The background of the image is a stylized, textured American flag. The red and white stripes are blurred and have a grainy, painterly quality. The blue field with white stars is also textured and slightly out of focus. A semi-transparent rectangular box is centered over the flag, containing the title text.

CHARACTER
IN CRISIS

CHARACTER IN CRISIS

To our Founding Fathers, character meant everything to the success of the nation and its leadership. Where did they get that idea? And what does it mean if we have strayed from that ideal today?

BY GERALD AND STEPHEN FLURRY

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TWO HUNDRED YEARS IS NOT LONG, CONSIDERING THE HISTORY OF most nations. But with the United States, it's as long as it gets! A little over 200 years ago, our forefathers set out to establish a new nation—a nation, as Abraham Lincoln said, “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” It was an altogether new experiment on the world scene—a nation *for the people*, ruled *by the people*, but *under God*. The Europeans didn't think it could work. They believed it could only end in anarchy and eventual ruin.

Were the Europeans right? Has the grand American experiment failed? Let us consider two fundamental principles upon which the United States of America was founded. Then we should ask, is America still grounded on these principles today? And, if not, what will be the final outcome?

In 1787, several of the greatest minds America has ever produced gathered in Philadelphia for what became known as the Constitutional Convention. Benjamin Franklin was there. So were George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris. They gathered to write a Constitution. They knew they were sailing uncharted waters—embarking on a bold new plan to establish a federal government for the purpose of unifying the colonies under one nation. But it was a unification that would affect all nations, as Morris prophesied when he said, “The whole human race will be affected by the proceedings of this convention.” Morris's declaration can hardly be disputed. After the Constitution became supreme law in the U.S. on March 4, 1789, America quickly ascended to astonishing heights—becoming the most powerful and dominant nation this world has ever known.

But to what extent can that awesome development and growth be attributed to America's humble beginning? In the Bible, God places special emphasis on starting small, and on

the *right* foundation. Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, “Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs . . .” (Matthew 13:32). And in the parable of the sower in the field (Matthew 13), He said that unless that small seed starts right, in *fertile ground*, it can never develop.

As far as human government goes, the United States started about as right as any government man has ever produced. Critics today can say what they will about *why* it started right. But the Founding Fathers all seemed to be in perfect agreement on the issue. The country began in *fertile ground* because it was founded upon *religion* and *morality*. THESE ARE THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS UPON WHICH AMERICA WAS BUILT.

‘NEW ISRAEL’

The Founding Fathers may not have known that America’s earliest settlers were in fact descendants of Israel (write for *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* for proof), but they certainly likened America to a “New Israel.” Historians and political commentators alike recognize this fact.

William J. Bennett wrote in his book *Our Sacred Honor*, “What made this country different from all others was a prevalent belief that God played a direct and active hand in founding a people. Like the Jerusalem of old, America’s ‘New Jerusalem’ was to become God’s promised land to the oppressed—an example to all humankind.”

New Jerusalem. Promised land. These are biblical terms. There was a tendency, Angelo Codevilla wrote in *The Character of Nations*, for “Americans to equate themselves with the children of Israel.”

Probably the first American statesman to see a parallel between the Exodus and early American history was Benjamin Franklin. According to Milt Machlin, author of *Joshua’s Altar*, Franklin “described the independent colony on America’s shores as ‘God’s new Israel,’ and proposed that the Great Seal of the United States should depict Moses with his rod uplifted and the Egyptian armies drowning in the sea.” According to Machlin, Thomas Jefferson recommended a similar design patterned after the Exodus.

Just as the Israelites of old fled from an oppressive Egypt to settle in a new land given unto them by God, so did many of the early colonial settlers flee from religious persecution to the shores of America—a land they claimed to be theirs by God's *divine right*. This biblical concept is what Manifest Destiny was all about—a belief that it was God's will for America to stretch from sea to shining sea—from the Atlantic all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

“Without God's blessing,” Bennett wrote, “many of the Founders, especially Washington, believed that this country would never have come into being” (op. cit., Bennett).

RELIGION AND MORALITY

Indeed, George Washington, America's first president, championed this cause: that high morals and sincere religion had to be the fundamental building blocks of American society *if* it was to succeed and prosper. In his first inaugural address on April 30, 1789, President Washington said, “The *foundations* of our national policy will be laid in the *pure* and immutable principles of *private morality*.” What we do in the privacy of our own home does matter! For Washington, this was not a peripheral issue. It was the *foundation* of our NATIONAL POLICY!

At the end of his presidential oath, Washington himself reverently added the words “so help me God.” Every president since has followed in his tradition. And according to Washington Irving, after our first president concluded his oath, he bowed down humbly and kissed the Bible. Without religion and morality, Washington knew the American “experiment” was doomed to fail.

Washington's ideals were not unlike those of his fellow Founders. Benjamin Franklin, a self-proclaimed non-churchgoer, was nevertheless *very* religious. In his autobiography, he listed 13 points to follow for attaining moral perfection, the last of which was to “imitate Jesus.” During the Constitutional Convention, when the delegates arrived at an impasse, it was Franklin who offered this solution: Pray for the “assistance of heaven.” That from a non-churchgoer!

Even Thomas Jefferson, not considered very religious by many, demanded this of the American people in his *Notes on*

the State of Virginia: “Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God?”

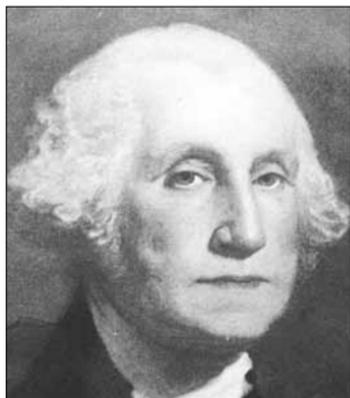
Study a bit of American history for yourself. See what priority our forefathers placed upon religion and morality. It was the chief cornerstone upon which the country was built.

Notice what George Washington said during his famous Farewell Address in 1796: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, *religion* and *morality* are indispensable supports.” Washington said they are *indispensable*. To him, religion and morality were not optional. They were *essential*, at least if the United States was to experience success, prosperity and peace.

For the Founding Fathers, adherence to this doctrine was essential for the American experiment to succeed.

Washington continued, “In vain would that man claim tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.” Those who worked to subvert these indispensable pillars, *religion* and *morality*, would be working in vain! So said George Washington. How many Americans would fall into this category today?

Our second U.S. president, John Adams, said, “Statesmen may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is RELIGION AND MORALITY ALONE which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand.”



“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”

George Washington

Our Founding Fathers created the Constitution. It will be perilous if we ignore their deep understanding. The Constitution was established only for a people with strong morals. But we have degenerated terribly in this area. Without character our liberties will lead to deep division and anarchy. Only character can stop that natural flow of events.

What makes our forefathers' statements so weighty is that they agree with God!

Abraham Lincoln stated, "Unless the great God who assisted [President Washington] shall be with me and aid me, I must fail. But if the same omniscient mind and almighty arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me, I shall not fail. . . . Let us pray that the GOD OF OUR FATHERS MAY NOT FORSAKE US NOW."

The Civil War almost destroyed America. Only the faith of Lincoln and the American people got us through that tragedy.

In 1954, Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it." Our forefathers knew that DECAYING MORALS MEANT A DECAYING NATION!

Several years ago, Justice Stewart Potter said it was impossible to define character. But many of our forefathers knew character meant not committing adultery and not lying. They knew that character meant keeping the Ten Commandments.

If the Founding Fathers were right, our greatness and success depend on how moral and religious we are. Let us now shift our attention from the Founding Fathers to the American people in the late 18th century. What good, if any, did the God-fearing, highly moral leadership have on American society?

EARLY AMERICAN LIFE

It should be noted that America, like any other nation at that time, had its share of brothels and philanderers. But those lewd, immoral practices were not nearly as prevalent in the mainstream as they are today.

For the most part, early America was deeply religious. We were a people who read our Bibles and took the instruction more literally than Americans do today. Unlike the showy

Character Does Affect Leadership

THE BIBLE REVEALS THAT CHARACTER AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP are as inseparable as hydrogen and oxygen in water. Joseph began his illustrious political career after his brothers sold him into slavery. Potiphar bought the rights to Joseph and very quickly entrusted him with everything in his house. Consider the character of this great man of God—Joseph. After Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, Joseph refused, saying, "How ... can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Joseph then sprinted out of the house while she was ripping off his clothes!

Potiphar's wife then lied to her husband and said Joseph tried to seduce her. Seething with wrath, Potiphar cast him into prison. But God was with Joseph because of his upright character. After he was freed from prison, he ascended to the second highest political position in Egypt—just below Pharaoh! (Genesis 41:41). And Joseph was an *Israelite*.

Joseph was a man of upstanding character. Egypt prospered under his direction. In fact, when a dreadful famine struck the region, surrounding nations came to Joseph for help because he *saved* the excess during prosperous times. He didn't lavishly spend more than he had. He didn't borrow from others to pay off mounting debts. He had no debts. He *saved* for the future. He exercised self-control in his own life, as evidenced by how he handled Potiphar's wife and Egyptian wealth. All of Egypt and the surrounding nations benefitted!

When the people of Egypt cried out to Pharaoh because of the famine, even he knew where to turn in the moment of crisis. "Go unto Joseph; what he says to you, do" (Genesis 41:55). What an example! Joseph lived lawfully. Pharaoh knew that. And when things got tough, he turned the people to the one who had his own life in order and said, "Listen to what he says, and then do it!"

During the famine, Joseph tearfully reunited with the brothers who sold him into slavery. The famine was so bad

that eventually Joseph's entire family moved to Goshen, the choicest property in Egypt. The Israelites found favor with the Egyptians and prospered. But after Joseph died, a new king arose in Egypt who knew not Joseph (Exodus 1:8). He was concerned about the rising power of the Israelites. He grew to despise them. To weaken the tremendous power and wealth of the Israelites, the king made slaves of them.

For over 400 years, the Israelites were subjugated to their Egyptian taskmasters. God then raised up a man of character—a leader of fine, upstanding morals who feared God and obeyed His commands. His name was Moses.

Through this man, God delivered His Ten Commandments in codified form to the Israelites. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not lie. Thou shalt not covet.* Imagine how much better this world would be if leaders and subjects alike followed



these commands, even by the strict letter! (When Christ came, He actually magnified—made *bigger*—those laws to include their spiritual intent. Not only is it sin to commit adultery, it's a sin to even think about it! See Matthew 5:27-28.)

Under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites again prospered. God led them out of Egypt and they became the nation of Israel. Soon, the executive responsibilities of Moses's job were too much for him to handle alone. Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, offered this advice: "Moreover choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people..." (Exodus 18:21, Revised Standard Version). They had to fear God first, and then they had to be honest and trustworthy—in their own *personal lives*. Otherwise Moses would not have selected them to *lead*.

In Deuteronomy 1, it says Moses chose wise men from the people who judged righteously; who didn't respect persons in judgment. He chose leaders who were fair, who did *not* dish out political favors to the prettiest people—or to those with the most money.

When Moses died, God offered this astounding promise to his successor, Joshua: “This book of the LAW shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night, that thou mayest *observe* to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way PROSPEROUS, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8). Look how God-fearing character relates to prosperity and good success. God said if you are careful to observe what is written in the law and then DO it, you WILL *prosper* and be *successful*.

God blessed Joshua and the Israelites because of their willingness to obey the same laws God recorded for Moses on tablets of stone (Joshua 8:35). Joshua lived it. He taught it to his followers. And as the nation submitted to God's will, it prospered and enjoyed much success.

After Joshua died, however, Israel endured much instability as a nation—mostly because of its immoral leadership. The book of Judges, more than any other book in the Bible, graphically illustrates this fact. That book clearly shows how the character of a leader *does* affect the people.

The first judge, Othniel, feared God and kept His commandments. Consequently, the “land had rest forty years” (Judges 3:11). As soon as Othniel died, the children of Israel did evil in God's sight.

Living in sin, the Israelites did *not* prosper. Neither were they successful. It got so bad they finally cried out for God's help. In His mercy, God raised up Ehud to deliver them from the Moabites. Israel had rest for 80 years. After Ehud died, they again sank into the depths of evil and despair.

And on, and on, and on the cycle goes. Gideon, another God-fearing leader, tried to tell the people to obey God whether they had a righteous leader or not. But they wouldn't listen. In the end, there was no king in Israel, and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). By that point, it didn't much matter what their leaders were doing. Nobody really cared! Everyone just did their own thing. Sound familiar?

IN ADDITION TO THE MANY OUTSTANDING STRENGTHS OF GOD-fearing leaders recorded in the Bible, God also recorded many of their weaknesses. King David lied, committed adultery and murdered someone, and yet God called him a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). Does that mean David was able to get away with his sin and still be an effective leader? Let's see what the scriptures say.

When God confronted David with his sin, David realized that no matter how much he bamboozled the people into believing he was a righteous leader, he could not fool God. David was overwhelmed with shame. He replied sorrowfully, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13). David repented—*deeply* (Psalm 51). He changed from his wicked ways. And guess what? God forgave David!

Nevertheless, the aftermath of David's lustful interlude with sin was not pretty. He suffered. And so did the nation. Even though he repented, God told him the sword would never pass from his house. While David was alive, Israel was always at war.

God also told David, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." David's son Absalom tried to kill his father. During Absalom's rebellion, Israel erupted into civil war, during which tens of thousands of David's own countrymen were slaughtered. Adonijah, another son of David, also rebelled against his father. On top of all that, God sentenced to death the child Bathsheba conceived in adultery.

This was the chain of events triggered by David's sin. And it would have been far worse had he not repented!

God will forgive our sins the moment we truly repent and *change* our ways. But what a tangled web we weave when we compound one sin, like adultery, with many more, such as lying and murder. The consequences, for the sinner, and for the people he leads, are disastrous.

God inspired writers of the Bible to record the character flaws and sins of leaders so we might vividly see how **SIN DESTROYS!** It destroys individuals. It destroys *nations*. Destruction may not come immediately. In fact, on the outside, things may look pretty good. But when the "famine" sets in, as it did in Joseph's day, who will the people turn to? Will they look to immoral leaders who are only concerned about serving themselves? Of course not! They'll be looking for a "Joseph." But this time around, they won't find him. ■

services you see on TV, a church service back then was more like a classroom, where the teacher gave a *lesson*. That's where they studied and learned about a higher law—a code of ethics. That's where they learned the TEN COMMANDMENTS. It was at church services across the land where so many Americans learned about the children of Israel. “Nowhere else in Christendom,” writes Angelo Codevilla, “was the Old Testament read so much and the notion of God as lawgiver so widespread.” Codevilla goes on to say that the tendency for Americans to liken themselves to the children of Israel was so common that it even spread among the Negro slaves. He said sincere religion and high morality were “something immediately *obvious* to visitors” (Codevilla, *op. cit.*).

The effect religion had on America was widespread. It influenced America from within, Codevilla said. Early American society was one built around the biblical sanctity of marriage and family. “Since the Founders had no doubt that popular government is possible only among virtuous people, they revered marriage as few people before or since” (*ibid.*). The 18th-century American family was organized with each member fulfilling his or her natural role as defined in Scripture. The father was the head of the family, the provider and protector. Wives respected their husbands' authority and faithfully supported their men. They took pride in their role as “helpmeets” and enjoyed managing the household. The Founders viewed the wife's role as complementary to the husband's. Together, a husband and wife were a complete team—a well-organized family by which children could be reared properly.

At the same time, our nation's leaders enacted laws designed to protect marriage and family. Husbands were obliged by law to support their wives; to pay off all debts they incurred. In some communities, dead-beat dads were sentenced to hard labor while in confinement. Divorce was illegal except in the rarest of cases. In the early 1800s, there were only a *few hundred* divorces in the whole country!

Clearly, the ideals and character of the Founding Fathers did filter down to individual families. And that's the way God and those great men wanted it. Six years before the Constitution was enacted, George Washington's objective for the country could not have been *more clear*: “WE HAVE NOW A NATIONAL

CHARACTER TO ESTABLISH.” If a fledgling America was to get off the ground as a nation, it had to begin in each home.

John Adams, himself a devoted husband, said the “foundation of national morality must be laid in *private families*.” As leaders, Adams and his fellow statesmen knew the linchpin for developing a prosperous, free society was *religion* and *morality*. As “founders” and great leaders, they were obliged to lead the way *by example*. This is a biblical principle. The Scriptures say Jesus came to set us an example that we might follow in His steps.

Nothing can be more basic when evaluating the success or failure of nations through man’s 6,000-year history: *Character does affect how leaders lead*; and the character of a leader, whether *good* or *bad*, does influence the people. As Codevilla wrote, “What the great do in a grand way, lesser folks do as they may.”

WHY RELIGION AND MORALITY?

In 1776, the year Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, John Adams wrote to his cousin, “It is *religion* and *morality* ALONE which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand.” There it is again. Why did the Founding Fathers keep pointing back to these fundamental building blocks? Adams himself answered that question in 1798, while serving as president: “Our Constitution was made *only* for a MORAL and RELIGIOUS people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

There’s the answer! They kept referring to religion and morality because, as Adams said, OUR CONSTITUTION WAS MADE ONLY FOR MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE! Now the question is, WHY? Why was the Constitution written *only* for moral and religious people? Why was it inadequate to the government of any other?

Alexis de Tocqueville’s 19th-century observations on the American republic answer this critical question. After touring America for two years in the early 1830s, he returned home to France and wrote his political classic, *Democracy in America*. Like the Founding Fathers, De Tocqueville acknowledged that religion and morality were indispensable to the maintenance of the American republic. Why indispensable? He said that while the constitutional law of liberty allowed Americans

complete freedom to do as they pleased, *religion* PREVENTED them from DOING THAT WHICH WAS IMMORAL AND UNJUST. In short, De Tocqueville surmised, liberty could not be governed apart from religious faith, lest there be anarchy.

Without the moral restrictions of a higher spiritual law, the liberty afforded Americans in the Constitution WOULD BE ABUSED. George Washington knew that! So did the rest of the Founding Fathers. That's why they kept harping on religion and morality. They did not want to see the United States of America self-destruct.

AMERICA TODAY

Today, Americans have departed from the ideals of our forefathers. We reason that religion and morality are nice, but certainly not necessary for the overall well-being of the nation. We have been led to falsely assume that private morality and public duty are separate issues. George Washington would have been appalled by such reasoning. And he was the *father* of our nation. Abraham Lincoln would have been appalled. And he *saved* the nation from ruin during the Civil War.

Times have certainly changed in the United States of America. Imagine a fornicator or adulterer being publicly ridiculed because of his sin. For that matter, imagine a public official even *calling* those acts *sinful*. Does it seem old-fashioned? It wasn't 200 years ago.

Consider the changes in America over the past 200 years. President Clinton received his highest approval ratings while in the midst of numerous White House scandals. This is what should disturb us, and even frighten us, most of all. That would not have been the response of Americans even 20 years ago!

A White House scandal is not just about the White House. It's about America and Americans. It's about all of us. It's about YOU!

When Americans go from proclaiming that a free society can only exist when founded on private morality to thinking that character just doesn't matter, it is time to ask some hard questions about the future of this nation.

The American people's response is a frightening portent of our nation's future. If we fail to understand, that doesn't make the bad news go away.

The Family Breakdown

MANY OF US HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES TO some degree or another.

If our families are sick, they produce sick children! The solution lies in strong, moral-building families.

Let's look at what our first two presidents believed about the family. "In short, the Founders' generation believed that men's and women's interests were complementary, and they saw marriage as the divinely ordained, naturally good way to organize life. George Washington had started his presidency by pointing out that public life must be grounded on private morality. His successor, John Adams, devoted husband of Abigail, was even more specific: The 'foundation of national morality must be laid in private families.' He went on to say that CHILDREN LEARN THE MEANING OF MORALITY, RELIGION, AND RESPECT FOR LAW FROM THE HABITUAL FIDELITY OF THEIR PARENTS TO ONE ANOTHER" (Angelo Codevilla, *The Character of Nations*; emphasis added).

John Adams said the "foundation of national morality must be laid in private families." That means the family must strongly teach its children not to lie and commit adultery!

If the families are not moral, how can the nation be moral? Our forefathers laid the FOUNDATION of a great nation. They built America with God's blessings.

Today, we are destroying America and bringing God's curses upon ourselves.

"[John Adams said that] children learn the meaning of morality, religion, and respect for law from the habitual fidelity of their parents to one another."

Angelo Codevilla



DOES GOD CARE?

America may not care about the morality of its leaders, but what does God think? Does He really care? The answer to that question is the most disturbing of all.

“The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly” (Jeremiah 23:20).

The expression “consider it perfectly” should read “understand it thoroughly.” That means these prophecies would be clearly understood in the latter days, or the end time in which we are living right now. That is because these prophecies are being *fulfilled* now. We see it happening all around!

How could this prophecy be any clearer?

God is full of ANGER. He is not neutral or unconcerned. This prophecy should strike fear in our hearts!

Here is why God is so angry. “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: THEY COMMIT ADULTERY, and WALK IN LIES: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah” (verse 14).

The leaders of the people commit ADULTERY and walk in LIES. The two sins go together. Many people who commit adultery also lie about it!

Christ said in the New Testament that if a man even looks upon a woman with lust, he has already committed adultery. Christ magnified the law. He did not do away with it, as many religions teach!

But where is it all leading? It is not only the leaders who are sinning. They are “as Sodom” and the “*inhabitants* thereof as Gomorrah.” Our leaders lead the people into the most disgusting sexual sins of all. It is the grossest kind of immorality.

That is the way lust works. A person starts with one lust. It soon fails to stimulate his evil desire. Then he twists his mind to a more disgusting lust—until we have reached Sodom and Gomorrah!

It is only logical that the “inhabitants” of a Sodom-and-Gomorrah society would not expect their leaders to have exemplary marriages and families!

God THUNDERS that our Sodom-and-Gomorrah society CONDEMNS ALL OF US! Our nations have rebelled against our Creator, the living God. The depth of our sins is staggering.

America spends over \$4 billion annually on pornography. That is more than we spend on professional baseball! So this is not just ghetto pornography. This cesspool material is being consumed by MAINSTREAM America. Only a fool could fail to see how pornography rips families apart! America leads the world in producing pornography—and divorces.

Of course pornography is only one problem that helps to destroy our families. Our peoples have “sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7).

If we don't stop the process, our nations will become like Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). Then God will have to destroy us as He did them! “Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked” (Jeremiah 23:19). God is going to send a grievous whirlwind—the Great Tribulation. That is going to be the worst time of suffering ever (Daniel 12:1).

God is addressing Israel (Jeremiah 23:2). That is primarily America and Britain today.

DISRESPECT FOR LEADERS

Before former President Clinton testified, and before the Starr Report was released, this was written in the February 3, 1998, *New York Times*: “In Norman, Oklahoma, David L. Boren, the former United States senator who is now president of the University of Oklahoma, said that when he asked his freshman American Government class about the scandal, almost all the students said THEY BELIEVED PRESIDENT CLINTON WAS LYING, and they tended to respond: ‘All politicians are crooks, very few of them tell the truth, few of them are faithful to their spouses, so why not have one who's smart and knows how to get things done?’ he said. ‘That's almost an exact quote. The attitude is, we really don't respect him, but what do you expect from a politician?’

“To me it's DEEPLY DISTURBING,” he went on, recalling the awe he felt when he saw his first president, Harry Truman.

“IN TIMES OF CRISIS, TIMES OF HARDSHIP,” Mr. Boren said, ‘a level of trust between the American people and their government,

particularly their leader, IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF WHAT'S NEEDED IN THE COUNTRY. We have passed from anger about what's going on in our political system to cynicism and alienation. And to me, CYNICISM AND ALIENATION ARE MORE FRIGHTENING THAN ANGER” (emphasis added).

These students believed the former president committed adultery and lied—and it made no difference to them!

Boren found this deeply disturbing. And so do we. But more importantly, so does God! As Boren said, “In times of crisis, times of hardship,” you must have a deeper trust and character to survive.

And those times of crisis are fast approaching. Do we grasp how fast our morals are declining?

“But instead of hothouse, the atmosphere surrounding the scandal might be described as funhouse, with the country awash in lewd jokes, aided by the presidential material that has become the mainstay of late-night television shows. The bawdy show is illustrative in itself. Jay Leno, host of *The Tonight Show*, said he now tells jokes he could not possibly have told on the air just 10 years ago” (ibid).

We are witnessing greatly accelerated degeneration in character. MANY IN AMERICA LAUGH AT THE SCANDALS. BUT GOD ISN'T LAUGHING!

DECEIVED MINISTERS

Who does God blame most of all for our sins? The religious leaders. “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). The word “masters” refers to the ministers. They are going to be condemned more severely. They are supposed to represent God.

What did James teach about the Ten Commandments? “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8). He called it the ROYAL LAW.

What if we break only one of those Ten Commandments? “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is *guilty of all*. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet

The Law

DOUGLAS COX WORKED IN THE OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL for Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Here is what he stated in the *Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1998: “The ENTIRE JUSTICE SYSTEM is predicated on the theory that *witnesses will tell the truth*. PERMITTING A CULTURE OF LYING TO TAKE ROOT IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM WOULD ULTIMATELY DESTROY THE SYSTEM” (emphasis added).

He believes a lying culture would ultimately destroy our justice system! (Or has it already?) That means the nation would collapse into anarchy or worse.

Our leaders, both secular and religious, should be the chief examples and enforcers of the LAW. That is what unifies the nation. If our leaders are examples in breaking the law, our system of justice must certainly fall apart.

Can we afford not to care about adultery and lying in America? If Americans don't care, how much longer can we stand?

If we truly believe in God, we had better act like it! Otherwise our sins are going to end in the worst possible catastrophe! And that is going to happen whether we believe God or not!

if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the *law of liberty*” (verses 10-12).

We are all going to be judged by the law of liberty. IT IS NOT A LAW OF BONDAGE, AS MANY RELIGIOUS LEADERS TEACH! These deceived leaders often teach that the law has been done away. Even our forefathers, who were not ministers, knew better! These ministers are going to be condemned more strictly than other people, because of the office they hold.

If we don't keep the law, we are without works. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto

them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (verses 14-16). It is a law of love (1 John 5:3). We must protect our neighbor, not prey on his wife or property!

James is condemning dead faith. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:19-20). So what if we believe there is a God? Even the demons believe that! That is faith without works. We must *keep God's law*—the Ten Commandments—to have faith with works.

THE FINAL OUTCOME

Because our forefathers likened the fledgling nation of America to the children of Israel, it seems fitting to conclude this booklet by summarizing the story of that ancient biblical nation, chosen by God.

God delivered the ancient Israelites out of Egypt by the hand of one of their forefathers, Moses. At long last, freed from religious persecution and the oppression of slavery, they departed with shouts of joy, singing praises to God.

At Mt. Sinai, God delivered His moral code of ethics to Moses on two stone tablets. When Moses returned to the people, he told them all that God had said, and what God expected of them in *morality* and *religion*. If they agreed to abide by this strict moral standard, in return, they could have absolute freedom and abundant prosperity. Very quickly the people answered in unison, "All that the LORD hath said we will do..." (Exodus 24:7).

But they didn't. Shortly into their journey, the Israelites became more concerned about their own desires and lusts than they were about what was right for the nation—what was right in God's eyes. And so they wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years, prohibited by God from entering the Promised Land.

After their generation died, a new one matured that trusted in the words of Joshua, Moses's successor. With a high hand, they crossed the Jordan River, routed the walled city of Jericho and settled in the Promised Land—a prosperous land flowing

with milk and honey. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua. And it prospered and had good success.

But when Joshua died, the Israelites lost an extraordinary leader. They also lost their passion for serving God and for subjecting themselves to an exalted moral standard. They turned to other religions. Their morality deteriorated. Their families divided. The nation suffered. Occasionally, while in the midst of a sore trial, the people would cry out to God for deliverance, and God would respond. He would send a leader who feared Him and kept His commandments; a leader who was a man of truth; who wasn't led away by his own lusts. And that upright statesman would lead the Israelites out of the hole they had dug for themselves.

But when that leader died, they again forgot their God. Finally, it says in Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

And so what was the end result of their miraculous deliverance from the oppression of Egypt? Anarchy. There was no common standard or purpose. There was no real political authority. Everyone just did what seemed right in their own eyes. And the final outcome of their anarchy? The great nation of Israel was eventually ripped apart and separated into two nations—the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. For many generations, God pleaded with both kingdoms to return back to that high moral standard which, at one time in their history, had afforded them much success and prosperity. But they rejected God's pleas and His law—to their own shame.

In 721 B.C., the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were uprooted out of their own land by a ruthless and cruel Assyrian nation, thrust into slavery, and lost from world view to this day. The people of Judah didn't fare much better. They were overrun by the Babylonian Empire and made slaves in 604 B.C.

After such a promising start, the ancient nation of Israel rejected God and His moral standard, turned to anarchy, became divided, and eventually went into captivity.

Our ancestors—biblical Israel—fell as a nation because every man was doing what he thought was right. That means the people didn't trust their press, their politicians, or their

religious leaders. The big question is, why? The answer is in today's headlines and all around us! The people were deeply degenerate and cared only for *themselves*. That led to their downfall. The leaders couldn't call upon the people to make deep sacrifices in desperate times. The people didn't trust the leaders.

God had it written in a book so we could learn from and avoid the same mistakes. It's God's loving concern. But it's of no help if we don't heed!

Any good history book would teach us that we are headed for disaster. Today, "New Israel" is on course to follow in the same path our ancestors took. We have forsaken our God and the ideals of our forefathers. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. No one seems to care about the character of our leaders. How could we, when we don't care about our *own* character?

As Alexis de Tocqueville said, any free society founded on liberty, yet without a sacred moral code to govern the actions of individuals, cannot stand. It can only end in anarchy. Because America has forsaken the ideals of our Founding Fathers, because we have forsaken our God—that is where we are headed. As it turns out, the Europeans were right. The grand American experiment has failed.

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