Weaponization of Institutions

Kerby Anderson examines claims that political activists and government agencies are reshaping American institutions, including immigration, policing, housing, education, and the administrative state, and presents a biblical perspective on faith, family, freedom, and civic life.

Society is defined by institutions, but unfortunately too many of those institutions have been captured by secular progressives. In this article I summarize material from Seth Barron, *Weaponized: The Left's Capture and Destruction of America's Sacred Institutions*{1} and from Christopher Rufo, *America's Cultural Revolution*.{2} In the discussion of the deep state, I will also refer to the material by Jason Chaffetz, *They're Coming for You*,{3} with some insights about the deep state from Ned Ryan's book, *American Leviathan*.{4}

Weaponization of Institutions

We heard lots of commentators talking about "weaponization" but often it is merely a means to focus on whatever someone finds annoying. The authors use this in a more specific way. Are there institutions and individuals who are using established institutions to advance their social agenda?

Leftist activists have been transforming respected institutions for their political and ideological ends. They could not achieve much success without leveraging the good reputation of those institutions. In his book, Seth Barron focuses on four institutions: citizenship, public safety, housing, and education.

Immigration is a process in America that is generally viewed in a favorable light. We are told that we are a nation of immigrants. Unfortunately, immigration has become a tool for the disruption of American political and cultural life. He

argues. “Citizenship has been devalued, weaponized, and turned against the citizens of the country.”

Policing is necessary in a civil society and has usually had a high reputation among the public. But activists have worked to tie policing to the legacy of slavery. The solution, therefore, is to defund the police and allocate tax dollars to “community-based radical social service nonprofit organizations” which often have the goal of destroying Western values and society.

Owning a home is central to the American identity. Living in a home of your own with enough space and a backyard has been part of the American dream. But the Left rejects these dreams and instead has been working to verticalize housing in the form of dense complexes that are close to mass transit. And they have been using state legislatures and zoning laws to achieve their goals.

Education has been the great cultural equalizer. Students in public schools traditionally learned about the history of this nation and the values that made it great. Unfortunately, public education has been “captured by teachers’ unions, ‘educrats,’ and leftist activists who have turned schools into indoctrination camps for progressive nostrums.”{5}

Leaders of the Cultural Revolution

While we are talking about the weaponization of institutions, it is worth mentioning some of the leaders of this cultural revolution. Christopher Rufo tells their story in his book, *America’s Cultural Revolution: How the Radical Left Conquered Everything*.

Within the last two decades, we have seen remarkable changes in institutions. Schools adopted critical race theory, which used to only be taught in graduate-level classes. Universities divided students into oppressors and victims and forced the

former to address their racial and sexual privilege. Corporations denounced the US as a “system of white supremacy” and adopted woke policies and used woke advertising to market their products.

How did this happen? To understand the changes, you need to understand the leaders of this cultural revolution. In his book, he provides the backgrounds of Herbert Marcuse, Angela Davis, Paulo Freire, and Derrick Bell. Many of those names are probably not familiar to you, but I can assure you that these names have surfaced in many of the radio interviews I have done.

Many of the ideas we will discuss this week have been in the culture for some time, but they exploded onto the scene with the death of George Floyd in the spring of 2020. Suddenly, the themes of the 1960s surfaced in our daily news feeds and became the official ideology of colleges and corporations. Phrases like “systemic racism” and “white privilege” and “diversity, equity, and inclusion” were being repeated in classrooms, newsrooms, and board rooms.

Much of this began in the 1960s during the student uprisings, urban riots, and revolutionary violence. Herbert Marcuse was the father of the revolution. Angela Davis was the leader of black liberation that later came to be known as Black Lives Matter. Paulo Freire promoted Marxist ideology in education. Derrick Bell promoted critical race theory and the development of DEI.

The rhetoric may not be as revolutionary-sounding as what was chanted in the streets decades ago, but the revolutionary goal is just the same. The radical left wants to replace individual rights with group-identity-based rights. They want to suppress speech and censor any ideas contrary to their ideology.

These new revolutionaries plan to do this with what have been called a “long march through the institutions.” No longer are

these revolutionaries on the outside trying to foment revolution. They are professors and administrators working to bring out a revolution from inside the institutions.

The Administrative State

Information is power. Data is power. When government has massive amounts of data, they also have incredible power. It is the power to control behavior. It is the power to shape the views of the electorate and the values of the next generation.

Consider that in the last few decades, government has passed the Patriot Act, established the FISA court (United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court), and expanded NSA (National Security Agency) warrantless surveillance programs. In every case, we were told it was being done to keep us safer.

Bureaucrats can use and abuse that power because our government has given them more power than the Constitution allows. And the problem has been made worse because new technology (such as artificial intelligence) has enabled what some have described as "weapons of mass detection." It can quickly find citizens who have not complied with the latest trends and woke ideas.

Our government is obsessed with collecting vast amounts of information. Countless Americans have been censored, debanked, and prosecuted by government officials who have collected information about them and their political perspectives.

In my booklet on *A Biblical View on the Deep State*, I explain that this term describes a parallel system of government that sometimes operates outside of official channels. This so-called "fourth branch of government" is referred to as a deep state or the administrative state. In his book, Ned Ryan refers to it as the *American Leviathan*.

Over the last few months, we have seen how this weaponization

of intelligence works. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform issued a significant report documenting numerous ways the Biden administration weaponized several aspects of the federal government.{6}

The Justice Department documented the previous administration's weaponization of the FACE Act (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act) against pro-life individuals and organizations. They also discovered that "the Biden DOJ (Department of Justice) routinely colluded with pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation." {7}

There has also been testimony at the National Religious Liberty Commission hearings about the various ways in which government (federal, state, and local) shows significant hostility toward Christian Americans. The report not only documents these abuses but sets up a Task Force dedicated to eradicating Anti-Christian bias.{8}

When the government collects information, bureaucrats use it in a variety of ways. But there is another side to the data collection. The weaponization of intelligence makes government surveillance much easier. Many in the deep state collect and weaponize private information.

The Power of the Deep State

In his first term, President Trump discovered the power of the federal bureaucracy. Winning the 2016 election and winning the 2024 election may have been significant, but it didn't change the makeup of the federal bureaucracy.

The deep state can also depend on progressive non-profit organizations and social media platforms to collect even more data. Even though the government is technically limited in some of the data it can collect, that's not a problem. The federal government can merely collect it by purchasing data

from several of these private sector data brokers.

After Elon Musk purchased Twitter, he released the "Twitter Files." We learned of the insidious connection between social media and the federal government. And with the advance of artificial intelligence along with facial recognition, the government can learn virtually anything it wants to know about any citizen.

Many individuals have been debanked because their views or businesses contradicted the views and values of the administration. For example, Dr. Joseph Mercola lost his business and personal account because of his statements about the Covid vaccine. Marc Andreesen (founder of Netscape) told Joe Rogan in an interview that he knew of 30 tech company founders who had been debanked in the past four years.{9}

Of course, President Trump and his family have been debanked. Charles Gasparino documented the many successful attempts to debank Donald Trump after he left office. Pressure from regulators was all that was necessary to force the former president to find other banks for his business.{10}

There is also the power of the IRS. During the 2012 election, I covered numerous stories about conservative groups who waited months to receive their tax-exempt status or never received that status. The reason: they had "Tea Party" in their name. In many cases, the IRS demanded disclosure of their donors and other confidential information.

More recently, the IRS denied tax-exempt status to the group Christians Engaged. In particular, the IRS ruled against the Christian organization because it affirmed "the sanctity of life, the definition of marriage, and biblical justice."{11}

Fortunately, the ruling was reversed due to pressure from members of Congress and our (Point of View) radio broadcast. But consider that thousands of Christian churches also have those views. If those beliefs were supposedly enough to

disqualify a Christian organization, those same beliefs could be used to remove the tax-exempt status of those churches.

Biblical Perspective

The Bible teaches that God has ordained key institutions. Christians cannot allow these leftist activists to take over these divinely ordained institutions.

The first institution is the government, which is ordained by God (Romans 13:1–7) and is ultimately under God's control. We are commanded to obey governmental authorities (Romans 13:1–4, 1 Peter 2:13-14).

A second institution is the church (Hebrews 12:18–24; 1 Peter 2:9–10). Jesus taught that the government should work in harmony with the church and should recognize its sovereignty in spiritual matters (Matthew 22:21).

A third institution is the family (Ephesians 5:22–32, 1 Peter 3:1–7). The family is an institution under God and His authority (Genesis 1:26–28, 2:20–25). A related institution is education. Children are not the wards of the state, but belong to God (Psalm 127:3) and are given to parents as a gift from God. Parents are to teach their children (Deuteronomy 4:9) and may also entrust them to tutors (Galatians 4:2).

In my booklet on *A Biblical View of Borders and Deportation*, I talk about the importance of borders and boundaries. We cannot have open borders and cannot allow uncontrolled immigration to this country.

The Bible teaches that God established the boundaries for the nation of Israel: "I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates" (Exodus 23:31). The Bible also warns the Jewish leaders, "You shall not move your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set" (Deuteronomy 19:14). And again, "Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the

fatherless" (Proverbs 23:10-11).

In Acts 17:26, we read that God set boundaries for the lands of the nations: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

Education must also be done with the consent of parents. Ephesians 6:4 says, "Parents, do not exasperate your children: instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it." We should also be teaching wisdom to our children (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10).

We have allowed these leftist activists to weaponize these institutions against biblical values of faith, family, and freedom. Christians are called to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16). It is time for all of us to challenge the weaponization of our institutions.

Notes

1. Seth Barron, *Weaponized: The Left's Capture and Destruction of America's Sacred Institutions*, FL: Humanix Books, 2026.
2. Christopher Rufo, *America's Cultural Revolution: How the Radical Left Conquered Everything*, NY: HarperCollins, 2023
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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.

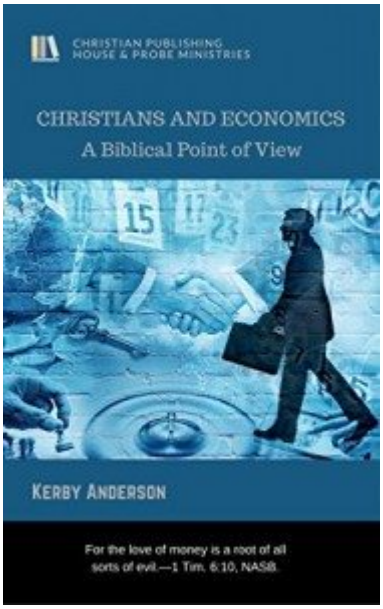
Another obvious issue is the fact that younger Americans are less likely to associate socialism with Soviet-style repression. Instead, they are told (incorrectly) that socialism is functioning well in Europe.

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.

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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.”

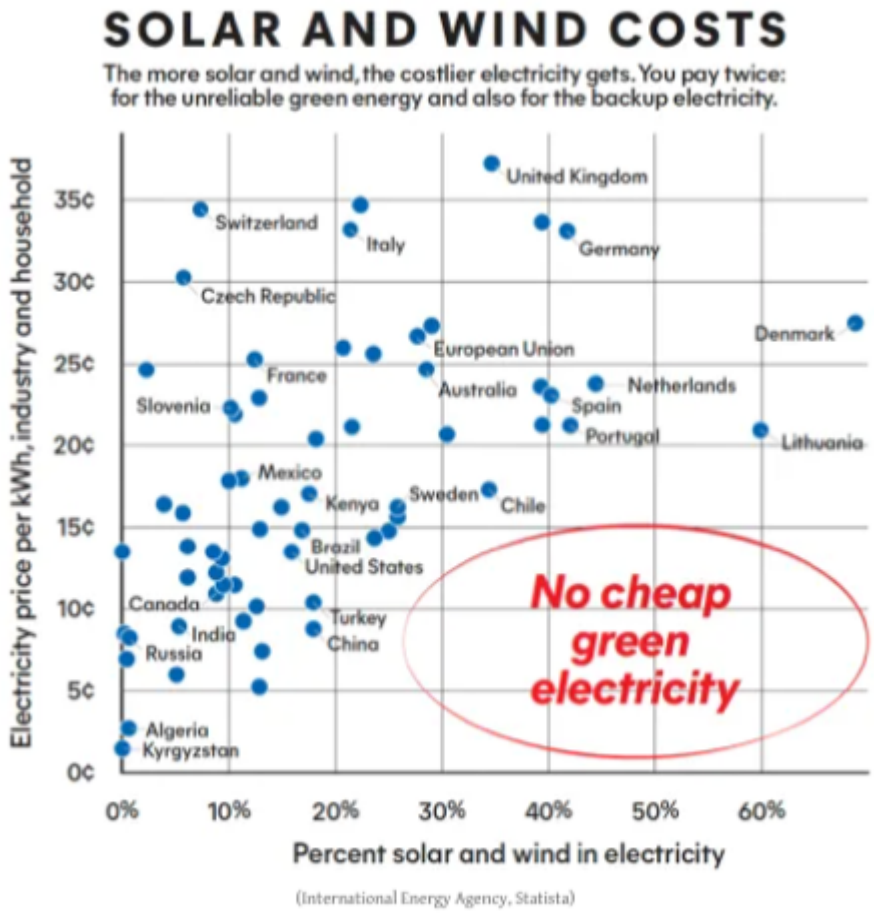
The film’s predictions about escalating catastrophes did not materialize, and its policy prescriptions failed. He also reminds us that approximately $16 trillion has been spent in pursuit of its vision, and yet it has delivered few benefits.

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.

Notes

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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

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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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Jesus, American Politics, and Bearing God's Name

Have you ever wondered how to engage in politics as a Christian? How do you filter what our political leaders say through the lens of scripture? How do you determine if someone in a political office just wants your vote and is willing to misuse scripture to do it? Tom Davis addresses the concerns we should have when our political leaders misuse scripture, how to identify their crafty lies, and how to think theologically when listening and evaluating their promises on their political platform.

I started paying attention to politics around the year 2000. Since then, politics has grown more contentious. The two major parties are suspicious of each other, and the rhetoric has grown even more contentious. Every president elected since 2000 has been declared to be an illegitimate president by some of their opponents. Most political pundits and activists increase the contention, especially during election campaigns. The worst part of this political polarization is that both parties claim Jesus is on their side. How can Jesus be on both sides? What is their evidence that confirms their claim? How should Christians respond?

The Third Commandment: Taking God's Name in Vain

To help us address how politicians use the name of Jesus, it will help to look at the third commandment. The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. God leads the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, and makes a covenant with His people. In Exodus 20, God gives these commandments as the conditions of His covenant with the Hebrews. In Deuteronomy, these commandments are restated as

the Hebrews are preparing to go into the promised land. The third commandment is, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”{1}

These commandments were the foundation for the moral behavior that the Hebrew people were to follow to keep their covenant relationship with God. Sometimes there is a particular confusion over the third commandment. A version of this covenant called “The Redneck Ten Commandments” lists the third commandment as “Watch yer mouth.” While humorous, this fails to capture the essence of the commandment. Dropping a “g__ d___,” or an “OMG” in a conversation is not at the heart of the third commandment. Paul wrote of Jesus, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”{2} This means that Jesus is God incarnate, which means exclaiming “Jesus Christ!” as an expression of disgust or surprise is the same as the expressions just mentioned. These phrases can violate taking God’s name in vain, but are not at the heart of the issue. There are other passages in the Bible that address the use of impure, offensive, or vulgar language.

If vulgar and impious phrases such as GD or OMG are not at the heart of the third commandment, what is this commandment about? I suggest two meanings, both of which we see violated in American politics.

When God gave the Hebrews the Ten Commandments, the people were coming out of Egypt. The people were going into the land promised to them, which was inhabited by the Canaanites. Those people, as well as most people of the Ancient Near East, thought that by invoking a god’s name, that god could be manipulated into doing what the people liked. Old Testament scholar Abel Ndjerareon tells us, “Pagans end up believing that they can easily manipulate both the name and the god represented by the name. The name thus becomes a way of controlling, of mastering, and taming the divinity. But the God of Israel refuses to allow his name to be used in this

way. He is not an object to be manipulated."{3} Unlike the gods of the surrounding nations, Yahweh will not be controlled or mastered by people simply because they invoke His name. Old Testament scholar John Walton also states, "The third commandment when read as ancient Near Eastern literature concerns how Yahweh's power/authority was not to be perceived—people were to recognize it by refraining from attempts to control or misuse it."{4} In the third commandment Yahweh is telling the Hebrews, with whom He just entered a covenant, that He is not like pagan gods. They cannot manipulate Him by using His name.

Politicians do not use God's name to manipulate God, they use God's name to manipulate people. People will take God's name and attach it to a political party or a politician to convince people to vote for them. Currently "Jesus Saves" is not only a statement of faith, now it is also a political banner. Jesus Saves banners were at the January 6th riots. Why? Were people witnessing to other people during the riot? That is not likely. Politicians use the name of God to gather support for campaigns and political ideas that God does not agree with. While they may not be trying to manipulate God, they are trying to manipulate His people.

There is another aspect to taking God's name in vain. One use of the Hebrew word for "take" could be something like taking up arms, taking things into your own hands, or taking a bag from someone to help them carry groceries.

The word translated as "take" in the third commandment is also translated as "bear" in other parts of the Old Testament. In Exodus 28, God gives Moses the instructions for how to make the priestly garments and how these garments were to be used. One of the garments, like an apron, is called a breastpiece. The breastpiece has twelve stones attached to it. Each stone represents a tribe of Israel. Aaron is to wear this holy garment when entering the tabernacle: "So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on

his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to remembrance before the LORD. And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD."{5}

A few verses later Aaron is instructed to wear a headband with a gold plate with "Yahweh" engraved on it. The instructions are: "It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall
regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."{6} In this passage we can see that Aaron is bearing, or representing, Israel before God by wearing the breastpiece. The gold plate on Aaron's forehead signifies that he is God's representative to Israel. In light of the third commandment and these instructions given to Aaron when fulfilling his priestly role, Israel is to represent God (bear or take his name) to the nations just as Aaron represents (bears) Israel before God.{7}

We Christians should be involved in politics. There is nothing wrong with Christians running for office, or campaigning for a cause. As Christians we bear God's name. We represent God to other people. This means that how we act, what we say, and how we treat people matters to God. When we take God's name and attach it to a political view that does not accurately represent Him, we bear His name in vain. When we campaign, we must do so in a way that honors God. We must not misrepresent Him.

American Politics and God

Throughout the history of America, people have appealed to God and the Bible to justify different social and political movements. The earliest people to settle in what became the United States were devout Christians. The Bible informed their

beliefs and way of life. The Founding Fathers had a variety of religious beliefs ranging from Enlightenment Epicureanism (an ancient Greek philosophy that believed that gods did not exist, and only physical things exist) and deism to Protestant Christianity. Most of them saw value in the Bible, even if they were not Christians. Different Americans at different times have appealed to God and the Bible to gain support for slavery, the abolition of slavery, Manifest Destiny (a cultural belief in the 19th-century United States that American settlers were destined to expand across North America, per *Wikipedia*), the humane treatment of Native Americans, Prohibition, and many other movements and goals. However, these movements are not equal when evaluated by the teachings of the Bible. Politicians and activists still appeal to the Bible to rally voters and supporters for their goals. How should current appeals to the Bible be evaluated?

Matthew Dowd, a Democrat who once worked as an advisor to the Bush administration, said, "If Jesus Christ was alive today, He would be called a groomer, He would be called woke, and He would be called a socialist if He was alive today and speaking the message He spoke in the gospels today about treating everybody with dignity." Dowd went on to say, "Jesus Christ hung around with prostitutes and tax collectors. He was nailed to a cross because He spoke on behalf of the most marginalized people in the Middle East."{8} He also said that a small segment of conservative activists has corrupted Jesus' message, which Dowd said was "love conquers hate."

What should we think about Dowd's statements during the interview? First, notice that Dowd does not quote the Bible at any time during the interview. He references the gospels in a general way. Given that this was a live interview on a news broadcast, I can understand that because time was limited.

The question remains, how do his claims stand up against biblical scrutiny? Would Jesus be called a groomer (slang for a person who builds relationships with children to

manipulate and exploit them)? I think Dowd means that Jesus would be falsely accused of being a groomer. But Dowd seems to think that Jesus would be teaching that same sex intercourse, transgenderism, and things like that are good. I see no evidence of that in the Bible.

Dowd's claim that Jesus died because He spoke out on behalf of marginalized people completely misses the mark. Jesus did disrupt the cultural norms and class divisions of the Jews of that time. Women traveled with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus spoke with the Samaritans. Jesus touched lepers and other unclean people. He even had a tax collector as one of his closest disciples. But there is no indication that He died because He did these things. Jesus did not die for "love conquers hate." The Apostle John tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."{9} John also wrote, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only but also the sins of the whole world."{10} While Jesus taught that the marginalized should be respected and that the oppressed should be defended, that is not why He died. Jesus did not die for love, He died because He loved the world. His death was not about equality, it was a payment for our sins. Those who confess their sins, oppressors and oppressed, and turn to Jesus as Lord of all creation, will have their sins forgiven.

The latest instance I saw of the Bible being used for politics is California governor Gavin Newsom's campaign billboards promoting the pro-choice position. The bottom of the billboards has Mark 12:31 at the bottom of the poster: "Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these." Newsom seems to think loving your neighbor means supporting abortion. He also left out the first part of Jesus' answer to the question of which command is the greatest, "The most important is, Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."{11} Does Newsom leave this out because he thinks it would make the billboard cluttered? I don't think so. The question that Newsom needs to answer is, how does promoting the pro-choice position show love for God? Every person bears the image of God. When, in the development of the baby, is the image put in the baby? Because biology, and more importantly, the Bible does not tell us, it seems the most moral and cautious position is to assume that the image of God is in the baby at conception. Let us not forget that the command to love your neighbor is tied to the command to love God. How does abortion show love for God? Every politician or political activist who wants to use passages of the Bible to support their political cause needs to be able to answer these kinds of questions. Leaving these kinds of questions unanswered does not honor the name of God.

During President Trump's campaign in 2016 he was a guest speaker at Liberty University. The thing most people remember about his speech is that he said "Two Corinthians" instead of "Second Corinthians." But why should this matter? Christians in England call the book "Two Corinthians."

The issue in Trump's speech is the verse he quoted and what was implied by its use. Trump said, "I hear this is a major theme right here. … Two Corinthians 3:17, that's the whole ball game . . . 'Where the spirit of the Lord is,' right? 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' . . . But we are going to protect Christianity."{13} Trump referenced 2 Corinthians 3:17 by quoting part of it, then making the verse about his political campaign, implying that Christian freedom depended on electing him. But what is this verse really about? Here is the verse in context:

> "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one

> turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."{14}

When viewed in context it is clear that 2 Corinthians is about Christ lifting the veil of sin, and the Spirit of the Lord providing freedom from sin. What does this have to do with Trump, or any other American politician? Nothing.

It is clear that American politicians have used the Bible to gain support from Christians. Most of the time politicians are taking passages out of context so that they can try to gain support from Christians to advance their own agenda. When politicians do this, they are bearing God's name in vain. When we Christians remain silent, we are bearing God's name in vain. In order to bear God's name well we must speak what is true and call out what is false. This includes when people, Christian or otherwise, misrepresent God or the teachings of the Bible.

How Do We Do Politics

Staying out of politics is not a good option. God calls us to be good stewards of the gifts He gives us, one of which is the opportunity to be salt and light in our culture through government. Christians living under dictatorships do not enjoy this blessing. How should we Christians engage in politics then? Where in the Bible can we find guidance? How can we bear God's name in a way that honors Him in politics? While there are a lot of places to find principles on specific issues, the beatitudes in Matthew 5 are a good place to find general principles for how to engage in politics and life. The beatitudes describe the characteristics that Christians should practice.

The first beatitude is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."{15} When we are poor in Spirit, we realize that we "can do no good thing without

divine assistance."{16} We must seek God's will, not our will, in politics. We are not to be about our political vision, but about the business of God's kingdom. We must humble ourselves before God and make His priorities our priorities.

The second beatitude is, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." When our political opponents face personal crises, we should not celebrate. We do not honor God by hating our political opponents and finding joy in their misfortunes. We should not celebrate the suffering of the liberals, or the conservatives (whichever one you find more annoying). We should still act in love and mourn with them when they suffer personal loss and misfortune. We should pray for them. We should not cover up the failings or our political allies. We should mourn their failures and encourage them to hold themselves to a higher standard.

The third beatitude is, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." As followers of Christ, we know that we depend on God for what we have. We should not be proud of gaining and wielding political power. Followers of Christ inherit the earth because they are meek (biblical meekness is strength under the control of love), not because they wield political power.

The fourth beatitude is, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." We should not engage in corrupt politics, or tolerate those who do. This means calling out corruption in both parties. We cannot ignore political corruption because it is our guy, or we might lose the next election. We must represent God with integrity.

The fifth beatitude is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Jesus was not ruthless. God mercifully offers us forgiveness even though we do not deserve it. How can we refuse to show the same mercy to our political rivals?

The sixth beatitude is, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” We are representatives of God, his priests. We must be pure, no matter how much it costs or inconveniences us. We serve God, not the world. We oppose tyranny wherever we find it.

The seventh beatitude is, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” We should be known by our love, not by our feuds. We should forgive and make peace with our political rivals as much as we can. We should not hold grudges or try to punish our political opponents when we have the power to do so.

The eighth beatitude is, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” We know that by holding to pure standards and representing God well we will be persecuted. We will be called Bible thumpers, Kool-Aid drinkers, backwards, deniers, and all kinds of other things. When this happens, we take the persecution and look to God, who will bring us into His kingdom.

The ninth beatitude is, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” When others mock us because we are loyal to Christ, we remain loyal to Christ.

As Christians we bear God’s image in every aspect of our lives. We must bear the image of God well in politics as well. This means that we have to treat others as we want them to treat us, pursue mercy, pursue truth, and pursue peace as best we can. We have to do this because we are bearing God’s image. We are representing Him in everything we do. May God grant us the courage and integrity to represent Him well.

Notes

1. Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11
2. Colossians 1:15
3. Abel Ndjerareon, *Exodus. In Africa Bible Commentary, ed.*

Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 111.
4. Walton, John, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament 2nd ed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2018), p. 121.
5. Exodus 28:29-30 ESV
6. Exodus 28:38 ESV
7. Imes, Carmen Joy, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sin Still Matters* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), pp. 48-52.
8. "MSNBC analyst claims Jesus would be called a 'groomer,' 'woke,' and 'socialist' if 'He was alive today' – TheBlaze," www.foxnews.com/media/msnbc-analyst-matthew-dowd-jesus-christ-groomer-alive-today. Accessed 11/12/2022.
9. John 3:16
10. 1 John 2:2
11. Romans 3:23
12. Mark 12:29, 30 ESV
13. "Trump Saying 'Two Corinthians' Doesn't Matter; His Heresy Does | Opinion News," www.christianpost.com/news/trump-two-corinthians-heresy-liberty.html. Accessed 11/12/2022.
14. 2 Corinthians 3:14-17 ESV
15. The Beatitudes are in Matthew 5:3-12
16. Tasker, R. V. G. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 61.

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Blessings and Judgment

The Bible offers principles concerning blessing and judgment concerning the nation of Israel. Do any of them apply to the

United States? Kerby Anderson examines this question.

Is God blessing America? Will God bring judgment against America? These are questions I often hear, and yet rarely do we hear good answers to these questions. Part of the reason is that Christians haven't really studied the subject of blessings and judgment.



In this article we deal with this difficult and controversial subject. While we may not be able to come to definitive answers to all of these questions, I think we will have a better understanding of what blessings and judgment are from a biblical perspective.

When we think about this topic, often we are in two minds. On one hand, we believe that God is on our side and blessing us. After the attacks on 9/11, for example, we launched a war on terror and were generally convinced that God was on our side. At least we hoped that He was. Surely God could not be on the side of the terrorists.

On the other hand, we also wonder if God is ready to judge America. Given the evils of our society, isn't it possible that God will judge America? Haven't we exceeded what other nations have done that God has judged in the past?

In his book *Is God on America's Side?*, Erwin Lutzer sets forth seven principles we can derive from the Old Testament about blessing and cursing. We will look at these in more depth below. But we should first acknowledge that God through His prophets clearly declared when he was bringing judgment. In those cases, we have special revelation to clearly show what God was doing. We do not have Old Testament prophets today, but that doesn't stop Christians living in the church age from claiming (often inaccurately) that certain things are a

judgment of God.

In the 1980s and 1990s we heard many suggest that AIDS was a judgment of God against homosexuality. In my book *Living Ethically In the 90s* I said that it did not look like a judgment from God. First, there were many who engaged in homosexual behavior who were not stricken with AIDS (many male homosexuals and nearly all lesbians were AIDS-free). Second, it struck many innocent victims (those who contracted the disease from blood transfusions). Was AIDS a judgment of God? I don't think so.

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, people called into my talk show suggesting this was God's judgment against the city because of its decadence. But then callers from the Gulf Coast called to say that the hurricane devastated their communities, destroying homes, businesses, and churches. Was God judging the righteous church-going people of the Gulf Coast? Was Hurricane Katrina a judgment of God? I don't think so.

In this article we are going to look at blessings and judgments that are set forth by God in the Old Testament so that we truly understand what they are.

Seven Principles (Part 1)

In his book *Is God on America's Side?* Erwin Lutzer sets forth seven principles we can derive from the Old Testament about blessing and cursing. The first principle is that God can both bless and curse a nation.{1}

When we sing "God Bless America" do we really mean it? I guess part of the answer to that question is what do most Americans mean by the word "God"? We say we believe in God, but many people believe in a god of their own construction. In a sense, most Americans embrace a god of our civil religion. This is not the God of the Bible.

R.C. Sproul says the god of this civil religion is without power: “He is a deity without sovereignty, a god without wrath, a judge without judgment, and a force without power.”{2} We have driven God from the public square, but we bring him back during times of crisis (like 9/11) but he is only allowed off the reservation for a short period of time.

We sing “God Bless America” but do we mean it? Nearly every political speech and every State of the Union address ends with the phrase, “May God bless America.” But what importance do we place in that phrase?

Contrast this with what God said in the Old Testament. God gave Israel a choice of either being blessed or being cursed. “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

We should first acknowledge that Israel was unique because it had a covenant with God. America does not have a covenant with God. But it does still seem as if the principle of blessing and cursing can apply to nations today.

A second principle is that God judges nations based on the amount of light and opportunity they are given.{3} The Old Testament is a story of Israel. Other nations enter the story when they connect with Israel. Because Israel had a unique relationship with God, the nation was judged more strictly than its neighbors.

God was more patient with the Canaanites—it took four hundred years before their “cup of iniquity” was full, and then judgment fell on them. Likewise, Paul points out (Romans 2:12-15) that in the end time, God would individually judge Jews and Gentiles by the amount of light they had when they

were alive.

A nation that is given the light of revelation will be held to greater account than a nation that is not.

Seven Principles (Part 2)

In his book *Is God on America's Side?* Erwin Lutzer sets forth seven principles we can derive from the Old Testament about blessing and cursing. The third principle is that God sometimes uses exceedingly evil nations to judge those that are less evil.{4}

Israel was blessed with undeserved opportunities, yet were disobedient. God reveals to Isaiah that God would use the wicked nation of Assyria to judge Israel. "Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isaiah 10:5-6). In another instance, God reveals to Habakkuk that He was raising up the Chaldeans to march through the land, plundering, killing, and stealing (Habakkuk 1:5-11).

As I mentioned above, Christians are often of two minds when they think about America. On the one hand they believe America is a great country. We have been willing to rebuild countries after war or natural disaster. American missionaries travel around the world. Christians broadcast the gospel message around the world.

On the other hand, America is a decadent country. We are the leading exporters of pornography and movies that celebrate sex, violence, and profanity. We have aborted more than 50 million unborn babies. Our judicial system banishes God from public life. Will God use another nation to judge America?

A fourth principle is that when God judges a nation, the

righteous suffer with the wicked.{5} A good example of this can be found in the book of Daniel. When God brought the Babylonians against Judah, Daniel and his friends were forced to accompany them.

We also see a parallel to this in manmade and natural disasters. Whether it is a terrorist attack or a hurricane or tsunami, we see that believers and nonbelievers die together. We live in a fallen world among fallen people. These actions (whether brought about by moral evil or physical evil) destroy lives and property in an indiscriminate way.

A fifth principle is that God's judgments take various forms.{6} Sometimes it results in the destruction of our families. We can see this in God's pronouncement in Deuteronomy 28:53-55. When the Israelites were forced to leave their homes to go to foreign lands, the warnings were fulfilled. Today we may not be forced into exile, but we wonder if "God is judging our families just the same. He is judging us for our immorality."

In Deuteronomy 28:36-37, "The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone." When the ten tribes of Israel were exiled to Assyria, they were assimilated into the pagan culture and never heard from again.

Seven Principles (Part 3)

The sixth principle is that in judgment, God's target is often His people, not just the pagans among them.{7}

Yes, it is true that God judges the wicked, but sometimes the real purpose of present judgments has more to do with the righteous than the wicked. Not only do we see this in the Old Testament, we also see this principle in the New Testament. 1 Peter 4:17-18 says: "For it is time for judgment to begin at

the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'"

This raises a good question. If judgment begins at the house of God, is the church today under judgment? Have Christians become too worldly? Have Christians become too political and thus depend on government rather than on God? Have Christians become too materialistic? Someone has said we should change the motto on our coins from "In God we trust" to "In gold we trust."

A seventh and final principle is that God sometimes reverses intended judgments.{8} We must begin with an observation. God's blessing on any nation is undeserved. There is always sin and evil in the land. When God blesses us, either individually or corporately, it is an evidence of God's grace.

Sometimes God calls for judgment but then spares a nation. A good example of that can be found in the life of Jonah. God called him to that city to preach repentance for their sins. He didn't want to go because it was the capital city of the Assyrians who had committed genocide against Israel. But when Jonah finally obeyed God, the city was saved from judgment.

God also used Old Testament prophets to preach to Israel. But the people didn't have a heart to care. Consider the ministry of Micah and Jeremiah. Actually, Micah preached a hundred years before Jeremiah and warned Judah that her "wound is incurable." A century later, Jeremiah is brought before the priests and false prophets who want him killed. After hearing him, they appeal to the preaching of Micah (Jeremiah 16:19). King Hezekiah listened to Micah's words and sought God who withheld judgment.

Erwin Lutzer gives another example from eighteenth century England. The country was in decline, but God reversed the

trend through the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by returning to the questions about whether God is blessing or judging our nation.

First, we must acknowledge that no nation can claim that God is on its side. In fact, there is a long and sorry history of nations that have claimed this. And the "God is on our side mentality" has done much harm throughout the history of the church.

Kim Riddlebarger: "Instead of letting God be God, our sinful pride leads us to make such pronouncements that are not ours to make. In these cases, God is not sovereign, he is a mascot."{9} As a nation, we must not claim that God is on our side.

This is also true in the political debates we have within this nation. Richard Land in his book, *The Divided States of America*, says: "What liberals and conservatives both are missing is that America has been blessed by God in unique ways—we are not just another country, but neither are we God's special people. I do not believe that America is God's chosen nation. God established one chosen nation and people: the Jews. We are not Israel. We do not have "God on our side." We are not God's gift to the world.{10}

This brings us back to the famous quote by Abraham Lincoln who was asked if God was on the side of the Union forces or the Confederate forces. He said: "I do not care whether God is on my side; the important question is whether I am on God's side, for God is always right."

Second, we should be careful not to quickly assume that a disease or a disaster is a judgment of God. Above I gave

examples of people wrongly assuming that AIDS or Hurricane Katrina was a judgment of God.

We can take comfort in knowing that this isn't just a problem in the twenty-first century. Apparently it was even a problem in the first century. The tower of Siloam fell and killed a number of people. It appears that those around Jesus thought it was a punishment for their sins. He counters this idea by saying: "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish"(Luke 13:4-5).

We should wisely refrain from too quickly labeling a disease or disaster as a judgment of God. But we should take to heart the words of Jesus and focus on our need for salvation and repentance.

Notes

1. Erwin Lutzer, *Is God on America's Side?* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 11.
2. R.C. Sproul, *When Worlds Collide* (Wheaton: Crossway, 202), 63.
3. Lutzer, *Is God on America's Side?*, 17.
4. Ibid., 25.
5. Ibid., 35.
6. Ibid., 41.
7. Ibid., 49.
8. Ibid., 65.
9. Kim Riddlebarger, "Using God," *Modern Reformation*, November/December 2007, 14.
10. Richard Land, *The Divided States of America* (Nashville: Nelson, 2007), 197.

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