

# AFTER AMERICA

Without justice, what else is the state but a  
great band of robbers.

St Augustine of Hippo<sup>1</sup>

Mark Steyn's thought provoking analysis of the moral, social and economic decline of the United States, *After America* (Washington D.C., 2011), is critical reading for all who are concerned over the direction in which the western world is heading. Steyn's 'folksy', American, way of expression and occasional crude humour will not appeal to everyone: but his message is compelling. The American people are drowning in a sea of subjectivism, socialism, political and bureaucratic interference—and debt.

While Steyn sees well the proximate causes of America's ills he sometimes misses their ultimate causes. He is right to tie the country's social to its moral ills. He sees, for instance, the link between the country's childlessness and its members' indulgence in abortion, though he could have made more of the debilitating effects on the national psyche of the systematic slaughter of some 3,000 children every day.

He is alive to the effects of usury, devoting a substantial part of the book to America's indebtedness, a consequence of its citizens' drive for goods and services though they lack the means to purchase them, a drive fuelled and facilitated by borrowing at interest.<sup>2</sup> Steyn is rightly critical of the irresponsibility of a nation burdening its offspring via future taxation with the costs of their parents' indulgence, but he omits to extend his criticism to the facility that permits them to borrow indiscriminately. America would never have reached the situation in which it finds itself if usury had remained outlawed as it was in many of the countries from which its citizens came. The wise have condemned usury since the time of Aristotle for its systematic injustice.

Regrettably, he neglects to identify the involvement, and the contribution as instrumental cause, of Freemasonry in the country's troubles. That movement had great influence in the founding of the nation and its continued influence, from the schoolroom to the legislature, has assisted in debilitating the country. Steyn is critical of 'globalisation' which he rightly classifies as—

“less a theory and more a religion with universalist claims... [a] mysterious metaphysical force that's out there remaking our assumptions about the planet...”<sup>3</sup>

—but seems ignorant of the fact that 'globalisation' is a Masonic venture. Naivety over Freemasonry's effects appears to be a national trait.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei* IV, 4, 1, quoted by Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the German Bundestag, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> In the practice of which they are aided and abetted by universal, and incessant, advertising.

<sup>3</sup> *After America*, op. cit., at p. 17. He refers to the idea in a number of other places.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. for example the failure of America's Catholic bishops to advert to it in their 1948 Pastoral letter, *The Christian in Action*. criticised in the author's paper *Archbishop Chaput on the American Bishops, John F Kennedy and Religious Liberty* at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/chaput\\_kennedy.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/chaput_kennedy.pdf)

He identifies, rightly, the consequences for a nation where socialism becomes a dominating force.

“You don’t need to make material sacrifices: the state takes care of all that. You don’t need to have children. And you certainly don’t need to die for king and country.

His conclusion as to the long term effects is admirable:

“But a society that has nothing to die for has nothing to live for... Europe’s economic crisis is a mere symptom of its existential crisis: What is life for? What gives it meaning? Post-Christian, post-nationalist, post-modern Europe has no answer to that question...”<sup>5</sup>

He cites Tom Wolfe’s argument that the cause of the American people’s plight is a loss of the sense of themselves as part of a great biological stream<sup>6</sup>, which is a sort of materialist attempt to address a metaphysical problem. His own assessment that it involves a failure to honour and acknowledge their posterity, with the implication that the answer has to do with loss of self esteem, is closer to the mark.

His repeated drawing of attention to the failure of Americans to conform their social structures to the demands of the principle of subsidiarity is, likewise, admirable.<sup>7</sup> Pope Pius XI had drawn attention to the critical place of this principle.

“Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so too it is an injustice, a grave evil, and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organisation to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies...”<sup>8</sup>

However, when he comes to deal with the source of authority he seems to confuse the operation of this principle with that of a higher principle.

“[T]he American colonists overthrew the [British] Crown because they believed the people are sovereign. If that means anything at all, it means that power is leased up from the citizen to town, to county, to state, to the nation, and ever more sparingly at each step along the way...”<sup>9</sup>

But power, i.e., authority, *does not come* from the people. That is a Masonic (and defective) idea borrowed by the Deists among America’s founding fathers from France’s revolutionaries. All authority, regardless of the manner in which it is instituted in any nation, comes from Almighty God.<sup>10</sup> Man is not social by agreement: there is no such thing as a ‘social contract’, despite the vaunted views of the *philosophes*.<sup>11</sup> He is social by nature: God made him that way. It is God who establishes society. Steyn’s lauding of the position of the United States as a republic

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<sup>5</sup> At p. 123

<sup>6</sup> At p. 123.

<sup>7</sup> As, e.g., at p. 50 in a quote from Justice Marshall of the US Supreme Court in *United States vs. Columbia Steel Co.* (1948); at pp. 78-9 dealing with the functions due to states and subsidiary jurisdictions; and in a quote from President Ronald Reagan in 1987 (at p. 333).

<sup>8</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

<sup>9</sup> At p. 333.

<sup>10</sup> *Matthew* 28: 18; *Romans* 13: 1: cf. Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, 1.11.1885, and *Diuturnum Illud* (On the Origins of Civil Power), 29.6.1991.

<sup>11</sup> The ‘social contract’ was an invention of atheists to justify a reality, society, whose provenance they had rejected. It is a corollary of atheism.

relative to that in Canada (where allegiance to the British Crown was retained)<sup>12</sup> is, then, a *non sequitur*. Indeed, he concedes as much when he acknowledges that the flaws in the one are flaws at least as lamentable in the other. How either nation was constituted is not to the point: the members of each have ceased to acknowledge God's authority and the evils that now afflict them follow inevitably.

There is, as Chesterton remarked, nothing natural without the supernatural. Man does not attain even the minimum of human dignity unless he respects his Creator. What is at issue in America, as elsewhere in the world, is institutionalised selfishness which follows on a refusal to acknowledge the truth that man is not his own possession.<sup>13</sup> No man keeps himself in existence, as neither does he bring himself into existence: he is both contingent and dependent. No one chooses to come into this world as a man, rather than a monkey or a donkey, a bee or a tree. Something, or Someone, made this decision for him; brought him into existence; keeps him in existence.

The root cause of a country's embrace of socialist paternalism, then, is the loss of belief in the *Divine* paternalism, loss of belief in God and His providence. If a man owes no duty to his Creator, he owes no duty to anyone. He is free to think himself the centre of the universe: free to think that others have a duty to support and sustain him. This loss is the cause, too, of the abandonment of respect for the principle of subsidiarity. For that principle is a corollary of a life lived in accord with the precepts laid down by Jesus Christ; of living with belief in God.

America's error, then, lies not in the failure of its people to adhere to the principles underlying the United States Constitution but in their abandonment of the Catholic principles embedded in the Protestantism the majority of its citizens brought to the States which formed the Union. The Protestant idyll has deteriorated into the Masonic<sup>14</sup>, and the Masonic is producing its lethal fruit.

It is remarkable how the mind that informed the French Revolution is emerging like some behemoth from the depths as America abandons the remnants of Catholic principle. The revolutionaries' facile slogan, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', was ever problematic: for the liberty they proclaimed was a false liberty; the equality, a false equality; the fraternity, a false fraternity.<sup>15</sup> Why? Because these three are subsidiary, not principal, virtues. Removed from subordination to the supreme principle of

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<sup>12</sup> At p. 333

<sup>13</sup> There are any number of indicia of this syndrome in society. Witness the widespread abuse of the body in tattooing and piercing with rings and other metal objects; the abuse of body and soul with drugs, fornication and violence; and the ultimate abuse of both in epidemic suicide.

<sup>14</sup> Always a peril, for Protestantism and Freemasonry derive from the same source. Cf. the author's *Life Under the Bane of Subjectivism*, especially in Parts I and III, which may be found at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/life\\_under\\_the\\_bane\\_1.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/life_under_the_bane_1.pdf) and [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/life\\_under\\_the\\_bane\\_3.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/life_under_the_bane_3.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Roy Campbell spoke to the point when he remarked: "More people have been imprisoned for Liberty, humiliated and tortured for Equality, and slaughtered for Fraternity in this century, than for any less hypocritical motives, during the Middle Ages..." Cf. *Roy Campbell, Selected Poems* (Ed. Joseph Pearce), St Austin Press, London, 2001, p. 65.

charity, love of God and of one's fellow man, they become unbalanced, obsessive, and dangerous. Chesterton noted this in his *Orthodoxy* when he said that the great evil of the Protestant Revolt was not that it denied the virtues, but that it set them free from each other.<sup>16</sup>

Steyn's vaunting of 'Lady Liberty' as symbolic of the principle uniting the American people<sup>17</sup> is, then, misconceived. 'Liberty' is not the supreme principle of social life whether in America, in France, or anywhere else.<sup>18</sup> This is, yet again, a Masonic claim. The 'liberty' so vaunted confuses moral liberty with absolute liberty (and vice versa depending on the pre-dispositions of the rhetorician, and shifting opinion).<sup>19</sup> In fairness to him, elsewhere Steyn seems to acknowledge the folly of America's reliance on the principle.

"[I]n the end ruin is the natural condition of the nation-state... even if you escape, as most nations do, coups, invasions, civil wars, and/or occupations, there arrives the moment when ruin comes to close the deal..."<sup>20</sup>

Unless a society is founded on the supreme principle of charity which Christ expressed in the aphorism, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you"<sup>21</sup>, in the end it will fail. A nation may rise and flourish; it may endure for centuries; but if it neglects to conform itself to the Divine precepts, ultimately it will fall.

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A shorter analysis of America's parlous state, one which complements Steyn's, may be found in an essay by respected American Jesuit, Fr James V Schall, on *The Catholic Thing* website (22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011). It is reproduced in the appendix for the convenience of the reader. Fr Schall's thesis is that the systematic abandonment of Catholic principle means that it is only a matter of time before Americans begin to persecute their fellow citizens who are members of the Church founded by God.

The rights of man come neither from statutes, nor councils of 'united nations', nor any meeting of minds, but from nature, God's handmaid. For God made man, and God gave man the rights that attach to him. God made him objectively infinite and no written statement can ever adequately comprehend those rights, as no limited utterance could ever hope to capture what is without limit. That is why a bill of

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<sup>16</sup> In Chapter III: "The modern world is not evil; in some ways the modern world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely the vices that are let loose. The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues wander more wildly, and the virtues do more terrible damage..."

<sup>17</sup> At pp. 37-39.

<sup>18</sup> It is fitting that the issues at stake here should be exposed as America celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the gift of the Statue of Liberty from the French people. Americans have never, it seems, thought to question the fitness of the virtue it symbolises as a standard for their nation.

<sup>19</sup> For a correct analysis of liberty, see Leo XIII's encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum* (20.6.1888); of the Church's concerns for America, his *Longinqua Oceani* (6.1.1895); of the perils of the secularisation of the Church's teaching there under the banner 'liberty', his *Testem Benevolentiae* (22.1.1899).

<sup>20</sup> At p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Matthew* 7: 12: *Luke* 6: 31

rights never serves as a satisfactory legislative base for any society.<sup>22</sup> If the rights given man by God are ignored or rejected, other 'rights' contrived by men will come in to fill the vacuum. Fr Schall touches the issue for America deftly —

“What is defined as ‘human’ is now solely a matter of civil law... Constitutional assurances of free speech, free exercise of religion, and limited government no longer carry much weight against entrenched ‘democratic’ ideologies... [O]ur invasion does not come from the outside. It comes from within our souls...”

### **The Silence of the Popes**

What is at hand in America, as elsewhere throughout the world, is the triumph of the virus of subjectivism initiated five hundred years ago by Martin Luther and Henry VIII. No longer is right determined by reality, by human nature, but by opinion, by force of human will. And to what authority do the draftsmen of these ‘rights’ appeal? To ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’, two of the false triumvirate erected by the Masons of the French Revolution.

The economic and social collapse of a country is not primary but a secondary evil. The primary, the principal, evil is atheism. When last did we hear the Vatican warning the nations about the perils of embracing atheism? When, for that matter, did we last hear a warning of the perils of Freemasonry? Or a warning about the evils that would flow from indulgence in usury?

The faithful are entitled to ponder whether, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1884, when Pope Leo XIII experienced his vision of the one hundred years or so of chaos that would befall Christ’s Church, he was permitted to see the effects on mankind of this systematic failure of teaching authority in the Church.

Michael Baker

30<sup>th</sup> November 2011 — *St Andrew*

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## *APPENDIX*

By Fr James V. Schall, S.J., Georgetown University

Reproduced from *The Catholic Thing* website, 22 September, 2011

### **LEGAL PERSECUTION**

Catholics have little legal future in this country except as a narrow, strictly defined sect. Catholic law schools, lawyers, and politicians have proved mostly ineffective or indeed abettors in the process by which “human rights” are used, step by seemingly logical step, to eliminate Catholics from the public order. Much has already occurred. The “Catholics” who

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<sup>22</sup> Much better the system which allows that in everything the citizen is free except where law circumscribes him, than one which seeks to set out his freedoms and limits him to their terms.

are the prime target are those who hold and live the central teachings of reason and faith. Those who do not, matter little.

Addressing a new Health and Human Services mandate concerning availability of abortions, contraceptives, and other such items, the Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, Barry Knestout, wrote:

“In implementing the new health care reform law, HHS issued a rule that would require private health care plans nationwide to cover contraception and sterilization as ‘preventive services’ for women. The mandate includes abortifacients, which have the capacity to terminate a pregnancy in early weeks. Never before has the federal government required private health plans to include such coverage.”

The District of Columbia Human Rights Commission has interfered in the Catholic University of America’s policy of same-sex dorms for college students. This policy is “sex discrimination,” not permitted in the District. These and other governmental initiatives are only the beginning.

Almost everything is now in place for a full-scale legal persecution of the Church, all concocted under the aegis of government protection of “human rights.” The meaning of “rights” the government itself defines in the name of “freedom” and “equality.” It is noble-sounding, but as Plato said: “Entreaties of sovereigns are mixed with compulsion.” This admonition includes democratic sovereigns.

*World News Daily* (September 17) reports that PayPal investigates Christian Internet sources said to be involved in “hate language” because of their criticism of certain gay activities. Addressing this issue is not affirmation of a “right to speak,” but a subject of state investigation. Certain central teachings of Christianity will be legally prohibited as threats to “human rights.”

A situation analogous to that in China can be foreseen: an “official” break-away church that follows government decrees and an underground church that still maintains the central truths of reason and faith. One suspects that the degree of hatred for the Church is more widespread and deeper than we like to admit. The situation, however, is not so different from what Scripture would have us expect.

Things change almost too rapidly for us to appreciate their scope. With legalized same-sex “marriages,” as they are equivocally called, in which children are adopted, we will have mandates to educate them in Catholic schools as if no problem exists. The children, legally deprived of a mother or a father, will be presented as from “normal” families. Several writers have suggested that parents teaching children that problems exist with homosexual life or adoption will be investigated for “child abuse.”

The child-abuse cases themselves have shown how to undermine the financial stability of the Church. In addition to properly investigating malefactors, legal procedures have permitted lawyers to make enormous wealth from Church funds. Ironically, since most of these abuses were rooted in homosexuality, not paedophilia, the corporate Church on the one side is required to pay for the abuses and on the other is forbidden to say that anything is wrong with this form of life.

The legal undermining of the family as a favoured, natural union of wife and husband is far advanced. Abortion is an established “right.” Few really care about the millions of human

infants slaughtered. Opposition to this system is considered “inhuman” and, again ironically, “against women.” What is defined as “human” is now solely a matter of civil law. Relativism is the established religion of the realm, backed by force.

Unlike other churches, which have made their obeisance to the state on these questions, the Catholic Church is mostly isolated. It has been a “brilliant” display in making it so. This undermining of man’s normal being has been carried out in the name of “human rights,” in the very language the Church has insisted on using in order to protect human life and family. Bishop Knestout recommended sending e-mails to HHS to protest the imposition of these standards on Catholics by the federal government. The issue is really more massive. One wonders if the bishops should not be preparing people for much more positive and aggressive persecution of which the legal step is but the first.

Constitutional assurances of free speech, free exercise of religion, and limited government no longer carry much weight against entrenched “democratic” ideologies, something both John Paul II and Benedict XVI foresaw. Few of us like to think this way about America, no doubt. We recall the Polish bishops before 1939. But our “invasion” does not come from the outside. It comes from within our souls, as all disorders of polity do.

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