

# The Truth Behind AMERICA'S MORAL CRISIS

by Gene H. Hogberg

An all-out assault on spiritual values and the family is reaping a bitter harvest.

**T**HE ROLE of religion and morality in modern society emerged as a big issue in the 1984 election campaign in the United States.

Religion and politics—or religion *versus* politics, as some view it—threatens to become an even more explosive issue during President Ronald Reagan's second term.

During the '84 campaign, President Reagan found himself at the heart of the swirling controversy. He came out strongly against the continuance of legalized abortion, permitted under a 1973 Supreme Court decision. He also endorsed voluntary prayer in the nation's public schools. Until another Supreme Court decision, this time in 1962, opening-day prayers in American public school classrooms had been commonplace.

Mr. Reagan reacted forcefully to charges from those who worried about whether his position on these two issues undermined the guarantees provided for in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of reli-

gion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof."

The President's response was that the issue was not one of "establishing religion" but rather one of rekindling a traditional sense of religious-based public morality.

#### Appeal to Values

In a speech before the Economic Club of Chicago, the President declared that the nation had lived through a "hedonistic heyday" of false values. In the past few decades, he said, "Many of us turned away from the enduring values, the faith, the work ethic and the central importance of the family."

During the Republican convention in Dallas, Mr. Reagan appeared before a prayer breakfast. In his speech he said: We establish no religion in this country nor will we ever. . . . But we poison our society when we remove its theological underpinnings."

In the 1960s, said the President, "We began to make great steps in secularizing our nation. . . . Without God there is no virtue. Without God we are mired in the material. . . . without God democracy will not and cannot long endure."

Many, of course, disagreed with the President's analysis. Some accused him of playing into the

hands of the "Religious Right" in an attempt to force a change of moral direction in the country.

#### Collapse of Religious Guidance

Other influential circles, however, have been echoing the President's concerns.

On March 20, 1984, *The Wall Street Journal* carried a powerful lead editorial condemning the moral decay in the country over the past two decades. Significantly, the editors placed a great deal of the blame at the doorstep of organized mainline religion for not standing up to the rising tides of immorality. The fact that this powerful editorial appeared in a leading business daily, rather than in a religious publication, says something about the state of religion in America today. The editorial said:

"Basically what happened is that the new morality of big cities such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco was imposed on the rest of the country by movies, TV, magazines, advertising, music, novelists, playwrights and, through default, by organized religion."

American parents, continued the *Journal* editors, especially needed counterarguments to battle the inroads of "aggressive modern secularism" in order to restore moral

balance to their families and communities.

"But outside the evangelical and fundamentalist communities, that help never arrived. . . . Oh sure, the church doors are open every Sunday. But unhappily for those who enter, much contemporary American theology has come to be based in this period on a kind of dainty religious mush that has more in common with the sentiments of Rod McKuen and John Lennon than the precepts of Isaiah or St. John."

An insightful editorial, indeed.

One can be sure there have been, of late, precious few sermons based upon the admonitions contained in the first few chapters of the book of Isaiah.

If God's warnings contained in this prophecy had been believed and preached, there would have been, for example, thundering condemnations from the pulpits of the "new morality" of the "gay rights" movement. Instead, some denominations have chosen to justify homosexuality, overlooking that God bluntly refers to today's America and much of Western Europe as "you people of Gomorrah" and our leaders as being "rulers of Sodom" (Isa. 1:10, Revised Authorized Version throughout).

Too strong? Then think of this: The United States Conference of Mayors recently approved of a resolution recommending that "all levels of government adopt legal protections for the rights of gay and lesbian Americans."

One very significant result of the November U.S. elections was the emergence of the first city government dominated by openly gay politicians. Three of the five councilmen of the new city of West Hollywood, California, proclaimed that their election was a victory for homosexuals across the nation.

The United States, at the moment, is experiencing an upsurge in national pride and confidence. But this is largely superficial, fueled primarily by economic optimism.

The fact is, contemporary U.S. society is fundamentally sick "from the sole of the foot even to the head [with] wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" (Isa. 1:6). But there is no one to bind up these

afflictions, which are moral and spiritual in nature (verse 7).

God takes the "shepherds of Israel"—the self-appointed modern ministers of the land—to task because "the weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick" (Ezek. 34:2, 4).

"Who can heal you?" God asks in Lamentations 2:13. Apparently not most of the spiritual guides of today.

"Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions," God thunders. "They have not uncovered your iniquity"—exposed sinful practices to the light of God's Word (verse 14).

The false shepherds have not done as God's true servants have done in this age: "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. 58:1).

The result of this spiritual inat-

described as secular) have grown vocal enough and strong enough to . . . persuade the courts to conform to their view. . . .

"The net effect was to drive acknowledgment of God's existence almost totally out of the collective life of the American society—a development, as some noted, that came close to making atheism our state religion by default."

#### Lost Links to History

Americans are losing sight of their roots, as it is commonly expressed today; roots based upon spiritual and moral values, as preserved in the family unit.

Last January, an important speech was delivered at the Shavano Institute for National Leadership, at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan. It was given by Allan C. Carlson, executive vice president of the Rockford Institute. It was entitled "Our National Self-Confidence: Understanding Its De-



**In the United States, homosexuals are demanding full legal recognition. They are acquiring political power and are receiving tolerance from organized religion and the media.**

ention, writes William Rusher, publisher of *National Review*, is that the United States has become, in the public, collective sector, virtually an atheistic society by default. He wrote in a March 23, 1984, syndicated column:

"It is only in recent decades that atheist views (often more gently

cline and Supporting Its Renewal." Dr. Carlson's address was reprinted in the March 15, 1984, issue of *Vital Speeches of the Day*.

In his address Dr. Carlson traced the development of the nation's values and how they have been under incessant attack in recent times.

There is little question, he noted,

“that religious values motivated the broad generation of men and women who created this nation. As the great philosophers of republican liberty . . . understood, a free society must also be a religious society, a society where moral virtue restrains the passions and guides individuals toward the common good.”

Few outside the United States, and increasingly fewer *inside* the country, understand this heritage. One who did was the late Italian author Luigi Barzini.

In his book *The Europeans*, author Barzini, in a chapter devoted to “The Baffling Americans,” explained this often-overlooked fundamental factor in U.S. history: “The secret of the United States’ tremendous success was in reality not merely technology, know-how, the work ethic, the urge to succeed, or plain greed. It was a spiritual wind that drove the Americans irresistibly ahead from the beginning.

“What was behind their compulsion to improve man’s lot was an all-pervading religious sense of duty, the submission of a God-given imperative, *to a God-given code of personal behavior*, the willing acceptance of all the necessary sacrifices, including death in battle. Few foreigners understand this, even today. The United States appears to them merely as the triumph of soulless materialism.”

Mr. Barzini noted that the expressions of religious fervor that were so evident a century ago are now less visible. “They are feeble,” he said, “discredited by intellectuals, corroded by the doubts of these impious times, but without them, or what is left of them, America would not be what it is.”

The French observer of early American society Alexis de Tocqueville maintained that “there have never been free societies without moral values.” In the country’s early days, he noted, these values were nurtured by America’s women. A chief reason for the rising power of the Americans, he believed, was due to strong family life and especially “the superiority of their women.”

Today’s modern American

woman, unfortunately, all too often wants to be “liberated” from her key role of influence in the family unit, a role now propagated as being unfulfilling and inferior.

Returning to Dr. Carlson’s address, he laid the blame for America’s decline on the powerful institutions of the churches, the media and the social sciences—all of whom have been influenced to one degree or another by trend-setting radical views.

Regarding the social sciences, observed Dr. Carlson, they were still traditionally based into the 1950s. At that time, he said, “the field of family sociology was dominated by Harvard University’s Talcott Parsons, a man who believed the American family structure to be a vital social institution resting on a solid set of historic values.”

Yet, by 1970, Dr. Carlson continued, Dr. Parsons’ views were wholly out of favor. This was reflected in the “Forum 14 Report” of the 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth.

At this conference, said Dr. Carlson, “a representative sample of America’s most prominent sociologists dismissed the traditional American family as outdated, denied any American identity, and welcomed the contemporary movement ‘to destroy the cultural myth of a “right” or “best” way to behave, believe, work or play.’ . . . This group urged the adoption of a new definition of ‘family’ that would embrace ‘single parent,’ ‘communal,’ ‘group marriage,’ and ‘homosexual’ varieties.”

By the mid-1970s, such ideas dominated the sociological profession. These views, said Dr. Carlson, “shaped the attitudes and actions of a generation of teachers, marriage-and-family counselors, clergymen, psychologists, and so-called ‘sex therapists.’ When released on the world, their cumulative impact, simply put, was staggering.”

And what fruits were soon to be reaped from following such advocated life-styles?

In the 20 years after 1960, the number of children annually affected by divorce tripled. America’s illegitimacy ratio rose three-fold over the course of the 1960s and 1970s. The incidence of abor-

tion rose from less than 100,000 abortions each year in the early 1960s, to 570,000 in 1973—the first year of sanctioned abortions—and to 1.6 million in 1982.

The astute Dr. Carlson, near the end of his address, said: “I believe it is a mistake to assume that a national culture can openly flaunt hedonism and social irresponsibility as proper, even superior, ways of life and not then pay some major price. In countless ways, we are now reaping the bitter harvest.”

While all of this was occurring, what were the religious shepherds of the land doing? Were they busy warning their parishioners to remember the simple truth of Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”?

Their message should have been the straightforward admonition in the ignored book of Isaiah, where we find, in chapter 3, verses 10 and 11:

“Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”

Interestingly enough, this passage occurs immediately after the warning in verse 9: “And they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it.”

The men of Sodom proudly advanced their homosexual “lifestyle”—until destruction rained down on them from God in heaven! And today it’s fashionable for those who call themselves gay to “come out of the closet,” and, with an air of pride and defiance, to push for social reforms at the moral expense of society as a whole.

But God says—even though too few ministers do—“woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.”

AIDS—Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—is just such a “woe,” despite the heated denial of many in the homosexual community.

#### Leaders Mislead

Not only to the United States, but much of the rest of the developed English-speaking world, God thunders: “O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and  
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destroy the way of your paths” (Isaiah 3:12).

Leadership today encompasses far more than politics. It includes those in the fields of religion and education. And perhaps the most influential segment of society is the opinion-molding industry—the news and entertainment media.

Not long ago, a survey was taken of leading journalists, broadcasters and news executives in the United States. According to the poll, the “media elite” are strong supporters of sexual permissiveness, 90 percent agreeing that abortion should be legal, 54 percent believing that adultery is not wrong. More than three fourths of those interviewed believed that homosexuality is not wrong.

Shortly afterward, a like survey was taken of top television entertainment executives and producers. Similar percentages, generally even more liberal, were obtained. Reported the Associated Press on February 15, 1983, concerning this second survey: “Top Hollywood creators of the entertainment fare on television are predominantly secular in outlook, politically liberal and shun religion, a new study finds. It also finds that they seek to reform society toward their views. . . .

“‘Their value orientation is fundamentally different from that of the general public,’ says the report published in *Public Opinion*, a magazine of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington. ‘On such issues as abortion, homosexual rights and extramarital sex their views diverge sharply from traditional values.’”

Since President Reagan’s landslide victory this past November, certain segments of America have expressed a hope that fundamental changes in the nation’s directions were at last under way. Columnist M. Stanton Evans is not so sure. “The power of the media and academic elites,” he says, “the entrenched influence of economic and ideological interest groups, the very structure of the government system itself, are all arrayed on the other side, intent on stopping change and well-equipped to do so.”

## Lack of Right Knowledge

How far *down* America has come since its humble beginnings, since the days when a man or woman was not even considered educated unless he or she had read the Bible, and could display a fair degree of competence in understanding it.

Today, as President Reagan enters his second term, it is not considered any mark of ignorance to be unable to recite more than two or three of the Ten Commandments.

Our English-speaking nations indeed are being destroyed—from within—“for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). Not physical, material knowledge, but God’s revealed knowledge on the right way to live.

In the book *The Story of America*, published by the Reader’s Digest Association (1975), the editors wrote in the foreword entitled “Why It Happened Here”:

“Puritan historian Edward Johnson wrote in the 1650s that the Lord had ‘sifted a whole Nation to plant his choice grain’ in America’s rich soil. Two centuries later this

strain was still being played. Novelist Herman Melville believed that ‘we Americans are the peculiar chosen people, the Israel of our time’ . . . .”

It was easy for the forefathers of today’s Americans to become believers, noted the *Reader’s Digest* editors. “One had only to look around for full evidence of the Lord’s bounty. Here was some of the best agricultural soil on the face of the globe. Vast forests spread out for hundreds of miles, filled with deer, beaver, and wildfowl. . . . There were mountains of coal and iron ore, reservoirs of oil, and rich veins of gold and silver. This was truly a chosen land for a chosen people.”

Americans have lost sight of these roots. And its religious leaders have never understood the *deeper* roots of the American people—that indeed, they were not only “the Israel of our time” but, in the main, the descendants of the ancient lost House of Israel.

These immigrants to North America were destined, in this end time of human civilization, because of the obedience of the patriarch Abraham, the grandfather of Israel, to become the greatest single nation in world history. Very few have understood the depth of these roots, and why America flourished and why she is on the way down to oblivion unless there is a drastic course correction.

For the true understanding of the heritage—and destiny—of the United States, Britain and the developed English-speaking world, write for the book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. It will open your eyes to today’s world conditions as nothing else. □