

THE 1787 COUP, CULT OF CONSENT, AND INVERSION OF LOGOS



*WHY CONTEMPT FOR LAW IS
THE AMERICAN TRADITION AND
PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP
ONLY REVEALS IT*



By Erik Moyer

The spectacle of President Donald Trump's legal battles dominates the headlines. Politicians and pundits warn that his "contempt for law" is a mortal threat to American democracy, as if this kind of lawlessness were a shocking break with the nation's traditions. In truth, contempt for law is the founding grammar of American power. Trump is not the aberration, but the latest expression of a pattern set in 1787. The regime itself was born through open usurpation and disregard for legal limits. What truly unsettles today's elites is not only Trump's behavior, but the fact that he refuses to maintain the pretense. He exposes a founding code the system prefers to keep hidden. This essay is not about Trump as a man or a politician, but about the historical and moral order that makes figures like him inevitable.

I. THE FORGOTTEN FRAMEWORK: THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION AS AMERICA'S LAWFUL BEDROCK

Before the current regime, the United States existed under the Articles of Confederation, a deliberately weak and consensual compact. Its animating spirit was fear of centralized power and fidelity to local sovereignty. The Articles of Confederation were not a provisional experiment or transitional phase; they were the law. The generation that fought the Revolution embedded explicit safeguards into America's legal architecture, chief among them Article II, which affirmed that each state retained its "sovereignty, freedom and independence," delegating only those powers expressly granted.

The central authority was intentionally constrained. There was no standing army, no national bank, and no direct federal taxation. These were not oversights or failures of imagination, but structural defenses against consolidation.

Most decisively, Article XIII required unanimous consent of all thirteen states for any alteration to the compact. This unanimity rule was not a procedural technicality but a constitutional firewall, ensuring that no state could be bound without its explicit and continuing consent.

The structure was coherent and intentional. Power flowed upward from the states rather than downward from a national sovereign. Consent was explicit and revocable, never presumed. Change was meant to be slow and difficult, not because efficiency was despised, but because liberty was valued more highly than administrative convenience.

Predictably, the postwar reality was strained. National debt mounted, Congress lacked enforcement power, interstate disputes festered, and foreign pressures persisted. Yet under the Articles, such disorder did not suspend legality. Dysfunction was anticipated by design. The system privileged consent over efficiency, and restraint over speed.

The decisive question was therefore not whether reform was needed, but whether reform would proceed within the only lawful framework the states had ratified.

The Annapolis Convention of September 1786 answered that question. Convened at Virginia's invitation for the narrow purpose of addressing interstate commerce under the Articles, Annapolis drew delegates from only five states, reflecting not collapse but continued adherence to the existing legal order; the delegates declined to act beyond their lawful authority recognizing that no partial assembly of states possessed jurisdiction to alter the compact while Article XIII still governed. The delegates openly acknowledged "important defects in the system of the Federal Government," yet claimed no emergency powers and asserted no revolutionary authority.

Instead, the Annapolis Convention report recommended a broader convention in Philadelphia solely to propose remedies, explicitly requiring that any alterations be submitted to Congress and confirmed by the legislatures of every state, in full conformity with Article XIII's unanimity rule. Drafted largely by Alexander Hamilton, the Annapolis report is decisive evidence that, on the eve of Philadelphia, even the most nationalist reformers recognized the Articles as binding law and unanimity as nonnegotiable.

The crisis was real, the defects were named, and the lawful path was reaffirmed. What followed in 1787 was therefore not compelled by necessity, confusion, or institutional breakdown, but by a deliberate choice to abandon a process that had just been explicitly reaffirmed.

The rupture in the American order did not begin with 1776. The Declaration of Independence, for all its revolutionary character, stands firmly within the tradition of natural law and justified resistance. Anchored in Locke's principles of justice, life, and liberty, and more deeply in the Thomistic doctrine that tyrants forfeit their claim to obedience when they violate the common good and exhaust lawful remedies, the American case against Britain was framed as an appeal to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." It was not metaphysical rebellion, but lawful resistance grounded in justice.

A more radical critique warns that Protestant rhetoric of self-government carries an inherent metaphysical risk. Once authority is severed from the divine order and treated as something generated by human will alone, the logic of rebellion can cascade downward, dissolving legitimate authority from ruler to father, husband, and finally God. That danger is real and must not be minimized. Yet acknowledging the risk does not justify collapsing all resistance into ontological revolt. In 1776, authority was not relocated

in autonomous conscience, but appealed beyond itself to objective natural law, the common good, and a sustained pattern of tyrannical violation after lawful remedies had been exhausted. That alignment places the American case within the Thomistic tradition of justified resistance, however imperfect its cultural soil. To erase this distinction is not to defend authority, but to render it unfalsifiable, transforming political theology into quietism and leaving the tradition unable to name tyranny without collapsing into silence.

The true American Revolution stood on the side of justice, divine law, and natural law. What followed in 1787 was not its fulfillment but its inversion: a coup by nationalist elites who replaced consent with central authority, liberty with creditor domination, and the rule of law with obedience to a system that claimed legitimacy only after violating the lawful process that bound them. The Revolution of 1776 restored rights grounded in natural law; the Constitution of 1787 subverted them, inaugurating a new regime that required a perpetual civil liturgy to sanctify its origins and disguise the wound. This was not evolution, but usurpation. The original compact was not extended, but abandoned.

II. THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION BREAK: FROM LAWFUL REFORM TO OPEN COUP

In 1787, the Philadelphia Convention was convened not to replace the Articles of Confederation, but to revise them. The delegates were bound, by their formal charge and by common understanding, to propose amendments within the existing constitutional framework. They were not authorized to draft a new system of government, alter the mode of ratification, or dissolve the compact under which they themselves derived authority.

That mandate was abandoned almost immediately. The most influential figures at the Convention, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton foremost among them, set aside the task of revision and instead undertook the construction of a fundamentally new federal regime. This was not a misunderstanding of scope, but a conscious departure from it.

The framers themselves admitted as much. In *Federalist No. 40*, Madison openly conceded the breach: "In one particular it is admitted that the convention have departed from the tenor of their commission."

Madison acknowledged that instead of proposing amendments requiring confirmation by the legislatures of all the states, the Convention had produced a plan "to be confirmed by the people, and may be carried into effect by nine states only." He did not deny the illegality. He attempted to justify it by deriding the unanimity requirement as impractical. The concession remains decisive: the framers knowingly bypassed the only lawful amendment process then in force.

Hamilton was even more explicit. Speaking at the New York Ratifying Convention, he admitted that the Convention had exceeded its authority: "The Convention were authorized to revise and amend the Articles of Confederation; but they have done more, they have framed a new system of government." Hamilton insisted that the Constitution should therefore be regarded as a recommendation rather than an imposi-

tion, an argument that tacitly confirms the absence of lawful authority to impose it.

This matters because the rule being violated was unambiguous. Article XIII of the Articles of Confederation required unanimous consent of all thirteen states for any alteration of the compact. No exception clause existed. No emergency provision applied. Yet the framers of the proposed Constitution unilaterally replaced this rule with Article VII, which declared ratification by nine states sufficient to establish the new system. This was not an interpretation of existing law, but a direct contradiction of it.

Contemporaries recognized the breach immediately. The Federalists were never a unified body acting in harmony. They were opposed, in real time, by Anti-Federalists who understood precisely what was being done. Luther Martin, a delegate who withdrew from the Convention, stated the matter plainly: "The members of the convention were only authorized to amend and revise the Articles of Confederation, not to annul them or establish a new government."

Patrick Henry warned that the Convention had been delegated authority only to amend the existing system, not to abolish it. George Mason condemned the proposed plan as a threat to liberty. Elbridge Gerry asked the obvious question: if nine states could impose a new government without the consent of the rest, what principle remained to prevent any future majority from doing the same?

The Federalists prevailed not by resolving these objections, but by circumventing them. Knowing unanimity could not be achieved, they altered the ratification mechanism midstream. State legislatures were bypassed in favor of specially constituted conventions designed to secure approval. What could not be obtained lawfully was engineered procedurally.

The practical consequences were immediate and decisive. By discarding the Articles of Confederation, the new Constitution conferred precisely the powers the original compact had been designed to withhold: centralized sovereignty exercised directly over individuals, the power of direct taxation, authority to maintain a standing army, and supremacy over state law. These were not incidental changes. They were the very objects of resistance under the old system.

Even later establishment historians concede the rupture. Clinton Rossiter acknowledged that the method of ratification adopted was "a radical departure from the mode set out in the Articles of Confederation." Michael Klarman has documented the extent to which political pressure, elite coordination, and procedural manipulation replaced lawful amendment. The point is not disputed: by the standards that governed at the time, the process was illegal.

What occurred in Philadelphia was therefore not lawful reform, but a coup, one faction abandoning the agreed rules of the union and imposing a new order justified only after the fact by its effective seizure and consolidation of power.

What the Convention thus entrenched was a governing philosophy long recognized as morally bankrupt: that the ends justify the means and that success retroactively confers legitimacy. This logic is articulated most clearly in Madison's own defense in *Federalist No. 40*. Having admitted that the Convention exceed-

ed its mandate, Madison does not deny the breach but argues instead that obedience to the existing law would have prevented a desirable outcome. Law is treated not as binding authority, but as an obstacle to be overcome. This is the refined form of "might makes right": power asserts necessity, violates established limits, and then offers the achieved result as proof that the violation was justified.

Yet the breach went deeper than procedure. The Convention enshrined a new governing axiom: legitimacy would no longer flow from law constraining power, but from power asserting itself as law. Where the Articles subordinated authority to consent, the new regime subordinated consent to authority. Where law once limited outcomes, outcomes now sanctified law.

This is the inversion at the heart of the American regime. What ought to have been condemned, force, fraud, and procedural manipulation, was rebranded as wisdom, necessity, and progress. Freedom was redefined as submission to centralized power. Consent became whatever arrangement emerged victorious. Illegality, once successful, was transfigured into legitimacy.

This inversion is not merely political but metaphysical. It echoes the logic of rebellion described by Milton: autonomy preferred to obedience, power preferred to order. Authority is no longer received as something to be governed by law, but asserted as something that justifies itself by victory. The safeguards of the Articles of Confederation were cast aside, and a precedent was established that would govern thereafter: when power cannot be obtained by law, it may be seized by subterfuge and sanctified retroactively.

The Philadelphia Convention was not a tragic misstep or historical anomaly. It inaugurated a governing logic that would define the American state going forward. With the legal rupture complete, the path was opened for the manufacture of consent, the ritualization of obedience, and the construction of a permanent machinery of managed compliance.

III. NECESSITY OVER LEGITIMACY: EMERGENCY AS CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE

When challenged, the architects of the Constitution did not ultimately defend their actions by law, but by necessity. This shift was not incidental. It marked the replacement of legitimacy with expedience as the governing standard of the American regime.

James Madison conceded the point directly. He acknowledged that if the delegates were regarded as mere agents of the Confederation, their work "would have been without authority," and then immediately questioned whether "a strict adherence to the forms prescribed by the Articles of Confederation ought to be a rigid rule." The implication was clear: when legality obstructs desired outcomes, legality may be set aside.

Alexander Hamilton made the same argument with even less ambiguity. He admitted that the Convention had exceeded its powers and defended the act on the grounds that "under the necessity of the case, they exceeded their powers and made a new system." Authority was not derived from law, but retroactively asserted by success.

This reasoning did not merely excuse a procedural irregularity. It installed a new governing doctrine. Once



necessity becomes the standard, legality becomes conditional. No constitutional form is binding if it obstructs perceived emergency. Law no longer constrains power; power redefines law.

This doctrine did not end in Philadelphia. It became the regime's operating grammar. Every future assertion of authority would trace back to this precedent: when law stands in the way, invoke crisis, suspend the rules, and sanctify the result after the fact.

Lysander Spooner later exposed the fraud at the heart of this logic with surgical clarity. He observed that the Constitution "not only binds nobody now, but never did bind anybody," and that it was, in substance, "as much a contract entered into by force and fraud as if it had been entered into at the point of a bayonet." Appeals to necessity or the public good, he argued, are not moral justifications but rhetorical disguises for arbitrary power. A system that rests on necessity rests on force, not consent.

Spooner's critique is decisive because it exposes what necessity arguments always conceal. If necessity can override law, then no law is ever final. If emergency authorizes suspension, then suspension becomes permanent. A regime founded on necessity cannot distinguish between authority and convenience, or between obligation and submission.

Modern invocations of emergency power follow this same grammar. Executive declarations, administrative overrides, undeclared wars, and unilateral reallocations of authority are not deviations from the constitutional order, but faithful repetitions of its founding logic. The outrage they provoke is rarely over contempt for law itself, but over breaches of tone, custom, or decorum. The principle has already been conceded.

Once necessity replaces legitimacy, crisis becomes the real constitution. Everything else is ceremony.

IV. HOW THE REAL STORY WAS ERASED: MEMORY CONTROL AND REGIME SURVIVAL

The vast majority of Americans, including the educated elite, have never encountered the real story of the 1787 coup. This ignorance is not accidental. It is functional. The regime's long-term survival depends on erasing its origins so completely that even sincere patriots internalize the founding myth and unconsciously defend it. What appears as historical amnesia is better understood as psychological warfare by omission: the deliberate removal of destabilizing knowledge combined with ritual reinforcement of an authorized narrative.

This erasure was not undertaken to glorify the past for its own sake, but to foreclose future resistance. A

population that understands its governing order was born in fraud cannot be reliably governed through appeals to legitimacy, crisis, or necessity. Forgetting was therefore not a cultural byproduct but a political requirement. What is never learned cannot be questioned.

FEDERALIST MYTHMAKING AND THE MORAL INVERSION OF DISSENT

From the moment the Constitution was imposed, the victors controlled the narrative. Federalists framed the Convention as a miracle of wisdom and unity, while dissenters were recast as parochial, irrational, or obstructive. Figures such as Patrick Henry and Luther Martin were preserved in the historical record but stripped of moral authority, remembered as impediments to progress rather than defenders of the lawful order. The conflict was not erased, but morally inverted.

COGNITIVE CONDITIONING THROUGH OMISSION

Education became the primary instrument of stabilization. Textbooks and curricula presented the Constitution as the inevitable solution to chaos, omitting both the continued legality of the Articles of Confederation and the procedural violations that displaced them. Students were taught outcomes without processes, authority without origin. The question of legality was replaced by the assumption of necessity.

RITUAL REINFORCEMENT AND SOCIAL POLICING

American civil religion operates through ritual rather than argument. The pledge, the flag, the anthem, and Constitution Day do not invite scrutiny; they demand affirmation. Once the founding becomes sacred, questioning it becomes a form of moral deviance rather than intellectual inquiry. Dissenters are not debated but pathologized, labeled extremists or cranks, and excluded from respectable discourse.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND SYSTEMIC SELF-REINFORCEMENT

Over time, the system became self-sustaining. Teachers taught what they themselves had learned. Institutions rewarded loyalty to inherited narratives rather than historical rigor. Citizens fused civic identity with moral virtue, so that questioning the founding felt like a personal betrayal rather than a historical correction. The defense of the myth became a defense of self.

RESULT: A TRUTH TOO DANGEROUS TO ACKNOWLEDGE

The true account of America's founding survives only at the margins, treated as unspeakable even among the educated. This is not an educational failure but a structural imperative. If the founding were widely understood as a breach rather than a miracle, the regime

would lose its ability to invoke crisis as justification, necessity as absolution, and obedience as virtue.

If you never encountered this history before, that absence was engineered. Only by recognizing this machinery of forgetting can one understand why every major expansion of power is framed as unavoidable, why debate is confined within narrow boundaries, and why legitimacy is always asserted but never examined.

V. CRISIS AS PRETEXT: HOW NECESSITY BECAME THE REGIME'S JUSTIFICATION

From the start, every major assertion of federal power has been framed as unavoidable necessity. Official justifications vary, "for your safety," "national security," "to preserve order," "for the good of the nation," but their function is constant. These phrases operate as incantations, invoked to suspend limits, centralize authority, and silence objection. Liberty is never restored to its prior baseline. Each invocation leaves behind new permanent powers. This process operates not only through law and force, but through psychological warfare: fear is cultivated, dissent is stigmatized, obedience is framed as moral duty, and perception is reshaped over time.

Each episode differs in surface detail, but the structure never changes. A crisis is declared. Normal limits are suspended. Extraordinary powers are claimed. When the crisis subsides, the powers remain. The emergency dissolves; the authority does not. What was introduced as temporary becomes normalized. What was justified as exceptional becomes routine.

What follows are the key episodes that reveal this pattern in operation. In every case, necessity is elevated above law, outcome is offered as proof of legitimacy, and power retroactively sanctifies its own expansion. This is not a deviation from the American tradition but its governing logic, the same inversion that birthed the regime in 1787.

FOUNDING AND EARLY CONSOLIDATION

• **Shays' Rebellion (1786–87):** In rural western Massachusetts, indebted farmers, many of them Revolutionary War veterans, resisted foreclosures, tax hikes, and court enforcement. Led by Daniel Shays, they shut down courts and demanded debt relief. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress lacked authority to intervene, and Massachusetts relied on privately funded militia to restore order. Elites seized on the unrest, recasting a localized debt revolt as evidence of "mob rule" and systemic failure. The rebellion was weaponized rhetorically to manufacture panic and justify a new constitutional order. What was presented as necessary reform was, in substance, a power grab orchestrated through crisis framing.

• **Whiskey Rebellion (1791–94):** When western Pennsylvania farmers resisted the federal whiskey tax, the new regime framed local economic resistance as a national emergency. President George Washington invoked the need to "preserve order" and personally led a federalized force of roughly 13,000 militia to suppress the uprising. The scale of the response far exceeded the threat. What mattered was not revenue collection but precedent. A fiscal dispute was transformed

into a test case for federal supremacy. Crisis supplied the justification; force supplied the proof. The episode normalized the idea that resistance to federal policy constituted disorder warranting military response, establishing a template that would be reused whenever law encountered opposition.

EXPANSION, WAR, AND CENTRALIZATION

- **Mexican–American War (1846–48):** A disputed border skirmish was used as pretext for territorial expansion and the projection of federal military power.
- **Civil War (1861–65):** “Preserving the Union” justified total war, permanent federal supremacy, and post-war constitutional centralization through the Reconstruction amendments.
- **Reconstruction Era (1865–1877):** Emergency rule in the postwar South normalized suspension of habeas corpus, military occupation, and federal override of state governments, establishing a template for future interventions.
- **Spanish–American War (1898):** “Remember the Maine,” an incident of disputed origin, enabled overseas empire and permanent foreign bases.
- **World War I (1917–18):** War emergency justified the Espionage Act, censorship, federal economic control, and the income tax.
- **Palmer Raids and Red Scare (1919–20):** Internal security pretexts enabled mass arrests, deportations, and early federal surveillance of political dissent.
- **World War II (1941–45):** Consolidated the national security state, permanent military establishment, global intervention, and intelligence apparatus.
- **Korean War (1950–53):** Truman’s undeclared “police action” normalized executive war-making without congressional authorization.
- **Cold War (1947–91):** Loyalty programs, surveillance, and suppression of dissent entrenched emergency logic as permanent governance.
- **Vietnam and Gulf of Tonkin (1964):** Exaggerated or fabricated attacks bypassed constitutional war powers, escalating military intervention.

DOMESTIC DISORDER AND ADMINISTRATIVE POWER

- **Urban Unrest and Race Riots (1960s, 1992):** Domestic disorder justified federal intervention, National Guard deployment, emergency curfews, and expanded policing and surveillance.
- **Great Depression and New Deal (1930s):** Emergency declarations produced permanent administrative agencies, cooperative federalism, and erosion of state autonomy.
- **2008 Financial Crisis:** “Too big to fail” logic justified bailouts, Federal Reserve intervention, and centralized financial regulation.

The War on Terror and Technocratic Control

- **Post-9/11 War on Terror (2001–ongoing):** “For your safety” justified mass surveillance, indefinite de-

tention, torture, endless authorizations for military force, and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Emergency powers became ordinary governance.

- **Iraq War (2003):** Unverified intelligence and manufactured necessity normalized preventive war and expanded executive authority.

- **Immigration and Border Emergencies (2000s–2020s):** Repeated emergency declarations enabled executive action, military deployment, and funding redirection under national security pretexts.

- **COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–23):** Public health emergency justified executive orders, shutdowns, censorship, economic control, and behavioral mandates, with emergency authority normalized across civil life.

Digital Control and the Next Phase

- **Programmable Money and Digital Currency (Present / Next):** Unlike earlier crises, this phase does not require new emergency declarations. It builds upon powers already normalized. Digital currencies and programmable money are justified through security, public health, fraud prevention, climate action, and financial inclusion, not as extraordinary measures but as routine governance. These tools enable direct surveillance, algorithmic control, selective enforcement, and economic exclusion without overt violence. Central bank digital currencies allow the state to freeze dissenters’ access, enforce compliance, and reshape participation in economic life itself. In the end, the American regime, long defined as the antithesis of authoritarian systems, adopts the very instruments it once denounced: ubiquitous surveillance, programmable obedience, and technocratic management of daily life.

The pattern is now complete: crisis no longer merely justifies the regime; the regime justifies itself through perpetual crisis.

VI. THE 1787 COUP: FROM CONSENT TO CREDIT – THE FOUNDING OF PERPETUAL SERVITUDE

The regime’s pattern of invoking crisis and necessity to override law and concentrate power did not originate in the modern era. It began in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. Under the Articles of Confederation, states retained not only political autonomy but economic sovereignty. They controlled taxation, managed debt locally, and exercised authority over money and credit within their jurisdictions. This decentralized system limited creditor power by preventing any central authority from enforcing debt uniformly across the population, thereby preserving genuine consent through the possibility of refusal, delay, and exit.

That system was the real target.

Fifty-five men, handpicked by elites and meeting in secret, were tasked only with revising the Articles of Confederation, not abolishing them. Yet they did exactly that. They discarded the existing compact, drafted a new sovereign authority, and rewrote the rules of ratification so that only nine states were required to bind the rest. Patrick Henry grasped the danger immediately: “If nine can do it, why not eight? Why not one?” His warning exposed the principle being established. Consent would no longer constrain power. Power

would redefine consent.

This was not merely a procedural breach. It was the deliberate substitution of an economic order. The revolution of 1787 was not only about centralizing political authority, but about insulating creditor interests from democratic pressure. Under the Articles, debtors could resist, states could restructure obligations, and monetary flexibility limited the dominance of bondholders and merchant elites. The Constitution eliminated those constraints.

Alexander Hamilton's blueprint made this explicit. The 1787 coup inverted consent and law into force and usury, enabling centralized monetary control that would bind both states and citizens to creditor interests. Article I, Section 10 stripped states of monetary authority, ending the autonomy that had existed under the Articles and replacing it with a uniform, national regime of debt enforcement. What had previously been uneven, negotiable, and locally responsive became centralized, coercive, and inescapable. Creditors no longer bore risk; risk was socialized downward. Credit itself became sovereign.

The institutional mechanisms followed predictably: a standing army to enforce law, a national bank to consolidate credit, and permanent public debt to bind the future. Hamilton's First Bank of the United States in 1791 and the Second Bank in 1816 were not policy experiments but structural necessities of the new order. They ensured that debt would be permanent, enforceable, and national.

Permanent debt does not merely enrich creditors. It disciplines populations by converting political agency into economic survival. A people burdened by perpetual public and private debt cannot strike easily, withhold labor, exit systems, or sustain long-term opposition. Consent is replaced by dependency. Resistance becomes materially suicidal. What bayonets once enforced, compound interest now accomplishes silently.

Here the moral logic becomes explicit. In the Thomistic tradition, St. Thomas Aquinas condemned usury not primarily as excessive interest, but as the unjust sale of time itself. Time, for Aquinas, belongs to God and to the natural order, not to creditors. To demand payment for the mere passage of time is to claim dominion over future labor that does not yet exist. A system built on interest-bearing debt therefore inverts moral order: obligation precedes consent, necessity replaces freedom, and economic compulsion substitutes for legitimate authority.

Charles Beard later demonstrated that this constitutional transformation was inseparable from material self-interest. The Constitution was not an abstract philosophical achievement but a practical instrument for enforcing creditor dominance and suppressing popular resistance. The language of stability and the common good cloaked a system designed to eliminate debtor leverage. Necessity was always the rhetorical cover for interest.

The full logic of this system reached its mature expression in 1913 with the creation of the Federal Reserve. Marx and Engels had identified the centralization of credit in the hands of the state through a national bank as a core plank of revolutionary power. The parallel is not accidental. Despite their ideological

antagonism, both the American and Marxist systems rely on the same essential machinery: centralized control of credit, monopoly over money creation, and the embedding of perpetual public debt as the condition of national life. Under both regimes, creditor interests dominate, and dispossession becomes systemic.

Compound interest completes the moral inversion. It does not merely extract wealth; it colonizes time itself, binding generations who never consented to obligations imposed before their birth. Political inheritance is replaced by debt inheritance. The future is mortgaged in advance, and consent becomes irrelevant to obligations that predate the living.

This outcome was not accidental. It was the fulfillment of the regime's design. Self-government was replaced by perpetual indebtedness. Every expansion of federal power and monetary control, always justified by necessity, has extended the founding betrayal. Modern presidents are not aberrations. When they invoke emergency powers, reinterpret statutes, or protect financial institutions at public expense, they reenact the precedent set in 1787. Rules are rewritten, necessity is invoked, and creditor interests are preserved.

Today's national debt, which can never be repaid under compound interest, is not a temporary excess or partisan failure. It is the logical conclusion of a system inaugurated by the constitutional coup. What was once justified as emergency necessity now stands revealed as permanent economic servitude, enforced not by open violence but by the iron logic of debt and centralized finance. The cycle continues, deepening with each administration, and the outcome is neither accidental nor reversible within the existing regime.

VII. THE DEATH OF EXIT: FROM VOLUNTARY UNION TO FORCED UNION

Under the Articles of Confederation, union depended on consent because exit remained possible. States could withdraw, resist federal overreach, experiment with policy, and negotiate obligations. The system was fragile by design, but that fragility preserved legitimacy. Authority could not compel indefinitely because participation was not irrevocable.

That structure did not survive 1787.

After the constitutional coup, exit was no longer treated as a political option but as a criminal act. Resistance was reclassified as rebellion. Withdrawal became treason. Voluntary union barely had a childhood before it was strangled.

The change was immediate and unmistakable. When Pennsylvania farmers resisted the whiskey tax in 1794, George Washington, fresh from victory over the British, personally led a federalized force of roughly 13,000 militia, larger than any army he had personally commanded against the Crown, to crush them. The message was not merely fiscal compliance. It was ontological. The union would no longer depend on consent. It would be enforced.

Lysander Spooner later exposed the fraud with devastating clarity. The Constitution, he wrote, "has no inherent authority or obligation... It does not so much as even purport to be a contract between persons now existing." Consent was redefined so that residence meant agreement, participation meant ap-

proval, and dissent meant guilt. Exit ceased to exist. The phrase "consent of the governed" survived only as ritual language detached from reality.

The Civil War made this logic explicit and irreversible. When southern states attempted to withdraw, the response was not negotiation but invasion. "A Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets has no charm for me," Jefferson Davis observed. Lincoln replied with the regime's final doctrine: "No State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union... I shall take care... that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States."

At that moment, the question was settled permanently. The union was no longer voluntary in any meaningful sense. Consent was no longer a condition of legitimacy. It was an after-the-fact claim enforced by force.

Decentralization did not guarantee justice. But consolidation guaranteed coercion. The historical record that followed includes civil war, mass conscription, Jim Crow, perpetual warfare, and the modern surveillance state, all under the banner of an allegedly unified people. Today, when states or citizens speak of resistance, nullification, or withdrawal, they are branded enemies of the union just as dissenters were in 1861.

The fraud endures. Consent is claimed. Bayonets enforce it. A contract you cannot leave is not a contract. It is a cage.

VIII. THE LITURGY OF VOTING: FRAUD, COMPLICITY, AND THE NARROW GATE

With its foundation illegitimate, the regime cannot rely on consent in any meaningful sense. It must instead manufacture belonging. Public life is therefore reorganized into ritual and civil religion, transforming obedience into virtue and repetition into loyalty. School ceremonies, anthem performances, electoral theater, and judicial pageantry are not cultural accidents. They function to insulate the founding usurpation from scrutiny and bind each generation to the fiction of voluntary rule. What emerges is not merely civil religion, but a national cult sustained by ritual participation rather than genuine assent.

Voting is the regime's central liturgy. It is presented as the highest expression of civic agency while operating as the primary mechanism of containment. The ballot offers the appearance of choice but delivers only managed participation within boundaries fixed by power. From the first federal elections onward, voting has not constrained the system. It has consecrated it. Each ballot cast retroactively sanctifies a structure designed to be permanent, converting powerlessness into civic virtue and dissent into procedural compliance.

The recurring appeal to the "lesser of two evils" is not prudence but submission to a closed system. Whether framed as harm reduction, defensive necessity, or moral compromise under duress, such reasoning concedes the regime's illegitimacy while insisting that one must nevertheless ratify it. This is the system's most effective moral inversion. Coercion is treated as license, and participation is recast as responsibility. Selecting which injustice to authorize does not negate complicity. It merely negotiates its terms.

The claim that abstention permits greater evil fails

on its own logic. If participation is morally required because the system produces harm, then participation is already implicated in that harm. Responsibility cannot be evaded by choosing among pre-approved outcomes within a structure that remains unchallengeable. Historically, a genuinely open political order was one in which the terms of association themselves remained contestable and withdrawal was possible without war, a condition that makes consent intelligible but that this regime deliberately extinguished. No level of turnout or enthusiasm restores openness once those conditions are absent. Participation does not merely register preference. It confers legitimacy. The system survives precisely by absorbing opposition into a ritual that simulates choice while foreclosing exit.

Nor can responsibility be displaced through delegation. Voting is celebrated precisely because it is understood to authorize power. To insist that the voter bears no moral responsibility for outcomes while demanding participation in the mechanism that produces them is incoherent. If the ballot is morally inert, it cannot be obligatory. If it carries moral weight, its consequences cannot be disowned. The ritual does not absolve guilt. It distributes it.

The further claim that virtuous participation can redeem a corrupt structure mistakes personnel for power. Systems that extinguish exit do not respond to virtue. They convert moral participation into proof of legitimacy, turning dissent, reform, and good faith engagement into evidence that the system works. Reformist impulses are proceduralized and neutralized, not suppressed, and then redeployed as validation of the regime itself. The system does not fear moral voters. It depends on them. What is praised as civic maturity is in fact the final stage of capture: the transformation of conscience into a renewable resource for regime maintenance.

At this point, resistance often shifts from argument to instinct. For many, especially those responsible for children, refusal feels indistinguishable from abandonment. Voting becomes symbolically entangled with guardianship, a way of affirming that one has not surrendered the future of those in one's care. The ritual reassures the conscience that something was done, even when nothing fundamental could be changed. This psychological burden is not incidental. It is the regime's final line of defense. By binding parental anxiety and moral responsibility to procedural participation, the system converts fear of neglect into renewed legitimation. The choice is no longer framed as truth versus falsehood, but as responsibility versus dereliction.

Voting is therefore not a civic duty but material cooperation with systemic injustice. To vote is to ratify the original fraud and to accept responsibility for the regime's actions carried out in one's name. War, debt, dispossession, and coercion are laundered through the ballot box, allowing moral distance to be maintained under the banner of democracy. The ritual does not mitigate evil. It normalizes it.

For the Catholic conscience, and for any moral framework that refuses consequentialist evasion, this conclusion is unavoidable. As Thomas Aquinas teaches, one may never do evil that good may come of it.

The Catechism reiterates the same principle: evil may not be chosen even for ostensibly beneficial ends. Where participation entails complicity in injustice, and abstention does not itself create greater harm, refusal is not optional. It is obligatory. Voting under such conditions constitutes impermissible material cooperation with fraud.

To recognize that one's own agency, and that of one's descendants, has long been circumscribed by design is a destabilizing realization. The regime endures by transmuting every hope for reform into ritual participation, ensuring that conscience itself becomes a mechanism of compliance. Refusal to vote is not withdrawal from responsibility but fidelity to truth. Abstention is not apathy or despair. It is the conscious rejection of a system that demands moral complicity as the price of belonging. For those who choose the narrow gate, nonparticipation is not an escape from obligation, but the clearest remaining form of moral witness

IX. FROM COUP TO DIGITAL TYRANNY: THE COMPLETION OF AMERICA'S FOUNDING FRAUD

The implications of the 1787 coup are not academic or confined to historians. They define the structure of American life, law, and power. America's original sin is not merely slavery, as so often claimed, but the founding fraud itself: the act of constitutional usurpation that replaced lawful compact with imposed authority and continues to shape every aspect of the regime's rule.

The maxim *fraud vitiates everything* is a longstanding principle of English common law and equity jurisprudence. If a contract or legal instrument is procured through fraud, it is null and void from the beginning. No valid rights or obligations can flow from it. Time does not cure fraud. Endurance does not sanctify it. Power does not transmute it into legitimacy.

In the American case, the relevant "contract" was the Articles of Confederation: a consensual compact among sovereign states, amendable only by unanimity. The Philadelphia Convention violated that requirement, rewrote the rules midstream, and bypassed state legislatures in favor of engineered ratifying conventions. This was fraud on the states and the people. Lysander Spooner extended the logic further: without explicit, voluntary consent from each individual bound, the Constitution is nothing more than paper, possessing no moral or legal force whatsoever.

In functional terms, the federal government operates as organized coercion at scale: extraction of wealth, monopoly on violence, and enforcement of authority obtained through usurpation. What differentiates it from ordinary criminal enterprises is not moral character, but ritual sanctification. Civil religion supplies the veneer that recasts coercion as law and obedience as consent. Because the regime's origins are rooted in fraud, every statute, regulation, court decision, tax, and enforcement action flows from that original poison tree. The consequences are visible everywhere.

Federal law rests on authority seized in Philadelphia, not on genuine consent. Statutes bind not because they are legitimate, but because noncompliance is punished.

The Supreme Court interprets and enforces a charter imposed through breach of trust. Its rulings compel obedience not through justice, but through the regime's monopoly on force.

Congress and the Presidency exercise powers derived from a government that replaced lawful delegation with its own rules, then claimed permanence through self-ratification.

Taxation and regulatory enforcement extract wealth under threat of escalating penalties: fines, asset seizure, prosecution, or imprisonment. Compliance is secured by fear, not legitimacy.

State governments no longer possess sovereignty. They function as administrative subsidiaries of Washington, managed through fiscal blackmail, conditional funding, regulatory preemption, and coerced "cooperation." State autonomy survives only where it aligns with federal priorities.

Civil liberties exist at the discretion of the regime's own agents. Rights become privileges. Constitutional guarantees become rhetorical devices, invoked when convenient and ignored when inconvenient. Surveillance, asset forfeiture, selective prosecution, speech control, and weapons prohibitions are not aberrations. They are expressions of authority untethered from consent.

Elections and voting complete the circle. Democracy becomes ritualized consent. Dissent is managed, re-directed, or punished, but never permitted to threaten the regime's core architecture.

Once authority is detached from consent, efficiency becomes the governing value. What began as usurpation now accelerates toward its terminal phase: total management through programmable money, real-time surveillance, algorithmic control, and behavioral conditioning. The emergency logic first invoked to justify constitutional usurpation now manifests as permanent crisis governance, with the capacity to monitor, restrict, or revoke access based on compliance. This is not a departure from the founding logic. It is its completion.

No legal remedy can be claimed by the defrauded. Appeals to constitutional meaning, accusations of unconstitutionality, and debates over judicial interpretation are empty rituals performed within a framework built by fraud. They seek legitimacy from a document whose foundation is illegitimate. No reform escapes these boundaries. All such efforts merely reinforce the regime's authority by accepting its terms.

No subsequent amendment or convention can cure the original defect, because any such act would proceed under authority claimed from the fraudulent instrument itself, reproducing the same absence of consent it purports to remedy.

It is therefore no accident that public frustration fixates on betrayal, hypocrisy, and the apparent moral

emptiness of political leadership. This is not primarily a matter of individual corruption or personal failure. It is the behavioral outcome selected for by a regime founded on inversion. Advancement within such a system requires adaptability to fraud, comfort with contradiction, and the ability to perform loyalty while serving expedience.

Over time, these pressures select for a political class marked by duplicity, emotional detachment, and ritualized betrayal. What citizens experience as hypocrisy or even sociopathy is not a deviation from the system, but its requirement. The mask is not incidental. It is the price of survival and ascent within a regime built to sanctify inversion and neutralize dissent. The result is a government that feels alien, unaccountable, and fundamentally hostile to those it claims to serve.

In a regime whose authority originates in fraud and culminates in totalized control, participation does not restrain power but consecrates it, leaving refusal not as protest or despair, but as the only coherent response consistent with truth.

X. SHATTERING THE SPELL: AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM, CIVIL RELIGION, AND THE FRAUD OF CONSENT

Scripture, history, and reason all refute the myth that America is uniquely favored or exempt from judgment. God has never guaranteed the preservation of any nation, not Israel exiled and Jerusalem destroyed, not Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Carthage, Greece, Rome, Constantinople, Byzantium, or the Russian Empire. Every civilization rises and falls under judgment, not because God is absent, but because judgment applies to nations as it does to individuals. Nothing in revelation exempts America, least of all a regime birthed in coup, fraud, and ritualized deception.

American exceptionalism, the belief that the United States is uniquely virtuous and divinely protected, has functioned as the regime's most effective psychological weapon. From the "shining city on a hill" myth onward, civil religion has substituted for truth, transforming founding lawlessness into civic faith. Loyalty is demanded rather than earned. Dissent is not suppressed outright but absorbed into legitimizing rituals, courts, elections, and culture wars that function as pressure valves, channeling opposition back into the system. Participation becomes proof of virtue; refusal is treated as moral deviance.

The 1787 coup was not merely a political rupture but the American expression of a far older pattern: necessity elevated over truth, power over order, and self-sovereignty asserted against divine authority. Here the analysis must be named for what it is. As Scripture teaches, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). The satanic inversion at the heart of the 1787 coup aligns precisely with this warning. John Milton captured the same logic in *Paradise Lost* when Satan declares it "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," naming the preference for autonomous rule

over rightful order that defines rebellion itself. Principalities operate through high places, governments, institutions, legal orders, and constructing systems that require deception for their survival. This is why reform fails. The battle is not against bad politicians, but against an inverted structure animated by unseen powers. The Constitution does not shield against this reality; it is its mask.

Many continue to believe America can be restored by returning to its founding ideals through activism, litigation, or moral witness. This hope is not merely historical naïveté but a psychological coping mechanism, a way to manage despair without confronting finality. The founding betrayal is irreversible. Every attempt at reclamation merely consecrates the original fraud, converting restoration into ritual and postponing reckoning. What appears as hope is often avoidance.

Some, including E. Michael Jones, acknowledge political terminality, the collapse of the "third republic" and the dissolution of the inverted regime, yet place hope in a form of spiritual endurance: logos rising through conversion, remnant fidelity, and cultural persistence amid collapse, without insisting on an explicit rupture or judgment of the existing order. This is a serious position, rooted in Augustine's distinction between the City of God and the City of Man, and in the conviction that truth survives even as political forms decay.

But it risks the same evasion. Augustine of Hippo does not imagine renewal emerging from within corrupted structures. In *City of God* (Book XIX.17-18), Augustine understands the fall of empires as providential judgment exposing orders built on pride. Renewal follows judgment and exile, not gradual moralization of an inverted system. The City of God does not reform the earthly city; it outlives it. The faithful endure, detach, and refuse to substitute witness or incremental reform for the necessary break with a corrupt and illegitimate order, because truth emerges only after rubble is cleared, not rearranged.

Scripture reinforces this pattern. Jeremiah teaches that God uproots and tears down before He builds (Jeremiah 18:7-10). St. Paul warns of a "mystery of iniquity" already at work, deceiving even the elect (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). History offers no counterexample. Pagan Rome was not redeemed from within; it was judged. Christendom emerged not by rehabilitating the imperial order, but from its ruins.

Thomas Aquinas clarifies the moral logic. In *Summa Theologiae* (I-II, q. 96, a. 4), unjust laws are acts of violence rather than laws, binding in conscience only to avoid greater harm, never redeemable internally. When a regime's *telos* (its governing end or purpose) is corrupt, its outcomes will be corrupt (I-II, q. 105, a. 1). Religion directs loyalty to God alone, subordinating all political orders lest creatures be worshiped over the Creator (II-II, q. 81, a. 1). Renewal follows judgment, not endless ritual struggle within a fraudulent order.

This is not quietism, condemned by Pope Inno-

cent XI in *Coelestis Pastor* (1687) as total passivity and abandonment of moral action. It is conscious refusal to collude with a regime whose ends are corrupt from inception. It is abstention from public rites that legitimize fraud, and the redirection of loyalty toward the Catholic Church and the ordering of one's own soul. It is action without illusion.

This refusal will be misunderstood, not because it lacks clarity, but because it demands something most people are not psychologically prepared to give. Many hear Christ's warning about the narrow gate and instinctively confine it to private morality or interior spirituality, assuming it does not apply to politics, nation, identity, or history. Yet political identity is among the most powerful idols of the modern world. To apply the narrow gate consistently is to apply it here as well.

What prevents this recognition is not ignorance, lack of intelligence, or even absence of faith, but identity fusion. For most Americans, the state is not merely a governing structure. It is a source of meaning, agency, continuity, and inheritance. To confront the founding as fraudulent feels like rejecting one's own adulthood, one's role as parent, and one's capacity to act meaningfully for future generations. It is experienced not as historical correction but as existential rupture.

To say, "your political identity is built on a fraud," produces the same psychic effect as saying, "your origin story is false." Even when the evidence is overwhelming, the cost of acceptance is existential rather than intellectual. The psyche instinctively chooses manageable falsehood over unbearable truth. Most people cannot follow this path not because it is false, but because it requires identity death before consolation. Participation persists not because it persuades, but because it anesthetizes. Restoration fantasies recur not because they succeed, but because they defer grief.

The path outlined here demands something harsher: renunciation of political agency as illusion, refusal without replacement, acceptance of judgment without timetable, and fidelity without visible efficacy. That is the narrow gate. Christ never promised it would be crowded. He promised it would be real.

The only radical and spiritually honest response is to reject the cult of legitimacy. Abandon the rituals of national myth. Accept the irreversibility of the founding betrayal. Seek truth and order outside the logic of restoration. Hope is not found in redeeming fallen regimes, but in fidelity to Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church, the only institution against which the gates of hell will not prevail. We are called to be in the world, not of it, to bear witness to truth, not to sanctify any political order. No constitution or nation stands at the center of history. Jesus Christ, Truth Himself, remains as judge, cornerstone, and measure of all things when every regime has passed.

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HOLY PLACES

A City of Music

Anthony Esolen

What craftsman among us now will be remembered as long as there are people who cherish beautiful things made by human hands? But the name of one man has become synonymous with art on the violin, the musical instrument that most seems animated with a human voice to express every feeling:

*The instrument on which he played
Was in Cremona's workshops made,
By a great master of the past,
Ere yet was lost the art divine;
Fashioned of maple and of pine,
That in Tyrolian forests vast
Had rocked and wrestled with the blast;
Exquisite was it in design,
Perfect in each minutest part.
A marvel of the luteist's art;
And in its hollow chamber, thus,
The maker from whose hands it came
Had written his unrivalled name,—
"Antonius Stradivarius."*

Those words are by Longfellow, from *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. That's an American poet, a sort of unitarian Christian, writing about an inn in Massachusetts and describing a party of travelers, among whom is a musician of Norse descent, playing on a violin made in Italy by a devout Roman Catholic, the great Antonio Stradivarius. The poet expects his readers to recognize the name. Not long after, George Eliot wrote a poem, "Stradivarius," in praise of the patient master who worked for fourscore of his more than ninety years. Says her Stradivarius to his friend, a raffish painter with skill but no divine inspiration:

*The masters only know whose work is good:
They will choose mine, and while God
gives them skill
I give them instruments to play upon,
God choosing me to help Him.*

The painter laughs. So too the people of Cremona laughed. They really do not seem to have appreciated the genius in their midst. For Cremona, a small city in the rich Po Valley, was the place where three great violin-making families were born and did their work. There was the Amati family, led by their mighty patriarch Niccolò; the Guarnerius family, among whom we single out for special notice Giuseppe Guarnerius, called "del Gesù," because he always inscribed the inner case of his violins with the Greek initials ΙΗΣ, the first three letters of Jesus' name; and the Stradivarius family, whose shining star was Antonio, patient, renowned all over Europe, and working always for perfection.

■ PLAYING BY EAR ■

Antonio Stradivarius (1644–1737) was not the founder of greatness in Cremonese violin-making. That honor we give to Andrea Amati (c. 1505–1577), the inventor of the violin as we know it today. There were previous stringed instruments played by bow: chubby cherub-boys are playing them in a 1529 painting, *The Madonna of the Oranges*, by Gaudenzio Ferrari. But the violin with its four strings is another matter.

We know Stradivarius for his incomparable intelligence, touch, precision, and artistic sense. No two of his violins are exactly alike. He had all kinds of questions to answer and problems to solve for each instrument he made. The work involved fifty-eight separate pieces of wood or ivory. What kinds of wood to use? Where to get the wood? How to bend the wood for the case? How thick or thin should the pieces be? How long to make the neck? What shape for the belly? Where should the sound-holes be? How should they be shaped? What about the decorative and acoustic "purfling," inlays binding the back of the instrument to its sides? Should it be made of veneer or mother of pearl? What about the varnish? What gums should be used? How to combine beauty before the eye with mellowness or brightness or depth of tone? There must be a hundred more such

questions I can't imagine, let alone put into words.

Now, you couldn't just get your sycamore, pine, and spruce from woods nearby. Stradivarius and his fellow luthiers got their sycamore from the cold slopes of the Tyrol or of Istria. The best wood was narrow and dense in grain, not only harder than the wood from the same genera of trees elsewhere, but *souder*: more resonant and less apt to warp under vibration. Craftsmen would keep their own stores of wood from which to choose, and these had to be ordered from far away and hewn according to specifications, as to dimension, angle of cut, age of the tree, and so on.

Antonio knew that no two trees are alike, nor were all the violins he was commissioned to make going to be used in exactly the same way. So he "felt" the musical quality of the wood, sensing or intuiting what adjustments he should make. He played his craft by touch and by ear. Sometimes his varnish is light; sometimes a rich red. There are "long" Stradivarius violins, longer by less than an inch, but by design, not chance, to produce a special sound. Sometimes the purfling is a little wider. Sometimes the sound-holes are slightly nearer the base, and sometimes their curvature is a little more or less pronounced. None of this was by accident or trial and error. All was by careful and minute design, as Michelangelo might feel a block of Carrara marble and find its veins and eye its color, and determine what was in that block that could be summoned forth.

■ PRINCES AND PRELATES ■

For whom did Antonio create his works of musical art?

It's hard for us to imagine a pope ordering a violin from a master luthier, but that's what Saint Pius V did in 1566, from Andrea Amati. It was taken for granted that princes and prelates should be patrons of the arts, and the Church led the way. In 1685, for example, the archbishop of Benevento, Vincenzo Maria Orsini, ordered from Antonio a set of violins to be given as a present to a Spanish duke. The archbishop understood the merits of the instruments, and raised Antonio to the honor of "private attendant," that is, his own violin-maker. In 1724, Orsini was elected to the papacy, and took the name Benedict XIII. If you've ever sat upon the Spanish Steps in Rome, you're enjoying architectural work that was completed under Benedict's reign and by the design he approved. Benedict built four hospitals too, and many another work of charity—or of culture, which is often a special form of charity.

Or we can consider the Stradivarius violins and cellos that an Italian banker sent in 1682 to King James II of England. Or the two violins and the cello Stradivarius made for Cosimo III de' Medici, the prince of Tuscany, which so delighted Cosimo and his orchestra that they commissioned Antonio to produce a *tenor* and a *contralto* violin to complete a concert set.

I could go on, but the point is clear. The same people who were involved in matters of profound theology, as was the scholarly Benedict XIII, or who were prominent on the political stage, as was James II, or who governed, as Cosimo did, in one of the nerve centers of international trade, wanted also to enjoy the heights of musical composition and performance, and in no small way to disseminate these among the more cultured of their people. It is hard to imagine such a thing now.

■ MUSIC FROM ABOVE ■

Antonio Stradivarius was buried in the old convent of San Domenico, in his native Cremona. That convent no longer exists. Its main structure was caving in, so it was demolished in 1868. On the site now are public gardens and the Museum of the Violin, a large brick building with an auditorium constructed to give the best effect to the violin music. Regular performances there are held throughout the year. You can visit and see not only the instruments, but the tools that shaped them, tools that remained in the great families for a hundred years and more. Seven of the ten rooms in the museum proper are devoted to the birth, the history, and the spread of the violin, to the craft of violin-

making, to the great Cremonese craftsmen, and to Antonio in particular. The outside of the building is not as ugly as most modern structures are, though it does put in a good effort at it. The real treasures are within.

In the public gardens there's a stone memorial, reading, in Italian, "Here was the tomb of the greatest of all luthiers, Antonio Stradivarius." You can also see the house where he lived when he was first married. In front of it, on the edge of the street, there's a sculpture of a middle-aged Stradivarius holding a violin at arm's length, balancing it on his apron-covered knee, looking it over intently.

Nearby, you can go to the majestic cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, beside which stands the bell-tower, the tallest pre-modern tower in Italy, 350 feet high. At the

top of the tower is a huge clock whose face tells the time, the phases of the moon, and the motions of the stars, with months, dates, zodiacal signs and symbols, and five hands, moving in tune with the heavens. The tower and the clock were there long before Stradivarius was born. I like to think that in the Renaissance and Baroque expressions of our faith, there was always music, and were it not for that music they perceived from heaven, they would have made precious little music on earth. I think *Il Sovrano dei Liutai* would agree.

Anthony Esolen is translator of Augustine's Confessions (TAN), translator and editor of Dante's Divine Comedy (Random House), and author of four volumes of essays, How the Church Has Changed the World (MAGNIFICAT).

US Statement on Lebanon Ceasefire Leaves Major Loophole That Israel May Exploit To Continue Attacks

Hours after the ceasefire was supposed to go into effect, the Lebanese army reported Israeli violations

by Dave DeCamp | April 16, 2026 at 9:01 pm ET | Israel, Lebanon

A statement from the US State Department on the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire that went into effect at 5 pm EST on Thursday includes language that Israel will likely exploit to continue attacks on the country.

The statement says that Israel "shall preserve its right to take all necessary measures in self-defense, at any time, against planned, imminent, or ongoing attacks." Israel frequently claims its attacks on Lebanon, Gaza, and elsewhere in the region are a response to some sort of threat, even when it's clear there was none, and the US has historically tolerated major Israeli ceasefire violations.

Similar language was included in a side deal between the US and Israel on the November 2024 Lebanon ceasefire deal, which Israel went on to constantly violate with strikes, surveillance flights, and ground operations, killing hundreds of people. During that same period, Hezbollah didn't fire any rockets toward Israel until after the start of the US-Israeli war against Iran on February 28.

Just hours after the new ceasefire was supposed to go into effect, the Lebanese military said in a statement that there had been "a number" of Israeli violations.

"The army command renews its call to citizens to exercise caution in returning to the southern villages and towns, amid a number of violations of the agreement, with several Israeli attacks recorded, in addition to intermittent shelling targeting a number of villages," the Lebanese army said in a post on X early Friday morning, Lebanon time.

In the hours leading up to the ceasefire, Israel escalated its airstrikes across Lebanon, and Hezbollah also launched several rocket attacks against Israeli forces in Lebanon and against targets in northern Israel. The IDF also destroyed the last bridge across the Litani River as it wants to prevent displaced Lebanese civilians from returning to southern Lebanon and is planning a long-term occupation in the area.

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Moral Miscalculation: America's Misunderstanding of Iran Is Leading to Catastrophe

Crisis Magazine

April 14, 2026 By Matthew Cullinan Hoffman

To form a proper moral judgment on this conflict, Catholics need to know the real history of America's troubled relations with Iran and the source of its conflict with this ancient civilization.

When he began his massive assault on Iran, the president was confident in its ultimate success. He had been advised that the Iranian people were deeply dissatisfied with their government and were groaning under the weight of an unwanted clerical autocracy. Furthermore, the country was in political disarray, racked by internal conflict, and would easily capitulate to its attackers, even welcoming them as liberators. Regime change was on the way. Iran would soon be neutralized as a threat.

The year was 1980, and the president was President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. His ear-tickling advisers as well as the family dictatorships of the Persian Gulf, had fed him a narrative that quite simply didn't jibe with the facts. No matter the fantasies swimming around in the heads of its international critics, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 wasn't the result of some random outburst of Islamist fanaticism. It was a deeply-rooted nationalist and anti-colonialist revolt against the foreign powers that had dominated the country through puppet shahs for more than a century, extracting the country's resources while enriching a domestic oligarchy bent on forcibly westernizing the population.

In a way, Hussein's miscalculation was understandable. The depth of the Iranian Revolution, although it had already expressed itself in two national referenda that established the country's unique Islamic constitution by overwhelming majorities, was not adequately perceived even by the leaders of the revolution itself. Some were concerned that the country's armed forces, as well-equipped as they were, were likely to fold under the brutality of Hussein's carefully-planned onslaught. Iran had repeatedly capitulated to foreign invaders under the shahs, the last time less than 40 years earlier—in 1941. Even the government and the armed forces could not predict what was to come.

The outcome should be familiar to any American citizen interested in the foreign affairs of his country; but nonetheless, it seems to have been completely forgotten by both policymakers and the public. Instead of overthrowing their own government or surrendering to the invaders, the Iranian people rose up in a massive and largely spontaneous civil movement to defend the nation against its attackers. Many of them, by their own testimony, were not primarily motivated by religious belief but by patriotism (although the two are not so easily distinguished in Iran). They would soon surprise the world by overwhelming Saddam Hussein's well-trained professional army with massive civilian "human wave attacks" unprecedented in the history of modern warfare.

Many civilians joined the Basij, a paramilitary outfit supportive of the revolution that now headed to the front to confront Hussein's forces, and others joined the new Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to supplement the regular army. Others simply showed up at the front armed with nothing but ancient rifles, Molotov cocktails, or even sticks and clubs. Ethnically Arab and Sunni Muslim Iranians, who were expected to welcome Hussein's Arab Sunni regime, joined the national struggle. Even teenagers sought the martyr's reward of an Islamic paradise by charging into minefields to blow them up with their bodies. This combined effort by the whole of the government and civil society turned back Hussein's forces, expelling them from the country within two years, and then took the fight into Iraq itself.

Nothing could save Hussein's ill-calculated invasion, not even the United States and its European allies seeking to "contain" Iran. In 1982, as Hussein's Iraq went on the defensive, the United States took Iraq off its list of certified terrorist states, established diplomatic relations in 1984, and began clandestinely selling them weapons technology, while prohibiting such exports to Iran.

The United States, along with Germany, even began to send chemical precursor agents that would enable Hussein to make poison gas with U.S.-designed munitions in violation of international law and even sold the regime biological materials capable of weaponization, although it's still not known if they were ever used. The U.S. government went so far as to clandestinely help Hussein target Iranians with chemical weapons attacks. Hussein also used his chemical weapons to massacre tens of thousands of Kurds perceived as rebellious during the war. All of it was to no avail.

Finally, with both sides exhausted and at least half a million dead, the two countries agreed to a ceasefire in 1988. What had begun as an exercise in "containment" had resulted in a moral and humanitarian catastrophe of horrendous proportions. The United States and its allies had intimately involved themselves in war crimes, the very same sorts of crimes that would be used to justify the U.S.'s ill-fated invasion of Iraq in 2003. Despite immense losses, the Islamic Republic of Iran was stronger than ever, hardened and inspired by the struggle.

Fantastic Narratives Drive the Current Conflict

U.S. President Donald Trump's current attack on Iran has been supported by similar narratives and fantasies that exploit the perpetual amnesia and historical ignorance of Americans. Iranians are variously portrayed as hapless victims of a fanatical theocratic regime that somehow imposed itself on an unwilling majority or as a nation of "terrorists" maniacally bent on wreaking destruction on Americans with nuclear weapons—a claim similar to the arguments used to justify the now-discredited Iraq War in 2003. The White House is using these narratives to justify an arguably illegal war of aggression that is increasingly being waged against civilian targets, a criminal act under the Geneva Conventions signed by the United States itself.

To form a proper moral judgment on such a conflict, Catholics—and Christians in general—need to know the real history of America’s troubled relations with Iran and the source of its conflict with this ancient civilization with which it once shared a high degree of mutual admiration and respect. One does not have to be uncritically supportive of Iran or blind to its defects to recognize that its people have reasons for their hatred and mistrust of the United States and that both sides share in the guilt of their broken relationship.

Sadly, Americans are blissfully unaware of what every Iranian knows well, that America’s troubled relationship with the Iranian people dates not from the 1979 U.S. embassy hostage crisis but from 1953, when the United States and Britain clandestinely overthrew the country’s fledgling democracy and instituted the brutal dictatorship of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the country’s latest (and, as it would turn out, last) foreign puppet-ruler. A review of the history of this affair is of great relevance to American Catholics wanting to assess the moral legitimacy of the U.S.’s current war with Iran and our nation’s ongoing conflict with the country.

Iran’s democratic reforms in the early ’50s had grown out of a long period of resistance to domestic tyranny. Since the mid-19th century, Iranians had been growing disillusioned with their ruling class and particularly their ancient shahs, who had increasingly become the tools of European imperial powers. Massive economic concessions were given by the shahs to foreign countries, allowing the shahs, their dependents, and their foreign patrons to profit by extracting Iran’s resources or engaging in business on very generous terms at the expense of average Iranians. Outraged by this state of affairs and inspired by the example of European forms of parliamentary democracy, the Iranian people, supported by the country’s Shia Islamic clergy, forced the shahs to accept a democratically-elected parliament and a written constitution supporting it in 1906.

Contrary to impressions in the modern West, the Shia clergy of Iran were natural supporters of these democratic reforms. Shia Islam had been adopted by Iran in the 16th century as a form of resistance against the perceived tyranny of the Ottoman empire, whose caliphs claimed the right to rule the whole Muslim world as the successors of Muhammad and sought to encroach on Iranian sovereignty. In contrast with the Sunni variety of Islam, the Shia religion was founded on the ritual celebration of martyrs who had died as victims of injustice and tyranny, particularly Husayn ibn Ali, who died resisting the abusive rule of the Umayyad caliph Yazid. By the 1950s, Iran’s Shia clergy had developed modern social justice doctrines and had created a sophisticated critique of the shahs’ dictatorial rule, very much in line with their theological worldview.

It might also surprise modern Americans to know that the 18th-century American British colonists were fascinated by Iran’s Shia resistance to the Ottoman empire and saw it as a fulfillment of Persia’s long tradition of civilized refinement and benign rule stretching back to Cyrus the Great. In fact, colonial Americans developed a sort of love affair and even obsession with Iran in the early 18th century. Their newspapers were constantly taken up with news from Persia and its resistance to the Ottomans, including positive commentary on Shia doctrines.

Some scholars in the colonies even learned the Persian language in order to read their literature. In turn, Iranians, at the time of their parliamentary democratic reforms in the early 20th century, looked to the United States as an example of a benign, freedom-loving and anti-colonialist power that had thrown off the rule of the British.

Parliamentary Democracy Suppressed by Imperial Britain and Russia

Iran's 1906 constitution represented a significant step toward a modern democracy—but in a particularly Iranian way. The whole male adult population was eligible to vote for representatives to the parliament, which had to approve any proposed laws. The prime minister and his cabinet were still selected by the shah, who could remove them at will. The constitution was dedicated to the implementation of Islamic law, and a committee of clerics would exist to ensure that the country didn't deviate from Shia Islamic principles. Monarchy and democracy existed in a tension mediated by the Shia religion.

However, Britain and Russia, two imperialist powers with major economic interests in Iran, soon found a way to thwart Iran's movement for parliamentary independence. Russia invaded in 1911 and temporarily shut down the parliament. Then, exercising its influence over the shah, Britain seized partial control of Iran's armed forces and other institutions in 1919 by way of a shady agreement with the shah that was ultimately rejected by the Iranian people and never ratified by their legislature. Britain then used its powers to place Reza Pahlavi, an obscure Iranian officer with whom it had friendly relations, in effective control of Iran's armed forces. Pahlavi used his power to oust the existing shah and have himself crowned shah in his place.

Pahlavi established himself as a military dictator and suppressed the independence of the parliament. He rewarded his British patrons by maintaining their oil monopoly in Iran, allowing the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to extract the nation's petroleum resources and keep all but 16 percent of the earnings. (He later attempted to wrest control of the country's petroleum resources from the British, but he failed.) He also began to forcibly secularize the country, mandating secularized education and forbidding women to wear the traditional hijab. Iran was back under European imperialist influence, at the expense of the Iranian people and their cultural and religious traditions.

When Pahlavi showed too much favor to Germany during World War II, Britain and Russia invaded Iran and removed him from office, replacing him with his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in 1941. After the end of the war, he would prove himself to be particularly slavish not only to Britain but also to the ascendant United States and its ally the State of Israel.

However, the new shah faced strongly democratic forces in Iran that were backed by much of the Shia clergy, who were seeking the country's independence from foreign economic and political control. By 1951, the parliament had forced the shah to accept the strongly reformist Mohammad Mosaddegh as the country's prime minister. Mosaddegh immediately began to curtail the power of the shah and to nationalize the country's oil industry.

Operation Ajax: Democracy Quashed by the United States

By 1953, the British had had enough of Mosaddegh and his attacks on their oil interests. They persuaded the Eisenhower administration that Mosaddegh was going to turn Iran over to the Russians, and both the CIA and MI6 plotted to overthrow the prime minister through Operation Ajax, whose machinations were finally revealed to the public in detail in 2013. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was now firmly in power again, and he would make himself into an increasingly absolute dictator, just as his father had been, now principally at the service of the United States. The democratic aspirations of the Iranian people had been quashed a third time.

The United States and the State of Israel began to work with the shah to ensure that nothing would threaten his rule in the future. With the help of the CIA and Israel's Mossad, Mohammad Reza established SAVAK, a secret police force that would arrest political dissidents and systematically torture them in hidden prisons. Thousands of Iranians suffered this fate, including intellectuals who had been able to freely publish and speak only a few years earlier.

The shah abolished all political parties in the parliament, restricting who could run and permitting only a single, pro-shah party that acted as a rubber stamp and a defender of his absolute rule. He dutifully invited the United States to send its major oil companies, including Exxon, Mobil, and Texaco, to manage the country's oil resources and take 50 percent of the profits along with British Petroleum. The United States built up the shah's armed forces with massive arms sales paid for with the shah's portion of the oil revenues. It also ensured that Iran maintained friendly relations with Israel while the latter freely persecuted the Palestinians.

The country's capital, Tehran, soon became the home of numerous foreigners representing various economic interests who were profiting from the regime. At its height, the American colony in Tehran boasted 50,000 residents, working mostly in the defense and oil industries.

By the 1960s, the country was importing the increasingly degenerate culture of the United States and other Western democracies, including movies and advertising with women in miniskirts and other immodest clothing. Religious and family values were being discarded for Western secularism. Even Planned Parenthood had branches in Tehran and other Iranian cities. The clergy, who had long sought to free Iran from foreign domination, were becoming more and more troubled and critical of the shah's compromised regime. Some, like the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, would be expelled from the country by the wary shah.

By the late 1960s, the shah was so isolated from his people and drunk on power that he scheduled a coronation ceremony to have himself crowned as "Emperor" (literally, "King of Kings") of Iran, a vanity title from Iran's ancient past that only had meaning in the narcissistic dream world in which he was living. In the style of Napoleon Bonaparte, he absurdly placed the crown on his own head, and then one on his wife's head, in a lavish and ridiculous ceremony in 1967. In 1971, he held an even more lavish international celebration of the 2,500-year anniversary of the Persian Empire, to which he invited hundreds of foreign leaders and other international dignitaries while excluding average Iranians.

The Iranian people, viewing these extravaganzas at a distance, didn't share in the shah's delusions. They had watched while he and his oligarchic allies enriched themselves with lucrative business relationships with foreign countries, while the nation's mineral and oil wealth were extracted for the benefit of others. The bazaar merchants, an important class in society, were being pushed out of their stalls in favor of big corporate interests tied to the shah. The clergy saw the whole thing as obscenely impious and contrary to the national interests of the Iranian people, and Iranians increasingly agreed. What's more, they saw the U.S. government as the shah's principal protector and enabler, and they saw the U.S. embassy in Tehran as the real base from which the country was being ruled.

"Death to America's Shah"

In 1977, the lid began to come off the pressure cooker of resentment against America and its Iranian proxy ruler. Encouraged by the election of Jimmy Carter, who claimed to be concerned about human rights in Iran, students and civil society groups began to express their dissent against the regime's systematic human rights violations. In 1978, protesters began to hit the streets, encouraged by the Ayatollah Khomeini still in exile, and they were consequently joined by the nation's Shia clergy and clerical students. The shah's U.S.-backed military began to massacre street protesters, but each wave of killings brought even more protesters into the streets month after month. Graffiti written on the walls read, "Death to America's Shah."

The American embassy in Tehran was seen as a "den of espionage" by which the United States had run the country; in fact, the shah even visited the U.S. embassy during this time to ask his American patrons what he should do. The

turning point came in late 1978, when Jimmy Carter made a personal phone call to the shah—after a particularly bloody massacre that used helicopter gunships against protesters—in which Carter “reaffirmed the close and friendly relationship between Iran and the United States,” as the White House summarized the call.

The United States had clearly thrown the Iranian dissidents under the bus. The population became more enraged and protests continued to grow. Finally, the shah fled the country, and in February of 1979 the Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile in a plane filled with Western journalists, now received by colossal mobs of literally millions of joyful supporters, and by almost the whole range of political opinion, as the de facto leader of the Iranian Revolution.

Khomeini soon agreed to a new interim prime minister and organized a national referendum on the creation of a new constitution, an Islamic Republic without a shah, which passed overwhelmingly with massive public participation. Even left-wing and liberal parties generally supported the idea of the new constitution, which had yet to be formulated in detail. However, Iranians were terrified that their overthrow of the shah, which was the third attempt in the last hundred years, would again be hijacked by the United States as it had been in 1953. Militant students briefly occupied the U.S. embassy in February, but Khomeini called them off.

American Embassy Staff Taken Hostage

As Khomeini’s coalition of liberals and clericalists wrangled over the creation of the new constitution and argued over the powers to be given to Khomeini and the clergy, Jimmy Carter dropped the last political bomb that insured Iran would emerge as a clergy-dominated state. In October of 1979, against the advice of U.S. embassy personnel, he allowed the shah to enter the United States for medical treatment. A few days later, the interim government met with Carter administration officials in Algeria. Iranians feared the United States intended to bring the shah back to power. Militant students soon stormed the embassy a second time and took hostages, and now Khomeini supported them.

As immoral and diplomatically counterproductive as the taking of the hostages was, and as wrong as it was for Khomeini to side with the students, it is telling to note that it proved to be the smartest political move the ayatollah could make in the political environment of his day. The sad reality was that the Iranian people so feared and hated the United States after decades of suffering under the shah that the taking of the hostages was an immensely popular act. Iranians took to the streets in massive demonstrations and overwhelmed the embassy phone banks day and night with calls expressing their support for the hostage-takers. A group of farmers walked dozens of miles barefoot on a pilgrimage-like journey to see the embassy and express their gratitude to the students. The average Iranian loved it.

When the embassy’s chargé d’affaires, Bruce Laingen, protested to the student militants, one responded, “You have no right to complain. You took our whole country hostage in 1953.” Laingen reportedly stated later that he had no argument in response.

Khomeini immediately recognized that by endorsing the militant students, he would make himself even more popular and easily overcome all of the more secular and liberal elements in Iranian politics, enabling him to consolidate support for his theocratic constitution with power concentrated in his person as the Supreme Leader. The takeover of the embassy had “united our people,” said Khomeini at the time. “Our opponents do not dare act against us. We can put the constitution to the people’s vote without difficulty.” He was right. Although turnout was notably less for the final ratification vote for the Islamic Republic constitution, he won the vote easily.

Although the new constitution placed much power in the Ayatollah Khomeini as Supreme Leader, in many ways it made the country substantially more democratic than it had been under the shah. The office of shah was abolished, and in his place a Supreme Leader, a Shia ayatollah, was to be elected and supervised by an Assembly of Experts chosen by popular vote, which also had the power to remove the Supreme Leader. The office of president was also created to oversee the daily functioning of government; and unlike the previous office of prime minister, he would also be elected directly by popular vote. After decades of monoparty rule, the country’s parliament was opened again to a restricted multiparty electoral system that allowed for competing points of view—but within certain limits governed by the Shia clergy, who had the power of deciding who could run for office and who couldn’t.

It would take more than a year of wrangling within his own government for Khomeini to end the hostage crisis. But after 444 days of captivity, the hostages arrived home on the first day of Ronald Reagan’s term. Although I was only 10 years old at the time, I remember well watching them on TV deboarding from their return flight within hours of Reagan being sworn in. The delayed release was widely seen as a final jab against the president who had betrayed his supposed commitment to human rights in favor of the U.S.’s supposed “strategic” interests in the region.

Unending Conflict

Since then, the United States has been in almost constant conflict with Iran, relentlessly pushed by Israel which sees Iran as its principal rival for regional hegemony. In 1982, after unfreezing some Iranian assets and briefly allowing weapons transfers to the country to counteract Iraq, the Reagan administration reversed course and began to covertly aid Iraq, and hundreds of thousands of Iranians died as victims of Iraq's conventional and chemical weapons, courtesy of the United States and its allies.

Iran soon began to ally itself with other countries and causes linked to anti-colonialism in the Middle East and worldwide, especially with fellow Shias. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and committed a massacre against thousands of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila under the protection of U.S. Marine "peacekeepers," Iran began to aid Shia Muslim organizations in the area that eventually came together to form Hezbollah (the "Party of God"), a political party and militia created to resist the Israeli occupation. A proxy of the group was later suspected of being the author of the bombings of the U.S. embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 that killed more than 250 Americans, although Hezbollah has always denied responsibility. The group eventually ran Israel out of Lebanon in the year 2000, after its occupation had claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Lebanese.

When American corporations tried to break the ice and begin doing business with Iran again in the mid-'90s, neoconservative pundits, AIPAC lobbyists, and the State of Israel went to work to shut them down. Finally, a multi-billion-dollar oil drilling deal with Conoco was nixed by Bill Clinton via a seeping executive order in 1995, which prohibited virtually all commerce, either direct or indirect, with Iran. Now under the most oppressive sanctions imaginable, Iran began to pursue energy independence for its decades-old nuclear program (originally created for Iran by the United States under the shah) and achieved domestic uranium enrichment capacity in 2006.

When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, Iran gave arms to Shia militias there to help them run the United States out of the country. Meanwhile, the United States and Israel funded the Sunni-aligned terrorists affiliated with Al Qaeda and ISIS, enabling them to wreak chaos in Syria and to finally install an Israel-friendly, Sunni regime. The United States also continued to support Israel in its own terrorist policies against the Palestinians and other Arab countries in the region. In turn, the Iranians built up Hezbollah to a massive fighting force and made an alliance with the Houthis in Yemen, while also supporting the Palestinian Sunni Muslim party Hamas, in Gaza.

An apparent breakthrough came when the Obama administration worked out a comprehensive deal with Iran and other countries in 2015 to reduce sanctions on Iran in exchange for Iran subjecting itself to regular inspections on its uranium enrichment program, which at that time was being used only for the purpose of nuclear power and to create medical isotopes but could have eventually led to a nuclear weapon. However, with encouragement from Netanyahu and the Israeli lobby, Trump tore up the agreement in 2018, reimposed sanctions, and pushed for conflict with Iran in 2019, which was averted when his advisers and base convinced him to back down.

In his second term, under Israeli pressure and after having received hundreds of millions of dollars in aid from Zionist donors for his reelection, the Trump administration began again to pound the drums of war over Iran's nuclear program. Under his leadership, the United States and Israel have attacked Iran twice in the middle of negotiations, even killing the negotiators, effectively shutting the door on a diplomatic solution of the conflict.

Marco Rubio has admitted publicly that the United States felt compelled to attack Iran by Israel's unilateral decision to attack while negotiations were ongoing. All of this is in spite of repeated intelligence assessments indicating Iran isn't working on a nuclear weapon. Meanwhile, "Christian Zionist" Secretary of War Pete Hegseth is leading Trump's armed forces with a theology that resembles a pagan death cult rather than the Gospel he claims to follow.

The real answer, and the authentically Catholic answer, to America's broken relationship with Iran isn't aggressive war on behalf of Israel, which is clearly unjust. It's acknowledging our own failed and immoral Middle Eastern policy and coming back to the bargaining table with Iran, this time with a long-term and sincere commitment to a new relationship that respects the country's sovereignty and no longer supports Israel's expansionist agenda against its neighbors.

U.S. foreign policy over the past 45 years has left a wake of immense destruction across the Middle East and now is endangering the world with an escalating conflict that could end in a horrific global disaster.

It's time to hit the reset button and return to principles of natural law and Christian ethics that the Catholic Church has long upheld. Let us seek peace and dialogue with Iran—as Pope Leo XIV rightly urges us to do—and pray for deliverance from the "dogs of war" being unleashed by the current U.S. administration.

Fear Of Books

By DR. DONALD DeMARCO

April 16, 2024

“Bibliophobia” is the word for a fear of books. The last place on earth one would expect this abnormality to exist is at a university. Nonetheless, there are professors as well as students who are fearful of ideas contained in books because they conflict with their personal ideologies. Indeed, even some works of Plato have been banned by university diktat. Ray Bradbury made use of this anomaly in his book *Fahrenheit 451* in which books are considered to be so harmful that all of them must be burned.

I recall going to my mailbox at the university where I was teaching one morning and finding a book of mine shredded. An irate student thought my arguments for life had no place in a school of learning. My first book, *Abortion in Perspective*, was discarded from my school’s library and the librarian was severely chastised for acquiring it. The book did go into more printings and was regarded highly by reviewers and pro-life advocates in general. It was graced by a foreword by Marshall McLuhan and seven illustrations by the renowned artist, William Kurelek.

An intrepid student of mine, by the name of George A. Peate, thought that information about the nature of the unborn child should be readily accessible to students. With permission from the school, he was allowed, for just a few hours a week, to use a vacant room where such books and pamphlets would be available. He had not anticipated how harmful such literature could be. He was soon banished from the room and his worthwhile project came to a lamentable end. A member of the psychology department complained to the dean that clients coming to him for help might suffer a significant setback if they happened to glimpse pro-life literature as they walked to his office. As in *Fahrenheit 451*, the books must go.

If the overscrupulous psychologist was consistent, he should have ordered the library to be shut down. How many undesirable ideas are contained therein? Our dutiful psychologist should meet his clients in the woods, an antiseptic environment where there are no books to traumatize them. Perhaps an institution for the sick would be a better venue for people of such delicate sensibility than a university. I wondered whether his anemic complaint reflected Bibliophobia or Biophobia (fear of life).

I offered my condolences to George

and commended him for his work and the poise he maintained in the face of professional nonsense. He was not intimidated and continued to believe that people should know more about the truth of the unborn. A statement by Franz Kafka, who knew something about the benefits of reading, comes to mind. “A book,” he wrote, “must be the ax for the frozen lake within us.” Consider the effect a book had on St. Augustine, or Chesterton’s works on C. S. Lewis, or the widespread positive influence the writing of C. S. Lewis had on thousands of readers. Yes, a book can do marvelous things. It can thaw the ice within us.

Thirty years later, a book arrived at my home. It was sent to me by George Peate, now a father of five and a grandfather, who at that time was living in southern California. My former student had not wavered in his enthusiasm for unborn life. In fact, he had nourished and developed it. The result is his opus, *Unborn Jesus Our Hope*. In his accompanying letter, he wrote, “through the Unborn Christ Child we are reminded of all unborn children created in God’s image and likeness, especially those who are most vulnerable. So devotion to Unborn Jesus results not only in praising and honoring Unborn Jesus, but also in praying to Him for unborn children throughout the world who are threatened or at risk.”

A close friend of mine, Ronda Chervin, a prolific author in her own right, who had read the manuscript, wrote the foreword. “*Unborn Jesus Our Hope* is a masterpiece,” she exclaimed. “Thank you, Holy Spirit,” she prayed, “for Your light shining in the darkness of the culture of death, upon the mind of George Peate, who has written this refreshingly beautiful reflection: *Unborn Jesus Our Hope*.”

Ray Bradbury is worth citing once more: “Without libraries, what have we? We have no past and no future.” George Peate, who was expelled from his small, pro-life library, certainly had a future. It includes one that is dedicated to those unborn children whose future perilously hangs on their mother’s “choice.”

George Peate had the right idea about libraries. His understanding of their importance was affirmed in antiquity. “I am what I am,” said Heraclitus, “what libraries and librarians have made me, with little assistance from a professor of Greek and poets.”

No one can find a safe way out for himself if society is sweeping towards destruction. Therefore everyone, in his own interests, must thrust himself vigorously into the intellectual battle. None can stand aside with unconcern; the interests of everyone hang on the result. Whether he chooses or not, every man is drawn into the great historical struggle, the decisive battle into which our epoch has plunged us.

– Ludwig von Mises

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