



## How to Ruin a Country

T. M. Moore | First Published: June 04, 2012

<http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/changepoint/17912-how-to-ruin-a-country>

Are we holding the door for a nation rushing to ruin?

*What I have to deplore with mournful complaint is a general loss of good, a heaping up of bad. But no one should think that anything I say is said out of scorn for humanity or from a conviction that I am superior to all men. No, I sympathise with my country's difficulties and troubles, and rejoice in remedies to relieve them.*

### A timely word

These words have a strikingly contemporary sound; indeed, many of us will agree wholeheartedly with them.

But these are not words from some conservative pundit or evangelical blogger. They were written in the middle of the 6th century by the monk, Gildas. He was reflecting on the decline of his beloved Britain, which was everywhere unraveling around him. Spiritually, morally, politically, economically — Britain, over a period of around a hundred years, descended from a superficial height of Roman splendor to the depths of medieval darkness.

And Gildas wept to see what he described as “The Ruin of Britain.”

### Spiritual ruin

How do countries come to ruin? What causes them to lose integrity and descend into corruption, wickedness, and waste? We might be tempted to think the problem is chiefly political: corrupt politicians, radical judges, influential lobbies and corporations, and so forth.

That was not Gildas' perspective, however. He laid the problem firmly at the feet of the Church.

As he saw the matter, the salt of Britain had become tasteless, and it was everywhere being thrown out and trampled under foot: “Britain has priests, but they are fools; very many

ministers, but they are shameless; clerics, but they are treacherous grabbers...They do not reprimand the people for their sins; indeed they do the same things themselves.”

The ruin of Britain was, in the first instance, a spiritual ruin, and that came about because Christian people — led by their ministers — left off fearing God. “What daring of man,” Gildas asked, “can, now or in the future, be more foul and wicked than to deny fear to God...?” The ministers of Britain had become so consumed by their own projects and perks that they lost all fear of God and concern for instructing the people in the ways of His Law. These were the same ministers, by the way, who tried to keep Patrick from going to Ireland as a missionary and who, at the end of his enormously successful career, wanted to remove him from the field.

When ministers lose sight of their calling, the Church ends up denying its true identity and mission.

### **Greasing the skids**

Abraham’s self-serving compromise in Genesis 20 was nearly the ruin of Abimelech and his nation. By turning from his calling and the fear of God, Abraham became more concerned about his present wellbeing than God’s plan for his future. He denied his true identity before the pagan king and thus opened the door for him to act corruptly toward Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

When ministers lose sight of God’s calling, to seek His Kingdom and build His Church, and when their own projects and prospects become their main objective in ministry, they deny their true identity and lead the people in their charge into a similar compromise. Thus they open the door for corruption and wickedness in the surrounding culture, and this greases the skids toward the judgment of God and the ruin of nations.

In his book, "Without God, Without Creed," James Turner, convincingly argues that Christian theologians and leaders in the mid-19th century, in an effort to save face with the intellectual community, denied their true Biblical identity, cozied up to Darwinism, and thus opened the household of faith to evolution’s corrosive powers. America went from being a people with a clear creed and a convincing faith in God to one where God hardly matters and the people believe, not anything, but everything and nothing.

Francis Schaeffer argued in "The Great Evangelical Disaster" that evangelical leaders at the beginning of the 20th century failed to show up when secularism and modernism began laying claim to all the arenas of thought and culture. The corrosive power of materialism and pragmatism spread through society and culture and now has begun to work its cancer even within the churches.

Helmut Thielicke reminded us, in *The Trouble with the Church*, that “today all the really vital questions that touch the depths of existence enter man’s consciousness through the medium of persons in whom these questions are, as it were, incarnated.”

### **Who is to blame?**

The materialistic, pragmatic, and hedonistic followers of the pagan god of self have been more

consistent, effective, and outspoken in embodying their worldview than we in the Christian community have our own. Have our pastors and leaders confronted us in our complacency? Challenged our lifestyle of “limping” between two worldviews – materialism and Christianity (1 Kgs. 18:21)? Failed to teach us the compelling vision and comprehensive glory of the Christian worldview? Have they, if only by neglect, encouraged us to believe that we can know the Lord and the pleasures of this age equally? And have they thus failed in making us true disciples and, instead, led us to deny our true identity and calling, and to exchange the glory of the Kingdom for the false hopes of ease and prosperity?

If our nation is on a course toward ruin, then let us not lay the blame at the feet of our secular neighbors or our political leaders. They have merely charged through the door to folly which we hold open to them every day.

The way to ruin a nation is for Christians to deny their true identity, compromise their calling, and do their best to fit in with however the winds of the age choose to blow. This was true in Abraham’s day and Elijah’s, as well as in Gildas’ generation.

And it is true for us as well.

If we ask who is to blame for the ruin of our nation, dear friends, let us look first to our own failure to repent of our folly, seek the Lord for revival, and be renewed in true worship, discipleship, and mission. Our nation will not awaken from the torpor of unbelief until the people of God are revived and renewed.

And we will not be revived and renewed until we seek these earnestly in prayer.

Pastors, church leaders: Will you lead us there?



the Chuck  
**Colson Center**  
for Christian Worldview

[www.ColsonCenter.org](http://www.ColsonCenter.org)