

# Christian Action Ministry Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

Sept—Oct, 2020 ☆ Vol. 30, Number 04

# Inside

## The Fatal Sequence of Nations

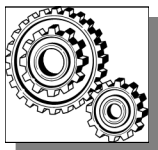
*Alexander Tytler's famous Quote on the longevity of nations*

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## The fourth verse of our National Anthem

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If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please call 802-655-0280, email, or contact our website (see back page)



**In the Works**

### Basic Voter Guide

Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 802-370-9560.

## Oil, Vinegar, Maple Syrup!

By  
Lauston Stephens

In a previous article, I stated, “America is the most individualistic culture on the planet; we are out of balance and this is a factor in many of our social ills.” Consider these points.

No one is ethnically American unless by that we mean a member of one of the over 500 recognized First Nations peoples. Ethnic identity remains throughout time; see Rev. 5:9. It appears that we feel a need to know this identity. Over 26 million have paid more than a few dollars to find out.<sup>1</sup> This is a harmless yet real symptom of the human need for communal identity.

There are more serious symptoms. Major problems will always have several contributing factors. This is not one total explanation for any of them, but we are looking at a common factor.

One study found “...several significant correlations between youth suicide, especially among males, and cultural attrib-

utes of Western societies, notably individualism.”<sup>2</sup>

Regarding another major problem, “Social factors are involved at every stage of the development of and recovery from a substance use disorder.”<sup>3</sup> Lack of healthy community contributes to drug addiction and community is important in recovery.

Different definitions are used for the term “mass shooting” and studies don’t come to the same conclusions about just how isolated shooters were before their day of infamy, but our cultural emphasis on individualism provides the least restraint on such actions.

Now, all people and cultures are being tested by a pandemic. The previous article, (Jan./Feb, 2020), pointed out that all cultures are sinful, not because they are individualistic or communal, but because they are created and expressed by sinful people. Chinese police ordered Dr. Li Wenliang to recant his

warnings about the COVID-19 virus. An unrighteous expression of an ethic of community more concerned with keeping “face” and an appearance of harmony than with public health and safety, prevailed to the neglect of the autonomy of the doctor and frustrated his efforts to do good. We in the West wonder, “How can people be like that? How much harm might have been spared globally if they had not done that?”

On the other hand, Americans have attacked and even killed store employees over as simple a thing as wearing a mask and the largest retailer in the world backed off their policy that was intended for the safety of workers and customers. Unrighteous expressions of an ethic of autonomy frustrated efforts for the public good. People in the East may well say, “How can people be like that? No wonder America has the highest death count.”



**“And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue his blessings upon this nation.”**

*From President John Adams' Inaugural Address 1797*

The sinful nature of humanity shows up differently in different places but it is the same fallen nature.

The Church in America can and must become better at being a true community. Jesus did not say, “By this everyone will know you are my disciples, by what you do on Sunday.” Are we to answer the ills of our nation just one day a week? We are not called to be a gathering of highly individualistic, isolated strangers addicted to electronic devices even in church. A church may use an organizational chart to depict ministries, but that is not the church. We are the family of God and, yes, even in Vermont, a congregation can be large enough that “community” is a better description than “family.”

“Your adversary the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”<sup>4</sup>

Predators like lions isolate their prey from the herd or flock. Suicide rates, levels of drug addiction, and mass violence indicate our adversary is having a heyday with America. Without a doubt, many emigrated to this country to escape sinfully oppressive communal cultures and circumstances but we have swung from one extreme to another. What would a healthy spiritual community look like that would guard against isolation?

We can improve on the “salad bowl” metaphor. America has been described as a “melting pot.” This is realistic because it suggests change over time. However, we have a history of enforced assimilation so a “salad bowl” metaphor has come into vogue, suggesting a sociological “still life.”

Anyone who puts onion in their salad knows the ingredients affect one another and

America is not a “still life.” Also, it has been suggested that government and the market are the salad dressing. Government and the market are institutions, structures; they are the salad bowl that holds the ingredients close to one another.

The dressing that we need is a vinaigrette and there are many. An ethic of community is the oil that provides a lubricating pursuit of harmony. An ethic of autonomy, as the vinegar or lemon juice, provides the astringency of individualism. Oil and vinegar naturally separate and do not stay mixed; cultures tend to sinful extremes of collectivism or individualism. Maple syrup is a natural emulsifier which can keep the other ingredients in suspension.

The previous article showed the correlation between the ethics of commu-

nity, autonomy, and divinity and the moral emotions of shame, guilt, and fear. In the Church, the fear of the Lord helps motivate us to keep a healthy balance between harmony and distinction. Neither the natural man nor the carnal Christian retains sufficient fear of the Lord to resist sinful extremes. America will continue her downward spiral unless we teach and model an alternative.

One more article will be needed to look at keeping clear the distinction between the righteous/unrighteous dichotomy and the communal/individual dichotomy when we address social issues in the political arena.

*Lauston Stephens is a Director of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Roadside Assembly of God in Rutland VT*

<sup>1</sup> Regalado, Antonio. “More than 26 Million People Have Taken an at-Home Ancestry Test.” *MIT Technology Review*, MIT Technology Review, 18 June 2020, [www.technologyreview.com/2019/02/11/103446/more-than-26-million-people-have-taken-an-at-home-ancestry-test/](http://www.technologyreview.com/2019/02/11/103446/more-than-26-million-people-have-taken-an-at-home-ancestry-test/).

<sup>2</sup> Eckersley, Richard, and Keith Dear. “Cultural Correlates of Youth Suicide.” *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 55, Jan. 2002, pp. 1891–1904. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1016/S0277-9536(01)00319-7.

<sup>3</sup> Dingle, Genevieve A, et al. *Social Identities as Pathways into and out of Addiction*. 30 Nov. 2015, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4663247/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4663247/).

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:8 WEB

**“More than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature ... If the next centennial does not find us a great nation ... it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces.”**

*President James Garfield—20th President of the United States*

## Alexander Tytler's "The Fatal Sequence of Nations" Quote and Background

Sir Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747 – 1813) was a jurist and professor of Universal History at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Several famous quotations are attributed to him. One of the most famous has been named "The Fatal Sequence". It had eight steps. Tytler said: "The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence:

- From bondage to spiritual faith
- From spiritual faith to great courage
- From courage to liberty
- From liberty to abundance
- From abundance to selfishness
- From selfishness to apathy
- From apathy to dependency
- And from dependency back into bondage"

Two additional steps have been added by modern commentators:

- Complacency inserted between selfishness and apathy, and
- Moral decay between apathy and dependency

It has been said that the average age of a great nation is 200 to 300 years. Rome in its full glory lasted 500 years. Greece as a power lasted 300 years. Media-Persia lasted 200 years. The United States in 2020 is 244 years old. Observe what is happening in America right now. Where do you think we are today in Alexander Tytler's sequence? What is the remedy?

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What can I do?



*Faith without  
works is dead  
James 2:17*

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**O! thus be it ever when free men shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's declaration;  
Blessed with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause is just;  
And thus our motto. " In God is our trust!"  
And the star spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!**

***Francis Scott Key***

*Francis Scott Key was an American lawyer and poet on a diplomatic mission to free an American doctor. On September 14, 1814, his ship was commandeered by the British and he was held captive and forced to watch the bombardment of the American Fort Henry. The following morning he was able to see "Old Glory" still waving and penned what is now our National Anthem. Above is the fourth verse of that anthem, which is seldom heard.*

✉ **CAM Network, Inc.**  
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☎ **(802) 370-9560**  
*Call to confirm date*

### **Next Meetings**

*Oct 5, 7:00 pm  
Parkinson home  
Hinesburg, Vt.  
Nov 7, 7:00 pm  
Parkinson home  
Hinesburg, Vt.*

To reach our website enter <https://christianactionministry.org> and select the first listing below that reads **Christian Action Ministry Network VT** and open it. Then bookmark our website calling it **CAM** or else **Christian Action Ministry**. Then when you want to go to our website in the future, click on the bookmark name you entered in your list of bookmarks.

**Making A Difference  
In Vermont!**