



Tale of Two Nations



BY JEFF REICH

Just ask the older folks—most of them will say the same thing: “Things ain’t the way they used to be!” Times have changed and so has society. Many older folks wish we could go back to the “good ol’ life” we used to have—where, for many people, honesty, decency, and respect were aspects of everyday life. So what happened to that “good ol’ life”? Prophecy sheds some light on the matter.

PROPHECY REVEALS THE CAUSE

The book of Daniel explains what happened to the “good ol’ life,” as well as offering other amazing insights. One insight from the Prophet Daniel is that while in Babylonian captivity, he identified himself with the guilt of the sins of Israel.¹ By this admission, he was saying, “We are all in this together, and we all hold a certain amount of responsibility in the matter.” His prayer is one of mediation. Daniel sets an example for us, who are spiritual Israelites (Christians) in Babylonian captivity (the world) today.

In chapter two, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream—a dream about nations that rise as superpowers and then fall. Simply put, these nations lost that “good ol’ life.” This prophecy is about change—change that eventually causes the downfall of entire nations. God opens to Daniel the interpretation of the king’s dream, revealing the fate of four superpowers—Babylon; Medo-Persia; Greece;

and Rome. While there is a definite connecting link between the demise of each of these nations, I would like to focus on the Roman Empire. *This is the tale of two nations—Rome and the United States.*

A THEORY

In a 1976 essay, *The Fate of Empires*, the famous general, Sir John Glubb², brings out the fact that historically an empire lasts some 250 years before decadence sets in and rapidly erodes the very fabric of society.

What exactly is decadence? The dictionary states: “A process, condition, or period of deterioration or decline; decay.”³

What are the causes of the decadence at the heart of the demise of great nations?

WHEN NATIONS DIE

In his book, *When Nations Die*, Jim Nelson Black identifies ten factors that have caused the downfall of great civilizations. Mr. Black observes

that in some cultures as few as three or four of these symptoms of social, cultural, and moral decline were enough to bring a society to the point of collapse:

1. Increase in lawlessness
2. Loss of economic discipline
3. Rising bureaucracy
4. Decline in education
5. Weakening of cultural foundations
6. Loss of respect for traditions
7. Increase in materialism
8. Rise in immorality
9. Decay of religious belief
10. Devaluing of human life

AS SEEN IN ROME

The above list were the factors that ate away the fabric of Roman society. But what does Rome have to do with us today? A lot. The rise and fall of the Roman Empire stands out to us in a startling manner, as there are many similarities between our two nations. Rome was a Republic; America is (was?) a Republic. In fact, many forms of our education and government come from Greek and Roman structure. Rome was a world superpower, reaching as far north as England, to the south in Northern Africa and into much of the Middle East; America is a superpower. Rome led the advance on certain technologies and architecture; America has done the same.

It was said of the early Romans: "A man was pious who gave the gods their due through worship and sacrifice, who honored his father and mother, and indeed all his ancestors, who stood by his friends, who was ready to die if need be for his country. A pious man submitted himself to things sacred, and believed unflinchingly that it was better to perish than to fail in his sacred duties." This sounds almost like America of

150 years ago, except that we had Christian rather than pagan roots. A society that is held together by such a cementing of beliefs would, and has, offered strong resistance to forces of disintegration.

Polybius, a well-known Greek historian, feared that Rome's success would eventually destroy the Roman character. He predicted that arrogance and luxury would infect the Roman people, and then, "being inflamed with rage, and following only the dictates of their passions, they will no longer submit to any control," and society would destroy itself. He remembered all too well what had happened in the closing years of the Grecian Empire, as decadency had played a major factor in causing it to fall into the hands of the Romans.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ROME?

Polybius's fears became reality. Here is what happened: The nation slowly declined as wealth, power, and passion took first place in the Roman heart. Once again, society became preoccupied with sensuality. Moral decadence set in, involving adultery and homosexuality, thus a breakdown of the Roman family. Eventually Roman citizens lost interest in piety and dignity and focused on day-to-day "living" and "instant gratification." Does this have a familiar ring to it?

What process played an important role in propagating the spread of moral decay? People became addicted to the amphitheater to watch—violence, nudity and sports. Citizens worshipped the gladiators who fought in the arenas. Consequently, the Romans lost respect for human life. Originally punishable by death, abortion became common, even encouraged. Violence became epidemic. Gang violence was rampant in the large cities.

Polybius, being a Greek, knew what had happened to his own nation. They, too, had begun with a high level of morality, but eventually Greek society had faltered and drifted. Materialism, sexual immorality, and self-absorption took over Grecian hearts. Homosexuality was glorified.

The stage and arts, once the hallmark of the noble Greek character, became lewd and violent.

Lacking focus and a consensus of values, the once-great culture succumbed to the Roman army. Years later, as he predicted, the same things happened to Rome.

Interestingly, as Rome became steeped in decadency, she started being attacked mainly, but not solely, by nomadic, uncivilized tribes from the North—the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Vandals. These tribes were later destroyed by Papal Rome, as they were resistant to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

These details should not elude us, as the similarities with what is now happening in the US since 9/11 make for even more striking comparisons. These uncivilized tribes that attacked Rome did not possess stinger missiles, grenade launchers, or vast amounts of oil wealth. Yet they were mainly responsible for Pagan Rome's demise. Here is what happened:

As Rome's decadency increased, judgment calls on national security were not handled wisely. The military was spread too thin, trying to hold the decaying Empire together. Attacks became more frequent from outside forces, weakening the Empire even more and stretching its wealth beyond its capabilities. As this happened, a shift of power took place inside the country as Constantine tried to hold the Empire together. He drew upon the growing Christians population to unite with the pagan

elements, thus hoping to secure national security! To do this the government shifted from a pagan government to a Christian ecclesiastical government to win the favor of the Christian population. As ancient Rome faced collapse, it gave way for the rise of the Papacy. While the Empire fell, strangely enough, the religious element, namely the Roman Catholic hierarchy, still had an ecclesiastical control over nations and kings of Europe all the way up to 1798!

A COMPARISON!

The question is: Has America come to a similar point as Rome before it fell? Let's again examine the list in Jim Nelson Black's book, *When Nations Die*. I think you will agree that America is displaying all ten symptoms at the same time!

1. Increase in lawlessness
2. Loss of economic discipline
3. Rising bureaucracy
4. Decline in education
5. Weakening of cultural foundations
6. Loss of respect for traditions
7. Increase in materialism
8. Rise in immorality
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We do not need to cover all of these in detail, as many are obvious! We know about crime in the US—just watch the news. Nothing seems to shock us any more—from snipers to corporate theft (item 1).

Also, we need not say much about the rise in bureaucracy (item 3). Even though there is much talk about reducing the size of government, it continues to grow year after year, and is more involved in our personal lives than ever before, especially after 9/11.

It is also obvious that items 5 and 6 are relevant. Recently there has been

a downplaying of generally accepted traditions, such as Christmas in public schools, and nativity displays on government properties. Various groups are allowing cultural issues to divide us rather than pulling us together in unity as "Americans," with respect and tolerance for the honest views of others. We do not have the space to go into detail about these matters, yet we all know they exist.

MATERIALISM AND DEBT

In items 2 and 7, we find that one of the leading causes of divorce in America is due to the lack of financial discipline. Credit card and other forms of personal debt have reached all-time highs, as we live in the "we want it now" generation. Most families are plagued with enormous debts. For instance, the total U.S. consumer debt (which includes installment debt, but not mortgage debt) jumped from \$2.46 trillion from back in June 2007, up \$11.85 trillion during the first quarter of 2015 (Source: Business Insider). The national debt now stands at a whopping \$18.2+ trillion dollars.


Where is this all headed? The USA used to be the world's largest producer. Now we are the largest consumer. And if you're not producing and only consuming, what will be the outcome? Going broke! And the sad news is, we *have become a debtor society*.

There is incredible pressure placed on everyone to acquire things we can't really afford. It destroys the family by creating a sense of dissatisfaction because of wants, or by the stress of spending more than can be afforded. We are obsessed with "getting" and many have an "entitlement" mentality. Such was the case in Rome—people were absorbed in their pursuit of making and spending money.



THE QUESTION IS: HAS AMERICA COME TO A SIMILAR POINT AS ROME BEFORE IT FELL?





IS IT BEST TO GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT? OR IS IT BETTER TO GIVE THEM WHAT THEY NEED?

WHO IS TEACHING WHOM?

Item 4 is very valid, as our national standard of education is steadily on the decline. In many countries, getting a good education is a virtue in the minds of both youth and parents. I hope I do not sound overly negative, and I know we need to be careful of sweeping generalizations, but, who are the role models in the minds of many American youth today? Here are a few: Taylor Swift, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lawrence, Scarlett Johansson, Angelina Jolie, Robert Downey, Jr., Chris Pratt, and Tom Cruise—the “stars” found among the ever changing list of actors and musical performers. Through the media the sacred is looked upon in jest.

While children in other countries are being educated in higher learning—and some for warfare—many of our youth are being educated in parties, music, and watching the latest release at the box office! This also explains the rampant use of drugs and teen pregnancies plaguing our country.

IMMORALITY AND THE MEDIA

Items 8 and 9 on Mr. Black’s “black list” refer to both the rise in immorality and decay of religious belief. One just needs to flip through the TV channels. Mainstream TV is nothing like it was 20 years ago. And just think—some people let their children have free rein of the TV. As with the Romans and Greeks of old, the TV has become the modern-day theater and amphitheater. The Hollywood media industry sits at the top of the list of contributors to the decadency of our country by spreading its propaganda that undermines a belief in God and the importance of moral values.

Then there is the porn industry. Need I say anything? “Alternative lifestyles” are generally accepted and permeate society. Any negative

comments are called “homophobic” and are considered “gay bashing.” The gay rights movement is now being equated with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. It is hardly comparable. Gay marriages? Gay pastors and priests? How far will this go? The next focus of attack as a civil liberties issue in the gay rights movement is churches and Christian non-profit organizations.

The philosophy of the spiritualist/humanist Aleister Crowley, “Do what thou wilt,” seems to have taken deep root in our society, both sexually as well as religiously. As a result, many people have become numb to religion and its relevance. It astounds me that many young people I meet know nothing about the Bible and God. Many people are simply leaving Christianity.

AN APATHETIC DILEMMA!

Why is it so difficult to get people to come out to meetings at the church? Why is evangelism faltering in the “good old USA”? Why is it hard to get people to commit to the mission of the church? It can be summed up in one word—decadence. Decadence creates apathy, a desire for self-gratification—for something new and stimulating. How can the church compete with the television, video streaming on your iPad, tablet or phone, let alone social media, sporting events, car shows, concerts, shopping with friends, or eating out?

And what is it that so often divides churches and causes “Christians” to argue among themselves? Is it not over worship style and church standards? Should our focus in worship be entertainment based or biblically expository based?

Is it no wonder that the types of church services that pack people in are loaded with entertainment style worship? Is it best to give the people

what they want? Or is it better to give them what they need? I am not justifying dead church services, but nor should we give license to catering to the entertainment hungry elements of society. What is really needed is a deep searching of the heart—conversion, repentance, and reformation—all of which can only be found in a true, bonded relationship with Jesus Christ. The simplicity of the Word needs to be preached. I have a hard time seeing the meek and lowly Jesus parading around on stage with a headset on, screaming some mantra-type, trance inducing song and putting on a “grand show” for an audience. Nor do I see him leading a worship service reminiscent of a funeral dirge!

Worldly entertainment is just what the dictionary says: “1: the act of entertaining; 2: Diversion or amusement. (The archaic form of ‘amuse’ means ‘To delude or deceive.’)”⁴ Could it be that in our indifference we are being self-deceived?

Let’s be honest. Decadency and its curse affect all of us more than we want to admit. We are surrounded by it. We are bombarded with it. We struggle with it in our homes and churches. The words of Jesus come burning home, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” John 17:15. It takes effort to change our tastes from the superficial vanities of this life to more rewarding character building elements for the life to come, but it is worth it.

THE BACKLASH

As stated earlier in this article, as Rome fell into decadence, it began to be attacked by nomadic, uncivilized tribes from the North. These tribes caused the Romans much heart-ache, thus giving way to the change

of Pagan Rome to Papal Rome (aka: Holy Roman Empire). Why? It was an attempt of Constantine to try to heal his faltering nation. He became a Christian for political means, and then legalized Christianity in hopes of bringing Rome back to its prominence as a world power. Rome’s national power subsided, but its ecclesiastical power grew.

I will strongly suggest that we are quickly coming full circle. This is the tale of two nations—Rome and the United States. We are fighting roving, nomadic terrorist groups. Danger signs of our decadence loom on every side. I say this honestly: We are on the very edge of some serious event.

Think about it: Every generation up till ours has faced some serious world crisis. Look at WWI, The Great Depression, and WWII. Even before this there were serious world events for each generation. What will happen in this generation? Could it be that any of the factors mentioned in this article could be catalyst to change this pluralistic, humanistic society around to a Christian nation again? Could any of the factors mentioned in this article become the catalyst to change our pluralistic, humanistic society around to a “Christian” nation again? Could it be that a time of serious crisis will cause people to run back to church? That sounds good, right? In fact, much of the content of this article is being preached about by leading Evangelical Christians. They agree—America is on the downhill side of decadence. Their answer? To bring this country back to God and what it stood for 200 year ago. Sounds good! But wait. What happened with Rome? It became the Papacy, which history testifies was an intolerant and repressive religious power that resulted in society entering the Dark Ages. In our day and time could we go from bad

to worse—a new Dark Age? Would a serious crisis create a mass of quasi-Christians as it did in Rome? Could history repeat itself? Could a religious backlash cause religious intolerance here in our country against those who go against the status quo? The book of Revelation indicates that. Time will surely tell.

1 See Dan. 9:3-6

2 Sir John Glubb (1897- 1986) was a legendary British military commander of the old Trans-Jordan and Arab nations and was knighted by the Queen of England. Ironically, he was stationed in Baghdad for several years.

3 *The American Heritage Dictionary.*

4 *The American Heritage Dictionary.*

