Capitalism and Its Critics

Kerby Anderson provides a biblical perspective on capitalism, defending it against economic and moral criticisms.

Nearly two decades ago, I did a Probe radio program on capitalism and socialism. Since then, I have also written other booklets on socialism, which provide an answer to the claims of candidates from the Democratic Socialists of America. But there is also a need to set forth why capitalism and the free market need to be defended and supported.

Even back then, I was able to quote from a Rasmussen poll that indicated that a mere majority of Americans said that capitalism was better than socialism.{1} That majority quickly became a minority, especially among young people. A poll just a few years later of millennials found a majority (58 percent) would prefer to live in a socialist nation than a capitalist nation. And only a small percentage (42 percent) favored capitalism. Of course, many of them probably didn't even know how to define socialism (which is a problem today).

A recent Cato Institute poll of the GenZ population found that a majority of them (53%) view socialism favorably.{2} The poll also found that more than a third (39%) would be more likely to vote for a Democratic Socialist candidate.

Part of the problem with this shift to socialism is the fact that many young people do not understand what they are supporting. Socialism sounds fair to them. And capitalism sounds evil since they have seen numerous depictions of evil, greedy capitalists in the movies and television. Think of the last time you saw a successful businessman portrayed in the media.

Another obvious issue is the fact that younger Americans are less likely to associate socialism with Soviet-style repression. Instead, they are told (incorrectly) that

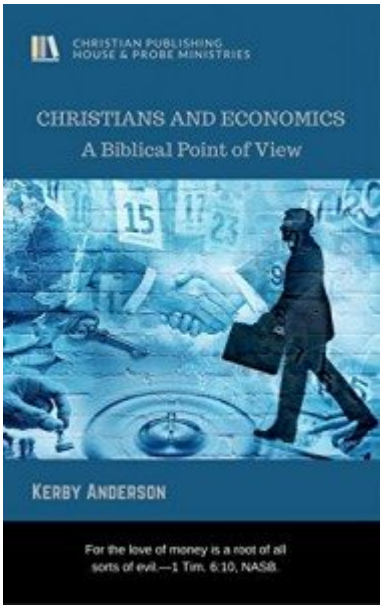
socialism is functioning well in Europe.

Also, young adults don't have "skin in the game" and thus do not think of the implications of an economic system on their future earnings. If they are in the economy, they are frustrated with the issue of affordability and naively think an economic transformation is the answer to their frustrations.

I am reminded of the famous phrase: "If you're not a liberal when you're 25, you have no heart. If you're not a conservative by the time you're 35, you have no brain." Arthur Brooks is someone I have interviewed many times, and he has proposed a variation: "A man who is not a socialist at 20 has no heart; a man who is still a socialist at 40 either has no head or pays no taxes."{3}

Capitalism Versus Socialism

How should we define capitalism and socialism? Here are some brief definitions of these two economic systems. You can find more information in my book on Christians and economics.{4}



Capitalism is an economic system in which there is private property, and the means of production are privately owned. In capitalism, there is a limited role for government. Socialism is an economic system in which there is public or state ownership of the means of production and the primary focus is on providing an equality of outcomes. In socialism, the state

is all-important and involved in central planning.

Many leaders of the Democratic Socialists argue that capitalism is doomed to fail because it leads to wealth inequality. Actor Mark Ruffalo concluded, “Capitalism today is failing us, killing us, and robbing from our children’s future.”

Steve Forbes disagrees. “Capitalism has done just the opposite! Deaths from famines are down 99% in the last 60 years. Standard of living, 10 times better than it was 50 years ago around the world.”{5}

He isn’t the only person saying that. Most people know Bono as a musician with the group U2. But here is what he said at the World Economic Forum: “Capitalism is not immoral—it’s amoral. It requires our instruction. Capitalism has taken more people out of poverty than any other ism.”{6}

Steve Forbes also argued: “Capitalism, free enterprise, free markets, whatever you call it is a moral system because success comes from meeting the needs and wants of others.” He further explained that capitalism is humane: “You may not love your neighbor, but you sure want to sell to your neighbor. It gets people working on a common objective, even if they don’t realize it.”

Another benefit of capitalism is technological innovation. Citizens are free to invent and are encouraged to do so because they can receive the financial benefits of their ideas and inventions.

This results in new products and technologies. It also results in higher-quality technologies. In a free market, the best way to get consumers to buy your product or service is to produce it more cheaply with higher quality. This, of course, also lowers consumer prices.

Economic Criticisms of Capitalism

People often reject the idea of capitalism because they believe one of the *economic* criticisms of capitalism. Here are two of these criticisms.

The first economic criticism is that capitalism leads to monopolies. These develop for two reasons: too little government, and too much government. Monopolies have occurred in the past because government has not been willing to exercise its God-given authority. Government finally stepped in and broke up the big trusts that were not allowing the free enterprise system to function correctly.

But in recent decades, the reason for monopolies has often been too *much* government. Many of the largest monopolies today are government-sanctioned monopolies that prevent true competition from taking place. Companies call for legislation that gives them a competitive advantage over other companies. The solution is for government to allow a freer market where competition can take place.

Let me add that many people often call markets with limited competition “monopolies” when the term is not appropriate. For example, the major car companies may seem like monopolies or oligopolies until you realize that in the market of consumer durables the true market is the entire western world.

The second criticism of capitalism is that it leads to pollution. In a capitalistic system, pollutants are considered externalities. The producer may incur costs that are external to the firm so often there is no incentive to clean up the pollution. Instead, it is dumped into areas held in common such as the air or water.

The solution in this case is governmental regulation. But this need not be a justification for building a massive bureaucracy. We need to find creative ways to direct self-

interest so that people work towards the common good.

The “capitalism leads to pollution” argument has failed. Instead, we find that as countries get richer there is more incentive and financial means to clean up pollution. This is called a Kuznets curve.{7} There are, of course, exceptions (especially with countries with inept governments and poor system of property rights). But the general rule is that as incomes go up, people focus on pollution.

Here’s what we find: when capitalism is wisely controlled, it generates significant economic prosperity and economic freedom for its citizens.

Moral Criticisms of Capitalism

Another reason people often reject the idea of capitalism is because they believe it is*immoral*.

One of the moral arguments against capitalism involves the issue of greed. And this is why many Christians feel ambivalent towards the free enterprise system. After all, some critics of capitalism contend that this economic system makes people greedy.

To answer this question we need to resolve the following question: Does capitalism make people greedy or do we already have greedy people who use the economic freedom of the capitalistic system to achieve their -ends? In light of the biblical description of human nature, the latter seems more likely.

Because people are sinful and selfish, some are going to use the capitalist system to feed their greed. But that is not so much a criticism of capitalism as it is a realization of the human condition. The goal of capitalism is not to change people but to protect us from human sinfulness.

Capitalism is a system in which bad people can do the least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works. Capitalism works well if you have completely moral individuals. But it also functions adequately when you have selfish and greedy people.

Important to this discussion is the realization that there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness. All people have self-interests that can operate in ways that are not selfish. For example, it is in my self-interest to get a job and earn an income so that I can support my family. I can do that in ways that are not selfish.

Capitalism was founded on the observation that all of us have self-interest. Rather than trying to change that, economists saw that self-interest could be the motor of the capitalist system.

By contrast, other economic systems like socialism ignore the biblical definitions of human nature. Thus, they allow economic power to be centralized and concentrate power in the hands of a few greedy people. Those who complain of the influence major corporations have on our lives should consider the socialist alternative of how a few governmental bureaucrats control every aspect of their lives.

Greed certainly occurs in the capitalist system. But it does not surface just in this economic system. It is part of our sinfulness. Capitalism may have its flaws as an economic system, but it can be controlled to give us a great deal of economic prosperity and economic freedom.

Biblical Perspective

Many Christians are surprised to learn that the Bible does address economic issues, even if it does not endorse any economic system. But we can use biblical principles to evaluate an economic system.

We begin with a biblical view of human nature. The Bible has what we could call a balanced view of human nature. Human beings are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27-28) and have a noble side influenced by rationality, compassion, and even altruism. But there is also a flaw in human beings. The Bible teaches that all are sinful (Romans 3:23) and that the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9).

An economic system that allows for human flourishing must also protect against economic abuse. As we have already discussed, capitalism provides that opportunity.

Capitalism is also based upon the foundation of private property. First, the Bible teaches that everything belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1 – "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it"). Second, we have been given dominion over the creation (Genesis 1:26-28). And the Bible does grant private property rights to individuals (Exodus 22). In fact, one of the Ten Commandments is about stealing, which implies property rights.

As Christians, we can also add our moral perspective to the economy. We read in Deuteronomy 8:18 to "Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers."

And we should enjoy the fruits of our labor. "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good" (Ecclesiastes 2:24). We should also "work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23).

Capitalism also promotes the work ethic. That is implied in the title of Max Weber's book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It is also an important aspect of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

Many of the Proverbs (10:4, 13:4, 14:23) contrast the

difference between hard work and diligence versus idleness and sloth. In the New Testament, there is a strong emphasis on honest work (Ephesians 4:28) and self-reliance. There is also a warning in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."

As Christians we should support a free market and reject the current attempts to implement a socialist economy in this country.

Notes

1. "Just 53% Say Capitalism Better Than Socialism," Rasmussen Reports, 9 April 2009.
2. Emily Elkins, "New Poll: Nearly Half of Americans Don't Know What America's 250th Is Celebrating," Cato Institute, www.cato.org/blog/new-poll-nearly-half-americans-dont-know-what-americas-250th-celebrating
3. Arthur Brooks, The Real Culture War is Over Capitalism, *Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2009, www.wsj.com/articles/SB124104689179070747.
4. Kerby Anderson, *Christian and Economics: A Biblical Point of View*, Cambridge: OH: Christian Publishers, 2016.
5. John Stossel, "The Case for Capitalism," July 29, 2026, townhall.com/columnists/johnstossel/2026/07/29/the-case-for-capitalism-n2680299
6. Hugh Whelchel, Bono: Capitalism Excels at Poverty Relief, but Needs a Moral Rudder, February 4, 2019, institutefc.org/bono-capitalism-excels-at-poverty-relief-but-needs-a-moral-rudder/.
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Voting and Christian Citizenship

Applying a biblical worldview to your voting choices is an important part of your role as a citizen. Byron Barlowe looks at how Christians should exercise their right to vote and make biblically informed decisions in the voting booth.

Summary

It is both a sacred duty and privilege for Christians to serve as citizens who salt (preserve) and light (illumine) our culture. Americans have inherited a government system based solidly on a biblical worldview, but one that also tolerates and protects other viewpoints. Truly humble, tolerant political engagement does not equal spiritual compromise. Christians found out how seductive political power can be in the 1980s and need to resist the pull of compromise. God doesn't take sides; we need to make sure we're on His side.



Although a strongly biblical candidate may be ideal, that's not often a realistic option. Instead, we must use our sanctified minds to prayerfully choose between imperfect candidates—who are *not*, after all, seeking *pastoral* positions. Believers have a duty to vote our values. How else would we vote? Our calling: not to force those values on others in a free society, but to honor the privileges of citizenship, including legitimate political influence, and to vote our convictions.

Christian Citizenship: A Duty and Privilege

One pundit wrote fifteen months before the 2008 election, "If you're not already weary of the 2008 presidential campaign . . . you must be living in a cave…. The campaign began the day after the 2004 election, making this the first non-stop presidential campaign in history. The media, desperate to sustain interest in the horse race, pursue such earth-shattering stories as: 'Which candidate owns the most pets?'"{1}

Then, a new kind of Internet-age debate featured Democratic presidential candidates responding to home-grown videos posted to *YouTube.com* by members of the public. Among them: two Tennesseans dressed like hillbillies and a snowman, ostensibly concerned about global warming!

Hard to take politics seriously given all of the theater, isn't it? But political engagement—including voting—is a God-given, blood-bought right that Christians must take seriously. We are called by the Lord Jesus to be preserving salt and illuminating light in our culture. And it's not just presidential races that matter.

Kerby Anderson, in an article entitled "Politics and Religion," wrote, "Christian obedience goes beyond calling for spiritual renewal. We have often failed to ask the question, 'What do we do if hearts are not changed?' Because government is ordained of God, we need to consider ways to legitimately use governmental power. Christians have a high stake in making sure government acts justly and makes decisions that provide maximum freedom for the furtherance of the gospel."{2} Some believe we have a *cultural mandate* to redeem not only men's souls, but the works of culture including politics.

Yet, Christians remain on the sidelines in alarming numbers.

According to one poll before the 2004 elections, “only a third of evangelical Christians—those who ought to be most concerned with moral values—[said they would] actually vote.” But the Bible says a lot about believers’ duties as citizens. “When Moses commanded the Israelites to appoint God-fearing leaders, he wasn’t just talking to a handful of citizens who felt like getting involved…. And modern Christians are under the same obligation to choose leaders who love justice…. Today, in our modern democracy, free citizens act as God’s agents for choosing leaders, and we do it by voting.”{3}

As believers, we’re citizens of two kingdoms: one temporal and earthly, the other eternal and heavenly. We are called to participate in both the culture and politics of The City of Man, as this world was called by Augustine, while primarily focusing on the Kingdom of God.

The longevity and value of these dual kingdoms ought to serve as crucial guides to how invested we become in them. Eternal issues matter more than temporal ones. To allow politics and social issues to overtake our commitments to the everlasting is to risk idolatry, while losing ground in both realms.

Flipping the usual focus of candidates’ qualifications onto the electorate, one Christian columnist wrote, “Those who make critical decisions for America (its voters, I mean) should come up to some minimal standards before leaving the house on Election Day. Voters should be able to tell the difference between worldviews…. Voters should be free of regionalism and other types of ‘group-think’…. Vocations, unions, ethnic groups and age groups that vote in lockstep are not behaving as free people. Citizens whose consciences are ruled by others should not govern a free nation… Voters should value their vote, but not sell it.” {4}

It didn’t take Albert Einstein to say it, but he did say “It is the duty of every citizen according to his best capacities to give validity to his convictions in political affairs.”{5}

Chuck Colson, convicted Watergate felon, said, “All you have to do is lose the right to vote once, and you would never again find any excuse for not going into the voting booth…. Be a good citizen: Exercise the greatest right a free people have [*sic*].”{6}

God’s will and Kingdom will not be thwarted, and *we* cannot ultimately control outcomes, even as a voting bloc. As Christian citizens in America, we need to offer due diligence in voting and other political activities, trust God with the results, and keep spiritual concerns first.

Puritan Roots, Pluralism & Practical Politics

In 2007, for the first time a Hindu priest opened Senate deliberations with prayer. I asked a group of Christian homeschool parents gathered to discuss America’s political system if they could justify forbidding this, and no one could answer satisfactorily. Pluralism—when a culture supports various ethnic backgrounds, religions and political views—is a practical and, understood correctly, appropriate reality.

Americans—believers and non-believers alike—have inherited a system of governance based solidly on the Bible, but allowing for a plurality of beliefs or even unbelief. The Puritans who first colonized this land “saw themselves as the new Israel, an elect people.”{7}

The architects of our political arrangement, many of them professing Christians, were deeply influenced by the Puritan’s positive cultural impact and the Scriptures to which they appealed. Daniel Webster said, “Our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment.”{8} John Quincy Adams said, “The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the

principles of Christianity." George Washington, a devoted Christian, left room for others: "While just government protects all in their religious rights, true religion affords to government its surest support."{9}

Probe's *Mind Games* curriculum points out the realism of the founders in mitigating the imperfections of people even as they self-rule. "Again, we can see the genius of the American system. Madison and others realized the futility of trying to remove passions (human sinfulness) from the population. Therefore, he proposed that human nature be set against human nature. This was done by separating various institutional power structures."{10} This was based on a biblical understanding of man, a proper anthropology.

So, how can such a firmly entrenched Judeo-Christian political heritage be reconciled with a culture increasingly full of Mormons, Hindus, Muslims, humanists, and other unbelievers living alongside Christians?

The Constitution and Bill of Rights justly allows for religious and political diversity. Nineteenth-century theologian Charles Hodge of Princeton regarding immigrants said:

> All are welcomed; all are admitted to equal rights and privileges. All are allowed to acquire property, whatever their religious feelings, and to vote in every election, made eligible to all offices and invested with equal influence in all public affairs. All are allowed to worship as they please, or not to worship at all, if they see fit…. No man is required to profess any form of faith…. More than this cannot reasonably be demanded.{11}

Theologian Richard J. Mouw explored the possibility of evangelical politics that doesn't compromise and at the same is time highly tolerant of other views. Not "anything-goes relativism," but rather confidence that comes from God's

guidebook for life, tempered by fair-minded ways of dealing with people. He wrote, “This humility does not exclude Christians advocating social and political policies that conflict with the views and practices of others. It does mean we should do so in a way that encourages reasonable dialogue and mutual respect.”{12}

Believers need to consider the words of Bernard Crick: “Politics is a way of ruling in divided societies without undue violence…. Politics is not just a necessary evil; it is a realistic good.” Kenyans victimized by recent mob killings that erupted after disputed elections could testify that when the political process fails it can be devastating.

The founders, even as they envisioned pluralism, did not themselves have to deal deeply with it. It requires a keen worldview for voting and activism in today’s truly pluralistic America. Our nation is based on an unmistakable Christian foundation, but that of course doesn’t mean you *have to* be a Christian or even believe in God to participate.

Political Might and the Religious Right: Does God Take Sides?

Ever since Jimmy Carter ran for President based partly on his evangelical faith in the 1970s, and then the Moral Majority took the nation by storm in the ‘80s, there has been a non-stop discussion in America surrounding faith and politics.

Political power’s seduction blinded believers, claim former movers and shakers like Ed Dobson. “One of the dangers,” he said, “of mixing politics and religion is that you begin to think the only way to transform culture is by passing another law. Most of what we did in the Moral Majority was aimed at getting the right people elected so that we would have enough votes to pass the right laws.”{13}

In those days, Christians seemed to believe they could legislate and administrate God's kingdom into full flower. However, core issues like gay unions and abortion remain largely unchanged or even worse today.

"History has shown us we can't rely totally on laws," continued Dobson.{14} A good example is Prohibition. The harder the government cracked down on alcohol, the more ways people found to get around the law. One result was increased crime. Laws don't change hearts; they are meant to restrain evil.

Sidling up to political power brokers even for commendable causes can prove disillusioning. Recently, conservative Christians hoped for fair and full consideration from the administration of the boldly evangelical George Bush. According to former White House deputy director for faith-based initiatives David Kuo, administration operators used and mocked evangelicals who were trying to do compassionate work partly funded through the government. But as Kuo asks, "What did they expect from politicos?" Good question for all of us. Jeremiah the prophet warned, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man."{15} That would seem to include man's politics.

Committed evangelical Bill Armstrong shared prophetically as a Senator back in 1983, "There is a danger when believers get deeply involved in political activity that they will try to put the mantle of Christ on their cause . . . to deify that cause and say, 'Because I'm motivated to run for office for reasons [of] faith, a vote for me is a vote for Jesus'."{16}

Ed Dobson often joked about God not being a Democrat or Republican—but *certainly not* a Democrat. But, he asked, "Is God the God of the religious and political left with its emphasis on the environment and the poor, or is he the God of the religious and political right with its emphasis on the unborn and the family? Both groups claim to speak for God."{17}

The Lord appeared to Joshua before a battle. He discovered that the issue wasn't whether God was on his side or his enemy's, but whether the people were on *God's* side. The religious and political Left casts itself as champion of the poor and the environment while the Right emphasizes the unborn and the family. Both say they speak for God. Seeking God's priorities and using His wisdom for our particular times is critical. However, "God's side" is not always easy to find.

So what's a Christian citizen's role? Armstrong and others believe Christians have been commanded by Christ to be involved. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" means more than paying taxes. Some basic biblical principles:

- *All political power comes from God;*
- *Government has a God-ordained role to play in society;*
- *Christians have a God-ordained responsibility to that government: to pray, submit to and honor government leaders and, of course, to pay our taxes.{18}*

The late Christian political activist, pastor, and author D. James Kennedy warned in the heady early days of "the Reagan Revolution" not to trust in the man Ronald Reagan but in God. "After victory," he writes, "many people give up the struggle and later discover they had won only a battle, not the war. Are you working less, praying less, giving less, trusting less? Maybe there is a bit of the humanist in all of us."{19} He continues, "The government . . . should be a means to godly ends. Ronald Reagan is but a stone in the sling, and you do not trust in stones; you trust in the living rock, Jesus Christ."{20}

Thus, voters, campaigners *and* officeholders need to heed the humility of experience in a fallen world and the understanding of the Founders that power corrupts and should be divided up, placing final trust in the Almighty.

Should We Elect a Christian When Given the Chance?

Talk show host Larry King asked pastor and author Max Lucado if religion should matter in an election campaign. I love his answer: "Well, genuine religion has to matter. We elect character. We elect a person's worldview. Faith can define that worldview…. [Within the] American population 85 percent of us say that religion matters to us. 72 percent of us say that the religion of a president matters."{21} Polls show that Americans would sooner elect a Muslim or homosexual than an acknowledged atheist.{22}

Philosopher and early church father Augustine dealt with a culture war among the Romans. In his classic book *The City of God* he taught that "The City of Man is populated by those who love themselves and hold God in contempt, while the City of God is populated by those who love God and hold themselves in contempt. Augustine hoped to show that the citizens of the City of God were more beneficial to the interests of Rome than those who inhabit the City of Man."{23} Of course, a Christian will want to vote for a citizen of God's city if there is a clear choice between him and a rank sinner. That choice is seldom so clear in elections. But understanding this dual citizenship of the Christian voter herself in the City of Man and The City of God is essential to dissecting complicated, sometimes competing priorities.

In the tangled vines surrounding campaign messages, it's not so simple to discern a candidate's worldview and decide who best matches our own, but that's what wisdom and good stewardship require (and as recent scandals like Senator Larry Craig's alleged homosexual improprieties shows, a politician's stated views and behavior don't always match). Seems like the Christian citizen's top priority, then, is to have a biblical worldview to start with (something that Probe can help with greatly).

Given that, how does the average Christian voter decide on parties, platforms, and candidates? They do it based on principles of biblical ethics, godly values, simple logic and a discerning ear.

Remember, America is a republic, not a democracy. And in a republic we are to elect representatives who will rise above the passions of the moment. They are to be men and women of character and virtue, who will act responsibly and even nobly as they carry out the best interests of the people. No, we don't want leaders we can love because they remind us of our own darker side. We want leaders we can look up to and respect.{24}

Should we elect a person who claims to be a Christian, like former pastor Mike Huckabee? It depends. Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney received a standing ovation when said, "We need a person of faith to lead the country." A contributor to the blog run by Left-wing evangelical Jim Wallis responded, "But that statement is nearly meaningless, for even Sam Harris is a person of faith. Strident, angry, atheistic faith."{25} Good point: all have faith, but *faith in what or who*?

On the other hand, former Senator Bill Armstrong states, "God was able to make sons of Abraham out of stone. Certainly that means he can make a good legislator out of somebody who isn't necessarily a member of our church or maybe not even a Christian or maybe an atheist. So I don't think we ought to limit God by saying 'only Christians' deserve our support politically."{26}

The politically influential Dr. James Dobson caused a stir when he critiqued one candidate for not regularly attending church. Dr. Richard Land responded that this is not a deciding factor for him. He said that as a Baptist minister he would never have voted for the church-attending Jimmy Carter but did vote twice for the non-attending Ronald Reagan. This, like so

many others, seems to be an issue of individual conscience for voters.

Evangelical Mark DeMoss writes in support of Romney, a devout Mormon. “For years, evangelicals have been keenly interested to know whether a candidate shared their faith. I am now more interested in knowing that a president represents my values than I am that he or she shares my theology.”{27} After all, we’ve worked together on issues like abortion, pornography, and gambling. Can’t we be governed well by someone who shares most of our values, he reasons? As columnist Cal Thomas says, I care less about where the ambulance driver worships than if he knows where the hospital is.

Taking the high road of choosing good candidates, not necessarily ones whose theology one agrees with all down the line, makes voting and party affiliation complex for believers. We’d prefer a clean, easy set of choices. But, it appears that even voting and civic engagement is under the “sweat of the brow” curse of Genesis—nothing comes easy.

Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias reminds us that we’re NOT electing a minister or church elder. He said:

> I think as we elect, we go before God and [choose] out of the candidates who will be the best ones to represent [sanctity of life] values and at the same time be a good leader . . . whose first responsibility [is] to protect citizens.
>
> What we want is a politician who will understand the basic Judeo-Christian worldview, and on the basis of that the moral laws of this nation are framed, and then run this country with the excellence of that which is recognized in a pluralistic society: the freedom to believe or to disbelieve, and the moral framework with which this was conducted: the sanctity of every individual life.{28}

Vote your conscience. Many issues are disputable matters, as

the Apostle Paul put it. Avoid the temptation to *unreflectively* limit your view to a few pet issues. If over time you prayerfully believe that stewardship of the environment is critical, balanced against all considerations, vote accordingly. If sanctity of life issues like abortion and stem cell research are paramount to you, by all means vote that way. However, realize that trade-offs are inevitable; there won't be a perfect candidate who falls in line on all our values and priorities.

Politics, Religion, and Values

As the old saw goes, "never talk about politics and religion." That may be wise advice when Uncle Harry is over for Thanksgiving dinner. But as a rule of life, it breeds ignorance and passivity in self-government. "Only if we allow a biblical worldview and a biblically balanced agenda guide our concrete political work can we significantly improve the political order," according to a statement by the National Association of Evangelicals.{29} That means dialogue, and that's not easy.

Some prefer a public square where anything goes *but* religion. That would be wrong. Likewise, a so-called "sacred public square," with religious values imposed on everyone, would be unfair. Christians should support a "*civil* public square" with open, respectful debate.{30}

But, you often hear people make statements like, "Christians shouldn't try to legislate morality." They might simply mean you can't make people good by passing laws. Fair enough. But *all law*, divine and civil, involves imposing right and wrong. Prohibitions against murder and rape are judgments on good and bad. The question is not whether we *should* legislate morality but rather, "*What kind* of morality we should legislate?"{31}

Yet tragically, as *iVoteValues.com* discovered, "many believers

don’t even consider their values when voting,” often choosing candidates whose positions are at odds with their own beliefs, convictions, and values. A Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study found that *nearly two-thirds* of Americans say their faith has little to do with their voting decisions!{32} Many believers are missing a chance to be salt and light to the watching world.

What about when the field of candidates offers only “the lesser of two evils”? Like when only one candidate is anti-abortion yet she holds to other troubling positions? That requires thoughtful distinctions. If the reason you vote for candidate X is only to avoid the graver consequences of voting for candidate Y, you’re not formally cooperating with evil. In this case, whatever evil comes from the anti-abortion candidate you helped elect due to your convictions would be unintended. Same as if you were a bank teller and the robber demanded, “Give me all the money or I’ll blow this guy’s brains out.” You cooperate to avoid the greater evil, but your intent was not to enable the robbery.{33} It’s hard to argue against this reasoning in a fallen world where even God allows evil for greater purposes.

What about cases when the field of candidates offers only “the lesser of two evils”? For instance, you can’t decide between the more pro-abortion candidate who’s otherwise highly qualified *and* the anti-abortion person who has some real flaws.

Some believe that if you vote for the pro-abortion person for other important reasons, then you are not responsible for abortions that might result, as briefly illustrated above. Others see a necessary connection—vote for a “pro-abort” and you are guilty. Study and pray hard on such issues as God gives freedom of conscience.

Sometimes it comes down to choices we’d rather not make. Only rarely, perhaps, can we say that to abstain from voting is the

only way. Notable Christian author Mark Noll believes this is such a time for him.{34}

Others warn that this only helps elect the candidates with unbiblical values. One commentator wrote, “Voters should not spend their franchise on empty gestures…. No successful politician is as strong on every issue as we would like. Our own pastors and parents can’t pass this test in their much smaller contexts. Rather than striking a blow for purity, we risk giving up our influence altogether when we follow a man with only one or two ‘perfect’ ideas.”{35}

Hold this kind of issue with an open hand. Many change their minds as they age and lose unrealistic youthful idealism. But if God gives a clear conviction, again, stick with that value or candidate. Only seek the difference between legalism and God’s leading.

Some more left-leaning evangelicals like Ron Sider and Jim Wallis value helping the poor and dispossessed through government, while critics claim that as the Church’s exclusive role. The retort: the Church is failing in its duty and it’s a fulfillment of the Church’s duty to advocate for government intervention. Others focus on sanctity of life issues not only as a higher priority, but as part of the government’s biblically mandated task of protecting its citizenry. What is your conviction? Best be deciding if you don’t know yet.

The purple ink-stained fingers of Iraqi citizens who voted at their own risk for the first time in decades testify to the precious privilege of voting in a free society. Americans gave blood and treasure to free them. Don’t let the same sacrifice made by our ancestors on our behalf go to waste. Inform yourself. “Study to show yourself approved” not only regarding Scripture, but as a citizen of The Cities of Man and of God.

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Inconvenient Truth 2.0

Kerby Anderson revisits Al Gore's claims of environmental alarmism in the 20-year-old film An Inconvenient Truth.

Next month is the 20th anniversary of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth,* which hit theaters in May 2006. Bjorn Lomborg reminds us that "the film, with its dramatic visuals and dire warnings, transformed the issue of climate change from a niche ecological concern into a front-page crisis."

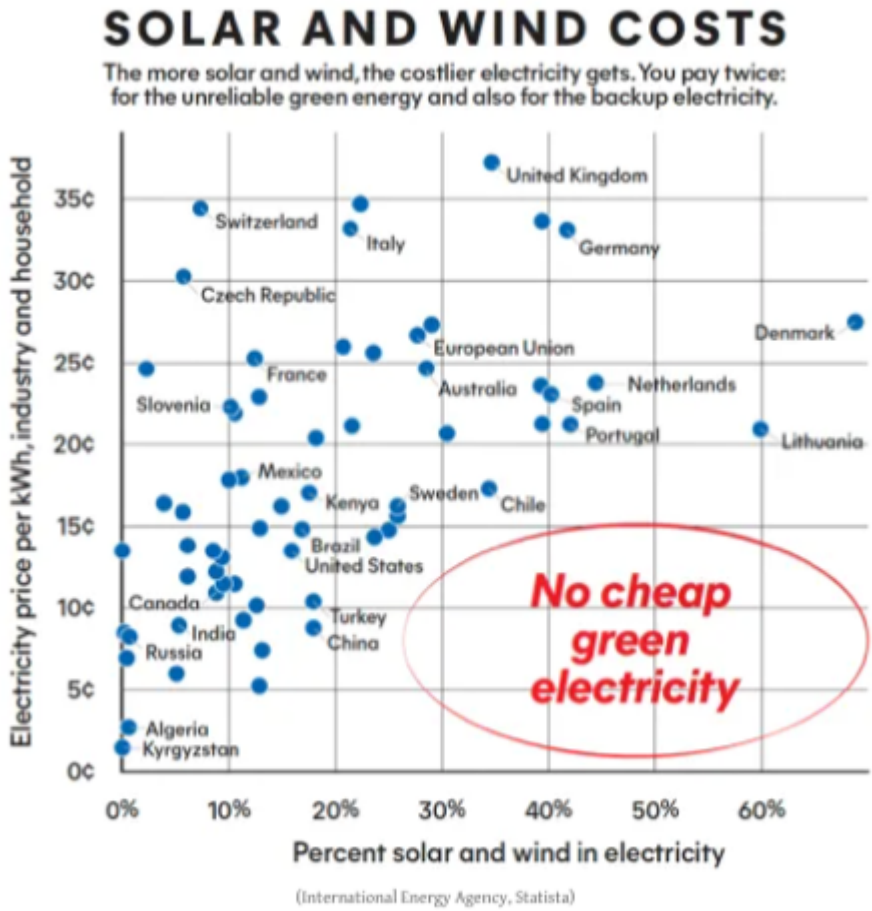
The film's predictions about escalating catastrophes did not materialize, and its policy prescriptions failed. He also

reminds us that approximately $16 trillion has been spent in pursuit of its vision, and yet it has delivered few benefits.

The film painted a bleak picture of the future with climate change driving ever-worsening disasters. For example, the film warned of polar bears vanishing, using computer-generated images of them drowning because of melting ice. But polar bear populations have doubled. The film predicted a significant increase in hurricanes. Global data from satellites have shown a slight decline.

The proposed policies cost trillions and had little impact. We were told that wind and solar were the cheap solutions to climate change. All we had to do was swiftly implement these technologies to save the planet.

Instead, nations have found that as they ramp up their share of such renewables, electricity prices soar. As his chart shows, there is no cheap green electricity.



Perhaps the worse fallout from the film has been climate hysteria that encourages activists to glue themselves to roads and to vandalize paintings. Bjorn Lomborg believes climate change is a challenge, but not a catastrophe. Twenty years later, the biggest catastrophe is the film.

This post was first published at pointofview.net/viewpoints/inconvenient-truth-2-0/ on April 17, 2026.

Why Empires Fall

Kerby Anderson looks at six insightful books and videos exploring alarming parallels between the U.S. and failed empires of history.

Collapse of Empires

If you study world history, you realize that empires come and go. In this article I want to look at what has happened to some of the major empires because we can also learn about what is happening today in our country. I will be quoting from recent books that have documented the decline and fall of empires.



First, I will merely quote from a recent YouTube video{1} that describes a pattern in history that has destroyed three global superpowers in the last 500 years: Spain, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Today, the U.S. is following a similar pattern.

In 1590, Spain was the richest empire on earth. Spain controlled half the world's gold and silver. Spain's military dominated Europe. Their currency was accepted everywhere. Yet

within 80 years, the Spanish government was bankrupt.

The Spanish coin that was supposed to be pure silver became 50% copper, then 75% copper. By 1600 Spanish coin contained barely any silver. Inflation exploded. Spain went into a debt spiral and borrowed constantly. Manufacturing declined. Agriculture stagnated.

In 1914, Britain ruled the largest empire in human history. At the time, it was said that the sun never set on British empire. Britain controlled 25% of the land surface. The pound sterling was the global reserve currency. Yet within 40 years, the empire was gone. The currency collapsed.

Britain had too many military commitments around the world. They won World War I, but at a terrible cost. By 1931, Britain had to abandon the gold standard. The pound lost 25% of its value overnight.

In 1991, the Soviet Union still seemed dominant. It was another superpower. It had nuclear weapons, global influence, and satellites spanning the globe. Yet the Soviet Union ceased to exist 900 days later due to economic implosion.

The idea that nations follow a pattern as they collapse isn't new. Decades ago, I did a week of radio programs on "The Decline of a Nation." A decade later, I did another week on "When Nations Die" because of a book that was published with that title.

What is new is how this video explains the seven stages of collapse and applies them to previous empires. But the key point of the video is the reality that America has already completed five of the seven stages. We aren't approaching the pattern but are within it.

As I often suggest, we can resolve some of these issues, but the first step is to admit that we are following this pattern of collapse. Below we will be looking at some of the reasons

other empires fell and connect it to what is happening in our world today.

End of Everything

Now we will look at the book by Victor Davis Hanson, *The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation.*{2}

In his book he provides four historical examples: the city-state of Thebes, ancient Carthage, Byzantine Constantinople, and the Aztec Empire. The leaders believed their illustrious pasts would be enough to prevent their destruction. Alexander the Great, Roman Scipio, Muslim Mehmet, and the Spanish conquistador Cortés proved them wrong.

He explains that the leveling of Thebes by Alexander the Great, the erasure of Carthage by Scipio, the conquest and transformation of Constantinople by Sultan Mehmet, and the obliteration of the Aztecs all marked the end of cultures and civilizations.

Alexander, for example, brought an end to classical Greece. The fall of Constantinople marked the end of the Mediterranean world as the nexus of European commerce. And the largest Christian cathedral in the West became the greatest mosque in the Islamic world.

The book is a warning to us today, but I also realize that few people will read his book. That is why I would encourage you to watch his five-minute video summary produced by Hillsdale College.{3}

He says his book "is about the existential destruction of the losing side in a war. This is very rare in history. It doesn't happen very often. But when it does, it should enlighten us how it does why it does, and can it happen again?"

He explains that he wrote his book "not just as a historical journey to document the rare cases of a targeted nation being

completely destroyed, but as a warning that human nature doesn't change." We naively assumed that globalization would create a common humanity and bring an end to global conflict. Instead, he "noticed that there were more and more existential threats coming from autocratic regimes."

He reminds us that the same mentalities and delusions that doomed the Thebans, Carthaginians, the Byzantines, and the Aztecs are still with us today. Even as they were about to be slaughtered, some may still have been thinking, "It cannot happen here."

He wants us to be aware that what happened in the past could happen in the future. We need to learn from the past and protect ourselves in the future. This is a sobering call for contemporary readers to heed the lessons of obliteration, lest we blunder into catastrophe once again. He reminds us that the world needs a strong America so that we can prevent "the end of everything."

Peak Human

Let's now turn to examine the book *Peak Human,*{4} written by historian Johan Norberg.

His book explains what we can learn from the rise and fall of "golden ages." He describes seven of humanity's greatest civilizations from ancient Athens and the Roman Republic to Renaissance Italy, the Dutch Republic, and today's Anglosphere.

Each had their golden age and contributed to our world today. Ancient Greece gave us democracy and the rule of law. From the Muslim world came algebra and modern medicine. The Dutch Republic gave us economic ideas and some of the greatest artistic movements.

He explained that he picked these civilizations because each of them exemplifies what can be described as a golden age.

This was a period of innovations that revolutionized many fields and sectors in a short period of time. The characteristics are cultural creativity, scientific discoveries, technological achievements, and economic growth.

He laments that human history is a long list of deprivations and horrors. But it is also the source of the knowledge, institutions, and technologies that have set most of humanity free from such horrors. It requires raw material, but the citizens needed to be free to experiment and innovate, without being subject to feudal lords, centralized governments, or raving armies.

In a recent interview with John Stossel{5}, he talked about how Rome inspired our form of government, a republic with a system of checks and balances. “There is a reason why we have a Senate, and they meet in the Capitol,” Norberg explained. “We borrow these ideas from the Romans.”

Of course, these empires fell. “The emperors wanted to become popular by handing out free stuff to people. Originally, this started small. You just handed the very poor means of subsistence. But it was popular, so the group that lived on the public’s expense grew larger all the time.”

Eventually the ever-expanding system of entitlements became too much. Norberg observed, “Romans could conquer the world, but they couldn’t do entitlement reform.” To pay for this, the Roman emperors devalued their currency by putting less gold and silver in each coin. He concluded that, “Inflation was much worse than barbarian invaders.”

This sounds like our world today. Modern governments, including our own, make more financial promises than they can keep. To pay for it, they print more money. We have been living in a golden age, but the question before us today is whether it will continue.

Loss of Moral Values

In this section we will look at an essay by Allen Mashburn who reminds us that "Societies That Surrender Moral Foundation Historically Self-Destruct."{6}

This is not a new idea. Decades ago, I did a week of radio programs on "The Decline of a Nation." A decade later, I did another week on "When Nations Die" because of a book that was published with that title. And more recently I even did a week of programs based on a book that compared America to Rome.

The reason for Mashburn's article were several events that took place during Pride Month. He "never envisioned a day where transvestites would lecture us on human biology, or sterilizers would pose as health professionals advocating for human rights. It seems that our nation has descended into a state of utter madness, where men can now claim pregnancy and the number of genders rivals the alphabet."

Those issues are just a few of the many legitimate concerns which point to the well-documented decline and fall of other civilizations. Greece tolerated and even celebrated immoral behavior. And "the decline of the Roman Empire can be attributed to the abandonment of strong familial bonds and moral values in favor of weakness and laxity." He observes that the similarity between Rome and America is alarming.

Of course, the pattern we recognize in Greece and Rome can be seen in other civilizations in the past. That would include the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and even the nation of Israel. In Isaiah 5:20 we read that God pronounced judgment on Israel. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Of course, there is another side of this equation. Mashburn reminds us that "whenever a nation upholds high moral

standards, it reaches the pinnacle of success." Yes, it is true that nations decline when they lose a moral foundation for society. But they also flourish when it upholds morality and integrity while also supporting and encouraging strong families.

He also quotes from the book, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, by Randy Alcorn. He warns that unless our country experiences spiritual repentance and undergoes a profound reversal of moral values, we risk inviting the same judgment that befell Sodom and Gomorrah.

That is why Christians should devote themselves to daily prayers for our nation's spiritual and moral well-being. The only way to reverse this downward moral spiral is for a spiritual revival and spiritual repentance in this country.

America's Expiration Date

Finally, we will look at a book by Cal Thomas, *America's Expiration Date*.{7}

He asks, what is America's future? The book came out years ago but has a new preface and is more relevant today. He was on my radio program to talk about the fall of empires and the future of the United States.

He begins with an observation by Sir John Glubb, who wrote *The Fate of Empires and the Search for Survival*. He noticed an interesting historical fact. The average age of a nation or empire's greatness is only 250 years. Most nations lose their way in a relatively short amount of time.

Using that ruler, Cal Thomas gives us a history lesson of the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Arab Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, and the Russian Empire. He concludes with the United States.

Each empire fell for different reasons, but they are lessons to us today. Sometimes they fell because they became too prosperous and thus too apathetic. Sometimes they fell because the empire was over extended. Most had a period of decadence and decline. The Spanish empire was so riven with conflict, they were never invaded because other countries saw nothing worth conquering.

Persia's decline was due to class struggle. The common people, who were not part of the upper class, began organizing riots and revolts. Kings became greedy and started stealing from the nation's wealth rather than sharing the wealth with the people. The social structure collapsed.

As we have discussed above, Rome's fall was gradual. The familiar saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Neither was it destroyed in a day. As the Roman empire grew, more money needed to be provided to the military. The empire's infrastructure suffered. And the common people suffered because the ruling class cared more about what was on the next horizon than what was at home.

He does believe that there is still time to resurrect the republic, but the answer can't be found in politicians. Our future doesn't depend on the White House, but instead is dependent on what we do in our house.

Cal Thomas ends his book with valuable suggestions. First, set standards of decency and morality for your yourself and your family. Reevaluate the education of your children. Don't send them to schools or universities that have largely become propaganda centers for secular progressives. Gather with other believers to worship, celebrate, and to encourage one another. Daily obey the call to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19), often witnessing with words and actions.

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The Death of Charlie Kirk and the Threat to Freedom of Speech, Universities, and National Peace

I remember where I was when I heard that Charlie Kirk had been shot. I was on my way to a chiropractic appointment. I normally listen to podcasts when I am driving, but that day I decided to see what the talk shows were discussing on the AM channels. I turned on the radio to hear Sean Hannity saying that Charlie Kirk had been shot and was at the hospital in serious condition. When I arrived at the chiropractor's office, I was surprised when my chiropractor asked me if I heard about the shooting. I was surprised that he heard about it. I was driving home when I heard that Charlie had died.

I did not know Charlie Kirk personally. I never met him. However, the news of what happened disturbed me deeply for several reasons. My first ministry job was as an intern for the Baptist Student Ministries. I remember manning tables and talking to whoever would stop by. The local atheist club invited me to go to their meeting to give them an apologetics talk. I was in their club with three friends, and about fifteen atheist students, discussing apologetic arguments. I never thought that I was in danger. If I was not in any danger on that day, why was Charlie Kirk in danger holding his public event on a university campus freely exchanging ideas with the students?

As I stated, I did not know Charlie Kirk, but I did know about his ministry. I saw some videos of him debating students at his "Prove Me Wrong" events. I saw that Charlie Kirk could handle himself well in those discussions, and that he was respectful to the other person. He allowed the other people time to make their points and lay out their arguments, and he challenged and refuted their argument. Charlie Kirk boldly proclaimed the Gospel, argued religious and political issues such as the resurrection and abortion, and refuted opposing arguments in a public forum. This is what got Charlie killed.

Charlie Kirk's assassination should disturb you for three reasons (other than the fact that he was a person who should not have been murdered). First, his death shows that there is a threat to the First Amendment. Second, his death shows that universities may not be safe spaces for the free exchange of ideas. Third, the left and the right might be taking us towards a second civil war. None of these things are certainties, but the threat is strong enough that we should be aware of it.

The part of the first amendment that is threatened by Charlie Kirk's assassination is the free speech clause, "Congress shall make no law…abridging the freedom of speech." One of the reasons that people came to the United States early in our

country’s history is because we allowed people to express their political and religious opinions. Liberals and conservatives should care about this. If society restricts public discussion or declares that certain topics are off limits, the common public is excluded from discussions concerning public policy and many other topics. One of the foundational principles that our country was founded on was free speech. The founding fathers did not want the government restricting public speech because they knew the impact from laws restricting speech critical of political leaders and royalty in England and other European nations. The people were oppressed because they had no say on certain issues that impacted their lives. Free speech at least allows for the ideas and policies of the government to be challenged publicly.

The University of Bologna is the first university in the historical record. The purpose of the university was to train future civil and religious leaders. Later training in certain subjects was required for certain professions. For scholars to discuss these issues they had to have the freedom to discuss controversial issues, and they had to be safe from harm while discussing issues. The university became a place where controversial ideas could be discussed openly. This is the activity that Charlie Kirk was engaging in when he was shot and killed. This means that Charlie Kirk’s murder was intentionally, or unintentionally, an attack on the university as a place where controversial issues can be debated. This shooting puts the university system in jeopardy. Are scholars and students allowed to debate issues or not? If the answer is no, then freedom of thought and speech is undermined. If the answer is no, certain ideas are not allowed to be discussed, and speech can be policed.

Since I started paying attention to politics, the nature of political debates has become more contentious. There will be a certain amount of contention and conflict in politics because

that is the nature of politics. Political discussions have become more contentious since the 2016 elections. This contention has led to an increase in political violence over the issues of race, marriage, LGBTQ issues, and abortion. There have been riots in Portland, Washington D.C., and many other cities that lead to buildings being burnt. No matter your view of the January 6th riot over the ratification of the 2020 election, the event is a sign that tolerance of opposing views is decreasing. One of the reasons people were coming to the United States was because they were not allowed to speak out against their leaders in the country that they were leaving. Unless we can find a way to discuss our differences without killing, physically attacking, rioting, or damaging public and private poverty, it becomes more and more probable that this will lead to a civil war.

Political violence has increased over the last 25 years. Liberals and conservatives are becoming more likely to use violence against fellow countrymen because they will not tolerate disagreement over certain issues. As Christians, how should we respond? We should not stop speaking the truth and challenging evil. Paul wrote, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). By speaking out against the “unfruitful works of darkness” we are being faithful to God. Christianity has a long history of speaking out against immoral and evil things. We cannot stop because the darkness threatens us with violence.

If we do not speak out against what is evil and stand for what is good, we will be held accountable for God. The law of Leviticus states, “If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity” (Leviticus 5:1). God does not want his people to remain silent and allow what is evil to go unchallenged. We must respond to evil and injustice by speaking out against it.

Christians are not called to respond to violence with violence. I am not claiming that Christians should not defend themselves against assault or protect others. The issue here is that Christianity will not spread by using violence. Jesus said, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11). Satan is not defeated by violence. If Christians become violent Satan wins. Instead, we should expect to be persecuted, slandered, and attacked when we speak out against evil and proclaim the Gospel. Christian brothers and sisters, the kingdom of God does not advance the way earthly nations advance. The kingdom of God spreads by the proclamation of the gospel, helping those that are in need, and remaining faithful during times of danger and persecution. At this uncertain time, we must remain faithful to God and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus.

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On Martyrdom



Over the past decade, we have seen an increase of high-profile political violence. In June of 2017 Steve Scalis and other Republicans were shot at in a baseball park. In 2018 pipe bombs were mailed to a number of Democrat politicians, in 2020 a militia group planned to kidnap Gretchen Whitmer, July of 2020 saw an attempt on Esther Salas, in 2025 Josh Shapiro's home was set on fire, June 2025 Melissa Hortman was shot and killed. President Trump was subjected to no less than five assassination attempts (not including threats or those not confirmed to be directly targeting him): June of 2016, October of 2017, October of 2018, September of 2020, and the two attempts in July and October 2024.

Recently, Charlie Kirk was killed by a shot to the neck at an event at Utah Valley University. With Charlie Kirk's death, we have seen five politically motivated attacks in just two years.

I could go on to say that we are too polarized as a country, but that is old news. I could use this as an illustration of how the political left has become a dangerous element in the United States because they doubled down, encouraging their constituents to become violent extremists where the Republicans are quick to disown terrorists from their side of

the aisle. That would be selfish of me, and would add nothing useful to the discussion. Instead, I will talk about how Charlie Kirk is first and foremost a Christian martyr.

While Turning Point's platform has always been about conservatism and free speech, Charlie frequently proclaimed his faith in Christ, and we can see from his conduct that Christ came before politics. For example, during an event at UT, he was approached by a girl who said her parents were divorced. Her mom was conservative, and her dad was liberal. Her mom wanted her to talk with her dad about politics more. The girl was troubled, and asked Kirk how she should navigate the situation. Kirk had every opportunity to score political points or give an easy answer of how to talk to loved ones about politics, or even get another clip for the highlight reels. Kirk chose to talk about the Bible instead.

He noted that her shirt quoted Isaiah 6:8: "Whom shall I send … send me." He talked about the Hebrew word for "to call." "You are going through a trial right now," he said. "It will not be easy for you, and you will grow up fast." He then talked about how we have a biblical obligation to honor our father and mother. "If you are incapable in this case of honoring your earthly father, you will never honor your heavenly Father." To honor them is to spend time with them, love them, and to give them the respect they are due. Instead of encouraging her to go along with her mother's desire over that of her father, he told her that since she has yet to form her own political beliefs, he encouraged her to say she'd rather talk about the Bible with them, as this will establish common ground in their relationship.

It speaks to Kirk's character, that when the opportunity presented itself, he chose to give the hard answer that brought glory to God. He frequently proclaimed God's word and ministered to those in the church. You may not agree with everything he said, you may believe he erred at times, but you can see that Kirk's heart was set on Christ.

With this in mind I say Charlie Kirk is a Christian martyr in the truest sense of the word. We routinely see that he sought to keep his heart set on Christ, and his arguments flowed from there out of a place of love. Like Telemachus, who leapt into the Colosseum to preach against the cruelty of the games, and Polycarp who pointed back at the Romans and jeered, “Yes, down with the atheists!,” Kirk was killed because he dared to stand up for the Gospel.

> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

What we need to keep in mind is the issue of spiritual warfare. Satan wishes to drag people, who are the image bearers of God, into depravity not only because it separates them from Him, but because it is an insult to God. Wherever you find an abundance of evil, you can be sure demons are there encouraging it.

Any good Christian should believe that Satan and demons are real, and that they are active in trying to keep people away from Christ. This changes our perspective of people. It is harder to hate a victim than a perpetrator, and we are called to fight against the powers of the world rather than flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). This is why I pray the young man who took Charlie Kirk’s life does not receive the death penalty, as he is the victim of a demonic worldview that caused him to stew in his hatred to the point of murder. Kirk was martyred because he confronted the dark powers behind identity politics, marxism, and LGBT+.

So, with his example fresh on our minds, it is good to see that the church is working harder because of Kirk. People are going to church for the first time in years, being baptized, and talking about Jesus more than they ever have because one

man stood firm for the Kingdom of God. Now it is our turn.

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Coddling of the American Mind

Drawing on the book The Coddling of the American Mind*, Kerby Anderson examines the insanity on college campuses where students cannot handle ideas and people they disagree with.*



In this article we will talk about what is happening on college campuses, and even focus on why it is happening. Much of the material is taken from the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind.*[{1}]

Greg Lukianoff was trying to solve a puzzle and sat down with Jonathan Haidt. Greg was a first amendment lawyer working with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). He was trying to figure out why students (who used to support free speech on campus) were now working to prevent speakers from coming on campus and triggered by words or phrases used by professors.

Greg also noticed something else. He has suffered from bouts of depression and noticed some striking similarities with some of the comments by students. He found in his treatment that sometimes he and others would engage in "catastrophizing" and assuming the worst outcome. He was seeing these distorted and irrational thought patterns in students.

After a lengthy discussion they decided to write an article about it for *The Atlantic* with the title, "Arguing Towards Misery: How Campuses Teach Cognitive Distortions." The editor suggested the more provocative title, "The Coddling of the

American Mind." The piece from *The Atlantic* was one of the most viewed articles of all time and was then expanded to this book.

That book used the same title: *The Coddling of the American Mind*. Jonathan was on *Point of View* last year to talk about the book. The authors believe that these significant psychological changes that have taken place in the minds of students explain much of the campus insanity we see on campus today.

They point out that two terms rose from obscurity into common campus parlance. Microaggressions are small actions or word choices that are now thought as a kind of violence. Trigger warnings are an alert the professors now must use if they may be discussing a topic that might generate a strong emotional response.

Before we talk about some of the insight in the book, it is worth mentioning that though there is a psychological component to all of this insanity, there is also an ideological component. When the original article appeared, Heather MacDonald asked if "risk-adverse child-rearing is merely the source of the problem. For example, why aren't heterosexual white males demanding safe spaces?"{2} They all had the same sort of parents who probably coddled many of them.

It would probably be best to say that the mixture of psychological deficits also with the liberal, progressive ideological ideas promoted on campus have given us the insanity we see today. We have had liberal teaching on campuses for a century, but the problem has become worse in the last decade because of the psychological issues described in the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*.

Three Untruths (Part 1)

The book can easily be summarized in three untruths that make up the first three chapters of the book. The first is the "Untruth of Fragility: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Weaker." Nietzsche's original aphorism was, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." The younger generation has turned this idea on its head.

It is true that some things are fragile (like china teacups), while other things are resilient (and can withstand shocks). But they also note that some things are *antifragile*. In other words, they actually require stressors and challenges to grow. Our muscles are like that. Our immune system is like that. And university education is supposed to be like that. Students are supposed to be challenged by new ideas, not locked away in "safe spaces."

Unfortunately, most young people have been protected by a culture that promotes what they refer to as "safetyism." It has become a cult of safety that is obsessed with eliminating threats (whether real or imagined) to the point where fragility becomes expected and routine. And while this is true for the millennial generation (also called Generation Y), it is even truer for the iGen generation (also called Generation Z) who are even more obsessed with safety.

Part of the problem in these untruths is what they call "concept creep." Safety used to mean to be safe from physical threats. But that has expanded to the idea that safety must also include emotional comfort. In order to provide that comfort, professors and students a few years ago introduced the idea of creating "safe spaces" for students. And in order to keep those students emotionally safe in the classroom, professors must issue "trigger warnings" so these students don't experience trauma during a classroom lecture or discussion.

The second untruth is the “Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always Trust Your Feelings.” You can get yourself in some difficult circumstances quickly if you always trust your emotions. It is easy in this world to get frustrated, discouraged, and even depressed. Psychologists have found that certain patients can get themselves caught in a feedback loop in which irrational negative beliefs cause powerful negative feelings. We are seeing that on college campuses today.

Psychologists describe “the cognitive triad” of depression. These are: “I’m no good” and “My world is bleak” and “My future is hopeless.” Psychologists have effective ways of helping someone break the disempowering feedback cycle between negative beliefs and negative emotions. But very few adults (parents, professors, administrators) are working to correct mistaken ideas.

Three Untruths (Part 2)

In a college classroom, students are apt to make some sweeping generalization and engage in simplistic labeling of the lecture or reading material. In that case, we would hope that a professor would move the discussion by asking questions or even challenging the assertion.

Instead, many professors and colleges go along with the student comments. In fact, many even argue that any perceived slight adds up to what today are called “microaggressions.” In many cases, slights may be unintentional and actually wholly formed from the listener’s interpretation.

Here is how it develops. First, you prevent certain topics from being discussed in class. Next, you prevent certain speakers from coming to campus because they might present a perspective that aggrieved students believe should not be discussed. In the book is a chart illustrating how many speakers have been disinvited from universities. Five years

ago, the line jumps up significantly.

The third untruth follows from that assumption. It is the "Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life is a Battle Between Good People and Evil People." The authors argue that "the human mind is prepared for tribalism." They even provide psychological research demonstrating that. But that doesn't mean we have to live that way. In fact, conditions in society can turn tribalism up, down, or off. Certain conflicts can turn tribalism up and make them more attentive to signs about which team a person may be on. Peace and prosperity usually turn tribalism down.

Unfortunately, in the university community, distinctions between groups are not downplayed but emphasized. Distinctions defined by race, gender, and sexual preference are given prominence. Mix that with the identity politics we see in society, and you generate the conflict we see almost every day in America.

The authors make an important distinction between two kinds of identity politics. Martin Luther King, Jr. epitomized what could be called "common-humanity identity politics." He addressed the evil of racism by appealing to the shared morals of Americans using the unifying language of religion.

That is different from what we find on college campuses today that could be called "common-enemy identity politics." It attempts to identify a common enemy as a way to enlarge and motivate your tribe. Their slogan sounds like this: Our battle for identity and survival is a battle between good people and bad people. We're the good guys and need to defeat the bad guys.

An Example: Evergreen State College

One good example of how these untruths play out can be found at what happened on a college campus in Olympia, Washington.

The entire story is described in chapter five but also is featured prominently in the opening chapter of the book *No Safe Spaces* and in the movie with the same title.

Just a few years ago, Evergreen State College was probably best known as the alma mater for rapper Macklemore and Matt Groening, the creator of *The Simpsons*. That all changed with an email biology professor Bret Weinstein sent.

In the past, the school had a tradition known as the "National Day of Absence." Usually, minority faculty and students leave the campus for a day to make a statement. But in 2017, the college wanted to change things and wanted white students and faculty to stay away from campus.

Professor Weinstein argued in an email that there is a difference between letting people be absent and telling people "to go away." And he added that he would show up for work. When he did, he was confronted by a mob of students. When the administration tried to appease the demonstrators, things got worse.

Weinstein has described himself as a political progressive and left-leaning libertarian. But his liberal commitments did not protect him from the student mob. The campus police warned him about a potential danger. The next morning, as he rode his bike into town, he saw protesters poised along his route tapping into their phones. He rode to the campus police department and was abruptly told: "You're not safe on campus, and you're not safe anywhere in town on your bicycle." Weinstein and his wife eventually resigned and finally received a financial settlement from the university.

The Evergreen students and faculty displayed each of the three great untruths. The Untruth of Fragility (What doesn't kill you makes you weaker) came from a faculty member who supported the protesters and addressed some of her faculty colleagues in

an angry monologue. She warned, “I am too tired. This [blank] is literally going to kill me.” A student at a large town hall meeting verbalized her anxiety and illustrated the Untruth of Emotional Reasoning (Always trust your feelings). She expressed, “I want to cry. I can’t tell you how fast my heart is beating. I am shaking in my boots.”

And the whole episode illustrates the Untruth of Us Versus Them (Life is a battle between good people and evil people). The students and faculty engaged in common-enemy identity politics by labeling a politically progressive college and liberal professors as examples of white supremacy. One student (who refused to join the protest) later testified to the college trustees, “If you offer any kind of alternative viewpoint, you’re the enemy.”

What Can We Do?

The book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, identifies many disturbing trends on college campuses that are beginning to spill over into society. What can we do to stem the tide?

Obviously, the long-term solution to the insanity on campus and in society is to pray for revival in the church and spiritual awakening in America. But there are some practical things that must be done immediately.

First, college administrators must get control of their campus. The riots at some of these universities resulted in violence and property destruction. Often the campus police and even the local police failed to take action. Sadly, the university administration rarely took action afterwards.

Some form of deterrence would have prevented future actions on the University of California, Berkeley campus. Instead, the inaction established a precedent that likely allowed the conflict at Middlebury College. Students not only shut down the lecture, but they assaulted one of the campus professors.

Once again, no significant action was taken against the students and outside agitators. The problem will get worse if there is no deterrence.

Second, professors must get control of their classrooms. Students cannot be allowed to determine what subjects cannot be taught and what topics cannot be discussed. The authors of this book are concerned about the tendency to encourage students to develop extra-thin skins just before they enter into the real world. Employers aren't going to care too much about their feelings. Students don't have the right not to be offended.

Third, we need to educate this generation about free speech. One poll done by the Brookings Institute discovered that nearly half (44%) of all college students believe that hate speech is NOT protected by the First Amendment. And since many students label just about anything they don't like as hate speech, you can see why we have this behavior on college campuses. More than half (51%) of college students think they have a right to shout down a speaker with whom they disagree. A smaller percentage (19%) of college students think it is acceptable to use violence to prevent a speaker from speaking on campus.

Finally, the adults need to make their voice heard. We pay for public universities through our tax dollars. Parents send their kids off to some of these schools. We should not tolerate the insanity taking place on many college campuses today.

The authors have identified certain concerns that colleges and universities need to address. They remind us how hostile the academic world has become, not only to traditional Christian values, but also to mere common sense. We need to pray for what is taking place in the college environment.

Notes

1. Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, et al., *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure.*New York City: Penguin Press, 2018.
2. www.thecollegefix.com/heres-the-9-best-takeaways-from-heather-mac-donalds-new-diversity-delusion-book/

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Stop Worrying About the 2024 Election!

It is Election Season, the great American pastime second only in importance to the Super Bowl, where we all gather as one people to decide how the government will exploit us this time! Get ready to break up friendships, argue with family members, and dehumanize anyone who does not vote for your candidate! All jokes aside, the presidential election is a stressful event, especially in 2024, since our political climate is extremely polarized. How are we as Christians and Americans to approach our own electoral process?

While not all of the founding fathers were Christians, "Jefferson and other secular minded Americans subscribed to certain propositions about law and authority that had the roots in the Protestant reformation,"{1} so they all held Christian values. The fundamental Christian teaching our government is founded upon is that humans are made in the image of God. The Declaration of Independence asserts, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights. . ."

The limitation of powers was also influenced by Christian teachings on human nature, that we are a fallen creation. Humans, while made in the image of God, are inherently corrupted by sin. All systems of government can and will be used for the ruler's benefit at the expense of their subjects. The U.S. government was set up to keep too much power from falling into anybody's hands, including the masses.

As citizens, Christians have been given a number of responsibilities. We are commanded to obey and render service to our government. "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." (Matthew 22:21) Because it is a God-ordained institution, we are to submit to civil authority (1 Peter 2:13-17).{2} One service you may render as an American citizen is participating in the law-making process and executive processes by voting.

The campaigners seek to present themselves as God's gift to the United States, while portraying their opponents and any who vote for them as the devil himself. It is your responsibility to discern truth from lies. We have no right to treat those who vote differently than us as less than human. All are made in the image of God, so all deserve to be respected as such. Do not throw around labels meant to dehumanize the other side like "anti-life" or "Nazi," as these achieve nothing but further enmity between our countrymen. Instead, do everything you can to debate with respect by attacking their position rather than the person.

Finally, in Luke 12 Jesus tells us that God can and will provide for our needs, so we should not worry about things outside of our control. Too often, I have seen people worrying over how other people in their city vote, or respond with anger when their electoral vote overturned the popular vote. This is unfortunate.

"But this is injustice!" some might say. On the contrary, letting the popular vote decide our elections is unjust,

because it gives all of the power to big cities. People living in rural areas will have no say in elections, because the city always out-votes them. We have no control over how other people vote. Our electors are meant to take power away from the popular vote.{3} Why should you be mad? Once you have voted, it's out of your hands. God is in control of the rest.

Notes

1. Anderson, Kerby. *Christians and Government: A Biblical Point of View* (Cambridge Ohio: Christian Publishing House, 2016), 20.
2. Ibid., 7.
3. National Archives and Records Administration. (n.d.). Electoral College History. National Archives and Records Administration. www.archives.gov/electoral-college/history

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The Importance of Voting

Kerby Anderson provides reasons why it's so important for people of faith to exercise our stewardship of voting in what is probably the most consequential election in our lifetime.

This election season is like no other in recent memory. This was the first time in more than a century that two presidential candidates, who have served in that office, were running against each other. Now we have a previous president and vice-president running. This is similar to 1984 when President Reagan ran against the previous Vice-President in Jimmy Carter's administration (Walter Mondale).

Voters can compare four years of a Trump administration with three-and-half years of a Biden/ Harris administration. Of

course, they can also compare a Republican-controlled Senate with a Democratic-controlled Senate. And they can do the same for the House of Representatives.

You can also compare the National Democratic Platform with the National Republican Platform. Here are links to both:
Democratic
Republican

The differences are stark and illustrate why so many people say this is the most consequential election in our lifetimes. Who we elect to office will determine our laws and our taxes. Judges that are appointed and confirmed will affect life, liberty, and property.

As Christians we need to consider what role we will play in the next election. We have a civic responsibility because we are both citizens of heaven and citizens of earth. To assess our involvement, let's look at a few issues.

Close Elections

We have had many close elections for federal office. For example, we have had close presidential elections in 1960, 1976, 2000, 2004, 2016, and 2020. The last two presidential elections illustrate this when we examine the vote totals in the six swing states (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin).

In 2016, Donald Trump won three of those swing states (Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) by a mere 77,744 votes. In 2020, Joe Biden won three swing states (Arizona, Georgia, and Michigan) by 42,844 votes.

While we can have a debate about whether Joe Biden really won those states fairly, my point is to illustrate how close even the presidential elections have been. Change 42,844 votes in three states and we would have had a 269-269 electoral college tie.

We can also point to very close elections for federal, state, and local offices. The key point is we have close elections, and that's why all Christians should be registered to vote and then go out and cast their ballot.

Importance of the Christian Vote

Various polls suggest that religious voters could sway the race between Vice President Harris and former President Donald Trump. One CBN report documented that "President Biden is trailing Donald Trump among voters who regularly attend religious services, a phenomenon extending beyond the traditional support base of evangelical Christians." Senator Josh Hawley put it this way: "There's no majority for the Republican party without voters of faith. And they're going to decide this election. So we need to them to turn out."

Former member of Congress and former presidential candidate, Tulsi Gabbard explains that the Democratic Party "is trying to erase God from every facet of our public life." She also added that "Now more than ever, people of faith, people of spirituality, need to stand up, to defend this fundamental, God-given right and stop those who are trying to take it away from us."

Stewardship of the Vote

Have Christians been a good steward of the vote? Over the years, I have provided statistics about how born-again Christians have done in previous elections. The percentages are relatively consistent. Approximately 85 percent of Christians of voting age are registered to vote. That means about 15 percent are not even registered to vote. Of those Christians registered to vote, about 65 percent actually vote.

In the New Testament, Jesus says that believers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We have a stewardship responsibility when it comes to using our

gifts, talents, and opportunities. Jesus also described the importance of this stewardship in His parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). He was critical of the one servant who buried his talent (Matthew 25:26). We as voters should not "bury our talent" but use the opportunity God has given us to vote responsibly.

Educating Voters

Having accurate information is vital and can change an election. Unfortunately, media bias often prevents voters from knowing important information. A month after the 2020 election, the Media Research Center asked The Polling Company to survey 1,750 Biden voters in seven swing states (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). They tested the voters' knowledge of eight news stories that liberal news media failed to report properly.

They concluded that this lack of information proved crucial. They discovered that one in every six Biden voters surveyed (17%) said they would have abandoned the Democratic candidate if they had known the facts in one or more of these news stories.

The eight news stories surveyed included three stories that reflected poorly on Joe Biden or Kamala Harris and five stories about Trump administration successes. For example, they found that more than a third (35.4%) didn't know of the Biden sex assault allegations. Nearly half (45.1%) did not know about the scandals involving Hunter Biden. And a quarter (25.3%) of them did not know that Senator Kamala Harris had the most left-wing record of any Senator in 2019.

When they surveyed the Trump successes, they found that anywhere from four in ten to five in ten did not know about economic growth, the creation of 11 million jobs, the Middle East peace deals, energy independence, and Operation Warp Speed.

A total of 17 percent said they would have changed their vote if they had been aware of these issues. This would have moved every one of the swing states into Trump's column and given him 311 electoral votes. This study is illustrative of the impact the mainstream media had on the 2020 election.

Churches and Pastors

Another place where voters can be educated is in church. But pastors often want to know how IRS regulations affect what churches might want to do to educate the congregation. Fortunately, Kelly Shackelford and First Liberty Institute have put together a legal summary of what pastors can and cannot do during an election.

Because the church is a 501(c) (3) organization, there are two actions pastors cannot take during an election. First, a pastor or a church may not use the organization to endorse one candidate over another. Second, a pastor or a church may not give its money to one candidate over another.

On the other side, pastors are free to do many things during an election. First, pastors can speak about political issues. "It is a misconception that pastors cannot address political issues—even 'hot button' issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and gun control—from the pulpit."

Second, pastors can educate their congregation about politics. "Pastors are fully protected when it comes to issues like educating members of their church about the political process, handing out non-partisan voter guides and flyers so members can read about each candidate's platform, and even providing the opportunity for members to register to vote."

Third, pastors can invite political candidates to speak at their church. "Contrary to popular belief, pastors and churches can invite political candidates to address their congregation from the pulpit, as long as all the candidates in

a race are included in the invitation."

This is a crucial election. It is time for Christians to get involved.

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Nuclear War

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of nuclear war from Annie Jacobsen's book Nuclear War: A Scenario *with a biblical response.*

Hell on Earth

Annie Jacobsen begins her book with a scenario:{1} a one-megaton thermonuclear bomb strikes the Pentagon and vaporizes the building and the 27,000 employees within it. A mile away the marble columns of the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials burst apart and disintegrate. Two and a half miles west at National Park, the clothes of a majority of the 35,000 people watching the ballgame catch on fire.



Her book, *Nuclear War: A Scenario*, takes you through, in a minute-by-minute description, what would happen if a "bolt out of the blue" nuclear attack took place on U.S. soil. This 370-page book isn't for the faint-hearted, but it is an in-depth investigation in how we got to this place in world history and what would happen if the unthinkable became reality. And the book provides a sequel to the 2023 biographical film, *Oppenheimer*.

Why are we discussing this difficult topic of nuclear war now? First, there is a need to educate a new generation. Although

Americans talked about the danger of nuclear war during the Cold War years, much less has been said in recent years. Second, the threat of nuclear war is even greater today because of countries like North Korea that have nuclear weapons and other countries like Iran that are attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Third, this discussion is relevant because so many documents about nuclear war have been declassified. We know so much more about nuclear war than we knew just a few years ago.

It is impossible for our minds to comprehend what happens in a nuclear blast. The air heats to one hundred and eighty million degrees Fahrenheit. This is nearly five times hotter than the temperature in the center of the sun. The blast levels any structure within miles, but also creates winds travelling at several hundred miles per hour.

The nuclear fireball then rises like a hot-air balloon forming the iconic mushroom cloud with cap and stem. Then the inferno begins. Gas lines explode and look like giant blowtorches. Washington, D.C. has now become a mega-inferno. Asphalt streets turn to liquid from the intense heat. More than a million people are dead or dying within two minutes after the detonation.

Outside of the blast area, the electromagnetic pulse obliterates all radio, television, and the Internet. Cars with electric ignition systems cannot start. Water stations cannot pump water. And deadly radiation spreads to those who survived the initial blast.

Nuclear war may be unthinkable, but that is why we are thinking and talking about it.

Happens Too Fast

Nuclear war could develop unthinkably fast and devastate our world.

An intercontinental ballistic missile is a long-range missile that delivers nuclear weapons to political and military targets on the other side of the world. These ICBMs exist to do one thing: kill millions of people in another country.

Back when the ICBM was invented, Herb York, the Pentagon's chief scientist, wanted to calculate how many minutes it would take for it to reach the Soviet Union.{2} A group of defense scientists estimated that it would take 26 minutes and 40 seconds. From launch to annihilation takes just 1,600 seconds. Nuclear war happens too fast.

Today that estimate varies because we have nine countries that possess nuclear weapons: Russia, France, China, Pakistan, India, Israel, North Korea, the UK, and the US. Given North Korea's geographical location, the launch-to-target time frame from the Korean peninsula to the East Coast of the US would be about 33 minutes.

But a nuclear blast can come even sooner from nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered submarines. These submarines are called "boomers" or even have been called the "handmaidens of the apocalypse." They are undetectable under the sea and can sneak up very close to a nation's coast and launch a first-strike attack. This is why the president actually has only a six-minute window to decide on a nuclear counterattack.

Launch on Warning

America has a policy known as "launch on warning."{3} What that means is that America will launch its nuclear weapons once its early-warning electronic sensor system warns of an impending nuclear attack. Put another way, the US won't wait to check if a warning is accurate, it will not wait and physically absorb a nuclear blow before launching its own nuclear weapons at whoever sent a missile to them.

This policy has been in place since the height of the cold war and represented an incredibly high risk. As one advisor

explains, launch on warning during at time of intense crisis is a recipe for catastrophe.

Presidential candidates have promised to change this policy, but nothing has happened so far. George W. Bush in 2000 vowed to address this policy: “Keeping so many weapons on high alert may create an unacceptable risk for accidental of unauthorized launch.” Barack Obama argued that “keeping nuclear weapons ready to launch on a moment’s notice is a dangerous relic of the Cold War.” President Biden has also encouraged to eliminate this perilous policy. No change has been made.

President’s Football

The decision to launch a nuclear strike comes from the president. How did the government decide to give the president the nuclear football? The story begins with Harold Agnew back in 1959.{4} He visited a NATO base and noticed there were four F-84F aircraft at the end of the runway; each was carrying two nuclear gravity bombs. This meant that these nuclear bombs were in the custody of one U.S. Army private armed with a M1 rifle with eight rounds of ammunition. The only safeguard against unauthorized use of an atomic bomb was this single GI surrounded by numbers of foreign troops on foreign territory with thousands of Soviet troops just miles away.

When he got back to the U.S., Agnew contacted a project engineer at Sandia Laboratories and asked if they could put an electronic “lock” on the bomb’s firing circuits that would prevent others from arming the nuclear bomb. They produced a lock and coded switch that would be activated with a three-digit code.

They presented the idea and the device to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and then to President Kennedy who ordered it to be done. But the military objected. A general asked how a

pilot somewhere in the world could get a code from the President of the United States to arm a nuclear weapon before being overrun by a massively superior number of Soviet troops? And why not have other nuclear bombs also coded?

The answer came in the creation of the President's Football, which is an emergency satchel. This gave the president, not the military, control of America's nuclear arsenal. The Football must always be near the president.

There is a story of how important it is for the president to have access to the Football.{5} When President Clinton was visiting Syria, President Hafez al-Assad's handlers tried to prevent Clinton's military aide from riding in an elevator with him. The Secret Service would not let that happen, and they did not let that happen.

Inside is a set of documents known as the Black Book. Robert "Buzz" Patterson served as a military aide to President Clinton, and I was able to interview him one time on my radio program. He likened the Black Book to a "Denny's breakfast menu" because of how it looked. The president must choose retaliatory targets from a predetermined nuclear strike list on the menu.

Let me end with this question: Do you believe the current president has a mental capacity to make a rational decision of about launching nuclear weapons?

War Games

One question that was asked more than forty years ago was whether anyone could win a nuclear war. Spoiler alert: no one can. President Reagan ordered a simulated war game with the name Proud Prophet to explore the outcome and long-term effects of a nuclear war.{6}

The research used mathematical models to predict outcomes and

was conducted at the National War College. Participants were cloistered away inside a secure location to prevent leaks. The results were only declassified in 2012, but much of the material was blacked out. Fortunately, this declassification allowed participants to discuss it without violating the Espionage Act of 1917.

Over the two weeks, every simulated scenario ended the same way. Sometimes they began with a tactical nuclear strike and a so-called limited nuclear war. Other times they simulated exercises with NATO and then with other exercises without NATO. There were scenarios where the U.S. launched nuclear war preemptively. Sometimes that was when the Pentagon was supposedly in focused calm and other when in a crisis mode.

Sadly, the result was the same. Once a nuclear war starts, there is no way to win it or even end it. No matter how a nuclear war begins, it ends with complete Armageddon-like destruction. As one participant put it, this destruction "made all the wars of the past five hundred years pale in comparison." At least a half billion (and probably more like a billion) people die in the war's opening salvo. Then billions more die of radiation poisoning and starvation.

Nuclear Winter

When the bombs cease striking targets, the world turns cold and dark. Everything is on fire. Smoke produces noxious smog of pyrotoxins. Fires in the cities ignite other fires. Even in the less-populated areas, forest fires rage.

The density of soot reduces global temperatures by 20-40 degrees depending on the location. Earth plunges into the horror known as a "nuclear winter." This might be a familiar term for those of us who lived in the 1980s. Astronomer Carl Sagan wrote about it and warned us of the dangers of nuclear war.

A nuclear war would change the troposphere and thus the amount

of sunlight reaching the earth. Once the radioactive fog and haze diminish, the ozone layer disappears, and the sun's warming rays are now killer UV rays.

Earth is no longer as hospitable for humans as it once was. After millennia of planting and harvesting, the few humans to survive return to a hunter-gatherer existence.

Biblical Perspective

We will conclude this discussion of nuclear war with a biblical perspective. Let's begin with the realization that God is sovereign and in control. But that doesn't mean that He would never allow a nuclear war to take place. Throughout history, we have had tyrants and armies destroy people groups and civilizations. God used pagan nations to judge the nation of Israel.

How should we respond? Since the first atomic bombings at the end of World War II, there has been a condition known as "nuclear anxiety." Jesus instructs us not to "be anxious about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34), and Paul also tells us not to "be anxious about anything" (Philippians 4:6). Jesus even says that "if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved" (Matthew 24:22).

In the book of Daniel, we have another reminder of God's sovereignty that came in the second dream of Nebuchadnezzar. It reminded him of the fact that God "rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men" (Daniel 4:17). Nebuchadnezzar knew more about human sovereignty than anyone and proclaimed God's sovereignty over the earth at the end of his days (4:34).

Some Christians have suggested that the Bible may be describing a nuclear war. In the book of Revelation, there is a description of the poisoning of the waters (8:11), death of the earth's vegetation (8:17), the end of ocean life (16:3),

and the inability to block the sun's rays resulting in severe burns (16:8).

There is a description of stars of heaven falling to earth (6:13) that some have suggested might be describing nuclear missiles raining down on earth during a nuclear war. These would be visible as they enter the atmosphere and begin striking the cities on earth.

Even passages in the Old Testament might point to the effects of a nuclear war. For example, in Zechariah 14:12 we read that "the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths."

One prophecy yet to be fulfilled can be found in Ezekiel 38 that describes nations that will come against Israel. But critics point to the fact that it says they are riding horses, wearing helmets and armor, and wielding swords (38:4-5). That doesn't look like a modern army. But I remember a famous quote from Albert Einstein: "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones." The world might look very different after a nuclear war.

In this article we have been discussing the unthinkable: a nuclear war. We should remember the words of Jesus: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Notes

1. Annie Jacobsen, *Nuclear War: A Scenario*, NY: Dutton, 2024, xvii.
2. Ibid., 53-55.
3. Ibid., 59-60.
4. Ibid., 86-87.
5. Ibid., 84-85.

6. Ibid., 173-178.

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