

America at 250: Blessings and Challenges

Session #2: A Nation That Lost Its Way

A. Promises and Warnings

The founders of our country viewed the creation of the United States as something of a joint partnership or project between themselves and Almighty God, realizing that without divine favor and assistance, the war for independence and the creation of a just and prosperous society would almost certainly fail. The fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence (fifty-two of whom were Christians) stated, “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor,” and in his Farewell Address, George Washington, our first president, asserted, “it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits and humbly implore His protection and favor. . . .” Over sixty years later, another of our greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln, further added, “It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to owe their independence upon the overruling power of God and to recognize this divine truth announced in the holy scriptures and proven in all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”

There are many similar quotations acknowledging divine authority from the founding fathers and the political, religious, and societal leaders of our country in its earliest decades, and ongoing and sincere efforts were made to live up to the ideals enunciated and enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. For instance, all the early colleges and universities in America were intentionally Christian in nature, including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—with the latter specifically established as a seminary for the training of clergy and pastors; also, a majority of their professors and presidents originally were ministers of the Gospel. Virtually all schools included Scripture and Christian principles as a central part of their curriculum, almost without exception. When, in 1844, a school in Philadelphia sought to teach morality but not religion, the issue eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which responded, “Why may not the Bible, and especially the New Testament . . . be read and taught as a divine revelation in the [school?] . . . Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the New Testament?”

Moreover, despite the so-called “separation of church and state” (a phrase not to be found anywhere in the U.S. Constitution), the new nation’s government looked favorably upon organized religion. For instance, the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives have had official, salaried chaplains for most of their history—an arrangement also found in the legislative bodies of many of the individual states. Beginning with George Washington, each president was formally inaugurated while placing his hand on a Bible and swearing to uphold the U.S. Constitution. Washington himself then kissed the Bible; he may not have uttered the words “so help me God,” but these soon became an unofficial part of the oath of office. Also, in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Congress set aside land in largely unsettled territories for schools, specifically intending that religion be a central part of the curriculum as a way of inculcating morality and good citizenship. Furthermore, in 1803 President Thomas Jefferson approved a treaty with a Native American tribe that gave financial support for “a priest of [the Catholic] religion” to perform “the duties of his office” and educate the tribe’s children.

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One author, the late Father Bill McCarthy, listed twelve principles that made America great: (1) being one nation under God; (2) a respect for human dignity and an inalienable right to life (with “inalienable” meaning bestowed directly from God, not from any earthly authority or government); (3) the principle of liberty, or individual freedom; (4) support for monogamous marriage and traditional families; (5) common decency (which in practice meant outlawing pornography, vulgarity, and immodest dress); (6) a solid work ethic, encouraged by a free enterprise system; (7) a sense of entering into a covenant with God; (8) God-centered education, in which the Bible was a commonly-used textbook; (9) emphasizing the importance of the home, in which loving parents were responsible for their children’s well-being, and children respected and obeyed their parents; (10) a divinely-ordained state, in which citizens were to respect civil authority and pray for their leaders; (11) a national respect by government and citizens for religion in general and the Bible in particular; and (12) freedom of religion, in which no one could be forced to belong to any particular church or denomination (*God Bless America: God’s Vision or Ours?*, pp. 65-69).

It’s evident, just from reading this list, that our nation has changed drastically during the course of its 250-year history—but that doesn’t mean the first few decades of American independence were a golden age free of all societal failure, strife, and division. As a new country and as an experiment in democracy, the United States had many growing pains, marked by both noble ideals and achievements, and serious moral failings. Even as America constantly expanded in size and prosperity, aided by the pioneers’ taming of the wilderness, the settling of new lands, and the steady appearance of new, labor-saving inventions, serious problems were always present. Three in particular stand out: a strong anti-Catholic prejudice, a shameful mistreatment of Native Americans, and the abomination of slavery.

Catholicism was not welcome in the original thirteen colonies, except for Maryland, and there was a widespread suspicion of and hostility toward Rome and the Church—feelings still very much present in the decades that followed national independence. Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Eastern Europe, and other strongholds of Catholicism usually had a harder time finding acceptance and employment than those from Protestant lands, and the lessons taught in public schools had a definite anti-Catholic bias. From time to time, there were also instances of mob violence directed against Catholics, including vandalism or outright destruction of churches and convents (a situation now existing once again). Because God blesses those societies and nations that defend and respect His Church, it can only be assumed that the United States forfeited even greater divine blessings and protection due to its initial hostility toward Catholicism.

The United States also failed on many occasions to treat Native Americans justly and respectfully. French settlers in the New World generally performed much more admirably in this regard than the English colonists, and as the new nation of the United States expanded westward, conflict with native tribes was inevitable. Both sides shared in the blame, but as the Americans gained the upper hand, they sometimes seized native lands, made unfair treaties (which they then disregarded or broke if it became economically advantageous to do so), and in general showed a shocking disrespect for the Native Americans’ human rights and dignity. This behavior, of course, was inexcusable, and presumably forfeited still further divine blessings that might have been granted to our nation.

America's greatest sin against humanity, of course, was slavery; even great men like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, among many others, were slaveowners (though some of them did arrange that upon their deaths, their slaves would be set free). Slavery was particularly entrenched in the southern states, especially after Eli Whitney's 1793 invention of the cotton gin, which greatly increased the demand for slave labor in the cotton fields of the South. Many of the founding fathers were ambivalent about slavery, feeling it necessary to compromise or tolerate it so the southern states would ratify the new Constitution, even as they felt guilty over how it contradicted the noble ideals of the Declaration of Independence. In the following decades a strong abolitionist movement developed (though even many of its members still considered blacks inferior to whites), and the underground railroad helped escaped slaves flee to Canada. Some slave owners were particularly vicious and cruel; others treated their slaves more kindly, and even gave them basic religious instructions.

The United States had nothing to do with the abolishment of the international slave trade, in which black Africans—captured and sold by other black Africans—were chained and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean under appalling conditions; it was the British Royal Navy that finally ended that grave injustice. Moreover, when Pope Gregory XVI denounced slavery in an 1839 apostolic letter—one of many Church condemnations of interracial slavery—the American Catholic bishops, showing a deplorable lack of moral courage, actually announced that this teaching didn't really apply to the United States. Despite this, there was a growing sense that slavery was evil and had to be eradicated—though it took a terrible war to do so. The Republican party was founded in opposition to slavery, and when its candidate, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president in 1860, the southern states seceded, setting the stage for the Civil War. Like many others, Lincoln believed this bloodiest conflict in American history was actually God's punishment of America for tolerating slavery for so many years.

In 1834 a French author, Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote a famous work called *Democracy in America*, based on his firsthand observations of the new nation. Overall, he was favorably impressed with the culture and values of the United States, especially its "can do" spirit, in which Americans banded together to solve problems and accomplish needed projects, rather than waiting for government to intervene. De Tocqueville noted, however, that "America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great." A very strong argument can be made that his prophecy has been fulfilled in our lifetimes.

B. The Subversion of America

Many Americans today have the troubling sense that something isn't quite right, and that the country in which they grew up has taken a decided turn for the worse. Above and beyond their concern over the economy, crime and violence, and fierce political divisions, they believe society has become increasingly coarse or degraded, and that our nation's moral values have declined alarmingly. This belief is, unfortunately, correct; even though America still has truly wonderful and praiseworthy features, and many millions of righteous and God-fearing citizens, ours is no longer the morally and spiritually great country it once was. This national decline did not happen primarily by chance; it was engineered, or created, as just one part—but a very important part—of the evil one's ongoing war against God and His people.

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In the 1930s Josef Stalin, the ruthless dictator of the Soviet Union, observed that there were two main obstacles to a Communist takeover of the West: the Catholic Church, and the American middle-class. Communism could never triumph, he believed, until these two fierce opponents were overcome—but because they were morally powerful and influential, and extremely vigilant and on-guard, they would have to be gradually subverted from within. In terms of undermining the Catholic Church, a small book called *AA 1025—The Memoirs of an Anti-Apostle* describes the process that was used. A man killed in a car accident in France in the 1960s was carrying a briefcase containing extensive notes or documentation about how he was recruited by his Communist masters to enter a seminary and eventually be ordained a priest, slowly working his way up the hierarchical ladder until, as a bishop, he would be in a position to help move the Church away from its traditional teachings and values, thus gradually robbing it of its spiritual and moral power and authority. The French Catholic nurse who tended the dying man was horrified by what she read, and arranged for the incriminating material to be published as a book. When the man was recruited, he was the 1025th such enemy agent infiltrated into Catholic seminaries around the world—hence the book's title.

Here in the United States a former Communist named Bella Dodd testified after leaving the Party that one of her jobs had been to recruit radical young men to infiltrate seminaries and religious orders while pretending to be devout Catholics. Beginning in the 1930s, she herself personally recruited almost 1000 young radicals in this Trojan Horse campaign against the Church, and it's believed many of them and other false apostles rose to positions of influence and authority. This would help explain much of the division and turmoil in the 1960s and beyond—including the problematic implementation of Vatican II's decrees (such as wholesale changes to liturgy and Church practices and tradition that the Council never authorized or intended); the suppression of popular religious devotions; an increasing disdain for Church authority and Tradition; the complete watering-down of catechesis or religious education; the radicalization of many religious orders of nuns; a growing culture of dissent among clergy and laity; and the tragic and scandalous phenomenon—very much present today—of priests, theologians, and even some bishops publicly contradicting the teachings of the Church, especially in the area of sexual morality (and thus a factor in the clergy sexual abuse crisis).

At the same time, Freemasonry—a fierce enemy of Catholicism—conducted its own secret war on the Church. Even though the Church had condemned the Masons and their beliefs over 200 times since their founding in 1717, it seems that many 20th century influential priests and bishops, especially in Italy, were Masons themselves, working to subvert the Church from within. In the 1950s Sister Lucia, the Fatima visionary, had warned that the Church would undergo a time of “diabolical disorientation,” and in the 1970s Pope Paul VI lamented that “the smoke of satan” had entered the Church. In the 20th century the Church's enemies made great progress in their efforts to undermine Catholicism—but, of course, these efforts were ultimately doomed to fail, for Our Lord had promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against it (Mt. 16:18). The United States, however, has no such guarantee.

Marxism, or Communism, has always regarded America as a major enemy and obstacle to its plans for world revolution, and a man named Antonio Gramsci—co-founder of the Italian Communist Party—developed a strategy for its eventual demise. He realized that Christianity was far too deeply embedded in Western culture to be overcome by a direct revolution or

military assault, so he counseled a much more patient and subtle approach. Marxism, Gramsci said, could only prevail if it attempted to alter the Christian mindset of the average person in Western Europe and America, eventually turning this mindset, by means of “a quiet and anonymous revolution,” into an anti-Christian attitude. Influential Communists and their sympathizers “needed to get individuals and groups in every class and station of life to think about life’s problems without . . . reference to God and the laws of God.” This would be done by what he called a “long march” through the West’s cultural institutions—particularly education, the arts, Hollywood and the entertainment industry, the press and news media (today including social media), labor unions, politics, and philanthropic and even certain religious organizations. By deceiving and subverting them and changing their missions, political power would finally fall into the laps the revolutionaries without a shot being fired.

In an effort to warn America what was happening, a former FBI agent named Willard Cleon Skousen wrote a book in 1958 called *The Naked Communist*. It listed forty-five different goals of the Communist Party in the United States, including: #4—permit free trade between all nations, regardless of Communist affiliation and whether or not the items could be used for war; #7—grant diplomatic recognition to Red China and allow it to enter the United Nations; #10—allow all Soviet satellites (supposedly independent areas actually under strict Russian control) individual representation in the United Nations; #11—promote the United Nations as the only hope for humanity; #15—capture one or both of the political parties in the United States; #17—get control of the schools, using them to transmit socialism and the Party line; #19—use student riots to foster public protests against targeted policies or organizations; #20—infiltrate the press; #21—gain control of key positions in radio, TV, and movies; #22—discredit American culture by degrading all forms of artistic expression (e.g., “eliminate all good sculpture from parks and buildings, and substitute shapeless, awkward, and meaningless forms”); #24—eliminate laws governing obscenity by calling them “censorship” and a violation of free speech; #25—break down cultural standards of morality by promoting pornography and obscenity in books, magazines, movies, and TV; #26—promote promiscuity and homosexuality as normal, natural, and healthy; #28—eliminate prayer and religious expression in schools as a supposed violation of the separation of church and state; #29—discredit the U.S. Constitution as inadequate, old-fashioned, and out of step with modern needs; #30—discredit the Founding Fathers by calling them selfish aristocrats who had no concern for “the common man”; #36—infiltrate and gain control of many labor unions; #37—infiltrate and gain control of big business; #38—transfer some of the powers of arrest from police to social agencies; and #40—discredit the family as an institution, while encouraging promiscuity and easy divorce. We can readily see all these things happening in American society today, and it’s estimated that 90% of these goals have already been achieved.

Even though Marxism has been totally discredited on economic and sociological grounds, it still has a powerful and undeserved influence in our society. This has long been the case in the higher education system, in which many university professors are either Marxist or sympathetic to Communism; now it’s also becoming apparent in politics, as shown by the election of a Communist as mayor of New York City, and the growing radicalism of the Democratic Party on a national scale (with traditional Democrats finding themselves increasingly unwelcome). One author (Bobby Angel, in *The Post Modern Predicament*) notes that a majority of millennials and Gen-Zers look at socialism favorably, and speculates that

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this is due to a widespread ignorance of how a Communist political system works, to a failure of schools to teach of the horrific death toll suffered inflicted by Communist regimes, and a growing suspicion of capitalism—including blaming it for extreme economic inequalities, while failing to credit it for lifting vast numbers of people out of poverty. Uninformed young people in particular are easy prey when Marxism falsely presents itself as a moral alternative to the injustices, crimes, and problems supposedly dominating American history.

Another element in the political Left's war on America and the Church is the phenomenon of deconstruction, or the deliberate changing and abuse of our language. As the 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche observed, "we atheists have not abolished God until we have abolished grammar"—that is, words supposedly have no inherent meaning, so "truth" is whatever the individual wants it to be. George Orwell, in his novel *1984*, referred to this concept as "Newspeak," or propaganda that gives words a significance opposite of their original meaning. For instance, "tolerance" now means accepting any point of view *except* those labeled as politically incorrect or oppressive; instead of someone being born as male or female, that person's sex is "assigned" at birth; and the term "misinformation" is used to dismiss inconvenient or unwelcome facts and arguments. (All this is a bigger problem for our secular culture, and for Protestantism, than it is for Catholicism—for the Church's magisterium still benefits from some understanding of and respect for authority among most Catholics; however, this traditional safeguard of truth is also under increasing assault.)

In 2005 author David Kupelian wrote an important and insightful book titled *The Marketing of Evil: How Radicals, Elitists, and Pseudo-Experts Sell Us Corruption Disguised as Freedom*. In it he describes how giant entertainment corporations use powerful psychological tools to manipulate our children not only to buy the latest products, but also to rebel against their parents' values; how the American Civil Liberties Union and its allies strive to remove every reference to God from the public square; how popular culture and the mainstream news media eagerly embrace and promote the LGBTQ+ agenda; how the abortion industry uses a slick public relations campaign to corrupt our society and turn it into a culture of death; and how the marketers of evil co-opt, trick, or intimidate America's churches into abandoning their natural role as moral leaders. This is only one of a number of timely books warning of an oppressive and anti-American agenda designed to transform our country into a society that would have horrified the founding fathers and disgusted our parents and grandparents.

This is not to say that everyone who disagrees with particular traditional patriotic and Christian values is evil, or knowingly serving a wicked cause; many people—especially young adults—have been mis-educated and manipulated, and sincerely believe they're working for a more just society, when in fact they're helping undermine our freedom and our nation's moral foundations. There are numerous political and societal movements, causes, and agendas at work, most of whose members fail to see the hidden links or connections with America's enemies and the terrible potential implications and self-destructive results of their efforts. Many well-meaning but seriously misguided people are being used as pawns by the New World Order, and ultimately by Satan, in an effort to discredit, defeat, and finally destroy the United States of America and prevent her from fulfilling her God-given mission of serving as a light and example to the rest of the world. At this point in history, it is uncertain which side will prevail—but with God's help, America can still be saved and renewed.

C. The War on Christianity in America

In 2012—three years after Barack Obama became president—American Catholic bishops, to their great credit, began sounding the alarm on the growing threat to religious freedom in the United States. Bishop Daniel Jenky of Peoria, Illinois stated, “The intensity of hatred against Catholic Christianity in elements of our culture is just astounding. . . . we are under assault.” According to Cardinal Raymond Burke, “[There] is a war [between] a culture of secularization which is quite strong in our nation,” and “the Christian culture which has marked the life of the United States during the first 200 years of its history.” Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles warned, “We are slowly losing our sense of religious liberty in America,” and a committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops asserted, “As Catholic bishops and American citizens, we address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard—for religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad.” These warnings were echoed by Pope Benedict XVI, who in an address to American bishops stated, “The seriousness of the challenges which the Church in America . . . is called to confront in the near future cannot be underestimated. . . . The obstacles to Christian faith and practice raised by a secularized culture also affect the lives of believers.”

A very strong argument can be made that the Obama Administration, in power from 2009 – 2017, was the most anti-Christian in American history to that point, due to its promotion of radical values and agendas contrary to most Americans’ beliefs, and its deliberate failure to defend religious freedom from growing hostility shown by an increasingly secular society. For instance, Chai Feldblum, Obama’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioner, once admitted that in any conflict between religious liberty and sexual liberty, “I’m having a hard time coming up with any case in which religious liberty should win.” The most egregious example, of course, was the so-called “Contraceptive Mandate,” in which the Department of Health and Human Services attempted to force Catholic hospitals, universities, employers, and even religious orders like the Little Sisters of the Poor, to violate their consciences by including contraceptive coverage in their employee health plans. Many Catholic institutions naturally and quite rightly refused to comply, and the Little Sisters themselves conducted a long and expensive legal campaign to protect their religious exemption rights from the federal mandate. However, even though the U.S. Supreme Court issued two rulings in their favor, in 2016, and 2020, several states, such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey, have continued to challenge these religious exemptions in lower federal courts.

Other examples of an anti-Christian bias on the part of the federal government during the Obama years include ending conscience protections for pro-life doctors and nurses at federally-funded hospitals (meaning they would be forced to commit abortions); ludicrously claiming that pro-lifers could be a serious threat to national security; permitting same-sex marriages on military installations, despite the federal Defense of Marriage Act prohibiting such ceremonies (though this law would be overturned by the Supreme Court in 2015, when it violated divine law by allowing same-sex “marriages”); restricting the right of military chaplains to pray in the Name of Jesus; and, when the president quoted from the Declaration of Independence “All men are created equal,” dropping the phrase “by their Creator.”

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Beginning in 2017, the new Trump Administration reversed many of these anti-religious policies, and demonstrated overall a noticeably friendlier stance toward religious liberty. However, Trump accomplished much of his agenda by means of executive orders—and these are subject by their nature to being overturned by a new and opposite-minded presidential administration. When Joe Biden came to power in 2021, the self-identified Catholic occupant of the White House (regarded by many as a “fake” Catholic) quickly tried to undo most of Trump’s efforts on behalf of religious freedom. According to Catholic author George Weigel, Biden “pursued an agenda that could be properly described not simply as un-Catholic but anti-Catholic,” leading to the “most pro-choice [pro-abortion] administration in American history. . . .” On his first day in office, Biden signed an executive order that allowed men self-identifying as women to participate in women’s sports. As vice-president he had earlier presided at a same-sex “marriage” ceremony, and later publicly celebrated Gay Pride Month at the White House. More alarmingly, during the Biden Administration the FBI began investigating traditional Catholics as potential terrorists, alleging supposed links between those attending Tridentine Latin Masses and “far right white nationalist movements.”

The second Trump Administration has made the protection of First Amendment religious liberty rights a high priority, establishing the White House Faith Office, and also—at the Department of Justice—creating the Religious Liberty Commission and the Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian bias. Trump also issued various executive orders on the subject, for instance, one allowing federal employees to display religious imagery and freely practice their faith in the workplace, as long as it doesn’t cause “undue hardship.” Moreover, the defense of religious freedom has become an important part of American foreign policy; with the approval of the Nigerian government, Trump launched military attacks on ISIS terrorist bases in Nigeria in response to the Islamists’ brutal persecution of Christians in that troubled land.

All these steps are very much to the credit of the Trump Administration—but these must not lull us into complacency or a false sense of security. If, as the late President Ronald Reagan frequently said, freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction, we might also add that religious liberty is never more than one election away from danger. If the wrong presidential candidate wins the White House in 2028, and the wrong political party takes control of Congress, we can expect serious efforts to impose a radical political and domestic agenda—including, quite possibly, a vindictive attempt to take revenge on Christian and conservative political opponents. Even if the Supreme Court and other branches of the judiciary intervene and limit the damage, difficult and distressing days may lie ahead. The opposition may be willing to concede us “freedom of worship,” in which we keep our beliefs and practices inside our churches and homes, but vigorously oppose “freedom of religion,” in which we attempt to live out our faith in the public realm, letting our Christian beliefs inform and motivate our duties and actions as citizens. The other side doesn’t fear quiet, timid, and cooperative Christians, but it does fear—and despise—moral leaders and religious heroes.

Over the years many thoroughly-researched and well-documented books have been written warning of the real possibility of a religious persecution here in the United States, including Janet Folger’s *The Criminalization of Christianity*, David Limbaugh’s *Persecution*, Rev. Donald Wildmon’s *Speechless: Silencing the Christians*, Donald McAlvany’s *Storm Warning*, Gus Stelzer’s *The State Against Religion*, Bill Donohue’s *Secular Sabotage*, and my own

Preparing for the Coming Persecution: A Handbook for Faithful Catholics. In addition to these and other books, there are vast amounts of information on this subject available from various podcasts and on-line resources, and sometimes also stories in the alternative media—stories the mainstream media will rarely acknowledge, let alone cover. All these warnings cannot easily be dismissed as “conspiracy theories” or “right-wing hysteria”; moreover, it stands to reason that because the devil is the “father of lies” (Jn. 8:44), his agents and servants would make every effort to conceal their activities and agenda, while also trying to discredit true patriots and Christians. (This brings to mind Mark Twain’s famous observation that a lie can circle half-way round the world while the truth is still lacing up its boots.)

We live in a surveillance society, in which virtually all of our travels, purchases, on-line activities, communications, and donations to religious and political causes are monitored and recorded. This has been true for years, and the pervasive presence and use of technology is ever increasing. Several recent articles, for instance, talk about worldwide efforts to create a digital ID for every person on earth, supposedly for the purpose of “health continuity” and combatting future epidemics; the growing use of license plate readers, which—while having a legitimate purpose in helping solve crimes or finding missing persons—can easily and illegally track the movements of law-abiding citizens guilty of no crime; and increasingly sensitive automotive technologies that in effect spy on a car’s driver, recoding conversations, driving habits, and locations visited. In addition, there are dangers to privacy and liberty from cell phones, televisions, household appliances, individual homes’ gas meters, documents such as passports with embedded microchips, surveillance cameras and microphones in public places, and even drones. A government hostile to persons with certain religious or political viewpoints would have a wide range of instruments and options to use if—in the name of “national security”—it decided to crack down on potential threats or its perceived enemies.

Jesus had warned His followers to expect possible persecution from His enemies (Mt. 24:9, Lk. 21:12-16, Jn. 15:18-20), while explaining, “They will do this because they have not known either the Father or Me” (Jn. 16:3). However, He also said, “In the world you will have trouble, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). God does not want His people to live in fear, but in a spirit of trust, living in such a way that we are truly light for the world and salt for the earth (Mt. 5:13-16). Our Lord and Our Lady have always had a special love for the United States, and our nation has received many blessings from Heaven over the years. Even though America has strayed far from its founding ideals, we—as part of a faithful remnant—can continue to gain divine favor for our country, especially by offering our prayers and sacrifices for our nation’s moral and spiritual renewal (the purpose of our Masses of Reparation held each month). 250 years ago, the patriots were courageous in overcoming the challenges facing them, and a new country was born. If we show a similar sense of courage and trust, then—with God’s help—our nation can be restored and renewed.

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Session #2: A Nation That Lost Its Way

A. Promises and Warnings

America's founders viewed the creation of the United States as a joint partnership or project between themselves and Almighty God, directly acknowledging His authority and imploring His help. Our earliest universities were specifically Christian; the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed (in 1844) the use of the Bible in public schools, and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives had official, salaried chaplains for the most of their history. Despite the so-called "separation of church and state" (a phrase not found anywhere in the U.S. Constitution), President Thomas Jefferson, in 1803, approved a treaty with a Native American tribe in which the U.S. would offer financial support for "a priest of [the Catholic] religion" to "perform the duties of his office" to educate the tribe's children.

Fr. Bill McCarthy, in *God Bless America: God's Vision or Ours?*, lists twelve principles that made America great: (1) being one nation under God; (2) a respect for human dignity and an inalienable right to life; (3) the principle of liberty, or individual freedom; (4) support for monogamous marriage and traditional families; (5) common decency (outlawing pornography, vulgarity, and immodest dress); (6) a solid work ethic; (7) a sense of entering a covenant with God; (8) God-centered education; (9) the importance of the home and the family; (10) a divinely-ordered state, in which citizens would respect and pray for their leaders; (11) government respect for religion in general and the Bible in particular; and (12) freedom of religion, in which no one was forced to belong to any particular denomination.

The United States had many growing pains, marked by noble ideas and great achievements, and also serious moral failings. The latter included a strong anti-Catholic bias (demonstrated by mob violence against Church members and property); a shameful mistreatment of Native Americans (in which treaties were broken by the government, along with other instances of a shocking disrespect for Native Americans' human rights and dignity); and the moral abomination of slavery. It was the British Royal Navy which ended the international slave trade, not the United States; moreover, when Pope Gregory XVI denounced slavery in an apostolic letter in 1839 (one of many Church condemnations of slavery), the American Catholic bishops shamefully claimed this teaching didn't apply to the United States. Slavery only ended as the result of the deadly and destructive Civil War; Abraham Lincoln, among others, regarded the war as a divine punishment for America's toleration of slavery.

In his 1834 book *Democracy in America*, the French author Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, "America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great."

B. The Subversion of America

Many Americans today rightly believe our nation has taken a decided turn for the worse; this moral decline didn't just happen by chance—it was engineered. Communism's two main enemies in the 20th century—its two main obstacles to world domination—were the Catholic Church and the United States of America. These were judged to be too strong to be overcome directly; they would have to be subverted from within. A small book called *AA 1025—The Memoirs of an Anti-Apostle* describes how thousands of young radicals were recruited to enter seminaries and religious orders, rise to influential positions, and gradually turn the Church away from her traditional beliefs and moral values; one former Communist in the United States, Bella Dodd, later testified to her great success in conducting this sort of "Trojan Horse" campaign. At the same time, Freemasonry continued its own secret war on the Church; these efforts may help explain the "diabolical disorientation" (warned of in the 1950s by Sister Lucia, the Fatima visionary) which followed the Second Vatican Council. (The Council itself was inspired by the Holy Spirit, but its implementation was hijacked by radical or Modernist elements in the Church, jettisoning traditions and imposing changes never intended by the Council Fathers.)

The Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci created a patient and subtle strategy to overcome the Western world by a “long march” through Europe and America’s cultural institutions (including education, the arts, Hollywood, the entertainment industry, the press and news media, labor unions, politics, philanthropy, and even religious organizations), gradually influencing people to think about life without reference to God. Thus, political power would eventually fall into the hands of the revolutionaries without a shot being fired. To warn Americans of this threat, in 1958 former FBI agent Willard Cleon Skousen wrote *The Naked Communist*, which listed forty-five different goals of the Communist Party in the United States—90% of which have already been achieved.

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche observed, “we atheists have not abolished God until we have abolished grammar”—in other words, language must be abused so that words have no inherent meaning (or Newspeak, in George Orwell’s novel *1984*). Furthermore, in his 2005 book *The Marketing of Evil*, author David Kupelian describes how ideologies, behaviors, and agendas once recognized and rejected as wicked or perverted have achieved widespread social favor and support.

C. The War on Christianity in America

In 2012 America’s Catholic bishops warned of a potential loss of religious liberty if certain societal trends and attitudes continued. At that time, the Obama Administration was the most anti-Christian in American history to that point, consistently promoting radical policies contrary to most Americans’ values and beliefs (such as its efforts to force the Little Sisters of the Poor, among others, to include contraceptive coverage in employee insurance plans). In 2017 the new Trump Administration reversed many of these anti-Christian policies, but most of these were reinstated by the Biden Administration (despite Joe Biden identifying himself as a practicing Catholic). The second Trump Administration has made the protection of First Amendment religious liberty rights a high priority; however, there is no room for complacency or a false sense of security. If, as President Ronald Reagan frequently said, freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction, we might also add that religious liberty is never more than one election away from danger.

Over the years many thoroughly-researched and well-documented books have been written warning of the real possibility of a religious persecution in the United States, including Janet Folger’s *The Criminalization of Christianity*, David Limbaugh’s *Persecution*, Rev. Donald Wildmon’s *Speechless: Silencing the Christians*, Donald McAlvany’s *Storm Warning*, Gus Stelzer’s *The State Against Religion*, and Bill Donohue’s *Secular Sabotage*. (Further information on this subject is available from numerous podcasts, on-line resources, and the alternative media.) Because the devil is the “father of lies” (Jn. 8:44), his agents and servants can be expected to make every effort to conceal the agenda of the New World Order, while trying to discredit Christians, patriots, and others sounding the alarm.

We live in a surveillance society, in which virtually all of our travels, purchases, on-line activities, communications, and donations to religious and political causes, are monitored and recorded. There are worldwide efforts to create a digital ID for every person on earth (supposedly to combat future pandemics); there are also growing dangers to liberty and privacy from almost every imaginable form of technology, including license plate readers, automotive technologies that in effect spy on the driver, cell phones, televisions, household appliances, individual homes’ gas meters, passports and other documents with embedded microchips, and surveillance cameras and microphones in public places. A hostile government—acting in the name of “national security”—will have many tools available to crack down on persons or groups having politically incorrect beliefs and practices.

Jesus had warned His followers to expect persecution (Mt. 24:9; Lk. 21:12-16; Jn. 15:18-20), but He also said, “In the world you will have trouble, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). God does not want His people to live in fear, but in a spirit of trust, living in such a way that we are truly light for the world and salt for the earth (Mt. 5:13-16). Our Lord and Our Lady have always had a special love for the United States, and even though our nation has strayed far from its founding ideals, we—through our prayers and sacrifices for America’s moral and spiritual renewal—can continue to gain divine favor and a time of restoration and renewal for our country.