

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Exposing Real Threats to our Personal Freedoms



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Introduction

We live in unprecedented times.

Without question, times have changed. Like many of you, I grew up in the era before the internet, before the rise of terrorism, and before global pandemics. Even if you are under the age of thirty, you recognize the world is changing at warp speed and there's no going back.

In the past ten years we've watched as every foundation of our existence here on planet Earth has been uprooted. The American dream of finding a job, getting married, and starting a family isn't as straightforward or acceptable as it once was. Even the basic truths of our identity as male and female are being challenged. For reasons beyond our control, life doesn't seem very simple right now.

From my current vantage point (the summer of 2020) we've witnessed every traditional institution—schools, churches, hospitals, and malls—as well as all social norms, such as attending birthday parties, going to concerts or sporting events, and even shaking hands, are either disrupted or entirely uprooted.

Join me as we explore what in the world is going on... and how to hold fast to the Truth.

1

The Risk to Religious Liberty

America. “The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.”

You may recognize this as the last line in the Star-Spangled Banner written by Francis Scott Key as he watched a huge American flag raised by soldiers at Baltimore’s Fort McHenry, after a critical victory over the British in 1814. This conflict, also referred to as the “Second War of Independence,”¹ was the first test of the new American republic.

The British had recently captured Washington D.C., burned the White House, and were now moving to invade Baltimore. They were confident that taking Baltimore – a thriving port city – would prove even more strategic than conquering the capital city. Major General Robert Ross, the commander of the British Army, felt certain that taking

Baltimore would cripple the American war effort and provide a victory for England.²

With over ten thousand men and one hundred cannons, the Americans mounted a stronger defense than anticipated. British warships were pressed to engage, and they bombarded Fort McHenry with mortar fire. However, because of the shallow waters surrounding the Port of Baltimore, the British fleet eventually withdrew. The defeat of the British at Fort McHenry in Baltimore was a decisive victory for the Americans and led to both sides signing a peace agreement later that same year.³

Unfortunately, many may not recognize that these famous lyrics from the Star-Spangled Banner were penned as a result of that fateful battle. In recent years there's been a coordinated effort to erase history and reshape the narrative in our country. We are seeing individuals disrespecting our flag, desecrating our monuments, and erasing the brave heroes who fought for our freedom.

During the summer of 2020, over 104 statues and monuments commemorating our American history were vandalized. Statues of Confederate and Union soldiers alike have been toppled, defaced, or decapitated in Minnesota, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Oregon, Texas, Lou-

isiana, Virginia, California, and Washington, D.C. Although these acts were committed under the guise of protesting our country's racist roots, many statues attacked by vandals had nothing to do with slavery or racism, such as the 120-year-old statue of an elk in Portland, Oregon.⁴

Petitions are being filed with the U.S. House of Representatives to remove "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance for all schools. Advocates of this view believe schools are forcing students to "believe in God" by allowing the phrase to remain in the pledge.⁵ These individuals contend this verbiage violates their First Amendment rights.

The "Land of the Free" is facing unprecedented challenges that threaten our freedoms. Our heritage is being uprooted daily.

America's uniqueness lies in the fact that it is the only country expressly founded on the idea of religious freedom. The early settlers to America risked their lives and their children's lives to make the treacherous journey across the Atlantic Ocean in search of this elusive dream. It's highly unlikely that any of us in this country will experience the persecution and torture for our religious beliefs that those first Americans did back in England.

This persecution—including the seizing of land and assets and physical torture—came at the hands of the state-run church.

Now think about that for a minute. State-run church. We're not talking about the Methodist church of Pennsylvania. State-run churches, also known as state-sponsor religions, grant power to the government to tax, punish, torture, or kill you for not conforming to their laws. And let's be clear about this—state-run religions have absolutely nothing to do with God. State-run religion is a means of controlling the population.

In 1776, the United States of America declared independence from the oppressive, totalitarian British government, sparking the Revolutionary War. The men who signed this document understood the risk they were taking to secure their own freedom and the freedom of many generations to come. This heroic act didn't go without notice. England branded these men as traitors and hunted them down like animals. According to historian Allan Hicks,

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.⁶

In countries all around the world, government replaces God. There are no freedoms—religious, personal, or otherwise—because an individual has no rights. The government controls all the wealth,

all the resources, all the land, all the people, all the time.

Consider nations where state-sponsored or state-run religions still exist: Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, for example, have Islam as their state-sponsored religion. Also, in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, Buddhism is the state-sponsored religion. These countries are notorious for consistently and systematically violating human rights.

Unlike the horrific violations of basic human rights perpetuated by governments all over the world, the United States' Constitution grants us PERSONAL freedom. We have the ability to live where we want, pursue any career we want, and make as much money as we can. We can go to church anywhere we would like and practice any religion we choose.

This is why the Declaration of America's Independence from England was, and still is, so radical. No other nation on the face of the earth had ever granted such freedom to their citizens. The document signed by Congress on July 4, 1776 contains the following statement:

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, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

As difficult as it may be to comprehend, personal freedom – the right to own property, to build wealth, to protect yourself and your family, and to pursue happiness – didn't exist prior to 1776. The Founding Fathers who secured our independence from England were conducting a social experiment called America.

In 1787, four years after the newly formed American army defeated the British in the Revolutionary War, the Founding Fathers drafted the Constitution to establish rules for the novel government. These laws were based on the idea that God created the universe and thus is the only one who can give life and take it away – not the government. The creators of the Constitution patterned the new form of governing after the ideals found in Scripture: freedom to worship, sacredness of human life, the ability to own private property, the traditional family, and free markets.

The need for freedom of religion was front-and-center when the Constitution was written. The founders understood the undeniable connection between religious freedom, capitalism, property rights, and prosperity.

Contrary to popular opinion, the notion of the separation of church and state isn't a liberal ideology, it references the First Amendment to the Constitution:

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Previously, the church and state were the same thing. Government was intended to be sovereign—our provider, our security, and our savior. Separating the two entities in this new government system allowed the individual freedom to worship the Creator, not the government.

The amazing thing about our Constitution is that it guarantees freedom for all religions. Americans are free to practice their faith as Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and the like, as long as it is done peacefully and within the boundaries of the law.

Governed by God

Fast-forward two hundred years. In post-post-modern America there is a notion that separation of church and state means that government and governing institutions should not be influenced by Christianity *in any way*. Advocates for this erroneous interpretation of the church-and-state debate have been slowly pecking away at the foundation

of our Constitution, especially with respect to freedom of religion.

There is no factual or historical basis for the removal of Christianity from the Rule of Law in America. As mentioned above, our Constitution is built on the foundation of biblical Christianity. The brave young men who rebelled against the tyrannical government in England understood this truth.

William Penn, the colonist who purchased Pennsylvania said, “Men must be governed by God or they will be ruled by tyrants.” Penn’s hope for Pennsylvania was for it to become a refuge for Quakers and other persecuted people groups. He had a vision for building an ideal Christian commonwealth.⁷

Like many others, Penn understood that if we reject the protections offered through the natural order which God established at creation, we leave ourselves open to be exploited by power-hungry dictators and oppressors.

Make no mistake. It is *impossible* to separate Christianity from politics. Did you know that 37 of the 39 books of the Old Testament in the Bible were written to, about, or by political leaders? The historical books of the Old Testament outline the founding, establishment, and subsequent fall of the nation of Israel. We see kings, judges, tribal elders, and oppressive foreign governments mentioned throughout Scripture.

Moses established local governments to rule over the millions of Israelites in their temporary camps.

[Moses] chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders over the people. He put them in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. These men were always available to solve the people's common disputes. They brought the major cases to Moses, but they took care of the smaller matters themselves (Exodus 18:26-28).

Prophets in ancient days served as consultants to kings. They were political advisors! They were not men with long robes that stood at the entrance to the temple and chanted. And as we see with Jeremiah, Nathan, and Ezra, many of them had a seat at the table and the ability to direct both foreign and domestic policy. The prophet Nehemiah served on the cabinet for the Persian King Artaxerxes and eventually led a coalition of Jews to return to Israel after years of living in exile.

It's Not You, It's Me

Please don't be fooled. The fight to extrapolate Christianity from modern society isn't an innocent misunderstanding or the expression of another viewpoint, it's a coup attempt. America is under siege. The attempt to obscure Christianity in American government by some in leadership is part of a larger plan to "fundamentally transform America"

by creating separation between modern America and the Constitution.

When disenfranchised young people, graduates of our state-run colleges and universities, began vandalizing and tearing down historic monuments and statues, they weren't protesting American's racist roots. If this were true, they wouldn't have toppled the statue of a Catholic priest and Abraham Lincoln, the man accredited with liberating the slaves.⁸

No, the rioters were protesting our *Christian* roots, not our racists roots.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that every government is guided by some type of belief system. Democracy is shaped by Christian principles. In contrast, Communism is guided by Marxism, and Sharia Law is directed by Islam.

Sharia Law, as observed in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other countries in Asia and Africa, extracts guidance from the Quran on penalties for behavior. For example, theft is punishable by amputation of the hands (Quran 5:38).⁹

Separation Anxiety

Many Americans are confused about the need for creating barriers between religious institutions and the government. These are the same individuals removing the Ten Commandments from

walls of courtrooms. They reason that separating church and state means our legal system shouldn't be influenced by Christianity. But the separation of church and state was never about protecting the government from the church! Many in power today would like us to believe that, but it's simply not true.

The purpose of separating the church and state was *to protect individuals from the government, not the other way around*. Separation of church and state was always intended to guard our personal freedoms, not to protect the government from Christianity.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding is that historically, when a government deliberately rejects Judeo-Christian principles—such as capitalism and free markets, the sanctity of human life, and the ability of private citizens to own property—it does not bode well for that country's citizens. We'll discuss these principles more in upcoming chapters.

Just within the last one hundred years we've seen the rejection of these principles of governance in Germany, Cuba, Venezuela, and North Korea.

In 1960, one of the first things the rebel leaders did during the revolution in Cuba was to cut off the food supply, as a means of forcing submission. Shortly after that, they destroyed churches

and killed pastors because religion is viewed as an enemy of the state. The regime was confident that if they could indoctrinate the people – particularly the youth – Communism would take a firm hold in the hearts and minds of the Cuban people.

I was surprised to discover that even Germany was a democracy prior to 1933. Hitler and other Nazi leaders disrupted the democratic process by burning down the Reichstag, their parliamentary building, one week before the election was to take place.¹⁰ Hitler capitalized on the chaos to seize power. Within the next forty-eight hours, he unlawfully imprisoned and tortured four thousand of his political enemies.¹¹

German society, which previously valued human life, was soon replaced with Hitler's version of Darwinism. Evolutionary theory suggests that different races of people evolved at different times and rates, causing one race to be superior to another. And while some don't believe Darwin ever fully envisioned the consequences of this flawed line of thinking, many believe Adolf Hitler's obsession with racial purity and the demonization of the Jews was fueled by Darwin's conjecture.

We all know what happened soon after that with the ethnic cleansing campaign that began with the elimination of its most vulnerable populations: the sick, elderly, and children.

When Christianity and its governing principles are removed from government, individual rights and freedoms are often sacrificed in the process.

The Fall of Democracy

It's hard to imagine that our beautiful Democracy in America – built and paid for by the blood and sweat of the brave founders – could ever be destroyed. But history tells us otherwise.

Even the mighty Roman empire fell, the super-power that encompassed much of the known world for over five hundred years. Historians don't agree on the precise reasons, but most concur that political corruption and over-spending were significant reasons.

How exactly does a democracy fall? ...

The above excerpt is from [Through the Lens of Love & Truth](#),
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 9: The Pursuit of Liberty.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

2

The Seduction of Socialism

There's a long list of failed experiments with socialism. The widespread devastation caused by World War II left many countries scrambling for new solutions. European colonialism—the practice of Great Britain and other wealthy countries exerting political and military authority over many smaller territories in order to exploit them for cheap labor and abundant natural resources—had failed. Countries previously controlled by Great Britain or other nations were finally establishing their independence.

Future leaders fighting to gain power across the world saw socialism—in one form or another—as a shortcut to economic prosperity for their struggling countries. If the government controlled all means of production, they reasoned, wealth could be redistributed evenly so that everyone would benefit. This proved to be an illusion in every case.

Some of these experiments began quite innocently. Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, East Africa, sincerely believed that he could rebuild the country and increase its wealth. But instead of creating economic prosperity through a market economy, Nyerere ordered all citizens to abandon their private property and move to collective farms where the government would redistribute the spoils. Instead of generating wealth, these policies proved to be very inefficient and led to more bureaucracy.

The people, now pushed to the brink of starvation, rebelled and burned down the villages.

Nyerere's flawed logic had tragic consequences: massive food and gasoline shortages. Government corruption exploded because it now held all the power. Instead of creating prosperity, his actions led to wide-scale starvation and despair.¹²

Other emerging leaders were not as naïve. Their promise to create a utopian society was nothing more than an elaborate and deliberate grab for power. Mao Zedong in China, for example, pledged his countrymen the one thing they all wanted: life-long, basic economic security. The Chinese people soon came to realize the cost was submission. The Chinese government controlled everything in their lives, including who they married and how many children they had. Even the clothes they wore and the books they read were dictated by the government.¹³

Many brutal dictators successfully sold this dream of *peace on earth*, only to devastate their country's economy, oppress their people ruthlessly, and crush any opposition. Vladimir Lenin promised Russia "Peace, Bread, and Land" in 1918; Jawaharlal Nehru promised India the end of poverty in 1947; Mao Zedong promised China there would be open debate in 1956;¹⁴ Fidel Castro promised Cuba prosperity in 1960; and Hugo Chávez promised Venezuela universal healthcare in 1998.

Contrary to popular opinion, socialism and Communism are more similar than they are different, and socialism leads to Communism more often than it does not. Regardless of the intention or methods, one thing is clear from history: every single experiment with variations of socialism has resulted in epic failure and untold human suffering.

Venezuela was once Latin America's richest country and one of its longest-running democracies. Hugo Chávez rose to power by promising the poorest citizens of his country that the government would take care of them, provide free healthcare, and lift them out of poverty. His plan was to redistribute Venezuela's great wealth, primarily from its vast natural resources. The lower class believed him and he was overwhelmingly elected in 1998.

It appeared to work for a time – until oil prices

plummeted. The government had abolished private industry and took over oil production. Under the new regime, production from oil refineries which had the capacity to produce 1.3 million barrels per day fell to 7,000 barrels per day. This was due to going years without maintenance and the breakdown of production systems.¹⁵ Government can never run businesses as efficiently as private industry.

A university study in 2017 testified that Venezuelans reported losing an average of twenty-four pounds of body weight from starvation¹⁶ in one year after their government oversaw the destruction of its democracy and economy, plunging much of the country into desperate poverty.¹⁷

Poverty, I've observed, is a political construct. Governments control the economic wellbeing of their citizens in the same way that a puppet master moves the strings on the marionette.

Democratic Socialism

This same promise of social utopia has been repackaged and sold in America as democratic socialism. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, New York Congresswoman, promised single-payer health-care, tuition-free public colleges, and a guaranteed living wage to all Americans in an interview with Business Insider in March of 2019.¹⁸

I feel like I've seen this movie before, and it doesn't end well.

Let's not forget that we already have a prototype of socialized medicine in the United States. It's called the VA. The Veterans Health Administration has the largest integrated health care system in the United States. Its 1,255 health care facilities, including 170 VA Medical Centers and 1,074 outpatient sites serve 9 million Veterans each year.¹⁹

The CBS hit drama *Seal Team* aired an episode in April of 2019 exposing the VA system. This episode, appropriately named "Medicate and Isolate," highlights the struggle of a veteran by the name of Brett Swann who was seeking help for his war injuries.²⁰ Finally, after years of failing to hold down a job and losing every important relationship in his life, Brett recognizes that he suffered a traumatic brain injury during one of his many deployments.

He schedules another appointment at the VA, fully knowing what to expect. The show captures the long waiting lines, poor service, and hopelessness of many of the veterans waiting to be seen. After sitting in the waiting room for over eight hours, the receptionist tries to reschedule Brett's appointment—for over two months away! After being coerced by Brett's friend, the doctor eventually agrees to see him.

When Brett is finally seen, the doctor acknowl-

edges that his symptoms definitely could have resulted from an explosion he encountered in Iraq ten years earlier. But since his injury went undiagnosed by doctors at the time of the event, the VA system rejects Brett for treatment for his brain injury. Instead, the overworked doctors and staff have no other option but to prescribe Brett with more anti-depressants.

The episode culminates when Brett – recognizing that he’s out of options and hope – takes his own life in the parking lot of the VA facility. Yes, Brett is a fictional character and this is a drama series, not a documentary. However, CBS accurately captured the essence of the VA system and how it has failed some of our most faithful citizens.

The VA medical system developed after World War II granted power to the government to make healthcare decisions for our nation’s Veterans. Although the system still works in many cases because of the dedicated medical professionals the government employs, the VA system has suffered several black eyes in recent years.

In 2014, a scandal involving then President Obama’s mishandling of Veterans Affairs came to light. A Newsmax article disclosed how 35 veterans that year died while waiting for appointments to be seen at VA medical facilities, just in the Phoenix area. Across the country, at least another 24

veterans have died while waiting for care.²¹

Although still not perfect, the VA has turned the corner. The MISSION Act, under President Trump, took effect in June of 2019 and privatizes some care. This policy serves to give control back to Veterans to make decisions over their own healthcare.

Europe and Socialism

Many have claimed that socialism is working in Europe; however, this depends on your definition of success. There is a lot of confusion among Americans – understandably – concerning European politics.

Democratic socialists typically cite Sweden, the Nordic country in Northern Europe, as the example of where socialized medicine is successfully practiced. Sweden has a robust market economy predominantly comprised of privately-owned businesses which fund their vast social programs.²² Sweden has also benefited from staying out of World War II and other global conflicts which would have depleted their national reserves.

In other words, capitalism funds Sweden's socialized healthcare system and other government-run programs. The government can finance these programs because the average Swede is taxed at a rate of nearly 50%.

Even though Sweden benefited initially from

socialized medicine, the healthcare system has fallen behind in recent years. According to Stanley Feld M.D., FACP, MACE, “Swedes are losing interest in the concept of a socialist society. The complaint is that it is inefficient, and, in most areas, the socialistic system does not work to the benefit of the people.”²³

For example, the town of Solleftea in Northern Sweden has 20,000 residents. The only maternity ward in town was shut down in 2014 to save the government money. Since the closest maternity ward is now over 125 miles away from town, midwives offer classes on how to deliver babies in cars—a skill which has proven very useful in many instances.²⁴ In an article in a local paper entitled, “Sweden’s Healthcare is an Embarrassment,” author Johan Hjertqvist reports that waiting times in Sweden’s hospitals are among the worst in Europe.²⁵

The healthcare dilemma in Sweden has been exasperated in recent years by their immigration crisis. This crisis began in 2015 when over 100,000 refugees poured into the country from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq in just one year’s time seeking asylum. An additional 70,000 refugees applied for asylum in the following two years.²⁶

Swedes are very angry about the flood of immigrants pouring into their country and putting a strain on the healthcare system, delaying wait times for regular citizens.²⁷ To make matters worse,

Sweden's over-extended healthcare system is one of the most expensive systems in all of Europe. Despite the scarcity of hospital beds, long wait times, and shortage of doctors and nurses, Sweden spends 11% of its GDP on healthcare.²⁸

The welfare state created by liberal immigration policies is creating an unsustainable financial crisis in Sweden. The country of 9 million citizens—slightly larger than the population of New York City—has now committed to providing care to hundreds of thousands of refugees for life. The citizens of Sweden fear the long-term political, cultural, and economic effects to their country that only time will tell.

Other countries in Europe are not faring much better...

The above excerpt is from Through the Lens of Love & Truth,
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 10: Socialism Distancing.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

3

Capitalism for Sale

Capitalism has created more wealth and opportunity worldwide than any other economic system throughout history. According to Brett Bair in his video series “The Unauthorized History of Socialism,” capitalism has been responsible for lifting over a billion people out of poverty.²⁹

The United States of America—under capitalism—has held the reputation of the largest economy in the world since 1871. The United States holds a 23.6% share (nearly a fourth) of the world’s economy with an annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$21.44 trillion. The bottom 173 countries combined comprise less than one-fourth of the total global economy.³⁰

An individual who makes just \$34,000 annual income is in the top 1% of the richest people in the world, and half of the world’s wealthiest individuals live in the United States!³¹

Often citizens of other countries have the notion that ALL Americans are wealthy. Many developing countries welcome American tourists; some even beg for them to come to their country. I can personally attest to this truth, having traveled to Uganda, Rwanda, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

Our kids would concur with this, too. Our older two children have deployed to Kuwait, Afghanistan, Guam, and Qatar at various times while enlisted in the Air Force, and our youngest visited Myanmar with his youth group. They have visited some of the poorest regions in the world. Even in countries that have leadership that hate us, everyone wants what Americans have. It seems they know that – more than any other country – Americans are willing to share their wealth.

According to a MarketWatch article, “The United States is the No. 1 most generous country in the world for the last decade.”³² Americans are some of the most charitable individuals in the world, giving more than \$427 billion in 2018 to US charities alone, to say nothing of charities worldwide providing relief to children and adults of impoverished countries. It’s possible that this number is actually much higher since many have stopped claiming tax deductions for their charitable donations after the 2017 tax overhaul.³³

Three reasons pointing to why capitalism is the

superior economic system include: incentive, innovation, and competition, according to Mike Huckabee in his book *The Three C's That Made America Great* (p. 123). We'll explore these below.

Incentive: Unlike socialism, Communism, and other similar systems, capitalism rewards individuals for hard work. Other systems create dependence and penalize motivation. Without the motivation to improve, individuals, companies, teams, and even governments can become complacent.

My first experience coaching soccer came in my late 20s when I was the assistant coach for a boys' middle school team. In soccer, only 11 players are on the field at the same time and we had a roster of 33 players! This is every coach's nightmare. The team wasn't very good and I soon came to understand why.

The head coach's philosophy was that everyone got equal playing time. The players loved the idea that everyone had the same chance to play – at first.

Every game, regardless of our competition, resulted in a similar outcome. We would be competitive for the first 20 minutes, until the substitutions began. He would take out our top guys and sub in less skilled players. By the third round of substitutions, we had people on the field who had never played soccer before. They only joined the team to get out of their 8th period classes. We lost

every game that year.

Halfway through the season Ben, our star player—the only one who could score—quit the team. He felt it made more sense to focus his energy on his Olympic Development team. With our team, he was not rewarded with more playing time for his skill or effort. Instead, the weakest players on the team were incentivized to stay without any expectations from them.

The next year I got my own team and never used that system again. The players who had invested the most time and intensity in developing their skills and getting in shape received the most playing time. Everyone had an opportunity to play but had to first prove their commitment to help the team.

Innovation: Capitalism rewards innovation, but socialism suppresses it. During the 2020 economic shutdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, innovation proved to be king. There was still profit to be made, but companies and individuals had to show ingenuity in order to overcome the drastic economic downturn due to restrictions.

Restaurants and the service industry were hit particularly hard during this time. Many closed their doors permanently. Others, however, thrived under the adversity. Sebastian Oveysi, Iranian-born

chef and co-owner of Amoo's in Washington, DC, devised another plan when sales plummeted 65 percent at the beginning of the pandemic.

"Our family survived a revolution and the extremism that followed it. Then we escaped through a border covered in mines," said Oveysi. "We can get through a pandemic, too."³⁴ The business purchased a food truck and posted the truck's adventures on social media. Homeowners associations throughout the area took notice and now he has bookings every week.

Necker's Toyland, a toy store in Simsbury, Connecticut, that's been in business since 1948, also had to get creative. Sales at their retail stores tanked during the lockdowns, for obvious reasons. They began offering a FaceTime browsing option, virtually walking kids around the store, so they can pick out something that would keep them busy during the quarantine.³⁵

Competition: Competition is a key reason why capitalism works. Competition forces down prices and creates accountability. When there is no competition—as in the case of major retailer Amazon and electronics lynchpin Apple—consumers lose their ability to control the market. Instead, the companies are in charge: they can hike prices, be careless with quality, and buy out prospective competition.

Competition benefits everyone. Competing companies benefit from increased marketing which exponentially expands consumer exposure. Bottled water is a prime example of an industry benefiting from product awareness. Even though the company Poland Spring began selling bottled water to summer visitors of their Maine resort in 1845, and Perrier mineral water began advertising in popular American magazines in 1910,³⁶ it wasn't until later in the twentieth century that bottled water became relevant. In the 1990s various US companies such as Deer Park, Nestle Pure Life, Arrowhead, Niagara, Smartwater, and others began producing bottled water, creating more attention and demand for the product.

The main reason many government agencies are notorious for poor service is because of the lack of competition. The Disney movie *Zootopia* released in 2015 comically portrays this stereotype. Judy Hopps, the bunny cop trying to solve a case, is delayed when she needs assistance at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Much to her dismay, all the employees at the DMV are sloths! (Sloths are the notoriously slow-moving mammals from South America who have become synonymous with the idea of being idle and lazy.) Needless to say, service at the DMV was extremely slow that day.

The school system in America has also fallen into

this trap. The lack of competition in public schools has produced disastrous results, particularly in low income areas. According to the 2019 Nation's Report Card, only slightly more than one-third of eighth graders are proficient in reading.³⁷ The high spot of the report is that forty percent of fourth graders are proficient in math. Sadly, the good news equates to less than half of all ten-year-olds having advanced math skills.

Some areas of the country scored worse than others. Within the Baltimore City Public Schools, only thirteen percent of fourth graders tested above proficiency in reading.³⁸ Another alarming statistic points to the fact that nine-out-of-ten black boys in Baltimore City can't read at their current grade level. That means that in this region 90% of black men grow up without basic reading skills. Also, in over a dozen high schools across the district, not a single student tested proficient in math.³⁹

To be clear, I have great respect for teachers. I personally know many, many exceptional professionals in this field. The problem isn't our teachers, it's the bureaucracy which eliminates competition and breeds complacency, particularly in minority neighborhoods.

For this reason, the Trump Administration and many of its supporters have declared School Choice—the ability of parents to use their own

tax dollars to send their children to the school of their choosing—the Civil Rights issue of our time. Kim Klacik, the Republican candidate for Maryland’s 7th District, ran her campaign based on the platform of how school choice seeks to break the “school-to-prison-pipeline” fueled by tragically ineffective schools in many inner cities.⁴⁰

Proponents of school choice are confident this policy would force underperforming schools to improve by introducing competition within the public school system. When multiple schools are competing for the same students, schools will need to improve methods and results in order to stay viable.

The Downside of Capitalism

If you were to ask ten people the downside of capitalism, most likely nine of them would say greed.

It’s true; there are many greedy people in our capitalistic society. Wealthy hedge-fund investors on Wall Street come to mind. Bernie Madoff, former chairman of the NASDAQ (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations) stock market became notorious for operating the largest Ponzi scheme in history. A Ponzi scheme is an elaborate financial scam where early investors are repaid with money received from later investors, not actual investment income.⁴¹

Madoff exploited his relationships with wealthy businessmen in New York and Florida in order to attract more investors. When he paid out handsome dividends (by using other people's money), these influential individuals encouraged their friends to invest with him, also. Madoff was indicted in 2009 when he plead guilty to fraud, money laundering, and other crimes. He is still serving his sentence in federal prison.

To say that capitalism is fueled by greed, however, is not substantiated.

Jay W. Richards dispels this myth in his book, *Money, Greed and God* (HarperOne, 2009). There is a difference between selfishness and self-interest, according to Richards. Capitalism is driven by self-interest because it seeks mutually beneficial transactions. For example, if you are a real estate agent you look to sell to people who need what you're offering—a home. Free markets exist because some have needs and others have products/services to fulfill those needs. Looking out for our self-interests isn't selfish, it's necessary for survival.

There's plenty of room for corruption in any economic system, whether it be socialism, capitalism, or any variation in between. The difference lies in who controls the power.

In capitalism, for example, the consumer is in control. Individuals have the option of choosing

the car they will purchase, the house they will buy, the college they will attend, and the amount of savings they will invest. Unfortunately, unsuspecting consumers can be exploited by greedy, unscrupulous actors into investing in products or services which yield less than optimal returns.

Everywhere you look, powerful corporations are inventing ways to manipulate the customer. Advertisers invest millions to persuade and even coerce us. Most of us have been caught up at one time or another – and to one degree or another – by their deceptive plots. But, at the end of the day, the consumer is still in charge.

In socialism, however, the government is in power. Those who hold political power make all the decisions, as we discussed last chapter. This is why socialized medicine is not the answer. Yes, you may not have to pay for your doctor's visits, but a government bureaucrat decides which doctor you will see, when you will see them, what procedures you are authorized to have, and which doctor will operate. You may not get a bill in the mail, but you have lost control over your own care.

Capitalism isn't perfect, but it's worlds better than any other economic system.

Wealth and Poverty

The idea that capitalism contributes to poverty is another myth. Compelling evidence proves that the opposite is true...

The above excerpt is from Through the Lens of Love & Truth,
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 11: Capital Gains.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

4

Race War

2020—The year that went through the cheese shredder.

Like many, I distinctly remember December 31, 2019. No one had any idea of the oppression, despair, and isolation that would fall on us like a heavy coat just weeks later. A global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus originated in Wuhan, China and was subsequently exported to all of the known world. Just like that, everything changed.

There is nothing you could have told me on December 31 to make me believe that eating at a restaurant, sitting at a coffee shop, casual “retail therapy,” attending sporting events, or even gathering with our family for Easter were in danger of extinction, or even temporary disruption. Essentially overnight, large events like parades and baseball games, vacations, international travel, and even attending church were banned.

By early May we were all begging for 2020 to be canceled with no refunds and no returns. But we still had over six months to go.

Memorial Day approached and we felt as if some relief was in sight. The warm weather gave hope that everything would soon return to normal. And then June rolled in like hurricane. A video surfaced of a black man by the name of George Floyd with the foot of a white police officer on his neck in Minneapolis, causing protests to erupt over all the country.

These peaceful protests—guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States—soon gave way to chaos, vandalism, and anarchy. Months of lockdowns exacerbated the need for people to express themselves. City after city saw unprecedented looting, burning, and destruction of businesses and personal property. Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Baltimore, MD; and Washington, DC, fared the worst.

After a week of protests and riots, something odd happened. Rather than diffusing and everyone going back to live as normal, the demonstrations intensified. Week after week protests and violence continued. Portland, Oregon, saw over 100 continual days of riots.⁴² Many of the businesses burned to the ground during the unrest were owned by minorities. Clearly this was no longer about pro-

testing the killing of an unarmed black man. The entire county seemed to be in chaos.

The unrest escalated. Calls to defund and dismantle police departments erupted across the entire country. Soon every news channel talked daily about racism and the need for “social justice” in America.

The Big Question

Is America systemically racist? That’s the question. Unfortunately, many Americans are buying into this notion without even understanding what systemic racism means. My answer is yes, unfortunately there are elements of systemic racism in our county. BUT, it’s not in the way you think.

The term systemic comes from the root word “system.” A system of racism does not originate at retail level (with an individual). Systems are developed at the top of the pyramid with the higher positions of leadership, not the bottom.

Of course, there will always be certain individuals who act inappropriately. I don’t deny individual racism exists, because it does. We all have heard about truly awful things which have been said and done to black folks and other minorities. Furthermore, I certainly don’t condone it. We are all human beings created in the image of God, for whom Jesus died. But the idea that all of American society is defined by a few hateful individuals is a very different claim.

Systemic racism implies that minorities are denied the ability to thrive in America. This simply is not true. Ironically, professional athletes and Hollywood elites are typically the first ones to lecture on the subject of the oppression of minorities, and yet nowhere in America do we find more wealthy, successful black and brown individuals than in these two demographics!

One look at Forbes Magazine “Highest-Paid Athletes of 2020” confirms the truth that ethnicity is not a key determining factor in one’s success in the field of athletics.⁴³ In fact, the sport these athletes compete in has more impact on their earnings than their race. Basketball players in the top 100 highest paid athletes, for example, cumulatively earned \$1.2 billion, while tennis players on this list collectively made \$245 million.

The notion that the average Caucasian in America is racist is also unfounded. One of the greatest evidences of this is “Just Sam,” a poor, young black woman from the Frederick Douglass Houses in Harlem, New York City who used to sing in the subways to pay the bills. She won *American Idol* in 2020. This highly rated singing competition is a television series that decides its finalists based on nationwide audience voting. Just Sam was voted the number one finalist by millions of American Idol fans across the country.

Our democratic system of governance is the only one on the planet which acknowledges every human being is created equal in the sight of God and has the opportunity to pursue happiness. Our Constitution guarantees equal opportunity, but not equal outcomes.

Galatians 3:28 says, “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The Bible makes it clear that God does not play favorites. He sent his only Son to die for our sins so that ALL may have eternal life.

Divided We Stand

Remarkably, the great divide between races seems to have reappeared lately. Looking back as recently at 2016, the discussion about racial tensions seemed to be fading. Morgan Freeman, famous for his roles in *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Bruce Almighty* commented on the ridiculousness of Black History Month in an interview with Mike Wallace on CBS’ *60 Minutes*.⁴⁴ During the 2008 interview, Freeman also said that the best way to end racism is to stop talking about it.

During a 2014 interview with CNN’s Don Lemon, Freeman rejected the idea that being born Black in America was an obstacle. “I don’t think wealth and genetics have anything to do with each other, actually,” the 80-year-old Freeman said. “Put your

mind to what you want to do and go from there.”⁴⁵

Even Whoopie Goldberg, host on *The View*, commented in 2016 that the Academy Awards “can’t be that racist because she once won a prized trophy.”⁴⁶ She was one of many black celebrities who denied claims of racial bias in the article.

Fast forward to 2020. Every news network is discussing racial issues, every day. An exacerbated race war has seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

Back in the Day

There was a time when American society was “systemically racist” ...

The above excerpt is from [Through the Lens of Love & Truth](#),
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 12: Race is On.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

5

Justice on Trial

The tragic death of George Floyd sent shock waves throughout the country. The call for “action for racial justice—to empower, support, and accelerate immediate solutions, as well as work toward long-term systematic transformation”⁴⁷ resonated throughout the United States.

But as time progressed, it became apparent that many of those protesting weren’t looking for immediate solutions or long-term systematic transformation—they were looking for anarchy. As cities burned, one prominent political group took center stage by exploiting the chaos—Black Lives Matter (BLM).

The seemingly organic demonstrations soon gave way to “mostly peaceful protests” and/or full-on riots in many major cities in America. Arsonists set fire to retail stores, police departments, vehicles, restaurants, and even federal buildings in Portland, Seattle, New York City, Chicago, and many other cities nationwide. Pictures of decimated busi-

nesses flooded the internet. Damages from looting and vandalism totaled more than \$2 billion.⁴⁸

Overnight, these demonstrations evolved into calls to “defund the police.” Within weeks, the BLM organization secured pledges from Corporate America in the amount of \$1.678 billion.⁴⁹ Bank of America, for example, pledged \$1 million. Nike, Sony Music Group, and Walmart pledged \$100 thousand. Google, Amazon, Spotify, and Facebook – not surprisingly – also wanted a part of the action and pledged thousands of dollars.

What is Social Justice

Many individuals and organizations sincerely wanted to help those oppressed by our “systemically racist culture” in America. As a result, many people, corporations, organizations, and even churches have jumped on the social justice bandwagon.

Given recent events, many of us are contemplating what exactly is social justice and what does it accomplish? Why does it suddenly appear that after decades of prosperity for Americans from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, many now can’t seem to find justice?

Consider the following definition of social justice:

Social justice is a political and philosophical theory which asserts that there are dimensions to the concept of justice beyond those embodied in the principles of civil or criminal law, economic supply and demand, or traditional moral frameworks. Social justice tends to focus more on just relations between groups within society as opposed to the justice of individual conduct or justice for individuals.

Historically and in theory, the idea of social justice is that all people should have equal access to wealth, health, well-being, justice, privileges, and opportunity regardless of their legal, political, economic, or other circumstances. In modern practice, social justice revolves around favoring or punishing different groups of the population, regardless of any given individual's choices or actions, based on value judgements regarding historical events, current conditions, and group relations. In economic terms, this often means redistribution of wealth, income, and economic opportunities from groups whom social justice advocates consider to be oppressors to those whom they consider to be the oppressed. Social justice is often associated with identity politics, socialism, and revolutionary communism.⁵⁰

One reason social justice is so troubling is because it's not interested in solving problems and creating solutions. Rather, it's about arbitrarily "favoring and punishing different groups of the population, regardless of any given individual's choices or actions" (see definition above). It's the opposite of

true justice; it subverts the natural order and, as a result, favors the strong while exploiting the weak. It's anti-justice in essence.

Consider the call to defund the police. Many believe this began with Floyd's death, but it didn't. Would you be surprised to learn that this movement began in the early 1900s?⁵¹ Dr. Michael Sawyer, and associate professor at Colorado College explains that the "abolition-democracy" is all about abolishing the institutions which oppress African Americans, and has been around for over a century. The issue of "systemic police violence" and the need to eliminate funding for these institutions first appeared in articles from the editor of Crisis Magazine in 1910.⁵²

This movement gained national attention in 2015 when then President Obama advocated for disbanding traditional police agencies and focusing on community policing.⁵³

The reality, however, is that the notion of disbanding police departments is not supported by the minority communities who have the most to lose. According to Newsweek, 81% of Black Americans don't want less police in their neighborhoods. As much as 20% of minorities want more of a police presence in their communities.⁵⁴

The city of Memphis, Tennessee, for example, had a crime rate in 2019 of 84-per-one-thousand

residents, making it one of the ten most dangerous cities in America. Individuals have a 1-in-12 chance of being a victim of violent crime, including murder, rape, robbery, and assault. A Memphis resident also has a 1-in-15 chance of being a victim of property crime, including burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft.⁵⁵

Following the unrest in the summer of 2020, several major cities witnessed a sharp spike in murders, according to Forbes Magazine.⁵⁶ While some have claimed no connection between reducing funding and manpower for police departments and increases in crime, there appears to be plenty of correlation. Several of the cities that began cutting funding for police departments—Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Washington D.C.—saw alarming increases in homicides.⁵⁷

New York City, for instance, made the news when Mayor Bill de Blasio slashed \$1 billion from the NYPD budget in June of 2020, and canceled a 1,200-person police recruiting class set to start the following month. The city saw a 77% increase in murder in the first six months of 2020, compared to all of 2019.⁵⁸

Justice in Action

True justice is an action, not a philosophical ideology. As discussed in the previous chapter, decades of poor legislation oppressed many Black

and Latino communities. The Three-Strikes provision in the 1994 Crime Bill increased sentences for non-violent drug offenders and made it more difficult for prisoners to be granted parole.

The Crime Bill imposed tougher sentences for those caught with crack-cocaine than those caught with powder cocaine. This disparity also seems to target minorities. According to former Rep. Keith Ellison, “Whites use cocaine, blacks use crack.”⁵⁹ Whites, according to this equation, get probation, blacks get a decade behind bars.⁶⁰

One individual caught up by the stricter sentencing guidelines resulting from the Crime Bill was Alice Marie Johnson. She was convicted in 1996 for her involvement with a crack-cocaine trafficking organization in Memphis, Tennessee. She was subsequently sentenced to life in prison without parole, even though this was her first offense. Johnson admitted her involvement with the drug trafficking organization but said that she didn’t actually sell drugs or make drug deals.⁶¹

Johnson’s case was brought to the attention of President Trump in 2018. Two weeks later – after serving 22 years in a federal prison – Johnson was granted clemency by the President and released from prison in June of that year. Johnson was a model prisoner during her time and became an ordained minister while incarcerated.

In order to systematically address the injustices imposed by the 1994 Crime Bill, President Trump signed into law The First Step Act (P.L. 115-391) in December of 2018. The legislation drew widespread, bi-partisan support. This law seeks to improve criminal justice outcomes by creating new mechanisms for maintaining public safety and decreasing the size of the federal prison population.⁶² This new law creates incentives for good behavior and participating in rehabilitation programs. Under this new directive, federal inmates convicted of non-violent crimes can earn up to 54 days of credit for every year of their *imposed* sentence, rather than every year of their served sentence.⁶³ This provision expedites the release of those who demonstrate model behavior, particularly those with extreme sentences.

The First Step Act of 2018 also includes humane measures. For example, the Federal Bureau of Prisons is required to house inmates as close to their primary residence as possible and practical. Some terminally ill and elderly prisoners can be granted home confinement for the remainder of their sentences.⁶⁴

Leo Terrell, a civil rights attorney and lifelong Democrat, commended President Trump and his Administration for doing more for the black community during his first four years in office than all

previous administrations combined in the last 50 years.⁶⁵

The Author of Justice

No one cares more for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized than God, the Creator of the universe and Author of mankind. God created social justice—it's called the natural order. God established justice for our protection.

“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's case” (Isaiah 1:17 ESV).

Scripture is clear about the way to achieve justice: do good, avoid evil, and help the oppressed. Justice in the Bible is not a vaguely defined concept; it's a measurement, and The Ten Commandments are the measuring stick. Psalms and Proverbs include many references to “just scales” and “true judgements.”

It baffles me how people within our culture—including pastors and spiritual leaders—think that in order to achieve social justice our country needs to fundamentally change. Many church leaders encouraged their congregations to march with Black Lives Matter to protest racial inequality, rather than take solid actions to correct injustice.

There is no greater guide to social justice than the Constitution of the United States, and no other

government on the planet that protects human rights more than America. The United States is the only country to offer “equal protection under the law.” The idea that you could defend yourself against injustice doesn’t even exist in many parts of the world. If you doubt this, I encourage you to speak to those who have fled from Cuba, the Soviet Union, or Iran to come to America.

Could it be that many of our leaders calling for “fundamental change in America” aren’t looking for justice, but instead looking for control? Social justice is an intentionally vague concept that can neither be proven nor disproven. It doesn’t provide a measuring stick, but instead creates an excuse for violence and vandalism when someone doesn’t get their way.

State of the Church

Many churches in America are in a peculiar position right now...

The above excerpt is from Through the Lens of Love & Truth,
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 13: Social Injustice.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

6

What in the World

With Tammy Summers

I view December 2019 much the same as I look back on August 2001, or how I would have thought about November 1941 had I been alive during the attack on Pearl Harbor. These dates mark a time in American history before the world changed forever, and there was no returning to things as we knew it.

When I was a teenager, I remember reading the book of Revelation in the Bible the same way I read George Orwell's *1984*—as science fiction. I couldn't picture any global event—war, natural catastrophe, or even a nuclear bomb—who's impact could affect the entire world at the same time. This would never happen in my lifetime, I concluded.

And then the Coronavirus pandemic originating in China spread to 180 countries worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.⁶⁶

The one-world government needed to usher in the Anti-Christ also seemed far-fetched. As an American, I had a nearly impossible time picturing a scenario where one body would rule over all the countries. I could see this happening in Eastern Europe or Africa, as in the case of British Colonialism, but could never envision every country being under one ruler.

And then a video appeared on social media in 2020 of American politicians from both parties over the past twenty years talking about the need for a “New World Order.”⁶⁷ China, one member said, needs to be brought into the New World Order; Ted Turner stated that the United Nations should be the global police.

Nowadays, future events predicted by the Bible to occur in the last days sound peculiarly similar to the evening news. Even though there has always been political tension, environmental disasters, and racial division in our country, this is different. Recent events have unleashed chaos in unprecedented ways.

The intent of this chapter isn't to debate theological positions related to biblical prophecy, or to say that Jesus is coming back tomorrow. However, the apparent connection between current events and future events predicted in Scripture is too similar to regard as coincidence. I don't believe in coinci-

dence. I believe that God is trying to capture our attention.

Bible prophecy predicts exactly what is unfolding before our eyes. Jesus tells us to be alert and watch for the signs of his coming. If God didn't want us to know the circumstances surrounding the return of Jesus, He wouldn't have told us. But He did...

The above excerpt is from Through the Lens of Love & Truth,
For more on this subject, please see Chapter 14: What in the World.
(Available on [Amazon](#) or at www.loveandtruthbook.com)

Thanks for reading!

Please contact Amy at loveandtruthbook@gmail.com
for questions.

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Thanks for reading!
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