

# GNITN

## How America Dies

### Cultural Erosion: Tradition Ignored, Materialism Surges

#### When Culture Is Corrupted

We either talk glowingly of the foundations of our country or we talk derisively about it, depending on who is opining. Regardless of how one looks at this core component of America, a foundation was set when the colonists arrived. We still have things like the Mayflower Compact to read and reflect on. Of course, we had the Bible which guided how we were founded and when these colonies developed their societies, the Ten Commandments were front and center for how they treated each other and how laws were written. We not only fled from oppressive cultures, we etched freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the freedom to seek happiness into our founding documents. It was because we lost those things which God endowed us with that people sailed across the sea to come to a new land. My point is not to disparage nor glorify our founding, but to explain them in light of how they are being challenged and, to some point, being changed and see if we can strengthen them again. Recent history will then show us the attacks on American culture, where they are coming from and, if we are willing, how to combat the rising tide of a counter culture that fell multiple times and still gets resurrected in spite of those falls.

#### Lincoln Saw This Coming

President Abraham Lincoln had many things to say about America, but one quote from a speech he gave in 1838 should give us pause. You see he knew that the United States would not initially fall from some outside army. He cautioned us to look inward to diagnose our destruction in this [quote](#) from his *Lyceum Address*:

*All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest; with a Buonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a Trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.*

Cultural suicide then will come from us rotting from the inside. Granted, the basis for it can be foreign, but how it plays out is an internal affair.

#### Who's Truth Will You Follow?

I had a professor who told us that all truth is personal at its base. And this was correct. He illustrated this by asking us about the cars we drove. How did they come to be? Yes, there are plants that produce them, but the idea or the truth of where they came from pointed to individuals like Henry Ford. And then he asked us about Biblical truth and we got the point rather quickly. Turning to America, the first line in the Declaration of Independence was truths that came not from our founding fathers, but from a person named Jesus Christ. It's just that simple. To deconstruct the foundation of our country you need to replace it with something else. Enter from stage right a guy named Karl Marx. Yes, that guy who championed a cultural revolution that ultimately failed, but his theories were repurposed into what we have today and that is cultural Marxism. I'm simplifying all this for time's sake and because I certainly don't want this to turn

into a boring college class where I see a growing number of people looking at their watches or picking up their cell phones to play Candy Crush or check the weather for the big game, or just about anything other than listening to me talk about Marx, Lenin, Stalin, or even Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and Che Guevara. So relax, I'm just letting you know that all of these leaders got their marching orders from the original perverter of all things good and Godly. Yes, the other guy, Satan.

### **Tearing Down Biblical Foundations**

America was founded on the Bible and its principles for life. Regardless of how deeply held their convictions, the Good Book and those who expounded on its virtues dominated the readings and research of our founding fathers and that point shouldn't be up for debate. What is up for debate is why mess with something that worked so well for so long? The problem has everything to do with losing the inspiration for why we do things and then having nothing to base how we address our cultural issues like racism, sexism, and a lot of other isms that all come down to not following the golden rule given to us by Jesus when He summed up the Ten Commandments this way in [Matthew 22:34-40](#):

*But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

*37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJV)*

Using the Bible to deal with societies failings? Absurd! No, we'd rather blame anything other than just treating people like we want to be treated ourselves. Oh, and leave out that loving God thing, too.

### **Traditions Aren't Bad**

Again, as long as those traditions are based on good foundations, we're alright. But when we forget why those traditions came to be, well, they go off the rails pretty quickly. And then when they are challenged and people realize they were just following them by rote and not by the truth they were founded on, changing to something worse is a relatively easy path to go down. Allow me to give you an example. Why do we go to church? After a revival, people want to go to church because they want to get closer to God and do so in a community of others like believers. And the Bible admonishes us to not forsake gathering together. Then we have children and we take them to church with us. They then have children and they take their children to church. If the reasoning behind doing this, which is a deep love for God, isn't transmitted from one generation to the next and then the next, when that third generation questions the need to attend church, they can easily see no value in it and stop going. The saying that God has no grandchildren is a good adage to follow. If we traditionally go to church but do so without the foundational reasoning, the behavior will only last so long. Now extend that out to our society as a whole and tradition can only take you so far. Why do we have a capitalist way of doing things? Why do we have charities? The list goes on and on, and if educational systems teach socialism instead, tradition would hold that back to a point. But that dam can only hold so long against a flood of questioning.

## **We Want Others To Have Things, But After We Get Them First**

That was a rather long heading, but you get the point. No nation can survive with all takers and no givers. And yet, they try. In America, so many made sacrifices to give us what we have today, however without teaching the next generation they need to do the same hard work to succeed, a nation of takers will arise. I like how author *Charles Pope* [describes](#) this issue:

*Liberty ushers in greater prosperity, because a civilization is still functioning with the virtues of sacrifice and hard work. But then comes the first danger: abundance. Things that are in too great an abundance tend to weigh us down and take on a life of their own. At the same time, the struggles that engender wisdom and steel the soul to proper discipline and priorities move to the background. Jesus said that man's life does not consist in his possessions. But just try to tell that to people in a culture that starts to experience abundance. Such a culture is living on the fumes of earlier sacrifices; its people become less and less willing to make such sacrifices. Ideals diminish in importance and abundance weighs down the souls of the citizens. The sacrifices, discipline, and virtues responsible for the thriving of the civilization are increasingly remote from the collective conscience; the enjoyment of their fruits becomes the focus.*

We saw this play out just after WWII when America rose to prominence because we had to. Factories were converted to produce war ships, weapons, fighter planes, tanks and so much more. When the war was won, we used the things we learned in the process to go back to making life easier for ourselves. The problem was, the people who sacrificed to give us this improved life didn't teach those boomers how and why it happened.

## **Materialism In Full Bloom**

Leaning on *Pope* yet again we read the next step for how America will fall:

*To be complacent means to be self-satisfied and increasingly unaware of serious trends that undermine health and the ability to thrive. Everything looks fine, so it must be fine. Yet foundations, resources, infrastructures, and necessary virtues are all crumbling. As virtues, disciplines, and ideals become ever more remote, those who raise alarms are labeled by the complacent as "killjoys" and considered extreme, harsh, or judgmental.*

Those "killjoys" are us. But there is a next step that adds to how we got to where we are now and *Pope* gives it to us this way:

*Due to the complacency of the previous stage, the growing lack of attention to disturbing trends advances to outright dismissal. Many seldom think or care about the sacrifices of previous generations and lose a sense that they must work for and contribute to the common good.*

*"Civilization" suffers the serious blow of being replaced by personalization and privatization in growing degrees. Working and sacrificing for others becomes more remote. Growing numbers becoming increasingly willing to live on the carcass of previous sacrifices. They park on someone else's dime, but will not fill the parking meter themselves. Hard work and self-discipline continue to erode.*

Can you say ouch? Mind you, all of this is very Biblical. And with cultural and traditional decay, the next step is inevitable.

## **If You Don't Work, You Don't Eat**

The Apostle Paul actually had to say this in one of his letters, specifically the one to the Thessalonians (see [2 Thess 3:10](#)). Look around and you can see a lot of people eating without working. *Pope* then addresses this quite eloquently this way:

*Increasing numbers of people lack the virtues and zeal necessary to work and contribute. The suffering and the sacrifices that built the culture are now a distant memory. As discipline and work increasingly seem “too hard,” dependence grows. The collective culture now tips in the direction of dependence. Suffering of any sort seems intolerable. But virtue is not seen as the solution. Having lived on the sacrifices of others for years, the civilization now insists that “others” must solve their woes. This ushers in growing demands for governmental, collective solutions. This in turns deepens dependence, as solutions move from personal virtue and local, family-based sacrifices to centralized ones.*

Centralized actually means government. The last phase of this materialism is then seen as actual bondage to a new master. Pope summarizes things thusly:

*As dependence increases, so does centralized power. Dependent people tend to become increasingly dysfunctional and desperate. Seeking a savior, they look to strong central leadership. But centralized power corrupts, and tends to usher in increasing intrusion by centralized power. Injustice and intrusion multiplies. But those in bondage know of no other solutions. Family and personal virtue (essential ingredients for any civilization) are now effectively replaced by an increasingly dark and despotic centralized control, hungry for more and more power. In this way, the civilization is gradually ended, because people in bondage no longer have the virtues necessary to fight.*

Point, set, match as they say in tennis. We are at the end of the road on these points, but the last three areas of America’s demise are found in these three areas: the rise in immorality, the decay of religious belief, and the devaluing of human life. We’ll break them down in our next lesson.