



The Most Corrosive Claim in American Politics: “Everything You’ve Been Told Is Wrong”

By [Dan Ellsworth](#)

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Does anti-elitist media sharpen or shatter judgment? Extremist talking heads destabilize reality and ease moral inversion.

The religious right is in a crisis of discernment.

Following Charlie Kirk’s assassination in September, many religious conservatives began to ask “What now?” Kirk had been a unifying voice and a coalition builder. With his Turning Point USA organization, Kirk brought together diverse voices to advance Christian conservatism. An evangelical Christian himself, Kirk assembled a team of Catholics, Jews, Latter-day Saints, and others to promote the cause. He reached and mentored racial and sexual minorities who might otherwise avoid the conservative movement, as Amir Odom explained in a [viral video](#) after Kirk’s death.

But lacking Kirk's unifying force, the conservative movement has fractured along political fault lines that were already emerging. Now, the fault lines have become much deeper and more public, particularly between [conservatives who believe in the U.S. constitution](#) versus Christian Nationalists who seek an authoritarian Christian ruler instead of our often-contentious pluralistic political system.

Political commentators are contributing to the rifts, particularly through their [conspiracy theories](#). Take Candace Owens as an example. Immediately following Kirk's passing, the popular commentator began formulating [conspiracy theories](#) that Israel was involved in Kirk's killing.

Commentator Tucker Carlson has also cultivated disillusionment with the Constitution and free society. In a recent [commentary](#) on Venezuela prior to the arrest of Nicolás Maduro, Carlson followed a similar pattern he has in the past: he identifies a country under an authoritarian regime, then suggests to his viewers that *everything you have been told is wrong*.

Carlson said of Venezuela: "Nicolás Maduro and his government are very left wing on economics, not on social policy, by the way, which is kind of interesting. In Venezuela, gay marriage is banned. Abortion is banned. Sex changes for transgenderism are banned."

"And by the way, the U.S. backed opposition leader who would take Maduro's place if he were taken out is, of course, pretty eager to get gay marriage in Venezuela," he adds.

Again, the pattern is to look at a regime that is oppressive, illiberal, and in conflict with the United States. Then, make the case to Americans that we have been deceived about that country: Show viewers that in that authoritarian-ruled country, good things are happening that are not happening in free Western societies.

In the case of Venezuela, Carlson's hinting that authoritarian socialism has enabled the implementation of conservative social policies around marriage and gender that should be the envy of the American right.

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The effect of this commentary is to leave viewers thinking “I’ve been deceived by elites. People and governments I’ve been told are bad, are in fact benign or even good. Up is down, and down is up.”

The unstated message is “trust me to be your new guide to reality.”

I recently saw the outcome of this commentary in a response to one of my social media posts on Tucker Carlson, as a commenter admitted Carlson was “the only journalist I trust to do real journalism.”

Tucker Carlson’s message appeals, in part, because he is often correct in cases where prominent people and institutions are wrong. After Carlson was accused of promoting a “great replacement conspiracy theory” in 2023, the Biden administration [allowed](#) a massive influx of immigration and resettlement using federal dollars, under an expansion of the notion of “humanitarian parole”.

Around that same time, Carlson began warning that Joe Biden was in cognitive decline and the executive branch was being run by staffers and presidential advisors — predating revelations near the end of Biden’s term about the full extent of decline that had been covered up.

A good lesson for critics is this: if you think it is important to limit the influence of a commentator like Tucker Carlson, the worst thing you can do is [give people legitimate reasons to believe he is right](#) and he is presenting a more accurate picture of reality than you are.

Critics of Carlson (I count myself among them) also have a challenging task of persuading people that his essential formula is wrong. To understand why, I think of KGB defector Yuri Bezmenov and his interviews on YouTube, where he details the Soviet process for subverting societies —with constant reference to the word “destabilize.”

Bezmenov [explained](#) that the objective of KGB psychological operations is “to change the perception of reality, of every American, to such an extent that despite the abundance of information,

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no one is able to come to sensible conclusions in the interests of defending themselves, their families, their community and their country."

Anytime a commentator is spending most of their time negating, disrupting, deconstructing, and telling you "everything you've been told is wrong," they are destabilizing.

Of course, there are times and situations where that mental toolset is appropriate. But when it becomes compulsive, when it becomes a person's constant default approach to the world, that person is showing you that something awful is going on inside.

When asked more about KGB strategies of subversion, Bezmenov described being instructed to "try to get into large circulation, established conservative media, reach filthy rich movie makers, intellectuals, so-called academic circles. Cynical, egocentric people who can look into your eyes with angelic expression and tell you a lie."

"These are the most recruitable people: people who lack moral principles, who are either too greedy or suffer from self-importance. They feel that they matter a lot."

None of this is to suggest that Tucker Carlson and other right-leaning influencers are somehow doing the bidding of Russia. What I am highlighting, however, is that our adversaries have been very open about their intentions to destabilize our society, and whether consciously or not, many of our influencers follow the patterns that these open enemies employ to undermine our social fabric and our institutions.

Tucker Carlson's efforts to upend conventional wisdom have led him to moral inversion, where he condemns Israel for its campaign against Hamas, but is only able to muster morally ambiguous commentary about Russia's rampage in Ukraine.

Recently, his criticisms of Israel have turned into something resembling obsession, and in a recent episode of his show, he and a guest suggested that the COVID virus was engineered to have a lower impact upon Jews.

This downward spiral of antisemitism on his show was on full display with the recent guest appearance of Nick Fuentes, a commentator distinguished by his open admiration

of Hitler (and Stalin), as well as countless examples of vile remarks toward women and minorities.

And here we find the crisis of discernment on the right, particularly among the religious right. In the coalition that Charlie Kirk formed, there are people who hold conservative and even extreme-right positions on issues like immigration or foreign policy. Not all of these people have a Christian worldview, including a Christian understanding of Israel and its biblically-described role in the world.

Many people on the right feel deeply disillusioned by the failures of our institutions, even ones that are trusted to promote a conservative vision for America. Figures like Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens step in and validate people's sense of disillusionment. They throw gasoline on the fire by leading their viewers into some **mixture of true narratives** intermixed with cynical conspiracy mongering.

In this way, they offer a constant stream of destabilizing commentary, steadily removing the mental guardrails of their audiences and cultivating a new receptivity toward extreme and morally-inverted viewpoints.

Standing against this process are Christian commentators like [Catholic professor Robert George](#) and the evangelical leadership of the Christian satire site [The Babylon Bee](#), as well as other commentators like Ben Shapiro, who is Jewish.

They know that the Judeo-Christian tradition carries its own set of mental and spiritual guardrails, and a truly principled person of faith can discern processes of destabilization, and their destructive impacts on the soul.

In my view, only a genuinely religious understanding of the world can guard against the pull of authoritarianism that finds so much appeal in a destabilized soul. A believer can see that destabilizing a mind with constant narratives of "everything they tell you is wrong" is the exact process employed in graduate schools to indoctrinate postmodernism and modern flavors of Marxism.

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Whereas Christ fasted and prayed in the wilderness and ended up spiritually grounded enough to reject the temptation to power, destabilization is the exact opposite process, preparing souls to accept the lie that power is the only pursuit of real value.

The electoral success of Charlie Kirk's coalition has been remarkable, and a cause for celebration on the right. But now there is a harder process ahead. The problems facing America's religious right are spiritual in nature, and they require the teaching and practice of humble and searching discernment.

About the author



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