

| AWAKENING & REVIVAL



WE DARE NOT SQUANDER THIS MOMENT

SOBER WARNINGS IN THIS GRAVE HOUR

BY MICHAEL BROWN, PhD

We are living today in one of the most critical moments in American history.

How we respond today will go a long way in determining the future of our nation—or whether our nation even continues to exist as the United States of America. That’s why the title of my October 2021 book was *Revival or We Die: A Great Awakening Is Our Only Hope*. There was no hyperbole in the title and no exaggeration in the subtitle. I believed then and believe now that, without a sweeping revival in the church that leads to a national awakening, America as we know it is doomed. We will either continue to fall into moral and spiritual confusion, ultimately crashing and burning, or we will break up entirely as a nation, pulling apart at the seams. Either way, without revival, we are in very critical condition.

But here’s the catch. Revival alone will not get the job done. Revival alone will not turn the tide. It must be a revival in

the church that leads to a reformation in the society—an outpouring that leads to awakening. Otherwise, to repeat, we are doomed. A powerful revival movement, without a national awakening, would just delay the inevitable or, worse still, simply make us more accountable. It really is revival and awakening or we die. Or do we really think that the right political candidate or the latest social program will solve our problems and cure our ills? Not a chance.

Much to Fix— But How!

How do we fix things when most American adolescents watch large quantities of graphic online pornography, and when most children are exposed to coarse porn by the age of 13 but some as little as seven? How do we fix that?

How do we fix things when 40% of our children are born out of wedlock and half of first-time mothers bearing children out of wedlock? CBS News reported that as far back as 2013, 83% of first births to non-high school graduates were to unwed mothers, and, “By 30, two-thirds of women will have had a



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child out of wedlock.” By 2019, America had the “world’s highest rate of children living in single-parent households,” Pew Research reported. What is the political or social solution to problems like these?

How do we fix things when Americans with no religious affiliation rose from almost 0% in the 1950s to almost one in three by 2021? In 2011, 75% of Americans identified as Christian. By 2021, that number had dropped to 63%, the most rapid drop in recorded polling history. How do we right the ship?

How do we fix things when there have been nearly 400 school shootings in the 25 years since Columbine? How do we fix things when every day we become more deeply and dangerously divided over important issues such as abortion, “transgender rights,” and free speech? What is the earthly solution?

Take something as simple (and apparently minor) as shoplifting. Even that has reached epidemic levels. As reported by David Marcus in the *Daily Mail*: “There is anarchy in the USA. More and more, Americans are living every day in a dystopia that just a few years ago would have been utterly unimaginable. From major cities to the border, and even in some suburbs, the rule of law is now all but meaningless, with hard-working families left to pay the price in blood and treasure. The America we grew up in—of bright shopping malls that weren’t attacked by thieving mobs, of gas stations where carjacking wasn’t commonplace, and of public transport that didn’t double as a homeless shelter—is vanishing. Last week came the sobering figure that our country now has [a] \$100 billion-a-year shoplifting habit. One hundred billion dollars. The annual budget for the entire

state of Maryland is a mere \$65 billion. And this is money that, according to the National Retail Federation, stores are never getting back. As brazen crooks stuff backpacks full of goods unchallenged, the police—crippingly over-stretched—will likely never even turn up.”

How do we fix all this or even begin to chip away at these problems, short of a sweeping spiritual revival that will produce a moral and cultural revolution? There is no other way to turn the tide.

The Hour Is More Urgent Than We Realize

Speaking to a group of Catholic priests around the year 2010, Cardinal Francis George (1937-2015) said, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history.” What profound words!

Cardinal George subsequently explained that he was responding to a question when he gave this spontaneous answer, which was “entirely outside of the current political debate.” And he noted that he “was trying to express in overly dramatic fashion what the complete secularization of our society could bring.” He certainly hit the nail on the head.

In my view, speaking as circumspectly and soberly as I can, the picture that George painted is entirely plausible, barring one thing and only one thing: sweeping revival that produces a radical reformation to our society. A spiritual renewal that is so deep that it births a societal awakening. Otherwise, the crash is inevitable. (Of course, if Jesus

returns in the next few years, this point would be moot.)

Some would protest that we’ve been here many times before in our history, with doomsayers repeatedly claiming that the end of the world was near. “It’s all over,” they shouted in years past. “America is doomed!” And yet here we are today, decades (or centuries) later, still economically strong, still powerful, still one nation. Perhaps I’m overstating things?

In point of fact, I’ve written extensively on this very subject, giving examples from our history of how, in fact, it appeared that it was all over for America (or at least for the church of America). Yet the tide turned, God poured out His Spirit and America marched on. Obviously the doomsday prophets were wrong. Perhaps my concerns will prove empty too?

But here is the three-fold, jarring reality:

1) It was powerful revival movements in the past that turned the tide and saved the nation. Nothing less will do today;

2) In many ways, we have been on a steady moral and spiritual decline since the counterculture revolution of the 1960s. So, it really is revival or we die;

3) There is no guarantee that America will not go the way of the Roman Empire, fading into oblivion, or have a fate similar to the USSR, breaking into fragments. (The Soviet Union dissolved into 15 independent states.) Show me where it is written that this will not happen to our country. Show me the chapter and verse.

After all, if the covenant nation, Israel, could suffer dispersal, exile and near complete destruction, continuing to exist as a people only because of the

sovereign mercy of God, why should we assume that America's blessed destiny is guaranteed? Again, I ask you: where is the chapter and verse that promise this?

Speaking at the commencement exercises at Harvard University in 1978, the famed Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn brought a sobering word to the graduating class. Describing the horrors of the Communist Revolution, he said, "If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible what was the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men had forgotten God; that is why all this has happened.'" Speaking of America, he said, "There are telltale symptoms by which history gives warning to a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, a decline of the arts or a lack of great statesmen. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy." And these words are from 46 years ago! I shudder to think what he would say if he were alive today.

We are, in so many ways, a nation that has forgotten God. To quote once more from this historic speech: "To destroy a people, you must first sever their roots." Could Solzhenitsyn have been any clearer?

Writing eight years earlier, in 1970, Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer spoke plainly of America as a post-Christian nation. As summarized by Joe Carter: "Yes, back in 1970, Schaeffer says the United States—not just continental Europe—was already post-Christian. He writes about the reality of historic Christianity becoming the minority in the West, stripped of cultural power and influence. And in this situation, Schaeffer identifies a great danger for evangelicals: taking sides with political elites in order to retain comfort, affluence and personal peace. In the face of societal chaos and upheaval, Schaeffer doesn't want Christians to compromise

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for the sake of short-lived comfort. In this remarkably prescient work, Schaeffer goes on to predict the inevitable loss of freedoms that will come once the Christian foundations of Western society have finally crumbled. And in response, Schaeffer calls for a kind of culture war—though not the sort of battles we might be imagining. Schaeffer wants a Christian revolution, the kind that looks like spiritual reformation."

Yet even a Christian thinker as brilliant as Schaeffer might struggle to find the right words to describe the current state of our nation, one in which...

» 13-year-old girls are encouraged by doctors to have their healthy breasts removed, simply because they are temporarily confused about their gender identity;

» men's bathrooms on college campuses have tampons, since "men can menstruate, too";

» you can be banned from social media for "deadnaming" or "misgendering" someone (for example, calling Caitlyn Jenner "Bruce" or referring to him as "he");

» music videos saturated with the most profane, graphic and degrading sexual imagery are watched or downloaded hundreds of millions of times;

» fentanyl overdoses have become the

leading cause of death for adults between 18 and 45;

» a Christian pastor who made reference to homosexual practice in a sermon 15 years earlier is disinvited from praying at a presidential inauguration while a gay bishop was invited to offer up special prayers by this same president four years earlier;

» a major sports team publicly honors an anti-Catholic, Jesus-mocking drag group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence;

» we have now more millennial witches than Presbyterians...

Need I say more?

Journalist and cultural commentator Christopher Rufo said, "The cultural revolution that began a half-century ago, now reflected in a deadening sequence of acronyms—CRT, DEI, ESG and more—has increasingly become our new official morality. Many conservatives have made an uneasy peace with this transformation of values, even as the culture around them has, in many places, collapsed. This attitude no longer suffices. It is time to break the loop of 1968. We need a counterrevolution."

He is absolutely right, but I would take this one step further. This counterrevolution must be gospel-based. That's why our only hope is a sweeping, national revival that turns into a powerful, cultural awakening. It is the purpose for my new book, *Turn the Tide*, to cast a vision for how this can be done—by the empowerment, grace and guidance of our Lord. ◀

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