

Reflections on the Passing of Charles Krauthammer and the Meaning of Conservatism

With the passing of Charles Krauthammer, we lost a giant. An intellectual giant and a conservative giant. His passing was made even more poignant in light of the letter he penned shortly before his death. His clear words before leaving this world were a testament to his courage and character. His passing also gives us pause to revisit the question of the meaning of conservatism.

In her tribute to Krauthammer, Rachel Alexander wrote, "Known as an intellectual conservative, he wrote a weekly syndicated column for years. He was also considered a neoconservative, a term loosely applied to baby boomer era Jews [and others] who grew up as liberals but moved to the right later in life."

She also noted that, "He was not conservative on all issues. He wasn't pro-life and supported embryonic stem cell research. He criticized the intelligent design movement and supported raising taxes to promote conservation."

Yet I imagine all of us who identify as conservative would agree that we have lost one of the key voices of our generation with his untimely death. Would that we had 100 more like him. Or even 10. Or just one to take his place. His absence will be keenly felt.

Does this, then, undermine my recent argument that only a faith-based conservatism will be able to withstand the assault of the radical left? As I asked in our new "Consider This" video, titled "What Does It Mean to Be a Conservative?", "Can you be a true conservative if you reject the most fundamental conservative values, starting with the biblical (and historic) definition of marriage? Can you be a true conservative if you

say that gender is whatever you perceive it to be? And can you be a true conservative if you don't believe in God?"

I answered that question by saying, "I expect that, in the days ahead, some of the leading conservative voices will come from outside the traditional, Judeo-Christian fold as the left gets more radical by the hour. I welcome those voices and intend to learn whatever I can from them."

All the more does this apply to someone of Krauthammer's stature. I learned from him whenever I listened to him.

At the same time, I stated: "But let's not fool ourselves. The radical left is ultimately at war with God and with biblical faith and morality. That means it is only those who are joined together in faith and morals who will be able to withstand the tidal wave that's coming. A conservatism based on anything less will ultimately fail."

So the point is not whether conservatives benefit from the presence of men like Charles Krauthammer. We do, clearly and overwhelmingly and obviously.

But unless our movement as a whole stands for marriage and family as intended by our Creator, unless our movement is devoted to preserving the sanctity of life, beginning in the womb, and unless our movement believes in absolute (God-ordained) moral values, we will not be able to withstand the coming tsunami.

Another case in point would be Canada's Jordan Peterson, a professor and intellectual who has recently skyrocketed to international fame, especially in conservative circles. Yet, as noted in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Jordan Peterson doesn't seem to think of himself as a conservative. Yet there he is, standing in the space once inhabited by conservative thinkers such as G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Russell Kirk, William F. Buckley Jr. and Irving Kristol."

But Peterson is unsure about the resurrection of Jesus (among other matters of faith), and thus can hardly be viewed as a believing Christian. And much of his opposition to LGBT activism is based on years of intensive study of Communist totalitarianism. He knows Big Brother well enough to recognize when he is raising his head again.

So Peterson understands the dangers of controlled speech and thought police, because of which he fearlessly resists the radical left today. Accordingly, he is a highly welcomed voice in our midst, an esteemed colleague, a leader to be appreciated. Yet where he will lead (and land) is not entirely certain—at least in terms of issues of faith.

On the one hand, Dante Witt laid out the best-case and worst-case scenarios, asking: “Will Jordan Peterson Lead People to God? Or Seduce Them With a Substitute?”

On the other hand, after the recent, outrageous, anti-Christian ruling of the Canadian Supreme Court, Peterson issued an important warning to the church of Canada: “Better stand up for yourself, because your religious rights are very low on the rights totem pole at the moment. And that’s going to get worse, a lot worse, before it gets better. So if you think your religious freedom is worth having, you better be ready to defend it, and you better be ready to do that in an articulated way, because you’re not a priority—put it that way.”

So far so good? I do hope he lands rightly and continues to lead well.

Yet I also recognize that, here in America, our second president, John Adams said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

That’s why I say that the core of our conservatism must be faith-based (“a moral and religious people”). With that as our

foundation, others can join with us, even without sharing our faith, as long as we ultimately major on the majors. Otherwise, to repeat: A conservatism based on anything less will ultimately fail. (To watch our latest "Consider This" video, [click here.](#))