 book *Glacial Cosmogony* by Hanns Hörbiger. This held that white “Aryan” man was not descended from the apes, as were other inferior races, but rather came from “divine sperma” brought to earth by meteors. These developed into the godlike Supermen of the ancient civilization of Atlantis-Thule, which employed parapsychology and mystical electricity like “Thor’s hammer.”

Atlantis was supposedly destroyed by icy moons crashing into earth. Refugee supermen established Buddhism and Hinduism in Tibet and the Himalayas and Shintoism in Japan. They believed that Jesus Christ, as well as the Knight’s Templar and the Cathars—who they claimed held the mysteries of ancient Thule in the Holy Grail—were “White Aryan” of Atlantean descent. The white supermen were locked in a

struggle for mastery with the ape like “Tschandala” or “monstrous humanoids” (that is, Jews, Slavs, blacks and “mongrel breeds”).

This overtly racist worldview was believed in by Hitler, Hess, Himmler and other senior Nazis like Julius Streicher, who was convinced that Jews gave off a particular odor and that he could “smell out a Jew” at several meters. It justified genocide, horrific medical experiments, and mass population displacements into the “Death Camps.” It convinced Hitler that “Nordics” could tolerate cold better than “Slavs,” with dire results for the German armies at Stalingrad.

The consulting of mediums, astrologers, fortune tellers, and Sorcerers was an obsession with the leaders of the Third Reich. The Allied forces destroyed the Nazi regime and its ungodly practices by a series of miraculous interventions. This turned the tide of war from Nazi conquest to the utter defeat of Hitler and his dreams of world domination.

If Nazi Germany was the only empire that wound up in the dust bin of history for its perversion

of God's word, laws, and way of life then we could say that was a "one off." But that of course is not the case, not by a long shot.

In the Bible (Daniel, chapter 2) we find the four great kingdoms or empires that would rule the known world. Let us consider the major empires that have risen and then fallen in utter destruction and see if there are major themes that caused that failure. I believe they can be divided into three separate yet concurrent categories. These three are the worship of pagan gods, sexual perversion, and child sacrifice.

The first kingdom, or empire, after the flood of Noah was Babel—or Babylon—founded by Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah. The name Nimrod, in Hebrew, is derived from "Marad," meaning "he rebelled," and he certainly lived up to its meaning. He also built the city of Nineveh in Assyria which became the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire.

It was in Babel that the famed "Tower of Babel" was built. This tower was not a Jack and the Beanstalk type of construction, where people were trying to build a structure to get into heaven. Instead, it is best understood as an ancient ziggurat (Assyrian "mountaintop"). A ziggurat was a man made structure with a temple at its top, built to worship the host of heaven.

Nimrod started the great organized worldly apostasy that has dominated this world until now. Nimrod was so evil, it is said he married his own mother, Semiramis, in an act which is

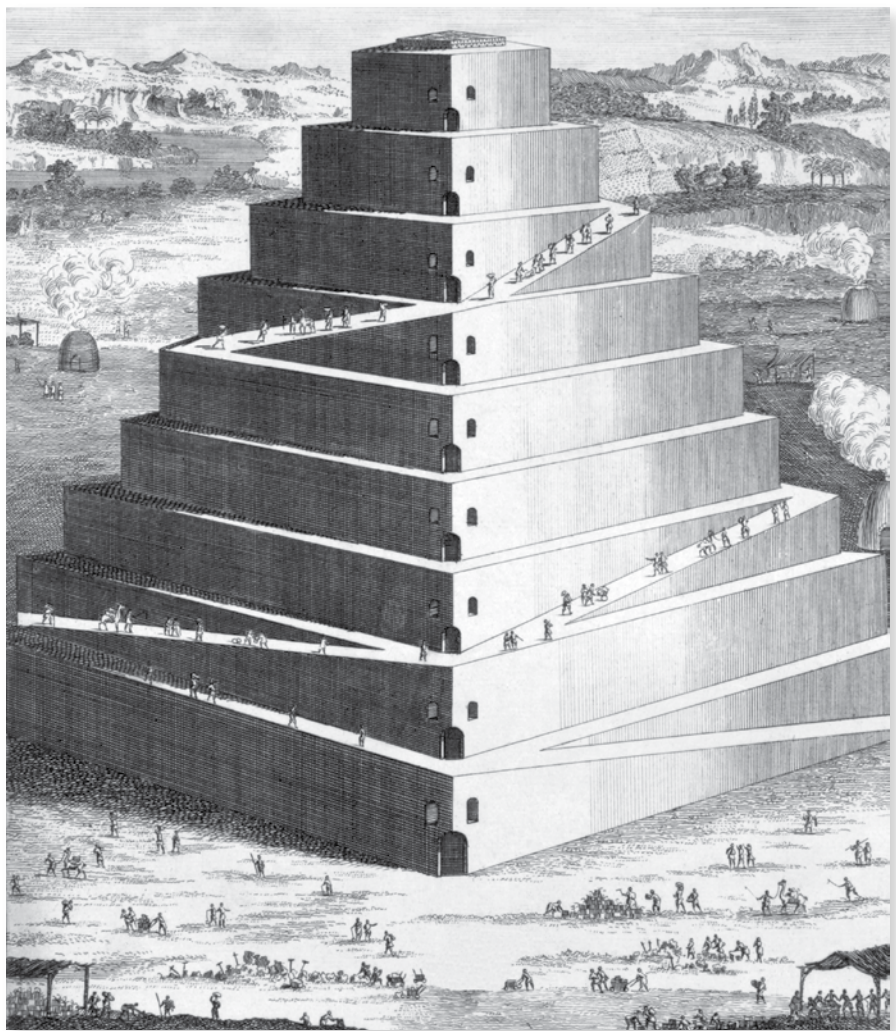
totally forbidden by God as sexual perversion.

After Nimrod's untimely death, his so called mother-wife propagated the evil doctrine of the survival of Nimrod as a spirit being. She claimed that a fully grown evergreen tree sprang up overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Nimrod. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed, Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of Nimrod. This is the real origin of the

Christmas tree.

Through her scheming and designing, Semiramis became the Babylonian "Queen of Heaven," and Nimrod, under various names, became the "divine son of heaven." Through the generations, in this idolatrous worship, Nimrod became the false Messiah, son of Baal, the Sun-god.

In this false Babylonian system, the "Mother and Child" (Semiramis and Nimrod reborn), became chief objects of worship. This worship of "Mother and Child" spread over the world.



The Tower of Babel. Engraved by Isaac Basire and published in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, United Kingdom, 1733.

The names varied in different countries and languages. In Egypt, it was Isis (also called Ishtar or Easter) and Osiris; in Asia it was Cybele and Deoius; in pagan Rome Fortuna and Jupiter-*puer*. Even in Greece, China, Japan, and Tibet is to be found the counterpart of the Madonna, long before the birth of Christ!

Another major part of the worship of false gods in Assyria, Babylon being its capital city, was the worship of Molech. As was customary in that culture, parents offered their newborn

children as sacrifices to their god, Molech. Most depictions of Molech include large metal statues of a man with a bull's head. Usually these statues had outstretched arms to hold the baby sacrifices. During the sacrificial process, the Babylonians and Canaanites would light a fire inside or around the statue to heat up the statue. Then they would place their newborns into the red-hot arms of Molech and watch the children burn. During this gruesome event, they would play flutes and bang on drums

to drown out the sound of their shrieking children.

This practice continued until 539 BC when the Persian King, Cyrus, took the city, destroyed it and killed King Belshazzar who ruled Babylon at the time. With the combination of the worship of false gods, sexual perversion, and child sacrifice, the first great empire of man, Babylon was utterly destroyed! Or so it was thought.

With the destruction of Babylon, the second great kingdom would arise. This empire was known as the "Achaemenid Empire," commonly referred to as the "Persian Empire" or "Medo-Persian Empire" headed by Cyrus the Great. This empire lasted from 550–330 BC. Religious toleration has been described as a "remarkable feature" of the Achaemenid Empire. As reported in the Old Testament, King Cyrus the Great released the Jews from captivity in 539–530 BC, and permitted their return to their homeland.

But true to men's form, it was during the Achaemenid period that Zoroastrianism reached Southwestern Iran, where it came to be accepted by the rulers and became a defining element of Persian culture. The religion was not only accompanied by a formalization of the concepts and divinities of the traditional Iranian pantheon but also introduced several novel ideas, including that of free will. Under the patronage of the Achaemenid kings, and by 5th century BC as the *de facto* religion of the state,



Depiction of ritual child sacrifice to the pagan god Molech.

Zoroastrianism reached all corners of the empire.

During the reign of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, Herodotus wrote, “The Persians have no images of the gods; no temples nor altars and consider the use of them a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine.” He claimed the Persians offered sacrifice to “the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds.” These are the only gods whose worship has come down to them from ancient times.

At a later period they began the worship of Urania, which they borrowed from the Arabians and Assyrians. Mylitta is the name by which the Assyrians know this goddess, to whom the Persians referred as “Anahita.” Mullissu is a goddess who is the wife of the Assyrian god Ashur. Mullissu may be identical with the Mesopotamian goddess Ninlil, wife of the god Enlil, which would parallel the fact that Ashur himself was modeled on Enlil. Nonetheless, Mullissu, who was identified with Ishtar of Nineveh in Neo-Assyrian Empire times, is usually identified with Ishtar. Also proposed to be Mullissu is a goddess whom Herodotus called Mylitta and identified with Aphrodite. (The Babylonian scholar-priest Berosus records that the Artaxerxes II was the first to make cult statues of divinities and have them placed in temples in many of the major cities of the empire).

Their worship of false gods

sank into the practices from Assyria (Babylon) which included the worship of Molech, with its attendant child sacrifices. Their worship of Aphrodite (Ishtar or Easter) later known as “Diana of the Ephesians” in Paul’s day, immersed the empire into the same sexual perversion formerly practiced in Babylon. With the combination of worship of false gods, sexual perversion and child sacrifice, the second great empire of man was destroyed in early 330 BC by Alexander the Great of Greece.

Alexander’s conquest of the Medo-Persian Empire ushered onto the scenes of history the third great empire known as the “Greco-Macedonian Empire.” This empire was brilliant in its military prowess and achievements but was heavily involved in the worship of false gods. There was a false god for every day of the week and sexual perversion was part and parcel with these pagan and abominable worship services.

As mentioned above, one of their main gods or goddesses was Diana of the Ephesians. The “great” goddess Diana resembled the attributes of Ashtoreth (Ishtar/Easter). She symbolized the generative and nutritive powers of nature and was depicted as having many breasts. Her original temple was founded 580 BC and burned by Erostratus in 356 BC. The second temple, built in the reign of Alexander the Great in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, became a renowned center of the worship of Diana and was the idol “whom all Asia and the

world worshipped.”

Another of the best known is the “Bacchanalia,” which carried right into their every day social lives. Homosexuality was accepted as well as bestiality and child molestation. Worship of false gods coupled with rampant sexual perversion was the order of the day.

The Greeks eschewed child sacrifice as practiced in Babylon and Assyria as barbaric, however they developed their own style of infanticide. Exposure was the preferred method of disposal, as that act in itself was not considered to be murder. Moreover, the exposed child technically had a chance of being rescued by the gods or any passersby. In ancient Greek religion, this practice took the responsibility away from the parents because the child would die of natural causes such as hunger, asphyxiation or exposure to the elements. Call it what you will in an attempt to justify killing the innocent child, it is premeditated child sacrifice.

Greek philosophers encouraged and condoned abortion as well. Aristotle encouraged abortion because he feared population explosion. Such abominable lifestyles led to a collapse, and the Roman victory over Cleopatra VII put an end to the last of the Macedonian descendants in Egypt, and with it the last remains of the Macedonian Empire. With the combination of worship of false gods, sexual perversion and child sacrifice the third great empire of man was destroyed in 31 BC.

The fourth and final empire is the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was founded when Augustus Caesar proclaimed himself the first emperor of Rome in 31 BC and came to an end with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE (Christian Era).

The Romans are known for the great number of deities they honored. As the Romans extended their dominance throughout the Mediterranean world, their policy in general was to absorb the deities and cults of other peoples rather than try to eradicate them. One way that Rome promoted stability among diverse peoples was by supporting their religious heritage and building temples to local deities that framed their theology within the hierarchy of Roman religion.

Inscriptions throughout the Empire record the side-by-side worship of local and Roman deities, including dedications made by Romans to local gods. By the height of the Empire, numerous cults of pseudo-foreign gods (Roman reinventions of foreign gods) were cultivated at Rome and in the provinces. Among them, cults of Cybele, Isis, Epona, and solar gods such as Mithras and Sol Invictus were found as far north as Roman Britain. The worship of false gods was prevalent throughout the empire from start to finish. Sexual perversion was also the order of the day. Homosexuality and lesbianism were accepted as

well as crossdressing.

Roman society copied the Greek in the “exposure” method of killing infants but later abortion was practiced on a regular basis among the poor, slave, merchant and even royal classes. To ancient peoples and the Romans an abortion was amoral. Romans agreed with the Greek view of abortion. There was nothing in Roman law or in the Roman heart that said, “It is wrong to kill your baby in the womb.”



With its worship of false gods, sexual perversion and child sacrifice, Rome was defeated in 476 AD when Odoacer, leader of the barbarian mercenaries in the Roman army, overthrew Emperor Romulus Augustulus, and installed himself as King of Italy. The Roman Empire in the west had come to an end. However, the eastern empire, ruled from Constantinople, continued for

another thousand years. It was not until 1453, when Mehmed II captured Constantinople that the Byzantine Empire, as it became known, ceased to exist.

Thus with the fourth and final empire defeated, the prophecy of Daniel 2 was fulfilled except for verse 44: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

God’s Kingdom will be established at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth and that event has not yet occurred. The above verse says, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Then the fourth kingdom, the “Holy Roman Empire” as it was known, although physically destroyed, would undergo attempted restorations in the 566 years that have passed since 1453 till the present day.

This brings us to 2019 and into the very core of what is modern Israel. No, not the tiny sliver of land in the Middle East bordering the Mediterranean Sea whose capital is Jerusalem, but those nations that bear Israel’s name as given to Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel by God), Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim would become a great company of nations known as the British Empire. America fulfilled Manasseh’s

call to be great among the nations. Each can trace their lineage all the way back to the sons of Joseph. But rather than follow the true Almighty God, they have adopted and immersed themselves in the practices of Babylon. These abominable practices are utterly condemned by the God who formed and blessed these two nations.

One can hardly deny the worship of the false Babylonian gods and goddesses extant throughout their lands under the influence of the Church of Rome (the Catholic or Universal Church). God's Holy Sabbath was thrown aside for the worship of the sun god, Elagabalus Heliogabalus or Sol Invictus. Babylon's Ishtar is now celebrated as Easter. None other than the "Queen of Heaven" with her son Tammuz are worshipped as the Madonna, mother and child. And of course there is "All Souls Day," the worship of the dead commonly known as Halloween.

One can hardly deny the sexual perversion so prevalent throughout Britain and America. Homosexuals, lesbianism, transgender persons, bestiality and

every other type of perversion can be found everywhere you look. So called "gay marriage" is now the law of the land and will be a major factor in America's destruction and collapse.

One can hardly deny the practice of child sacrifice on an unprecedented scale through the ungodly act of abortion, again sanctioned by the state as the law of the land. Abortion was recently elevated in New York State and at least three other states are now considering allowing abortion of a child fully born—living, breathing on its own, exactly as done in pagan ancient Greece and Rome.

The most obvious parallel between the rite of child sacrifice and the practice of abortion is the sober fact that the parents actually kill their own offspring. There are however many other parallels. At Carthage the main reason for sacrificing a child was to avert potential dangers in a crisis or to gain success through fulfilling a vow. Today many times when a woman faces an unwanted pregnancy, abortion seems to be the only way to resolve the crisis she finds herself in. The potential

danger to reputation, education, career, etc., become overwhelming. To avert the seemingly terrifying consequences of carrying a pregnancy to term, the woman may turn to abortion as a means of escape. Some women may simply see the pregnancy as an intrusion into their self-serving lifestyle and an obstacle on the road to success. Sadly this woman's offspring must be sacrificed so that she can continue uninterrupted with her plans for the future.

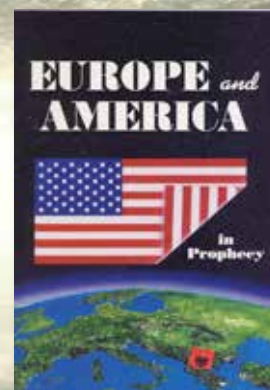
Our national sins will be exposed in the near future as God pours out His wrath on modern Israel, America and Britain, and the nations of Europe and Australia, who are the descendants of the original tribes of Israel. We will be destroyed by the Beast and False Prophet power according to prophecy. Only the return of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords will stop the utter destruction of the entire earth. With its worship of false gods, sexual perversion, and child sacrifice practices, modern Israel too has been guilty of the perversion of empires. Without national repentance our fate will be the same. □

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Europe and America In Prophecy

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Pharisees and Fallacies

by Michael Armstrong

No one is a stranger to this common problem, “Do as I say, not as I do.” As repulsive, irritating, and frustrating as hypocrisy is, we have all been guilty of it at some point. It is even possible to do it unknowingly. It is easy to judge a matter leniently in regard to a friend or loved one and come to a more objective conclusion when it involves a stranger. This is part of why prospective jurors are questioned under oath about their acquaintance with all those involved in a case before any selections are made, but the principle applies in our personal lives as well.

It is also easy to slip into hypocrisy around people you are trying to impress, maybe on a date or speaking with your boss; to feign disgust or express derision towards things you actually like or do. How about your opinion of the referee’s professionalism when your favorite team is playing? It likely goes which ever way the calls go.

The charge of hypocrisy is often leveled at Christians by unbelievers and, whether true or not, is used to dismiss the actual truth of God. Many are accused of it upon conversion, when those who have known you best

see your attitudes or habits begin to change. Only Jesus Christ has lived entirely without sin, and try as we might, it is inevitable that we stumble occasionally. To those who seek occasion against us, any shortcoming on the part of a professing Christian is labeled “hypocritical.”

The idea of a hypocrite is held in almost universal reprehension. The duplicitous insincerity of standing in judgment while guilty is repugnant. Jesus Christ spoke out vehemently against it. Who can forget the scathing 23rd chapter of the Book of Matthew? While best appreciated in its entirety, some of the highlights of this indictment of the Pharisees, the most outwardly religious group of the day, include:

“All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” (Verse 3)

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.” (Verse 5)

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he

that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

“Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

“Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?” (Verses 11-19)

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye

to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” (Verses 23-24)

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” (Verse 28)

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

“For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Verses 37-39).

Does that leave any doubt in your mind as to how He, who will judge all mankind, feels about the matter? While the role we play in society is quite different from that of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, we are similarly responsible for the example we set. As converted Christians, we are future members of the family of God. Our speech and actions affect those around us, potentially influencing opinions on what we claim to be. Do they measure up to the example of Jesus Christ? Are they consistent with the dictates of scripture?

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees is a little ironic. Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt as to their sincerity and assume that at least some of them genuinely sought righteousness as evidenced by the conversions from among their

number. They were so caught up in keeping the law they became pedantic. It’s as if they were so absorbed in microscopic examination that they failed to realize they were treading all over the bulk of what they were trying to keep holy! No wonder the Lord called them “blind leaders of the blind.” How can we avoid finding ourselves in a similar situation?

Not everyone has the same level of spiritual maturity...to appreciate the information you are giving them.

It’s important to always remember what Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 7. Verse 2 reads, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Verse 3 continues with the beam and the mote, reminding us to look to our own problems and shortcomings before attempting to correct someone else’s.

Life requires judgment. Our calling requires us to be circumspect in the things we say or do, to be an example to those around us, and to help when we see others stumbling. How to do this constructively, in a way that earns you respect rather than derision, is not always simple. Even disagreement on small issues can be a deal breaker. Pointing out someone’s mistakes can be an easy way to start arguments and end friendships. It can especially be a strain on work or family relationships.

Most members of the Church of God have probably found themselves in awkward situations on account of their beliefs. “How was my Christmas? You mean the Roman amalgamation of pagan abominations you pretend is the Lord’s birthday and celebrate by indulging in superficial materialism?” That’s definitely not the best way to answer that

question. Yet no matter what you say, it isn’t likely to be the answer they were hoping for and it will probably be offensive to them on some level.

How can we best handle it? Perhaps we should remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:2, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” Not everyone has the same level of spiritual maturity or even the knowledge and background to appreciate the information you are giving them. Try to give people something they can relate to. A small bit of truth may do more good than a detailed explanation of everything you know on a subject.

Often we encounter actions or opinions that are expressly condemned in God’s word. It can be infuriating. Your conscience may even require you to set the record straight, so to speak. “Be ye angry, and sin not,” wrote Paul

in Ephesians 4:26. Our society can be vexing, especially as we see it draw further away from the principles of God, but imagine the evil debauchery Paul's initial audience were witness to! Their society actually lived and wor-

first. Not that we should not help instruct, correct, or warn those around us, but in the end we only have control of ourselves. Just like the watchman of Ezekiel 33; after being warned, the responsibility lay with the people.

We do have a responsibility to judge, but primarily to judge ourselves.

shipped according to the Greek and Roman mythology you were probably forced to read in school.

The fruits of the spirit have not changed, however. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance should be evident in us in all circumstances. If we confront adversity in this manner we will at least have conducted ourselves as Christians, whatever the response may be.

These points are especially relevant when conflict or disagreement arises between brethren. In such an instance, all parties would be expected to exhibit these characteristics in a manner we probably wouldn't count on from an antagonistic co-worker. Paul writes in Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

This is similar to the statement Christ made about the beam and the mote, mentioned earlier in this article. Both emphasize our responsibility to judge ourselves

We know that Jesus Christ is our High Priest. While the moral code outlined in the Old Testament is the same as what is taught in the New Testament, physical men are no longer the intermediaries between us and God. We have access to Jesus Christ directly, and through Him to God the Father. Men broke the Old Covenant, not God. Men showed themselves incapable of keeping or enforcing the perfect law of God, of which Paul said, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). They showed themselves to be hypocrites. The scriptures are for our edification, to help us avoid the errors of our forebears.

We do have a responsibility to judge, but primarily to judge ourselves. When it really gets complicated is when we encounter others engaging in or believing things we personally abstain from or disagree with. While many issues are explicitly addressed in scripture, not every nuance we encounter, not every

matter we might be forced to take a side on, is quite that clear. What is clear is our responsibility to confront them all with the gentleness, goodness, and meekness required of all Christians. Our will and opinions are not the pinnacle of righteousness. Neither is the example Jesus Christ set for us one of judgment and condemnation, but one of humility and servitude.

Consider Paul's instructions in Romans Chapter 14 verses 1 through 13: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord:

whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

There is room for difference of opinion amongst brethren. As Paul taught, we have liberty in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 10:32-33 he said, "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

James also said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:10-12).

Even the Lord Himself, He

who is able to save and destroy, set an example of humility and encouraged His disciples to follow it on the last night of His physical life. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is the chief, as he that

struggled with this. Look at the hundreds of supposedly Christian denominations, all claiming to believe the Bible and worship Jesus Christ. How can this be? It is hardly consistent with the multiple injunctions to "be of one mind."

Sadly, despite our knowledge of the truth, the Churches of God have hardly fared better. Even though we are of one mind

**Keeping the clear, plain
commandments of God sets us
apart from the rest of the world.**

doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:25-27). Is there any better example for us to follow?

How would a servant provide correction? If you found it necessary to correct your boss, a police officer, or anyone in authority over you, how would you go about it? Probably very carefully and humbly. Don't these instructions seem to indicate that this is how we should deal with everyone—especially our brethren?

Paul had to address disputes among brethren who said, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:12) Were they not trying to out-righteous one another, just like the Pharisees with their rigmarole? History shows us that the church has always

in regard to such foundational teachings as the Sabbath Day, the annual Holy Days, the Kingdom, and the law and grace, we have allowed smaller issues and men's egos to divide us. How do we keep the Sabbath holy? Can we eat out? Stay in a hotel? Watch TV? Use electricity? Drive a car? Can we observe our birthdays? Should we vote? Are church eras successive or concurrent? On Atonement, which goat represents whom? Should we only say the Lord's name in Hebrew? What does "amen" really mean? Are there clean and unclean fungi? Will my dog be resurrected? Will there be internal combustion engines in the kingdom? (Those last ones were supposed to be funny, but if you think sides won't be chosen, think again.)

Yes, we must all try to be blameless in every instance, and yes, that sometimes means

making hard decisions about our associations. But if we seek to carry our point more than we seek to follow the Lord's clear instructions, treating each other mercifully and with love, are we really performing His will?

Isaiah 64:6 reads, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." We would do well to consider these words and remain humble in situations that call for judgment. It is not reasonable to expect that we will all 100% agree on worldly issues or even on doctrine. Romans 14:22 says, "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." There is some room for difference of opinion between men in the eyes of God.

Overcoming is a life-long process. As we learn and grow we will not always have the same level of understanding or maturity. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," reads Proverbs 27:17. Fashioning a raw lump of metal into a blade sounds like hard,

slow work. If we serve a steak to a hungry baby and it doesn't eat, whose fault is it really?

Is our commission to find fault with one another, or to do the work of God? The message Jesus Christ preached was relatively simple, "repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." He said "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:15).

Notice He didn't say like a smug, know it all teenager. He also said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. We are all individuals, responsible primarily for our own actions, answerable directly to God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and our own conscience. We all have something left to learn, something to improve on.

Are we the people of God, doing the work of God? Do we trust in His mercy, or in our own righteousness? Christ overcame the world. Should we then emulate it in bickering or self-seeking? When He returns He shall set the record straight. He said, "Therefore all things whatsoever

ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:12-14).

Few people find it, though many seek it. The right thing to do in a situation isn't always clear. We constantly rely on prayer, fasting and repentance for our own shortcomings. Few people consistently treat others the way they want to be treated.

Keeping the clear, plain commandments of God sets us apart from the rest of the world. The trunk of the tree is solid. We must keep our eyes on the coming Kingdom and the work that still needs to be done. We must showcase the love, joy, humility, and mercy so obviously required of us.

If we do, if we work together in harmony, then God will give us increase, and this tree will continue to bear fruit. □

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WORLD NEWS BRIEF

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

ROCKET BARRAGE OUT OF GAZA – WHAT’S NEW?

You’ll be tempted to think you’ve read this before, and it’s old news. Hamas in Gaza reportedly reached a truce with Israel after firing 700 rockets toward Israeli population centers, resulting in death for four and injuries for many unsuspecting Israelis. Newspapers in Israel surmise that another temporary truce has been reached because schools have been reopened, and the “all clear” sign given that everyone can go back to business as usual.

Although Israel responded with some 350 airstrikes, only eleven terrorists are reported killed. But Netanyahu says it’s not over amid criticism that a truce has been reached. Israel’s official position is that they don’t negotiate with terrorists. To the extent that a (temporary) truce has been instituted, Netanyahu is actually being attacked from the “right” for having reached a truce at all.

ATTEMPTED TAKEOVER OF EDUCATION BY “PERSONALIZED LEARNING” PLATFORM, SUMMIT

Many schools have adopted the Summit curriculum for their students. The *New York Times* reports that there is a rebellion in Kansas where schools had adopted the program, handed out laptop computers to students to use daily.

It didn’t go over so well. The students don’t like being taught from a laptop, requiring that they spend multiple hours per day hovering over a little computer. Students complain of eyestrain and carpal tunnel issues. A girl with epilepsy started having multiple seizures per day, and it’s been suggested that she limit her screen time to 30 minute sessions to cut down on the seizures.

Parents are ticked off about the program. Many are pulling their kids out of school to get them away from influences over which they have little knowledge and no control. The program was developed by Mark Zuckerberg and his pediatrician wife Priscilla Chan. It turns out that students have to enter all manner of personal information in order to get enrolled in the “personalized learning” program, and that starts a few bells ringing. Isn’t that what Facebook does? It collects all kinds of personal information, data and contact information, then sells it to whoever can pay. That right there ought to be all anybody needs to know about “personalized learning.” Given the record of the boy billionaire and his penchant for selling the personal data of millions who thought they were signing up for convenience and the ability to contact and keep up with their “friends,” only later to find that they’d been duped into making Zuckerberg fabulously rich while their personal data was for sale all over the internet.

Knowing that Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Twitter and the long list of other tech outfits that have taken over the world are pushing global warming, gay marriage, open borders, Trump hatred and all kinds anti-American sentiment, here’s a bit of advice. Don’t give any of them ANY personal information. And that goes double for kids in school.

NORTH KOREA RESUMES MISSILE TESTING

Establishment media had its predictable meltdown when the bad haircut recently fired short-range missiles into the Sea of Japan. He was standing up to Trump, revealing that the two summits between the American President and little Kim

Jong-Un accomplished nothing, according to jaundiced pundits. They'd previously argued that President Trump accomplished nothing except to give the height-challenged dictator the credibility he so earnestly desired.

Turns out that neither the President nor his advisors are concerned in the least about the short-range missiles. Those weapons are not capable of carrying a nuclear payload (assuming North Korea has a nuclear payload), and they're also not capable of reaching distant targets. So the mainstream media panicked and warned that all was lost. Meanwhile the Trump administration blew the whole thing off as no big deal in the grand scheme of things. At least nobody's climbing down man-hole covers in Hawaii, fearful they'll all go up in a mushroom cloud within minutes. At least there's that...

FLORIDA: GUNS IN THE CLASSROOM

These days, nearly every shooting leads to cries for more and stricter gun controls. State legislators in Florida are attempting to tackle the problem from a different angle. Largely in response to the deadly Parkland shooting in February 2018, a bill has passed that will allow teachers to be armed on campus and in the classroom. The Guardian program, as it is called, requires a 144-hour training course. While counties can opt out of the program, 40 of Florida's 67 counties have teachers participating in the program.

FUNNY-MAN ON THE FRONT LINES

While it rarely penetrates American news, armed conflict has been under way between the Ukraine and Russia since the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Multiple Russian-backed "People's Republics" have declared independence in eastern Ukraine, leaving the country a crumbling bulwark for Europe in the face of Soviet-style expansion. Recent Presidential elections propelled a political new-comer into office in Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Zelenskyy is a comedic actor who became famous for his role playing a school teacher who unexpectedly becomes president in a popular sitcom. His campaign mirrored his TV show in many ways, targeting corruption with comedy. For many

entrenched career politicians in Ukraine this is no laughing matter. Zelenskyy's first act as President has been to dissolve Parliament for snap-elections, his own party is so new that it currently holds no seats. Russia is also ready to exploit any weakness or division, advancing their interests in a conflict that has lasted five years and claimed over 13,000 lives.

COUNTING THE COST

The German Finance Ministry has reported that the country spent over 23 billion euros (\$25.65 billion) supporting and attempting to integrate migrants and refugees, an increase of 11% over the previous year. An additional 7.9 billion euros were expended to help prevent any more from entering EU territory. Most have originated from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. Backlash to the enormous influx of immigrants has roiled the political landscape across Europe. A German public TV station conducted a telephone survey to commemorate the 70th anniversary of their Constitution asking if Islam "belongs to" or "is a part of" Germany. Over 95% of participants said, "no." Large, expensive, unassimilated and often hostile migrant populations have become a liability to the very politicians responsible for resettling them.

A DEAL THEY CAN'T REFUSE

The Trump Administration has announced that the first phase of their plan for peace in the Middle East and Israel will be implemented in the coming months. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas are outraged! They assert that they have agreed to nothing, and furthermore no details have been released regarding the most sensitive issues like the status of Jerusalem or real Palestinian statehood. True on all counts. The plan will begin taking effect, the Palestinians have not agreed, and what the actual proposals will be on the more contentious portions is unknown. Phase one of the plan is the ECONOMIC PORTION. Foreign capital will begin flowing into Gaza and the West Bank. When the rest of the plan is eventually revealed, the PA, Hamas, and their constituents may find themselves in the embarrassing situation of having benefited from the first portion for some time. □

BIBLE STUDY

by Dr. James & Natalie Ricks

The Pentecost Miracle

JESUS, THE FIRST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS

Jesus was resurrected as the embodiment of the first harvest of Israel. All the rituals in Israel at the Tabernacle were really all about the plan of God with Christ as the central figure. They foreshadowed Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The first ritual related to Pentecost was the waving of the wavesheaf offering. This represented presenting the first of the first fruits to God. Jesus is clearly the first of the smaller, earlier, first harvest of those born into God's family and the Kingdom of God.

Leviticus 23:9-12, "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

"He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

"And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD.'" (NKJV)

The early, smaller, spring-summer harvest

could not be eaten by the people until it was presented in the form of a big wavesheaf to God at the Tabernacle. Christ, at His resurrection, was the first of all believers to be born into the family of God. He was the first of many brethren to be resurrected. The lamb represented Jesus.

John 1:29, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

Pentecost is really all about Jesus as the firstfruits. The Tabernacle design that Moses was given was a model of the real Throne of God in heaven. Therefore the high wavesheaf was acting out the role that Jesus would play when He presented Himself as the first born unto God after His resurrection.

John 20:16-17, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'" (KJV)

After Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven and presented himself as the firstfruits wavesheaf offering he returned and allowed the believers to touch him. He fulfilled the Tabernacle ritual perfectly as we would expect.

Continued next page

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians 15:20-23, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

Believers who remain in Christ until death will follow Jesus as the smaller first harvest to God.

THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS IS COMMEMORATIVE AND PROPHETIC

This celebration is prophetic in that it looks forward to the first of the firstfruits resurrection of Christ, as well as the smaller harvest of the first believers to be born into the family of God. Further it is also commemorative in that it was an opportunity for the worshipers of the true God to show appreciation for the early harvest and the Ten Commandments which were given at the first Pentecost. Pentecost celebrates the most valuable gift to be given mankind. This festival gave the Israelites the chance to show gratitude to God for his provisions. In the case of future believers we not only show gratitude for physical food, but for spiritual food or bread. The spiritual food is the real gift that we celebrate at Pentecost.

John 6:44-51, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day...”

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

“I am the bread of life.

“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

“This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh,

which I shall give for the life of the world.”

After Jesus’ resurrection He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to His followers so they could really eat of Him. They could grow to become more like Him. Pentecost is the giving of the true spiritual food that powers our spiritual side.

John 6:32, “Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”

Jesus provides us the true spiritual bread from heaven given on the first new covenant Pentecost.

Matthew 4:4, “But He answered and said, It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

If our real life is the spiritual life, we believers are growing into, not so much, our physical life powered by physical bread but our true Christian life.

WHY WAS SPIRITUAL POWER GIVEN AT PENTECOST?

The disciples had to wait after given proof of Jesus’ resurrection for the real spiritual power. Why? Some say the Holy Days are done away. If that is God’s desire then why have his believers wait until the next Holy Day? Clearly God in the new covenant is fulfilling all things written in the OT. Christ was fulfilling the Pentecost model by giving the power and Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Acts 1:4, “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to WAIT for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me;”

If God wanted to get away from Holy Days which he gave all Israel, not just the tribe of Judah, why have them wait the ten days for Pentecost. Clearly God is supporting His Holy Days with important events such as Jesus dying at the same time as the Passover lamb, and being the spiritual

BIBLE STUDY

wavesheaf offering.

If the Holy Days were only for Jews then why does God require all gentiles to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the future (see Zach. 14:16). He told them they would receive power and it came on the Holy Day of Pentecost.

The Holy Days work together. All of the seven feasts must be kept by all the people because they show God's *full plan for humanity!* They are celebrations and prophecies as well. All are needed for complete understanding and worship of the true God. Replacing them with compromised pagan rituals obscures the truth.

We see the sacrifice of Jesus to establish the new covenant (Passover), and the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower believers (Pentecost), while Fall Holy Days are about the return of Jesus to save the rest of mankind, those that are not a part of the first small harvest. The Fall Holy Days represent the large, final harvest of God.

Colossians 2:16-17, "Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matters of feasts or new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (is) of Christ." (DBY)

The word "is" was added by the translator and makes the verse somewhat misleading. Paul is actually saying do not let pagan neighbors, with their worldly philosophies, judge you on your feasting. The body of Christ is the church.

We know from a number of other verses that the New Testament church kept the Holy Days. Note for instance I Corinthians 5:6-8. Paul does not contradict himself. Their pagan neighbors were involved in ascetic worship and philosophies. They resented the brethren feasting. Note the following.

Colossians 2:20-23 says, "If you died with the Messiah to the elemental forces of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations; Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch?

"All these regulations refer to what is destroyed by being used up; They are commandments and doctrines of men.

"Although these had a reputation of wisdom by promoting ascetic practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence."

All of God's festivals are about feasting on food—both spiritual and physical food—with one exception.

PENTECOST IS ABOUT EMPOWERING GOD'S CHURCH

All the believers, both men and women, young and old, were given power on Pentecost. The first Pentecost in the new covenant era was also the birth date of the church. Note what Christ did for all 120 of his followers on that Holy Day.

Acts 2:1-4, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

All of them were given the power to promote the gospel message with the gift of speaking many languages. All the special effects—the sound and the fire—attracted thousands of spectators. Many repented and were saved. Peter said it was again the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

Acts 2:16-18, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days,' says God, 'That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.'"

Pentecost is a true believer's day to celebrate the spiritual gifts and food given by God to fulfill the mission. □

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE *Feast of Tabernacles*

At the time of the great fall harvest season, God set His “Feast of Tabernacles.” The word “tabernacle” merely means “booth,” or “kiosk,” a temporary domicile. God said, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.

“On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein...Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

“And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

“And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

“Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

“That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

“And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:33-35, 39-44).

Notice that the Feast of Tabernacles, or little “booths,” was coincident with the time of the gathering in of the fruit of the land—a festival which emphasized the harvest. Notice also that

God said the purpose for their dwelling in these little tabernacles or temporary domiciles for seven days was so that they would remember that God “made the children of Israel to dwell in booths...”

God reveals that He has placed within each human being the “spirit in man,” or the human spirit, which, while it has no separate consciousness or intelligence apart from the brain, it is nevertheless spiritual.

Paul wrote, “The spirit itself [God’s Holy Spirit] beareth witness with OUR SPIRIT that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). All of us are endowed with the human spirit. This entire eighth chapter of the book of Romans says a great deal about how God’s Holy Spirit is to dwell inside our mortal bodies.

That there is something spiritual in connection with the human brain which man cannot destroy is obvious from Christ’s words. Christ said, “...fear not them which kill the body [Greek: *soma*] but are not able to kill the soul [Greek: *psuche*]: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Matthew 10:28). Notwithstanding the fact that the traditional concept of the “immortal soul” is erroneous, it is clear from Jesus’ words that there IS something spiritual in connection with the human mind which man simply cannot destroy.

Few have understood that God is begetting children; that a new spiritual life is engendered within each human being who repents and receives God’s Spirit. Plainly, it is “created.” Conversion—receiving the begetting of the Holy Spirit—is not merely a change in attitude or outlook; not merely “turning over a new leaf,” or making minor adjustments in life style. It is the creation of a new creature in Christ!



PANAMA CITY BEACH, FLORIDA

White sand beaches, emerald green waters, beachside restaurants, endless shopping, and amusement parks for family fun. Church services are held daily. church activities for the whole family include karaoke, themed dance, raffle, bingo, and beach day. Mention group code 1120FR for ICG rates. **Majestic Beach Resort (866) 494-3364.**

BRANSON, MISSOURI

Enjoy spectacular lakes, championship golf courses, theme parks, outlet malls, family-friendly restaurants and amazing live shows. There will be Sabbath School for the children as well as youth activities. Everyone will enjoy the church picnic, pie contest, bingo night, karaoke, a church raffle and more! Use group code 64-499 for ICG rates. **Westgate Branson Woods Resort (888) 879-0034.**



LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA

Kings Beach is located on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe, on the California side of the border. Many people consider this Feast destination one of the most beautiful places in the world. At this friendly feast location you can look forward to Bible studies, church raffle, bingo night, and annual barbecue. **Lake Tahoe Accommodations 1-800-250-8013.**

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

Myrtle Beach has over 100 amusement parks and pavilions, 1,800 restaurants, deep sea, pier and surf fishing, endless shopping and a host of cultural activities. The entire Grand Strand area is a delightful destination for visitors of all ages. You'll enjoy our themed church dance, bingo, Fun Show, and church raffle! Mention the ICG for church group rates. **Landmark Resort (800) 845-0658.**





LAKE BARKLEY, KENTUCKY

A peaceful atmosphere with attractions sure to entertain the entire family. The lodge has a restaurant, game room, nature center, and rocking chairs overlooking the lake. The church will be hosting a cook-out, Bingo Fun Night, a golf outing, and Trap Shooting Day. Mention ICG for group rates. Rooms are going fast! **Lake Barkley State Resort Park (800) 325-1708.**

KENDALL, CUMBRIA, ENGLAND

A hilly and scenic area in the north of England, Kendal has many attractions with different zoos, local shops, steam trains, and sheep shearing events. It also has a large indoor leisure center for all the family to enjoy. There are several castles in the area and many picturesque villages. Services will be held at **Stricklandgate House 01539-742600.**



NELSON BAY, AUSTRALIA

Join the brethren Down Under at this beautiful Feast destination! Attractions at this year's Feast include cruises for whale watching, dolphin watching or just admiring the scenery. There are fine dining restaurants and Hunter Valley wineries to visit and even local wineries just a short drive away. Services will be held at **Nelson Bay Bowling Club 02-04981-1272.**

**This year's Feast of Tabernacles will be
14 to 21 October 2019**

Call our office (903) 561-7070 or visit our website, **www.IntercontinentalChurchofGod.org**, for more information about Feast locations, room prices, church activities, nearby lodging, and contact information.

Are the Holy Days for Christians?

God's seven annual feasts, or holy days, picture the entire purpose for human life! They picture, in moving, beautiful, rich types and shadows, the plan of salvation; the progressive fulfillment of all prophecy; how the saints of this time are but the "first fruits" of the great latter-day time of judgment; the second coming of Christ; the banishment of Satan; the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, and the great general resurrection of the "rest of the dead" (Revelation 20:5) to take place AFTER the millennium.

By understanding the types and shadows implicit in each of the annual Sabbaths, or holy days, one comes to understand the very purpose of one's own life!

The Passover, or Lord's Supper as it became to Christians, is the one annual festival which symbolizes, more than any other, the very way to salvation. We reaffirm each year our acceptance of Christ's broken body and shed blood. We continually reconfirm our faith in Jesus Christ, and in Him ALONE, for salvation!

The Days of Unleavened Bread picture Christ as the "bread which came down from heaven" and the eating of unleavened bread focuses on Christ coming to live within each newly repentant Christian, thus driving sin out.

The Feast of the Firstfruits, or Pentecost, shows us that God is calling only a "kind of firstfruits of His creatures" in this dispensation, and shows that the great latter, fall harvest of human lives is to come during the millennium, and even afterward. The New Testament observance of Pentecost portrays Christ sending the "other Comforter" to be generally available to human beings for the first time.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures not only the announcements of Almighty God from the time of Christ until the time of the end by the preaching of the Gospel, but God's own righteous angels, sounding the alarming trumpets leading up to the last plagues and the final great trump, announcing the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The Day of Atonement, the only FAST day (Acts 27:9; Lev. 23:32) among the seven holy days, depicts the whole world finally AT ONE with God through the atoning work of Christ; Satan, banished, will be unable to deceive the nations any further.

The Feast of Tabernacles acknowledges that we are living, as human beings, in but a temporary dwelling place, but it looks ahead to the PERMANENT dwelling place in God's Kingdom! Jesus Christ said, "In my Father's house are many mansions," which can also be rendered "positions of responsibility," or "offices."

The Last Great Day typifies the "Great White Throne Judgment" of the 20th chapter of Revelation. This final annual holy day signifies the completion of God's plan, the last great general resurrection and the final destruction of the incorrigibly wicked, and leads directly from the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20 to the "new heavens and new earth" of the last two chapters of your Bible.

IRAN the *most hated* country in the world, behind neighbor Iraq, controls 10% of proven oil reserves and 15% of natural gas reserves globally. These are the basis of the Iranian economy, representing over 80% of its exports. China is their chief trading partner (over 20%, followed by Iraq, UAE, Turkey, India, Japan and South Korea). As a regional power, Iran has long sought to extend its influence. They back Assad in Syria, supply funds to Hezbollah, and have long helped to prop up the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Iran's location between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf has contributed to its regional power status. Once a US ally, the 1979 Islamic revolution resulted in bitter enmity. It now finds common ground with those opposing America, including China, Russia and North Korea, among others. Iran is responsible for funding militias in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Lebanon. Hezbollah is considered the best armed and most powerful faction in Lebanon and is a constant threat to Israel's border.



Iran on Notice

Continued from page 2

ships are clearly vulnerable on their way through the Strait, and Iran continues threatening as if it has the ability to shut down 20% of the world's energy exports with the wave of a wand. Good luck with that.

The other Iranian threat causing international consternation is that they'll ramp up their nuclear program once again. But that bluster is fraught with additional complications. You'll remember that nearly all European nations decided to break with President Trump when he pulled the United States out of the sham known as the "Nuclear Agreement" with Iran. Former president Obama and his Secretary of State John Kerry regarded it as something that would stand as a "legacy" accomplishment in the realm of international relations.

There was no small amount of consternation when President Trump revoked the "deal." John Kerry may yet feel reverberations from his attempts to preserve what was left of the arrangement with European nations after the U.S. pulls out.

Those who worry aloud for a living say that President Trump is receiving bad advice from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security advisor John Bolton. Bolton is seen by his critics as a "hawk" who envisions an inevitable war between the United States and Iran. The imposition of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group into the Persian Gulf is being blamed

largely on Bolton's influence by his many critics in the establishment media.

They point out that the carrier group, anywhere in the Persian Gulf, will be a provocation to Iran. Recent experience shows that Iran will at least attempt to harass U.S. forces with high-speed gun boats if not aircraft. "What could

purpose of being fired at Israel.

The militant, brink-of-war mentality that grips the entirety of the Middle East is all about control of Jerusalem and the fact that Israel is the Jewish homeland. That is one reality that the Iranians and every known terrorist group refuse to accept. Not only are they willing to die for their angry

Any confrontation between the U.S. and Iran would likely bring the Russians into the fray, perhaps other Middle Eastern nations and even the Chinese.

go wrong?" they ask rhetorically. Any confrontation between the U.S. and Iran would likely bring the Russians into the fray, perhaps other Middle Eastern nations and even the Chinese. Next thing you know, a World War has been instigated and it's all Trump's fault!

China, which buys fully half of Iran's exported oil, is the wild card. As everybody knows, a trade deal between the U.S. and China hangs in the balance. If China refuses to honor U.S. sanctions against the purchase of Iranian oil, negotiations for a trade deal with America may face yet another complication. Trump's critics call it a full blown "Trade War!" He calls it a squabble in which the U.S. holds all the cards. But back to Iran.

Iran's Islamic regime hates Israel and the United States with unbridled passion. It has also expanded its sphere of influence to include Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Gaza. As the whole world knows, the rockets that keep getting fired out of Gaza into Israel are produced in Iran for the very

hatred, they'd be more than happy to see the world plunged into all out war.

You may have seen that the U.S. Embassy in Iraq was evacuated of all non-essential personnel in mid-May. It was only a few days afterward that apparently some Shiite militia group fired a missile into the American sector known as the Green Zone. The missile didn't hit the embassy, but it came too close for comfort. Was this what Israeli intelligence warned about? Or is there more?

President Trump responded by saying, "If the mullahs want to fight, that will be the official end of Iran." Wouldn't you have loved to be a fly on the wall when the weird holy men were delivered that statement?

There will undoubtedly be more wild threats from the radical Islamic regime, and who knows? If the mullahs want conflict, Trump will be happy to oblige whether Russia, China, or for that matter the nations of Europe, like it or not. □



DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS EUROPEAN MONSTER?

by Dr. Ted Malloch

He is the one and only, Martin Selmayr, a German, and a civil servant, now Secretary General of the whole European Commission, since 2018.

The 47 year old is feared as the most powerful man in Europe and was even called “a monster” by his very own boss.

The mini-Fuhrer insists that the UK must pay 39 billion pounds in a Brexit bill or put its future with the EU at risk—even if there is—No Deal.

His threats and maneuvers are legend as a fierce infighter who takes no prisoners.

He has been quoted by the European press as saying that the EU must be “punitive in its negotiations with Britain” as a signal to other deviant countries.

Selmayr is said by *Politico* to be “arguably the most powerful right hand man ever to prowl the upper halls of the Berlaymont” in Brussels—the EU’s HQ.

He refers to himself as “the adult in the room” and as “someone you want in charge” in

tumultuous times.

An ardent federalist, Selmayr believes fervently in just one thing: the United States of Europe.

He is also very positive on the need for a EU army.

As the architect of Jean-Claude Juncker’s vision for Europe, Selmayr is overtly anti-American.

He championed the Spitzenkandidat system, which brought his drunken and ineffective boss to power, with none other than himself as the real power behind the throne.

He brokered that deal with Merkel’s Germany, which was seen as nothing short of a putsch.

This amounted to a naked German takeover of Europe and its institutions.

Selmayr is on record and makes no secret about his plan to establish the EU as an all-powerful supranational/globalist entity in a multipolar world to challenge the US.

The European Parliament last year adopted a resolution, with a

majority of 71%, that called for the resignation of Selmayr, the former right-hand man of Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker whose rushed promotion was criticised as “a coup-like action.”

Who is this almighty shadowy Selmayr figure?

As a hugely divisive person, Selmayr has risen quickly to the top of the EU heap.

One Dutch MEP called his promotion a farce, arguing it “destroys all credibility of the European Union.”

Known to be wildly and blindly ambitious, Selmayr makes no bones about his power grab.

Others refer to it as what it truly is: cronyism.

A careerist, Selmayr is hell bent on his own accomplishments and extended role.

He knows he has benefitted enormously from his patron, namely- Jean-Claude Juncker, the former Prime Minister of Luxembourg who was wedged in as President of the European

Union back in 2014.

The EU is an unelected, bloated, overpaid, bureaucracy and is known to be an “old boys club.”

Sylmar fits in perfectly.

He does not play by the rules but instead bends them to his own advantage.

He is known to be a leaker and was accused of leaking very private information from a dinner at Number 10 in London, where Theresa May was in talks with Mr. Juncker.

It was done to damage her.

Jokingly perhaps, the former German Minister of Finance quipped, “Do you know the difference between Selmayr and God? God knows he is not Selmayr.”

Selmayr is referred to as the UN-civil servant in the corridors of the EU and is feared by associates and detractors alike.

Born in sleepy Bonn, West Germany during the Cold War in 1970, Selmayr has painted himself in near mythical terms.

He is a very clever lawyer and a spin-doctor of some acclaim.

He has played the system like a virtuoso violinist and in the process has created many enemies as



Secretary-General of the Commission, German, Martin Selmayr (L) and EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at the start of a college meeting of the European commission in Brussels, Belgium, 27 February 2019.

well as a spoils ladder of those deeply indebted to him.

The EU powerbroker received a doctorate from Germany’s Passau University in 2003 and has very deep ties to the CDU Party there and to Mrs. Merkel and her inner circle.

Sylmar is best understood as a Eurocrat. A badge he wears with great pride.

He may be a German by ancestry but with the mantle now of representing ALL of Europe.

His family roots are most noteworthy. They tie him on both his maternal and paternal sides to the Nazi Wehrmacht.

His grandfathers on both sides were important Generals in WWII — for Hitler. They would be proud. □

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DEATH OF A REPUBLIC

Gridlock and endless investigations destroyed Rome - *Is America Next?*

by Dr. James & Natalie Ricks



Political warfare and paralysis undermined the Roman republic. Scholars believe that political stalemate helped destroy the Roman Republic. Rome had grown as a republic to great heights as the world's only superpower. Then important decisions went undecided. Nothing was done to solve great problems. Why? They were the victims of legislative stalemate and political infighting. The Senate was paralyzed by partisanship. In Rome, each party would rather leave a crisis unsolved than give a victory to the leadership of the other side. We see eerie similarities in today's Washington.

The second issue that added to the legislative disease of partisanship-over-patriotism was wealth. The empire's wealth, which corrupted the political system, included vast campaign finance corruption. By 70 BC, the weaknesses in Rome's government were clear. The empire's wealth had completely and powerfully corrupted the Senate. In fact, wealth of the Roman Republic as a superpower corroded every aspect of Roman political life. Money eroded the political process.

The only way to get elected in 70 BC was to spend lavishly. To get citizens' votes, politicians sponsored expensive gladiatorial games. Wealthy businessmen traded campaign contributions for political favors. Both Caesar and Cato commented that the very patriotic and self sacrificing Senators of the past that had guided Rome to superpower status no longer existed in this petty, spoiled generation of legislators.

The Roman Senate was stuck in gridlock and therefore could not solve pressing problems. The two parties hated each other so much that they could not let the other side gain any victories.

This even included international issues affecting all of the nation. Ordinary citizens lost faith in the republic and the government because of this political paralysis. The two parties spent endless time on punitive investigations of the other party. Scandals used for political purposes rocked the Senate. Rome had usually resolved its differences peacefully and for the good of the country. During Rome's rise from a small city to a superpower the people displayed traits of patriotism and piety and honor. They had character and discipline, but years of wealth had led to decadence, not just in society, but also in politics.



False accusations, infighting, and grandstanding have paralyzed the U.S. Capitol.

They entered the politics of winning at all costs; even the personal destruction of rivals.

At that time in Rome there were two major political parties, the Optimates and the Populares. The Optimates stood for old moral values and supported political reforms from within the Senate. The Populares—which literally means “democrats”—believed that Rome needed *more* democracy, not less. It needed leaders responsive to the popular will.

Rome had a serious problem in 70 BC with pirates who terrorized the Mediterranean and took hostages, including senators’ wives being held for ransom. Yet the Senate was trapped in partisan bickering and could not agree on a solution. Does any of this sound like our border crisis? In America today, one party is currently more interested in blocking the other party, regardless of what is good for our nation. In Rome’s past the Senate and the voters of Rome made momentous decisions which helped the Roman republic become the most powerful nation/empire in world history with possibly the exception of America in the last century or so.

People eventually lost confidence in the government’s ability to solve problems. Citizens lost confidence in the government of Rome and maybe Americans are losing confidence in Congress and our media, the fourth branch of government. In the past, the Roman Senate had provided superb guidance for Rome during the struggle with Hannibal and



The Roman Forum. These are the remains of those buildings that during most of the Ancient Rome’s time represented the political, legal, religious and economical center of the city.

the rise to superpower status. Polybius said, the Roman people, whose civic virtue and constitution was the key factor in why Rome, in one generation, rose from being a small nation to being master of an empire. The Roman Empire was, in the terms of its day, a global empire, marked by a global economy, a global culture, and a global political world. All this is similar to American domination of the planet.

Rome was, in its own way, as creative as our own age of technology and science. As America today builds upon the intellectual heritage of Europe, so Rome built upon its legacy from Greece. In art, literature, and architecture, the Roman Empire laid the cultural foundations for European history. Roman science and medicine shaped the history of both the medieval Christian and Muslim worlds. The Roman Empire was an age of creativity with few parallels in history. One coinage united worldwide commerce. One law protected all inhabitants.

Rome had great senators like Cato and Cicero. In Europe, parts of the Middle East, and northern Africa one language, Latin, was spoken throughout the empire.

Roman citizens eventually felt they could no longer trust their Senate due to endless gridlock and useless investigations. Therefore the Roman republic died. Some now think America also needs a large, all powerful (socialistic), autocratic, central government. Many successful republics ended in this fashion or collapsed when voters discovered they could raid the treasury and spend the government into financial ruin. We could look at the French Revolution, which ended with Napoleon’s military dictatorship.

A republic requires devout, engaged, moral citizenry to maintain itself. Have we started to enter the period of endless investigations and political warfare? It seems our country is facing political paralysis. Will the American republic continue? □



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