

***ONE EMPIRE,
UNDER GOD***

*A Cautionary Tale in Two Acts
by Anthony J. Piccione*

ONE EMPIRE, UNDER GOD

ONE EMPIRE, UNDER GOD

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In 2021, American democracy - which already had significant flaws, from systematic racism to the excesses of capitalism – was tested in unprecedented ways. During the lead-up to the New York premiere of this play, we endured an unprecedented health crisis in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising hate crimes against people of color inspired and enabled by fascist demagogues, and an attempted overthrow of the government on January 6th by the very worst people that the United States has to offer.

At the time of this play's publication, I still fear that the worst is yet to come.

The dark times we lived through can be seen and compared to past incidents in other countries. Political leaders and movements come and go with the times, but what has endured throughout history is a culture that has thrived on exploiting the inherent bigotry that lies in organized religion to take power and oppress those who dare to question their intolerant and simplistic beliefs. If I have any regrets, it's that the menace of Christian nationalism remains a threat to our collective freedoms.

I don't expect everyone who reads this play to agree with me on every issue that it raises, nor should you be forced to. However, I do hope you will at least be inspired to question your worldview; to think about whether you, your friends & your family have all done enough to confront and condemn the fascistic culture I speak of; and to remain vigilant in fighting for the full eradication of that culture. I say this in the desperate hope that Damian Cunningham will not become our reality, and that my work will be remembered as just a mildly entertaining work of fiction by the time we reach the year 2776...

...assuming we're as lucky as the citizens living in this fictitious timeline, in that we find a way to survive and adapt to the climate crisis that is coming our way...

Anthony J. Piccione

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

The live premiere of **ONE EMPIRE, UNDER GOD** was presented November 11-21, 2021, at The Tank - located at 312 W 36th Street, New York, NY - and was directed by Andrés Gallardo Bustillo, after premiering virtually on Zoom in July 2021. The live production starred Trey Shields as Damian Cunningham, Marc Verzatt as Reverend Ian MacDougal, Sarah Spagnuolo as Jessa Barclay, Gian Caro as Josh Garcia, J.J. Miller as Darren Cunningham & Joshua Cunningham, Marcus R. Smith as General River Calvin, Mary Miles as President Armani Bakali & Senator Jane Harvey, Clara Tan as Vice President Zaine Thompson, featuring Sabrina Lopez, Sarah Nowik, Michael Paone and Demonte Thompson. Additional production staff included Harrison H. Harper, (Stage Manager) Ella Rose, (Assistant Director) Valeriya Nedviga, (Set Designer) Nicole Sliwinski, (Lighting Design) Lissy Gold (Sound Design/Original Score) & Dimitri Saari. (Master Carpenter)

The play received six nominations at the 2021 BroadwayWorld Off/Off-Off-Broadway Awards, with J.J. Miller winning in the category for Best Performance in a Streaming Play, and the recording of the original livestreamed recording of the November 2021 production was showcased throughout 2022 as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the Calgary Fringe Festival & the Rochester Fringe Festival.

REVIEW EXCERPTS

“...remarkably spot-on...bigger than life...”

-Jan Ewing, Hi! Drama & Pups Books

“*One Empire, Under God* is meant to provoke and challenge. That the story is not so far-fetched is the dire warning here.”

-Joe Lombardi, Theatre Reviews From My Seat

“Ambitious; Entertaining; Thought-Provoking; If you are religious, you’d be very offended!”

-Various Show-Score users

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CHARACTERS

Damian Cunningham: Mid-30s, male, naive, easy to manipulate, conservative, will do anything for what he believes.

Reverend Ian MacDougal: 60+, male, manipulative, has a special way of getting into people's heads.

Jessa Barclay: 20s, female or female-identifying, strong, the hero, humble, a beast.

Josh Garcia: 20s-early 30s, male or male-identifying, a rebel, bold, caring, will do anything for his ideals.

President Darren Cunningham: 40+, male, hard-headed, big personality, conservative.

Joshua Cunningham: 50+, male, humble, he knows once he's made a mistake, supportive.

General River Kalvin: 40+, gender neutral, strong, heroic leader.

President Armani Bakali: 40+, gender neutral, liberal, intellectual.

Vice President Zaine Thompson: 40+, transgender or gender-fluid, liberal, strong, knows what they want and when they want it.

Senator Jane Harvey: 50+, female, strong, she knows she has more experience than anyone else in the room.

Ensemble: Imperial Troops, Revolutionary Soldiers, Politicians, Reporters, etc.

TIME

Act I - From 2405 to 2411 C.E. in the United States of America / Act II - From 2766 to 2776 C.E. in the American Empire

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PROLOGUE

The year is 2776. Undisclosed location. JOSH GARCIA, a young, twenty-something year old member of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, is bruised and unconscious, strapped to a chair in a dark and mysterious room. His hands and legs are tied up to a chair, with two Secret Service agents - each wearing a cross-shaped badge on their suits - on each side of him. The President of the United States, DARREN MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM III, is standing in front of him and staring.

DARREN. Wakie wakie, Joshie Joshie.

JOSH. Huh? Wh-wha-where.....who are.....President Cunningham?

DARREN. Be patient. The unfreezing process takes a bit of time-

JOSH. You better untie me right now, you son of a bitch!

DARREN. (chuckles) Gladly. After you tell me a few things about the DRA.

JOSH. What?

DARREN. You are a member of the DRA, are you not? You really think I'd come all the way down here, just for any piece of filth we've captured, if I didn't think they had any particularly useful information? Now, if you give us what we need, then maybe, just MAYBE...you'll get to live.

JOSH. You'll have to kill me.

DARREN. (chuckles) Oh, no. No, I have something better planned.

JOSH. Like what?

DARREN. (snaps his fingers. Two GUARDS enter, one of whom is carrying a virtual reality headset. They walk toward Josh's chair.) See that?

JOSH. (nods his head) VR headwear.

DARREN. More specifically, VR headwear pre-programmed by the CIA to make you feel as if you're drowning in freezing cold water. Now, allow

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me to give you one last opportunity to respond to my request. Tell me what you know about the DRA's plans...now...

JOSH. *(long pause)* Fuck you...AND YOUR ENTIRE FUCKING FAMILY AND YOUR ENTIRE FUCKING EMPIRE!!!

DARREN. *(sighs)* Very well, then. You've given me no other choice...

JOSH. *(The Guard holding the VR headset lowers it onto Josh's face, as the other Guard grabs Josh by the head, and forces his face into position. Darren walks toward Josh, who is suffocating and panting, as if he is drowning.)* No! NOOOOOO! HELP!

DARREN. WHAT ARE THE REVOLUTIONARIES PLANNING?! TELL ME JOSH! TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW!!

JOSH. NOOOOO! OH, FUCK!! NOOOOOOO!!!

DARREN. You have the power to end this, Josh! Tell me what the DRA is planning! TELL ME NOW!! *(Josh continues screaming again and again and again, until...Fade to black. Silence. A hologram of Josh appears.)*

JOSH. Jessa, if you're watching this, I'm probably dead. I imagine by now, you've found out what happened to me, and I hope you can try and understand why there was no other way. I know that might be difficult, and there's only so much I can do to explain, but please believe me when I say it was all for you. You know the history now, and that's all that's been on my mind, particularly these past couple of weeks. Knowing all this and how it got there, there was no way I could have lived with myself if I didn't do all I could to end it all- *(Hologram disappears. Lights up. Washington D.C. January 20th, 2401. Several public officials and other distinguished guests and gathered on Capitol Hill to witness the inauguration of PRESIDENT ARMANI BAKALI. Bakali has her right hand raised, as the CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT faces her.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE. Please raise your right hand, and repeat after me: I, Armani Bakali, do solemnly swear...

BAKALI. I, Armani Bakali, do solemnly swear...

CHIEF JUSTICE....that I will faithfully execute...

BAKALI...that I will faithfully execute...

CHIEF JUSTICE....the Office of President of the United States...

BAKALI....the Office of President of the United States...

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CHIEF JUSTICE....and will to the best of my ability...

BAKALI....and will to the best of my ability...

CHIEF JUSTICE....preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

BAKALI....preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

CHIEF JUSTICE. Congratulations, Madam President. *(President Bakali and the Chief Justice shake hands, as a mixture of loud applause and some gasps can be heard in the background. Fade to black. Various holograms of news REPORTERS light up, one after another.)*

REPORTER 1. Tonight's top story: President Bakali's refusal to say the words "so help me God" in the Oath of Office still has some questioning whether she is set to take America down the path to ruin.

REPORTER 2. From his consistent gaffes made in public statements on religion to his controversial decision to appoint government-programmed iSapiens to top-level administrative positions, the President just can't seem to stop saying exactly the wrong thing to the wrong audiences.

REPORTER 3. Is the President really able to affect positive change, with all the potential distraction that his controversial statements on religion could be leading to?

REPORTER 4. Protests continue to break out across the country, organized primarily by hard-right Christian groups, but some Jewish and Islamic groups are increasingly joining in, as well.

REPORTER 5. BREAKING NEWS: We can now project that President Armani Bakali has been re-elected President of the United States, winning a very narrow victory over his Republican opponent.

REPORTER 6. Earlier today, President Bakali signed a memorandum declaring America to be a secular humanist nation, welcoming of all faiths and beliefs that believe in universal human rights.

REPORTER 7. The backlash to the President's recent proclamation on religion in America continues to grow, with more and more influential religious leaders in many faiths beginning to speak out in opposition.

END OF PROLOGUE

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**ACT I – DAWN OF A NEW EVANGELISM
SCENE 1**

The year is 2405. REVEREND IAN MACDOUGAL - an elderly priest in rural California - is seen praying in his church office.

MACDOUGAL. Oh, heavenly father, if you are there, I hope you hear my prayer soon. Our nation is being taken over, with each passing day, by atheists, radical socialists, and homosexuals alike. We are being led by a fraud that rejects your very existence. Our culture, which has preserved our community and our devotion to your word, is fading. Virtual technology is blurring the lines between what exists in man's mind, and what truly is God's creation. Robotic beings created by the non-believers are constantly taking the jobs of those of us in small towns outside the country, leaving us to starve as our crops and plants die out, and too many of our homes remain damaged by the storms and floods that come our way each year. Even the very concept of man and woman are fading, with each passing year. Please, I hope you will soon deliver us from these forces of Satan. Please show them your wrath. Help show us the way. Give us a sign. Anything at all. Please, father in Heaven, deliver us from evil. *(There is a knock on the door.)* Come in. *(Enter DAMIAN CUNNINGHAM, a young man in his mid-30s.)* Mr. Cunningham.

DAMIAN. Hello, Father.

MACDOUGAL. Please, have a seat. *(Damian sits down, right across from Macdougall)* What is troubling you, my child? Do you have something to confess? If so, please don't be afraid to-

DAMIAN. No. It's just...I've been sober now for six months, and it's caused me to do some reflecting.

MACDOUGAL. As it should, Damian. You should be proud, and thankful for the Good Lord.

DAMIAN. I am, Father. It's not that I'm not thankful. I thank the Lord every day. It's just, some of the people in my life have been worrying me.

MACDOUGAL. Bad influences, you say?

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DAMIAN. Certainly, to others. I feel that their lifestyle has been tainted by the influence of Satan, or worse, that they're willingly doing Satan's bidding.

MACDOUGAL. Has there been anyone who has been troubling you lately?

DAMIAN. Well...yeah, it's not *just* one, but there is someone who REALLY stands out. He's this guy where I work. Even some of the others at the office think he goes too far. Not only does he not acknowledge the existence of God, but he actively mocks and criticizes those who do worship the Lord.

MACDOUGAL. Ahh, not unlike the fraud posing as our current president.

DAMIAN. Exactly! He's been driving me crazy lately, with all his talk of how religious people are deluded, how anyone who doesn't follow the gospel of "scientific" virtucasts is a rube who knows nothing, and how Bakali is going to use her second term to finally eliminate Christianity and all those who follow the word of Jesus Christ-

MACDOUGAL. Oh, my dear, dear child. I know full well what you mean.

DAMIAN. Do you, Father?

MACDOUGAL. Of course! It's hard not to see exactly what you're talking about. I'm surprised it's taken you six months to see it.

DAMIAN. I remember my obsession with the Devil's drink like it was yesterday, and how it kept me from finding God, and I fear what will happen if fewer and fewer people are listening to God's calls for forgiveness and atonement.

MACDOUGAL. You should be fearful, Damian. Our faith is dying, and with it, so shall any chance of the almighty welcoming us into the gates of Heaven. Look around. All the signs are there that the Lord is not pleased. From the droughts and storms that have left so many small towns damaged and forgotten, even as cities have managed to adapt and rebuild to the various diseases of despair, such as the stubbornly high suicide rate still spread across real America, despite the abundance of antidepressants, as well as so-called vaccines, and other Satanic forms of "psychiatric medicine", the signs are everywhere God is punishing us. And people like

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who you're describing, who disobey, if not deny, the word of God, are exactly what's to blame.

DAMIAN. I fear for this country every day, Father. I only wish there was some way I could help.

MACDOUGAL. What makes you say you can't?

DAMIAN. Father, I've only found the light myself just a few months ago. How am I going to help others if I am still just a year into recovery?

MACDOUGAL. Someone needs to speak to political virtucast watchers the truth that nobody else is speaking. We need someone bold. Someone fresh. Someone who can reach audiences that our faith hasn't been able to reach in generations.

DAMIAN. What are you saying, Father?

MACDOUGAL. My child, I'm saying someone like you is truly what we need to spread the word of the Good Lord. You, my child, have something that an old man like myself does not.

DAMIAN. And what is that?

MACDOUGAL. You, Damian, have youth on your side. You're still young, and there's so much you can do that I simply cannot.

DAMIAN. Well, Father, I must say, you are in good health, thank God, for someone who-

MACDOUGAL. I don't just mean that. There's so much technology out there that an old man like me just can't understand.

DAMIAN. Father, I thought you believed those were creations of Man, and interferences with God's will. That's what you said in your sermon the other week.

MACDOUGAL. (*chuckles*) What I said was they were creating by men and women doing Satan's bidding, and that they were using them to interfere with the will of God. But that does not necessarily mean that men doing the work of God cannot use them to serve Holy purposes. These can very easily be used - more effectively than television or the Internet, in past times - to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

DAMIAN. And you think I can help using the power of technology?

MACDOUGAL. Are you familiar with the Pastor Mike show?

DAMIAN. Of course. My dad listens all the time.

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MACDOUGAL. Yes, he's quite popular still with the older crowd, and he's a solid host, even if he tries often to maintain some sense of "neutrality" when it comes to current political issues outside of religion. His virtucast, unfortunately, doesn't have much reach beyond those who already follow Jesus. But someone like you, Damian, with all your youth and charisma, could potentially start something that could be a breath of fresh air, and wake up lots of Americans to the truth about what's going on to the moral core of our country.

DAMIAN. Y-you think I should start my own virtucast? You really think I'm the right person to do that?

MACDOUGAL. Your family raised you right. You know there is only one God in heaven, and his word is the only word that is relevant.

DAMIAN. But how do I know, in the heat of such a moment, what God wants me to say?

MACDOUGAL. Just spend some time, look into your heart, and you'll find what God wants you to do, and the passion behind the work will follow.

DAMIAN. The passion to speak to potentially thousands of viewers?

MACDOUGAL. Perhaps millions, even. And if you truly need guidance on getting in touch with the Lord, come see me after Sunday, and we will discuss what messages of His the world needs to hear most now.

DAMIAN. That would be wonderful, Father. I'd be so thankful to have your help in starting this endeavor.

MACDOUGAL. Perfect. So then, will I see you in church this Sunday?

DAMIAN. Absolutely, Father. I will see you then...and after your sermon, too.

MACDOUGAL. Oh, and Damian? Just one preliminary piece of advice...

DAMIAN. Yes, Father?

MACDOUGAL. Don't be too afraid to have any violent thoughts that you've felt guilty of. Don't suppress them. If they're toward someone with atheistic thoughts and feelings in their head, your feelings are likely coming from high above. Remember that when you start your virtucast.

DAMIAN. I will, Father. I won't forget. (*Exit Damian.*)

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SCENE 2

Four different holograms of Damian are seen delivering dialogue on his VMN virtucast, one after another. As Damian's holograms are shown, various Americans are shown listening and reacting - mostly with great positive reactions, but occasionally with shock and disgust - to projections of Damian's virtucast.

DAMIAN. "Good evening, once again, my fellow Americans. I'm your host, Damian Cunningham, accompanying you on yet another dark day in our great country's history." "It truly does break my heart to tell you this, but I only say it because I am afraid. Our government is being run by bad people...and that's being generous, considering how some of them can hardly be described as "people", now can they? "Each year, it only gets worse, with the socialists and the "humanists" joining forces to co-op technological advancements and use them to control God's creation. Well, we are here to fight back!" "We are under attack, and if we don't fight back now, it may lead to eternal Hellfire for all of us!" (*Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear. Fans of Damian are show demonstrating in support and critics of Damian are shown vocally protesting in opposition, as Reporters speak.*)

REPORTER 1. Another controversy out of independent virtumedia today, as one virtucast is gaining lots of attention for his recent provocative statements on religion.

REPORTER 2. Virtucast host Damian Cunningham is under fire for making controversial remarks about non-religious people, who make up over 40 percent of the American population.

REPORTER 3. Left-wing activists are calling for a boycott for all companies who advertise or do business with Mr. Cunningham's virtucast, while many on the right are praising Cunningham for providing a bold political voice to those who have not found one in the mainstream media.

REPORTER 4. While many of the debates he has fueled are not new, they are certainly gaining more and more attention, in large part thanks to the reaction to his virtucast.

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SCENE 3

A hologram of Damian is seated across from a hologram of virtucast host MIKE JOHNSON, host of one of the largest Christian virtucasts in the world.

MIKE. Good evening, folks, and welcome to the Pastor Mike Show, the longest running Christian virtucast in God's #1 country, the United States of America. I'm your host, Pastor Mike Johnson, and I'm very excited to welcome today's guest. He's currently one of the hottest political virtucast hosts in the world, and quite possibly the best role model for young people of faith across this country. I'm talking, of course, about Damian Cunningham. Damian, welcome to the show.

DAMIAN. Thank you for having me, Pastor Mike.

MIKE. Of course, and we couldn't be more thrilled to have you. Now, Damian, your virtucast is now being projected into the homes of well over 30 million Americans. That's a record number, by far, for any political virtucast in the United States.

DAMIAN. It's an absolute honor, and I'm incredibly grateful for all the support that the virtucast has received, but to be honest, I'm not entirely surprised. Not because of anything specifically to do with me, but because of what I'm saying. They're eager to finally hear the truth about what's happening to our country, and frankly, to all of God's Earth. I just happen to be the messenger for that truth.

MIKE. Of course, you're a bit different from me, in that you SPECIFICALLY fight for the Lord in a slightly different sphere from me, which is the world of politics, where there are lots of socialist pundits dominating the conversation, and naturally, someone as unapologetically Christian as you is bound to get some pushback from the radical left. Are you worried at all that the higher-ups at VMN are going to try and censor you, at some point or another?

DAMIAN. Of course, people are always going to try and silence and mock anyone who doesn't conform to their outdated leftist standards. But I think most people - and not just Christians, but people of all faith - are seeing what's going on. They're seeing how our country has been in a state of

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moral and spiritual decline as a result of socialistic leadership from the Democratic Party, and because of a Republican Party that has been resigned to complacency. I think those people – the people who are watching our virtucast – are truly emblematic of the general American public, and the more people who keep projecting what we have to say each night into their living rooms, the more hopeful I become about our country's long-term future.

MIKE. I have to ask you this one question, and it's one I'm sure you must have been asked before: Have you ever considered running for President?

DAMIAN. (chuckles) Running for office is not something I've ever considered doing. I only do my virtucast because I'm worried about the direction this country is going in, at this particular moment in history, after the past six years of Bakali. Having said that, if I hear a call from God, and he wants me to do something more for our country that I'm not already doing, of course I will have no other choice but to answer that call.

SCENE 4

January 2407. Damian, his father JOSHUA, and Reverend Macdougall are all gathered in Macdougall's office.

JOSHUA. But seriously? Running for president?! You've got to be kidding me!

DAMIAN. Think about it, Dad. If you really loved me, why do you have to keep arguing with me about it?

JOSHUA. I mean, you're not even 40 yet. You have no real experience in government or business. It's only been a few years since you first started gaining even a vague interest in politics.

DAMIAN. But deep down, I've been a follower of Christ my whole life. Doesn't that qualify me more than most people in government right now?

JOSHUA. Father, will you please talk him out of this?

MACDOUGAL. He says he's heard the call from God. I can't argue with that.

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JOSHUA. B-but Father, please...you know he's just reciting what he tells you to say-

DAMIAN. Why can't you just believe me, when I say - with all my heart and soul - that this what I believe God wants me to do.

JOSHUA. Son, I love you. You know I do. But I don't think this is truly the best way for you to spread the word of Christ.

DAMIAN. Let me ask you, Father MacDougal. What do you think I should do? Should I run for President? Is this not the best way for me to carry out God's plan?

MACDOUGAL. If that is what you feel that God wants, then you should follow his word.

JOSHUA. Father, I don't think-

DAMIAN. What, Dad? You don't think I should follow the word of God?

JOSHUA. Father, may I please speak to you...in private.

MACDOUGAL. Joshua, do you really think it's necessary to-

JOSHUA. (*To DAMIAN*) Father...please.

MACDOUGAL. (*Awkward pause*) Damian, will you please... (*Exit Damian, disappointed.*) Joshua, my child, what is your concern?

JOSHUA. Father MacDougal, please understand. I've come to you many times with these concerns about him, and please believe me when I say that I truly am grateful for your guidance, and of course, for the Lord's help with getting him to quit drinking and getting back toward a better path in life. But you and I know he's been having emotional troubles ever since he was a teenager...and he's *still* very fragile.

MACDOUGAL. Of course. Losing one's mother at such a young age can have a terrible impact.

JOSHUA. Exactly, and I fear that - especially given how passionate he gets sometimes - he may end up going too far.

MACDOUGAL. What do you mean?

JOSHUA. Well, you've been listening to his virtucast, right? You know how controversial some of the things he's been saying have been, right? I mean, shouldn't we be preaching to others in a way that is more welcoming. Shouldn't he be learning more before going out and doing something like THIS? It's bad enough that he's already been getting carried away on his virtucast this much.

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MACDOUGAL. Well Joshua, you must know that what Damian has been saying on his virtucast is the TRUE word of God, and not like what others have been claiming to be His word, in recent years. You know what we preach here at this church.

JOSHUA. Right, but...but I mean, I do believe in the word of the Lord, of course, but do you really think such an aggressive approach is what's necessary to spread it? And is my son really the right person to spread it, either?

MACDOUGAL. You can't second guess what your son is saying, Joshua. If he says he's hearing a call from God, then you should take him at his word. Or are you saying your son would lie to you about that?

JOSHUA. I... I just- (*sighs*) I'm just worried for him, that's all. I just want him to stay okay.

MACDOUGAL. And you have every right to be, as his father. Anyone in your position would be. Just pray for his health and for his success, as any good father would. I will do the same.

JOSHUA. I... alright. Alright, Father. I will.

MACDOUGAL. Good. So, I'll see you on Sunday?

JOSHUA. Yes...yes, of course. I presume you'll be seeing me and my son afterwards, too?

MACDOUGAL. Oh, yes. I'm looking forward, just as much as anyone, to hearing his official campaign announcement.

JOSHUA. Right...right. (*Exit*)

MACDOUGAL. (*Enters prayer position*) Oh Father in Heaven, please look after young Damian. Please guide him as he embarks on this mission that you've chosen for him. Please, let him be the one to deliver us from the extremists and perverts that distort our culture, subvert our government, and threaten our lives. Let him be the one to make this country the purely Christian nation that God always intended for it to be. Please, let him be the one to fulfill this destiny. Don't let him fail. If he does, I fear the very worst for our country's future...

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SCENE 5

Damian stands in front of a large, adoring audience.

DAMIAN. And so, my fellow Americans, I am deeply proud and deeply humbled to stand here today to announce that I am officially a candidate for President of the United States of America! (*Applause from audience*) I pledge to you today that, unlike our current leader, I will be a president who is true to his faith, who will protect all faiths, and will preserve the culture and the society that was first envisioned by our founders and demanded of us by God. (*Applause from audience*) So together, let us go forward and take our movement to restore faith in this great country across all 50 states, and all the way to the Republican nomination, all the way to the White House, and then, all across the world. Thank you, and God bless you all! (*Applause from audience. Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.*)

REPORTER 1. BREAKING NEWS: Damian Cunningham is drawing tens of thousands to yet another campaign rallies this afternoon.

REPORTER 2. Critics argue that Cunningham's comments might have worked during the time of the Westboro Baptist Church, but they have no place in America in the 25th century.

REPORTER 3. VMN News's latest polling now shows that Damian Cunningham has taken the lead in the race for the Republican nomination for president.

REPORTER 4. Surprising statistics show enormous support for Cunningham not just among evangelical Christians, but also among many Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, and Muslim Americans, as well.

REPORTER 5. With just days away from the 1st GOP debate, all eyes are on Damian Cunningham, and how he will respond to questions from the moderator, and attacks from the more conventional Republican candidates on the stage.

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SCENE 6

Damian Cunningham is at center stage on a debate stage with podiums, surrounded by six other presidential CANDIDATES - three different ones on each side of him. The DEBATE MODERATOR is seated at a desk facing all seven of them.

DAMIAN. Let me be as clear as I can be: I firmly believe that the work I am doing is all in the name of Jesus Christ, and as long as I continue to hear the call, you better believe that our campaign will stay the course...and not only will we stay the course, but we...will...WIN!

(Roaring applause from audience)

DEBATE MODERATOR. Cunningham, the question was: What experience do you have that your opponents do not have that qualify you to be commander-in-chief? Do you have a-

DAMIAN. And I just answered your question: If you know in your heart that you're doing the Lord's bidding, doesn't that make me more qualified than others to lead the Lord's favorite country in the world? *(Additional applause from audience)*

CANDIDATE 1. With all due respect, Mr. Cunningham, I don't think you - just because you say you've heard some call from God - can claim be His messenger any more than the rest of us can.

DAMIAN. And how can YOU be so certain of that?

CANDIDATE 1. Because God talks to me all the time. We all hear from God, even when we-

DAMIAN. How do you know that's not just Satan pretending to be God? Would explain a lot about why you're in bed with the humanist establishment. *(Combination of gasps, applause, and boos from audience)*

CANDIDATE 2. Mr. Cunningham, that type of vulgar innuendo is completely uncalled for.

DAMIAN. What's the innuendo? What part of what I said isn't true?

CANDIDATE 1. It's completely untrue. You can attack our integrity as much as you want, but we all know that you'll never be able to slander your opponents all the way to the White House. *(Combination of applause and boos from audience)*

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CANDIDATE 3. Respectfully, I don't think the American people want to hear any more of this provocative rhetoric. How is what you're saying any better than what President Bakali says on the other extreme? We need unity, not divisiveness.

DAMIAN. It's better to be dead than unite under a moderate who collaborates with the atheists in our government. (*Combination of applause and boos from audience*)

CANDIDATE 3. Anyone with a high-enough IQ knows we need someone serious and experienced - not some fringe virtucast host – as President to stand up to the leftists in Congress. (*Louder applause from audience*)

DAMIAN. And how are *you* gonna stand up to the leftists and atheists, if you can't stand up to a guy like me? (*Louder applause from audience*)

SCENE 7

Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.

REPORTER 1. After a defiant debate performance, Damian Cunningham is expected to be holding a rally in Iowa this evening.

REPORTER 2. Thousands are expected to attend what some expect to be the largest crowds for a Republican candidate in over a generation. More and more polls are now showing that despite the controversy, Mr. Cunningham is the definitive GOP frontrunner.

REPORTER 3. This reality has leading political figures in both parties increasingly concerned. (*Holograms disappear. Enter Damian.*)

DAMIAN. There is no other candidate in this race willing to call out the President of the United States for the antichrist that he is, and whether we are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or any other faith, we can all agree that any leader with no faith at all is a leader we should all be very, very afraid of. (*Applause from audience. Exit Damian. Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.*)

REPORTER 1. With the increased spotlight on Mr. Cunningham, so too has attention on his controversial pastor, Reverend Ian MacDougal.

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REPORTER 2. Based in rural California, Reverend MacDougal has been known for his strict adherence to evangelical Christianity, far outside mainstream thought.

REPORTER 3. In the past, he has made public comments interpreted to be racist, homophobic, and hateful toward other religions and even other forms of Christianity. (*Holograms disappear. Enter Macdougals.*)

MACDOUGAL. So, without further ado, it is my honor to present to you the next President of the United States: Damian Cunningham. (*Applause from audience. Enter Damian. Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.*)

REPORTER 1. The Cunningham campaign insists that, while they welcome Reverend MacDougal's advice and support, they do not agree with everything he has said in the past, and that they are welcoming of all faiths.

REPORTER 2. However, given Mr. Cunningham's youth and experience, critics remain skeptical of the influence that MacDougal has had on the campaign.

REPORTER 3. Only time will tell whether MacDougal's support helps or hurts Mr. Cunningham, as he attempts to ride his wave of religious support all the way to the White House. (*Holograms disappear. Damian speaks, as Macdougals watches.*)

DAMIAN. And so together, ladies and gentlemen - and yes, those are the two sexes, as God almighty defined them – we will take our country back, for ourselves and for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! (*Applause*)

SCENE 8

White House Rose Garden. President Bakali and Vice President Thompson enter, as Reporters await their arrival.

BAKALI. Good afternoon, everybody. Today, I am proud to announce that I am officially endorsing Zaine Thompson to be our next President of these United States. For the past eight years, Zaine has proven themselves to be a loyal and effective vice president, and I am confident that they will be

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very successful with continuing our agenda of progressive and humanist values. These are tumultuous times, and we need inspired and thoughtful leadership in the White House now more than ever, and there's no doubt in my mind that Zaine is the best qualified person to carry on our administration's record of success.

THOMPSON. Thank you, Madam President. It is an honor for me to receive your endorsement, and I am incredibly honored to be the presumptive nominee of our party to take up your mantle and carry forward your legacy as President of the United States. I am proud to have served as your vice president for the past seven years, and I am extremely humbled to carry forward the torch of progressive humanism that you've been carrying. Indeed, with extremism on the rise once again in our country, we need bold yet clear-headed leadership in the White House to demonstrate to the world that a fringe movement defined by bigotry and falsehoods does not speak for the United States of America. I am grateful to have you by my side, as we seek to bring this country forward into the future, not back into the dark ages. (*Exit Bakali and Thompson, as Reporters shout ad-libs such as "Do you think America is ready for a non-gender binary President", "How confident are you that Vice President Thompson will WIN this November", and "what do you make of the Cunningham campaign's latest attacks?"*)

SCENE 9

A hologram of President Bakali is seated across from a hologram of an iSapien Reporter, being interviewed from the Oval Office.

REPORTER. Madam President, thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to speak with VMN News.

BAKALI. Always a pleasure.

REPORTER. I'd like to start by asking you for your take on some recent political events: As you know, we're just a couple of weeks away from the Iowa caucuses. Polling right now currently shows that a hard-right Christian virtucaster is the frontrunner for the Republican Party

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nomination. Given this reality, are you at all concerned about the current political discourse?

BAKALI. Well, of course I'm concerned. But I do believe that this will pass. On the Democratic side, I think our party will quickly unite behind Vice President Thompson, and sooner rather than later, we will be prepared to make history with their election and show the world just how far we've come toward a more perfect union.

REPORTER. Madam President, your job approval - according to the latest VMN poll – shows your approval rating at an all-time low. Your approval rating among everyone from Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Scientologists, anyone aside from the non-affiliated, is well below 30%. Few presidents have united people of all faiths in their disdain in the way you have. Considering this, do you have any regrets, in terms of how you've conducted yourself during your presidency, especially in your 2nd term?

BAKALI. Not at all. I'm proud of how we've-

REPORTER. So, there's nothing you would do differently, if you could go back and change anything?

BAKALI. No.

REPORTER. Nothing at all? So, you still would have signed that memorandum about America being a humanist nation-

BAKALI. Absolutely.

REPORTER. Some have expressed concern, Madam President, that your actions have made it harder for you to get along with not just Republicans in Congress, but also members of your own party. As you wind down your second term, are you at all optimistic that any progress on any major issues can get done from now until the day you leave office?

BAKALI. I do hope so. I hope members of both parties will be able to come together, put aside all the silly spiritual and holy talk we're seeing, and solve some of the real issues facing our country. Whether it be improving our economy or improving the environment...I mean, the same technologies that these virtucasters are using today were once used to help solve many problems throughout our nation's history - from eradicating diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's to saving our planet from the climate crisis of the 21st century - and they can

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be used for more productive purposes once again today, as long as we stick with the right leadership. There's a lot that we should all be focused on right now that has nothing to do with any sort of God thing.

REPORTER. Final question, Madam President: If Damian Cunningham captures the Republican nomination, and if he is elected President of the United States, then what-

BAKALI. He's not going to be elected president of this country.

REPORTER. But hypothetically speaking, I mean, what if-

BAKALI. I understand that it is hypothetical, but it's a hypothetical I refuse to entertain, and more to the point, I don't think it's going to happen.

REPORTER. But if it DID, what do you think that would say about our country?

BAKALI. I think our country has come a long way over the past century, in terms of ensuring a general consensus rooted in human rights and progressive values. I believe that despite what a few lunatic religious nuts out there might think, our country is better than that... (*sarcasm*) "so help us God."

SCENE 10

Damian and his CAMPAIGN MANAGER, CHIEF STRATEGIST, and SENATOR JANE HARVEY, are gathered around a hologram of a VMN news anchor reporting the news, as Macdougall lurks in the corner.

ANCHOR. -and so once again, after this interview, religious leaders all over this country are outraged over the apparent disrespect they claim the President has shown to communities of faith with his comments about "lunatic religious nuts" and "any sort of God thing". The only question that remains is how much, if at all, will this help boost the candidacy of Damian Cunningham, who has made religion a central issue of his campaign, as the first Republican primaries rapidly approach. (*Hologram disappears*)

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CAMPAIGN MANAGER. There's no way Thompson wins after this. All we have to do now is get past the primary. That's the hard part. After that, it's clear sailing.

CHIEF STRATEGIST. Damian, I really think now's the time to start bringing up the trans issue. There's still way too many people who won't vote for a he-she for president. That creature claims to be a woman, but won't show or even tell us-

HARVEY. What?! Damian, don't listen to that advice. I mean, haven't we already gone far enough in this campaign?

CAMPAIGN MANAGER. It seems to be working so far, doesn't it?

HARVEY. Working to do what? Gin up more hate and division than our atheistic President?

CHIEF STRATEGIST. Senator Harvey, we appreciate your support in our campaign. We really do. But at the end of the day, we know you're still part of the establishment, and so do the voters. I think our candidate here knows what's truly best for THE PEOPLE.

HARVEY. But it's wrong. I signed on to this campaign because I wanted to restore faith in America, but not hate in America. Just because it might win one election one day doesn't mean it'll be something history will be kind over.

CHIEF STRATEGIST. We can easily see to it later that historians will say the RIGHT things. You know what Winston Churchill once said: "History shall be kind to me, for I intend to write it."

HARVEY. And THIS is the kind of history you want to be written?

CAMPAIGN MANAGER. Damian, what do you think? You're the candidate we're all working to elect.

DAMIAN. *(To Macdougall, who emerges from the shadows.)* Father, what do you think?

MACDOUGALL. It's good advice to call out the vice president for such an unnatural state, one which goes against the will of God. You'd be wise to take it.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER. Perfect. It's settled, then. *(Exit Campaign Manager and Chief Strategist.)*

HARVEY. Campaigning against someone based on their gender. How civilized. *(Exit)*

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DAMIAN. I only hope by doing and saying all of this, God will be forgiving of me toward my own past sins.

MACDOUGAL. Keep up the good work, my child, and you will have done far more than redeemed yourself.

DAMIAN. Thank you, Father. I certainly will.

SCENE 11

Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.

REPORTER 1. Good evening: We are projecting live from the VMN newsroom in Washington. We'll be bringing you live coverage of the Republican Iowa caucus.

REPORTER 2. This just in: VMN News can now project that Damian Cunningham is the winner of the Iowa caucus, riding on the support of the high number of evangelical Christians who have historically determined past winners in Iowa.

REPORTER 3. One of the biggest takeaways from the results of last night's primary in New Hampshire is a stronger than expected showing for Damian Cunningham, finishing a strong second place-

REPORTER 4. This just in: Damian Cunningham, aided by a surge in support from working-class religious voters, has won the California primary, in an enormous upset.

REPORTER 5. One big takeaway from last night's Super Tuesday is that Damian Cunningham, after practically sweeping the Deep South, looks practically unstoppable.

REPORTER 6. With just three candidates remaining after last night's Florida primary, and conservative support consolidating behind Cunningham, the question is now whether or not there is any chance the establishment can stop him.

REPORTER 7. "This just in: VMN News can now project that Damian Cunningham - at 37 years old, who just three years ago became notable for being the host of one of the most watched and most controversial

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virtucasts in the United States and around the world - is the presumptive Republican nominee for president of the United States."

REPORTER 8. "Now, we are just moments away from Damian Cunningham's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, where the presumptive nominee is expected to formally accept his party's nomination for the presidency." (*Enter Damian, addressing an adoring crowd of supporters.*)

DAMIAN. Mr. Chairman, delegates to this convention, and my fellow citizens across this great country of ours: I accept your nomination for the Presidency of the United States! (*Applause from audience*) I do so with great humility for the trust you've bestowed in me...and even more humility for the trust that God has placed in me to embark on this journey to save America from its long, eighty-year downward spiral into moral and spiritual decay. (*Applause from audience*) Together, you and I will rebuild this great country, not just for those who follow Jesus Christ, but for all men and women of faith who have been oppressed by this administration, and by far too many administrations in both parties for far too long. (*Applause from audience*) And so let us go forward, my fellow Americans, and let this mark the beginning of a new crusade, to restore faith in America, restore the greatness that once defined this great country of ours, and leave behind a country that our children can all be proud to be part of. God bless you all, and God bless America! (*Applause from audience*)

SCENE 12

Joshua & Macdougall are gathered in the Cunningham campaign HQ.

JOSHUA. Look, I'm not here to argue with you. I'm here to see my son. (*pauses*) Where is he? He said he'd be here by now.

MACDOUGAL. Damian is a very busy young man, Joshua. He is out doing the work of the Good Lord.

JOSHUA. Well, it's important that I speak to him.

MACDOUGAL. More important than what God wants of-

JOSHUA. No, of course not, Father. You know that's not-

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MACDOUGAL. What Damian is doing, it's perfectly in line with what God wants from all of us. Your family has been coming to my church for many years now. You should know.

JOSHUA. Well, lately I've...I... I- (*Enter Damian*)

DAMIAN. Dad! You wanted to talk with me?

JOSHUA. Yes, I was wondering if I could have a word with you.

DAMIAN. Of course.

JOSHUA. Alone, I meant. Without Father MacDougal.

MACDOUGAL. Anything you have to say to him you can say to me. I'm only here to represent the will of God-

JOSHUA. Father, please! Just this once, let me talk to my own son again!

DAMIAN. It's okay, Father. He wants to do right in the eyes of God as much as anyone.

MACDOUGAL. (*disgusted*) Very well. (*Exit*)

JOSHUA. Son, have you heard the things about the campaign people have been saying in the press? They're saying it could go in a bad direction.

DAMIAN. (*sarcastic*) Because they've been completely right about our campaign, so far.

JOSHUA. Not that you could lose, son! They're worried about what you're saying you'll do if you WIN!

DAMIAN. ...such as?

JOSHUA. Where do I even begin? Everyone in the media is saying, even some Christian pundits, that it sounds too "extremist" and "divisive".

DAMIAN. That's why we chose Senator Harvey as our running mate. To balance the ticket out, so nobody would think the wrong thing.

JOSHUA. And have you heard the things she's said? She's worried about how this campaign is going...and frankly, she seems more worried about what happens if you win. She seems like she only took the job to try and-

DAMIAN. Dad, do you really think that I would do anything that the Lord didn't want me to do, if and when I'm in the Oval Office?

JOSHUA. I...am very worried that Father MacDougal has misguided you.

DAMIAN. What's that supposed to mean? That I shouldn't be running?

JOSHUA. No, it means-

DAMIAN. Do you not think that this is God's will?!

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JOSHUA. I don't think it's God's will for you to be running a campaign about demonizing your fellow Americans, whether they agree with us or not! The Bible tells us to love thy neighbor. That's what I've raised you to believe-

DAMIAN. And you don't think I've done that?

JOSHUA. I sometimes question that.

DAMIAN. Dad, please believe me. I really want to do good for this country and for all of us. I really believe that what I'm hearing, and feeling is what God wants me to do, and if I do that, I know I will have reached full redemption, and my soul will be ready to be embraced and accepted into heaven. Please, trust me.

JOSHUA. I... I just-

DAMIAN. Dad...please.

JOSHUA. *(sighs)*...alright. Alright.

DAMIAN. Now, if it's okay with you, I really have to be preparing for my next speech. Goodnight, Dad.

SCENE 13

Damian Cunningham and ZAINÉ THOMPSON are standing at podiums on opposite sides of the stage. The Debate Moderator is seated at a desk facing them.

DEBATE MODERATOR. Moving on to another topic now, Mr. Cunningham, you have spoken previously of the topic of Vice President Thompson's gender, and questions of the transition they have previously made. Why is the vice president's gender relevant to whether they are qualified to lead this country?

DAMIAN. Simply put, we look for honesty and integrity in our leaders. Regardless of what religion we belong to, and I proudly declare that I am a born-again Christian who wants to make this great country born-again, we should all be able to agree that telling the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us GOD, is the most important quality we should be asking for in

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our leaders. And let's be honest: If we can't trust our would-be leader to tell us what he's got in his pants, what CAN we trust him with? (*Applause*)

DEBATE MODERATOR. Vice President Thompson? Your response?

THOMPSON. Well...what more should we expect from an alcoholic man-child who looks to his redneck pastor more than his actual father?

(*Applause*) After all, what impact would it have on the country, as long as I keep it separate from the way in which I lead and govern?

DAMIAN. Because you live an unnatural lifestyle, and we have the right to know whether it leads you to be dishonest not just with yourself and with God, but with the American people?

THOMPSON. And, Mr. Cunningham, is there a reason you won't use my proper pronouns? This is 2408, and until there's something you're feeling insecure, there's no reason why-

DAMIAN. Until you can prove to me that there's still something between those legs of yours that proves otherwise.

THOMPSON. Why, do you also believe that women have no right leading the country, not just trans or fluid people? We've seen people like you run for office before, and the results only hurt ALL people, including the ones you claim to care about.

DAMIAN. You mean the leaders who helped lead our country's decline into moral decay? Like our current cockroach in chief who makes OUR God cry every day, almost as much as you? (*Boos*)

THOMPSON. Well, I certainly hope that the people watching at home can see through Mr. Cunningham's lack of substantive policy proposals, and shown throughout his campaign, and will judge us both on our records, and-

DAMIAN. And either way, God will judge us all, based on how we respond to the events that have led to this travesty that our country has become!

THOMPSON. -and decide based off THOSE details who is best fit to lead our country! (*Mix of applause and boos.*)

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SCENE 14

Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.

REPORTER 1. Thompson supporters have expressed their outrage at Mr. Cunningham's continued attempts to make an issue out of the Vice President's gender and biological makeup.

REPORTER 2. This isn't the first time Mr. Cunningham has survived controversy, throughout this campaign. Will he survive his controversial debate performance, as well?

REPORTER 3. Despite the shock surrounding his comments, Cunningham supporters across the country assist that what they call his honest and faith-driven approach to campaigning helps him far more than it hurts. (*Holograms of Thompson and Damian appear*)

THOMPSON. America can do much better than the hateful and vile rhetoric that Damian Cunningham has brought into this campaign.

DAMIAN. We, the people of America, have a unique opportunity in this election to finally reverse our moral decline, and get back to the Biblical principles of greatness that Western civilization was founded on.

THOMPSON. I am optimistic that come Election Day, the American people will make the right choice, and keep our country going forward, not backward.

DAMIAN. Vote for me, and I promise you, America, will never again fall into the gutter of Satanic despair that we are now in, and by the time our Lord and Savior returns, he will be proud to embrace our people with open arms! (*Holograms of Thompson and Damian disappear*)

REPORTER 1. New poll out shows that despite a series of seemingly campaign-ending gaffes, Cunningham holds a narrow lead over Thompson, up roughly 5 points.

REPORTER 2. Another new poll out now, contradicting polling from just two days ago, showing Thompson up by double digits.

REPORTER 3. Dual polls showing vastly different results, with both campaign using the recently released data to spin last week's debate as a win for their campaign.

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REPORTER 4. Only one thing is certain, based on what's been said so far in this campaign: Whoever wins this election, the decision will shape American politics - and global politics - for years to come.

SCENE 15

Damian gazes out a window in his office, in a thoughtful position. Long pause. There is a knock on the door. Brief pause, as Damian sighs.

DAMIAN. Yes? (*Enter Macdougall, feeling giddy and excited.*) Father, come in. (*Damian and Macdougall sit across from each other at a desk.*) I don't think I've ever seen you so excited before, Father.

MACDOUGAL. Well, I just got back from the voting booth. I don't think I need to tell you who I voted for, do I?

DAMIAN. Well, of course, I always appreciate the support, Father.

MACDOUGAL. Well, it's not just me! For what it's worth, if the people I talked to in line at the booths are any indicator, it looks like you're gonna win!

DAMIAN. Well, we'll see.

MACDOUGAL. Well, didn't you hear the news about record breaking turnout? Lots of evangelical Christian voters, in numbers we haven't seen in DECADES!

DAMIAN. Listen, Father, can I ask you something?

MACDOUGAL. Of course, absolutely!

DAMIAN. Let's say we do win this election...there are many people supporting our campaign.

MACDOUGAL. Yes.

DAMIAN. As in, many people who...don't believe the God we know to be real.

MACDOUGAL...yes, there are.

DAMIAN. When we get into office, what should be done about them? Am I really expected to accommodate them? Would it be blasphemous if I were to actually try and-

MACDOUGAL. Oh, my son...do what you believe God wants you to do. For He is the almighty, and His wishes must come first-

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DAMIAN. And Father...what do you believe-

MACDOUGAL. My son...by now, I think you and I both know what needs to be done.

DAMIAN....Father?

MACDOUGAL. For too long, men of other faiths, from the Catholics to the Jews to the Muslims to the nonbelievers, among others...they have sought to contaminate God's Earth with their Satanic ideologies, and God's will MUST be carried out. Those who refuse to follow his word, and instead choose to follow Satan, should be cleansed from this land, so We the People may be ready for the Messiah's return.

DAMIAN. I- *(pauses)* Of course, yes.

MACDOUGAL. I understand you cannot say this now. Not while we are still seeking votes. However, this is not something that we can forget, once the election is over. The day we lose sight of what God wants from our country, and from our planet, is the day we all should resign ourselves to the fiery depths of Hell.

DAMIAN. Understood. Thank you, Father.

MACDOUGAL. No, thank YOU, Damian. You are truly doing God's work. You've done more to restore my faith in our country's future than anyone else I've seen in my lifetime. If our country survives the Satanic forces of evil that are tearing it apart, we will have you to thank.

DAMIAN. I only hope we do, Father. If I may ask, can you join me in a moment of prayer?

MACDOUGAL. Of course, my child. *(Damian and Macdougall kneel.)*

DAMIAN. Oh Father in Heaven, in all your might and power, do everything you can to make sure that we are successful in winning this election on November 6th, and if I am given the chance to lead this country, please do all you can to guide me on the path toward making sure that not only the United States but also the rest of the world returns to being a God-fearing country. I fear for our planet. I fear that if they don't do as I did, and accept your word as law as I did with the help and guidance of Father MacDougal than we may be doomed, as a planet, to spend eternity in Hellfire. So please, whatever I must do to shepherd this

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planet into your loving arms when Judgment Day arrives, help me get our peoples there together so that we may please you and fulfill our mission.
MACDOUGAL. Amen.

SCENE 16

Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.

REPORTER 1. Good evening, welcome to VMN News's live coverage of the 2408 Presidential Election. We will be projecting results as they come in from states all over the country, as the American people decide whether Zaine Thompson or Damian Cunningham will be the next President of the United States.

REPORTER 2. And we can now project that Damian Cunningham is the winner in the state of Kentucky. The state of Vermont, meanwhile, is still too early to call, with Zaine Thompson in the lead.

REPORTER 3. At the 8pm hour, we can now project that the swing-states of Pennsylvania and Michigan are, as expected, too close to call. Despite recent polling, the Thompson campaign was hoping these two states would not be as close as they are expected to be.

REPORTER 4. It is now 9pm, and VMN News is now projecting that while Zaine Thompson is leading in the reliable blue state of New York, the results are expected to be much closer than usual, due to a sharp rightward turn upstate.

REPORTER 5. We can now project that Damian Cunningham will carry the perennial swing-state of Texas, a major victory of the Republicans tonight.

REPORTER 6. Just a few minutes after calling the state of Ohio, we can also project that Pennsylvania will go to Damian Cunningham.

REPORTER 7. Polling has closed in our last three states of the evening. Cunningham will carry Alaska, while Thompson will carry Hawaii. The real surprise, however, is in the state of Puerto Rico, where Thompson is

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leading, but only by a narrow margin. Another shocking development in a normally reliable state for the Democrats.

REPORTER 8. And we can now project that Damian Cunningham will carry the state of Florida. With that, we can now project that Damian Cunningham will become the next President of the United States of America. A stunning and remarkable conclusion to one of the most divisive and contentious elections in recent memory.

REPORTER 9. Let's go live now to Cunningham Headquarters in California, where President-elect Cunningham is addressing his supporters. *(Music fades. Damian is seen addressing his supporters at a large rally.)*

DAMIAN. My fellow Americans, tonight, in large and unprecedented numbers, the American people have voted loudly and clearly to restore FAITH in America! *(Loud applause)* The American people have voted to take our government back from the socialistic, Satanic forces that have been running these 52 united states into the ground for decades now. This moral decline they've concocted has taken an enormous toll our country and our Earth. But tonight, from Florida to Minnesota, from Texas to Wisconsin, we the people have risen up, and we are ready to reverse that decline once and for all! *(Fade to black. Pause. Lights up. President-Elect Damian Cunningham has his right hand raised and his left hand on a Bible being held by Macdougall, as the CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT faces him.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE. Please raise your right hand, and repeat after me: I, Damian Michael Cunningham, do solemnly swear...

DAMIAN. I, Damian Michael Cunningham, do solemnly swear...

CHIEF JUSTICE....that I will faithfully execute...

DAMIAN. ...that I will faithfully execute...

CHIEF JUSTICE. ...the Office of President of the United States...

DAMIAN. ...the Office of President of the United States...

CHIEF JUSTICE. ...and will to the best of my ability...

DAMIAN. ...and will to the best of my ability...

CHIEF JUSTICE. ...preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States...

DAMIAN. ...preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States...

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CHIEF JUSTICE....so help you, God.

DAMIAN. ...so help me, God.

CHIEF JUSTICE. Congratulations, Mr. President. *(President Damian Cunningham and the Chief Justice shake hands, as loud applause can be heard in the background. Fade to black. Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.)*

REPORTER 1. Tonight's top story: President Cunningham continues to push the Justice Department to implement and enforce elements of his social agenda by fiat, with these orders already set to be challenged in the courts."

REPORTER 2. President Cunningham calls for new constitutional amendments outlawing abortion and homosexuality, making prayer in schools mandatory, and recognizing Protestant Christianity as the official religion of the United States."

REPORTER 3. New comments at the President's press conference spark outrage, as he questions whether non-Christian immigrants should be welcomed into the country, or even if non-believers should have the right to vote."

REPORTER 4. More and more Americans are beginning to question the President's promise to protect all faiths from the atheist movement...or whether he simply wants to protect his own. *(Anti-Cunningham protesters are storming through the streets of New York City, as they run up against a wall of police officers. Violent riots and conflicts are depicted between protesters and police officers, with police officers using guns and mace to resist the protesters.)*

SCENE 17

The year is 2411. President Damian Cunningham is with members of his White House staff discussing issues of war and the possibility of declaring a national emergency.

HARVEY. What do you mean sanctions?

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CHIEF OF STAFF. Top officials both in Germany and the United Kingdom have been discussing it lately. They say the latest executive order is in violation of some lefty "human rights" crap.

SECRETARY OF STATE. Mr. President, we have absolutely no evidence that suggests that any of our allies are planning to turn on the United States, either now or at any point in the future.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. It's true, sir. The fact of the matter is that the case that the Chief of Staff and White House Counselor have both been making is shaky, at best.

CHIEF OF STAFF. It'll appeal to your base, sir. If you want to boost your polls and win again in 2412, history suggests this is the route you need to go.

MACDOUGAL. He's right, Damian. There's plenty reason to believe that the atheists still leading our "allies" can't be trusted any more than the Russians or the Chinese.

HARVEY. Aren't their bigger considerations to be taken into than getting cheap votes, Mr. President? This is dead serious. We're talking about potentially invading our allies. Committing war crimes. Possibly violating the Constitution. Doesn't any of this matter to-

DAMIAN. Everyone except Harvey and MacDougal, get out. (Pause)

CHIEF OF STAFF. Yes, Mr. President. (*Exit CHIEF OF STAFF, followed reluctantly and with bitterness by SECRETARY OF STATE and SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.*)

DAMIAN. So, as far as I'm concerned, the two of you are the most articulate advocates for the two cases I've been hearing back and forth in my administration. Tell me, both of you, why you're right and why the other is wrong.

HARVEY. Mr. President, with all due respect, there have been many issues that I've had with people on your staff, particularly with Counselor MacDougal, but what I'm hearing now about some mass invasion of Europe is both illegal and amoral.

MACDOUGAL. Madam Vice President, with all due respect to you, I am simply making the case on behalf of God. If you have an issue, your issue is with Him.

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HARVEY. God wants the President to go in and kill several innocent civilians in other countries, out of some paranoid, pre-emptive fear of sudden betrayal?

MACDOUGAL. *(To Damian)* Damian, we have all the evidence we need. Many countries are planning unprecedented sanctions against the United States. Now is the time to act on our plan to take back not just America for the Lord, but the rest of the world, as well.

DAMIAN. *(To Harvey)* You say it's unconstitutional, Madam Vice President?

HARVEY. Absolutely. Congress must approve any such act of war, and there's no way they'll be enough members in either party to support such a ridiculous proposal.

MACDOUGAL. But Madam Vice President, you're forgetting one loophole in the Constitution, which our founders intended exactly for this reason: If there is a national emergency - as there has been for some time now - the President can declare one, in order to bypass Congress and do what needs to be done to preserve and protect our country.

HARVEY. And then what? Martial law in America, and potentially abroad?

MACDOUGAL. For as long as is necessary, yes.

HARVEY. That's absurd!

MACDOUGAL. It's exactly what needs to be done to protect the Biblical principles that this country was founded on.

MACDOUGAL. But we're not talking about what the founders intended. We're talking about a mass scale global expansion, unlike any other regime change effort that the country has gotten itself into. A subversion of democracy, and even a dictatorship.

DAMIAN. And what about what God intends, Madam Vice President?

HARVEY. What?

DAMIAN. At the end of the day, we're not here to talk about what the founders intended. We're here to carry out the will of God. *Everything* else is secondary.

HARVEY. Mr. President, please, I think you've been going too far, since taking over the party and ever more so since winning the White House. Please try and look at this rationally-

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DAMIAN. Madam Vice President, you really think I would be even considering this option before me, if I didn't have God on my side?

HARVEY. Sir, with all due respect, I don't think I can go along with such an irrational and dangerous-

DAMIAN. I'm the President, I make the decisions, and I've made my final decision on this matter. As the Counselor made clear, if you have a problem, your problem is with God, and you should consult with Him. Understood?

HARVEY. *(sighs)* Understood, sir.

DAMIAN. Good. *(Exit Harvey, visibly frustrated.)*

MACDOUGAL. Don't fret, Damian. You're making the right choice. With God by our side, our men in uniform will get it done.

DAMIAN. I just question every day why we put a Catholic on the ticket.

MACDOUGAL. Like I suggested at the time, we needed to persuade the people you'd be there for all faiths during the election. And besides, we had to prove that we were at least okay with the notion of having women in power, even if history has proven its failure. Now that we're past that, there's no need to put on a facade, anymore. Soon, when America and the rest of the world is as God intended, they'll be just as disposable as the rest.

DAMIAN. Of course. Now that the path is clear for how to make it happen, I'm sure it won't be long.

MACDOUGAL. Excellent. Well, I'll leave you to your speech prep then, sir. *(Exit Macdougall. Damian looks away and stares out the window. Pause)*

SCENE 18

President Damian Cunningham addresses the nation from the Oval Office.

DAMIAN. My fellow Americans...at this hour, the Pentagon has been requested to fire a series of missiles aimed at the governments of various nations – some authoritarian or harboring terrorists, and others who are working with such nations – and shall continue firing until these governments have offered unconditional surrender to the United States. These nations across Europe, Asia and Africa have been given one chance

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after another to come to the negotiating table, but at this point, after multiple warnings, we have no other choice. This may seem like a terrifying moment for our civilization, but I assure you, once this operation is complete, the United States will emerge stronger than before. As strong as we have been in times past, never before have we, as a nation, come this close to achieving absolute strength. Never before will the people of the world have seen such vast military might, such as that which we are unleashing tonight. And never, ever before has there been an empire as strong and as powerful as the one that shall emerge from the ashes of what remains... *(Fade to black. Several countries and their governments across the world - from the United Kingdom to Germany to France to China to Russia to Japan - are shown in anarchy, ultimately being blown away by nuclear blasts, one after another, as what's left of their leadership signals surrender to the United States. Holograms of various Reporters – some human and some iSapien – appear.)*

REPORTER 1. Tonight's top story: America at war with the rest of the world, in an unprecedented preemptive strike which has unleashed nuclear havoc on virtually the entire industrialized world."

REPORTER 2. "None of the other governments outside the U.S. could see it coming and found themselves off-guard and unable to strike back before their military capabilities were clearly wiped out."

REPORTER 3. "Some politicians, while they oppose the oppressive regimes in China and Russia, question the wisdom and rationale of turning back on long-standing democratic allies."

REPORTER 4. "The President's approval rating among other religious groups - including devout Catholics, Muslims, and Jews - continues to decline, as the President is increasingly viewed as favoring Protestant Nationalism."

REPORTER 5. "Congressional leaders are now facing increasing pressure to push for impeachment proceedings against the president, although Republicans in Congress continue to suggest such talk is foolish and unpatriotic." *(Anti Cunningham protesters are storming through the streets of London, as they run up against a wall of U.S. troops. Violent riots and conflicts are depicted between protesters and U.S. troops, with troops using guns and mace to resist the protesters.)*

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REPORTER 6. "BREAKING NEWS: We have just reported that President Cunningham has fired seven members of his Cabinet, in a stunning shakeup of his administration."

REPORTER 7. "We have breaking news, at this hour: Several U.S. judges - including five justices of the Supreme Court - have been reported missing."

REPORTER 8. "Several members of Congress - including leading members who have called for the President's impeachment - have recently been arrested on charges of treason. It is unclear, at this time, where these members of Congress are currently being held."

REPORTER 9. "This just in: We have confirmed that both the chiefs of the CIA and the FBI have been found dead in their sleep. It's unclear, at this time, the cause of their deaths, and why they were so close to one another."

REPORTER 10. "We are now reporting that a major fire has broken out at the Vice President's residence. The cause of this fire is unclear, at this time, but it is believed that both the Vice President and his family were home at the time it began."

REPORTER 11. President Cunningham has officially declared martial law, in response to continuing unrest and assassinations in the wake of his controversial foreign policy, which continues to divide- (*Quick fade to black. Long silence. A hologram of Joshua lights up.*)

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