

world will follow Christianity at all.

Well, setting aside Orthodox suspicions that papal supremacy is likely to remain less negotiable than other differences, and that any prospective union would mean, as it always has in the past, Orthodox subordination to Rome, and therefore precisely a question of what brand of Christianity the union produces, this seeming indifference to dogmatic questions is indicative of how little the West understands the East. Some of the over-the-top Greek rhetoric obscured the fact that, for many Orthodox, "*Filioque*" (not to mention "Vicar of Christ") is still fightin' words. Catholic ecumenists may prefer to think the vehement anti-Romanism of doctrinally and morally conservative Orthodox is simply the mark of retrogrades and obscurantists (oh, flatterers!), and they are entitled to their opinion. They may console themselves with the notion that the Orthodox simply have not come to terms with modernism or, as has been suggested by some (both Catholic and Orthodox), have not even noticed it. To which I reply: Oh, we've noticed modernism all right; it's just that we don't like it very much. In fact, Orthodoxy in the last century alone has suffered at its hands to an extent the Western confessions can scarcely imagine. But it is hard for conservative Roman Catholics to understand that, from our perspective, Rome (and not just post-Vatican II) is not an antidote to modernism but part of it, John Paul's own moral witness on some important issues notwithstanding. (One very important distinction should be noted here. Some Roman Catholics who pass for moral "conservatives" nowadays, mostly because they are pro-life, have long since made their peace with modernism up to Vatican II and beyond. Some of the "conservatives" who make a point of hailing John Paul II, perhaps mistakenly, as one of their own barely conceal their underlying disdain for what they see as Orthodox backwardness. Their interest in the East does not, I believe, extend much beyond an urge to devour us. More tragic, at least from the Orthodox perspective, are those truly conservative exemplars of the best of the Roman Catholic tradition who, like some of their Protestant counterparts, desire reconciliation with East precisely because they see our backwardness for what it is: loyalty to the ancient traditions. But they are caught in a circle that cannot be squared: If they

think Dostoevsky's parable of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* is just about socialism, they had better read it again.)

Part of the reason for Catholic ecumenists' incomprehension is that their understanding of Orthodoxy is derived almost exclusively from contacts with Orthodox ecumenists, too many of whom are exactly the type of Eastern-rite Episcopalians (in the Bishop Spong sense) that Rome would end up with if there were a union. Any foreseeable union would cause a schism in our Church, and Rome would mostly find itself in communion with people who, as much or more than Catholic modernists, want nothing so much as the approval of a godless world. There are exceptions, of course, but Catholics should ask themselves: If these Orthodox are willing to unite with Catholics professing views on authority in the Church, the *Filioque*, etc., that run counter to their own tradition, how pro-life would they turn out to be? Those Catholics who see union as a means to reinforce the best elements in their own confession might find that it leads to the exact opposite.

In sum, the Greek trip was a big setback for John Paul II's well-known desire to go to Russia, and prospects for union during his pontificate are virtually dead. Even as far as his own agenda is concerned, it was almost entirely counterproductive. Try to see it from the perspective of real Orthodox Greeks: the Church of Greece, which knew he wanted to advance his ecumenical agenda, did not want him to come. So the socialist government (pro-abortion, pro-homosexual, pro-"Europe") preempts the Greek Church by inviting John Paul as a head of state. And then he doesn't expect to be received as a political figure? When you sincerely court someone and the answer is "no," why force your attentions? Isn't this just asking for things to get ugly, notwithstanding efforts by the Greek hierarchy to strike a note of civility during the visit itself? On this Rome—probably not the Pope himself but his diplomats—has made an unfortunate blunder.

From the Orthodox perspective, we can unite with Roman Catholicism when, and only when, what we sincerely regard as the latter's errors of the past millennium are rejected, and the former patriarchate of the old imperial capital returns to Orthodoxy. No one expects that to happen anytime soon. Trying to force the issue by dismissing the disagreements

as so much fussing, and by placing unity above truth, is an insult to faithful Catholics and Orthodox alike. Better that we accept that we fundamentally disagree on important matters of faith but can still—and must—cooperate on moral and cultural issues.

The primate of the Greek Church, Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens, made that appeal in his meeting with John Paul II, stating that

the time has come for us to coordinate our efforts to assure that Europe remains a Christian land, away from the apparent tendency to transform her nations into atheist states, denying their Christian identity.

Likewise, there is little for any Roman Catholic or Protestant worthy of his own tradition to disagree within the social concept published by the Moscow patriarchate in August 2000. Serious Christians of various confessions have plenty of reasons to view one another as friends and comrades in the twilight struggle against the modern social pathologies and their effects, exemplified by the demographic crisis that threatens all of Christian Europe. If moral alliance, not Eucharistic unity, were the focus of the Pope's eastern policy, even many Orthodox zealots would be receptive. But his Greek pilgrimage, however well-intentioned, was not the way to go about it.

J.G. Jatras, an occasional contributor, writes from Virginia. His disturbing resemblance to certain monks seen in news photos of the Pope's visit to Greece is purely coincidental.

THE OLD REPUBLIC

The Dangerous Myth of American Exceptionalism

by Joseph E. Fallon

One thing that distinguishes the French from the Americans is that the French have the good grace to number their failed political experiments—two kingdoms, two empires, and five republics.

Americans, on the other hand, profess “American exceptionalism.” They assert that the United States is unique among the countries of the world because she alone has successfully functioned under the same Constitution for more than 200 years. According to “American exceptionalism,” the government of the United States has never been overthrown, and the U.S. Constitution has never been changed—except through the amendment process, as established by the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

If ignorance is bliss, then Americans live in a terminal state of euphoria. The War Between the States (as Congress officially termed the conflict in 1928) or the “Civil War” (as the politically correct intentionally mislabel it) alone shatters the myth of “American exceptionalism.”

American exceptionalism, however, is not just a myth; it is a *dangerous myth*, because of its four false corollaries: First, the government of the United States is morally and politically superior to all other governments; second, the government of the United States is “indispensable” for the peace and prosperity of the world; third, other governments, as a matter of national self-interest, must conform to the policies of the government of the United States; and fourth, if any country’s government refuses to conform, then the government of the United States is morally entitled to impose economic sanctions or launch military attacks against that country.

Neoconservative “theorists” William Kristol and Robert Kagan took the belief in American exceptionalism to its logical conclusion in the Summer 1996 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. The objective of the government of the United States, they declared in “Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” must be nothing less than “benevolent global hegemony.” Kristol and Kagan validate the observation of Albert Camus that “the welfare of humanity is always the alibi of tyrants.”

The myth of American exceptionalism has transformed the United States from a federal republic with limited constitutional powers into an “evil empire” and a “rogue state.” From Afghanistan to Waco, from Ruby Ridge to Yugoslavia, the United States behaves increasingly as both the political equivalent of Friedrich Nietzsche’s “superman” and an embryonic version of George Orwell’s “Oceania.”

Since the advent of political correctness, the U.S. government already practices the Orwellian concepts of “newspeak” and

“doublethink.” Its domestic and foreign policies are slowly conforming to the official creed of Oceania—“War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength.”

In reality, American exceptionalism is “a lie agreed upon.” And the lie begins at the beginning. Contrary to the myth’s central tenet, the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was not a lawful assembly that produced an extraordinary political document, but an illegal cabal that staged a *coup d’etat*.

In 1789, just six years after independence, the first republic of the United States, established under the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, was overthrown. The justification for this treason was the conviction shared by many politicians—including George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison—that the first republic was too weak to be effective and would remain so because of Article 1 of its constitution. This article limited the general (or federal) government by declaring:

Each State retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

As a result, the Confederation Congress had no independent source of revenue and had to rely on requisitions it received irregularly from the states; it had no control over foreign or interstate commerce; and it had no power to compel the sovereign states to honor its decisions.

While the impetus for abolishing the first republic was undeniably political—the belief, however dubious, that the Confederation was unworkable and would soon collapse—there were economic motives as well. Those demanding the creation of a second republic included holders of government securities who had not received interest on their loans; landowners and speculators who had been unable to develop commercially the western lands, because the first republic allegedly could not adequately defend or administer the frontier; and merchants, manufacturers, traders, and shippers whose interstate commerce had been adversely affected by conflicting state laws. All these interest groups also shared a common concern: the financial losses they incurred due to confusion over state and “national” currencies and

the introduction by farmers of depreciated paper money.

But the actual overthrow of the first republic was the culmination of a series of events that had begun in 1785. Together, they resulted in a creeping *coup d’etat*.

First, there was the Mount Vernon Compact of March 1785 between Virginia and Maryland (Delaware and Pennsylvania were also invited to join), which dealt with interstate navigation and commerce. It was a success. While not a secessionist movement in the common meaning of the term, the compact, by possessing jurisdiction over the navigation and commercial rights of its members, constituted an embryonic political rival to the first republic.

Second, at the time of the Mount Vernon Compact, the Massachusetts legislature adopted a resolution calling on its delegates to the Confederation Congress to petition for a general convention to revise the Articles of Confederation. Delegates refused on the ground that it would lead to the overthrow of the first republic.

Third, in the summer of 1786, seven amendments to the Articles of Confederation were introduced in the Confederation Congress for reforming and strengthening the first republic. All seven were defeated.

Fourth, by September 1786, farmers were in rebellion throughout New England. Collectively known as “Shays’ Rebellion,” farmers—so-called “Regulators” (term that would later be replaced by “vigilantes”)—took up arms in parts of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and the independent republic of Vermont to block attempts by their creditors to collect debts by foreclosing on their farms. “[B]y one estimate, nine thousand men—one-fourth of the potential armed force of New England—were up in arms against established authorities.” Later, the issue of the “anarchy” of the Regulators, and the “inability” of the Confederation to deal with it effectively, would be manipulated at the Constitutional Convention and in the subsequent ratification debates in the states to justify overthrowing the first republic.

Fifth, in September 1786, the Annapolis Convention (meeting ostensibly to expand the Mount Vernon Compact to include additional states) conspired to draft a new federal structure. It was a failure. Five states—including the host state—refused to send delegates, while

delegates from three other states arrived too late to participate. In desperation, the delegates of the five states present submitted a report to the Confederation Congress noting the failure of all states to attend, expressing the need for “reform” of the general government, and calling for a Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia the following May.

The government of the first republic, the Confederation Congress, agreed to this proposal and, in 1787, authorized a Constitutional Convention. But it forbade the drafting of a new constitution. The instructions were explicit: Delegates were gathering “for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation.” Virtually every state government issued similar instructions to its delegates.

Equally explicit was Article 13 of the Articles of Confederation, which declared that no revision was legally permitted “unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States, and be afterward confirmed by the Legislatures of every State.”

The delegates ignored their instructions and the constitution they had sworn to uphold. Instead, they plotted the overthrow of the first republic. Like good conspirators, they held their deliberations in secret. Armed sentries were posted around the State House where they met. Rules were passed

That no copy be taken of any entry on the journal during the sitting of the House without leave of the House; That members only be permitted to inspect the journal; That nothing spoken in the House be printed, or otherwise published or communicated without leave.

And all loose scraps of papers were to be destroyed.

In a letter to Oliver Ellsworth, delegate from Connecticut, a friend expressed an opinion of the Constitutional Convention that was shared by many Americans: “Full of Disputation and noisy as the Wind, it is said, that you are afraid of the very Windows, and have a Man planted under them to prevent the Secrets and Doings from flying out.”

This obsession with secrecy bordered on paranoia. When Benjamin Franklin, the oldest and (arguably) the most famous delegate to the Constitutional Convention, would attend dinner parties in Philadelphia, the other delegates had a colleague accompany him to ensure that

Franklin did not divulge any information of the proceedings to the public.

In such a setting of suspicion and isolation, the delegates, motivated by economic self-interest as well as pragmatic political concerns, illegally drafted a new Constitution, which unconstitutionally declared ratification by only nine of the 13 states to be sufficient for its adoption.

Some delegates, however, raised fundamental questions of legality and logic. Luther Martin of Maryland challenged the majority:

Will you tell us we ought to trust you because you now enter into a solemn compact with us? This you have done before, and now treat with the utmost contempt. Will you now make an appeal to the Supreme Being, and call on Him to guarantee your observance of this compact? The same you have formerly done for your observance of the Articles of Confederation, which you are now violating in the most wanton manner.

Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts took the majority’s position on ratification to its logical conclusion—“if nine out of thirteen can dissolve the compact, Six out of nine will be just as able to dissolve the new one hereafter.”

By its actions, the Constitutional Convention proved itself to be a conclave of conspirators who betrayed their sacred oaths to the constitution of the first republic and usurped power. The subsequent adoption of the U.S. Constitution, and the establishment of the second republic, was achieved by extraconstitutional means. It was a bloodless *coup d’etat*. It was, in fact, a very civil *coup d’etat*. But it was a *coup d’etat*, nonetheless.

The second republic, however, did share its predecessor’s ideological conviction that the United States was a compact among sovereign states, which had delegated limited powers to the government. In the words of Alexander Hamilton, one of the chief architects of the second republic, the United States would “still be, in fact and in theory, an association of States, or a confederacy.”

But the *coup d’etat* of 1789 set a suicidal precedent. On the same pretext of establishing “a more perfect union,” the second republic was overthrown by Abraham Lincoln when he launched his war against the South—a war the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitution-

al in the “Prize Cases” of December 1862. Lincoln destroyed the federal principles of 1783 and 1789 and replaced them with the ideological foundation for today’s centralized, “welfare-warfare,” bureaucratic state.

To the degree that American exceptionalism ever existed, it was as an experiment in limited government based on the unique concept of dual sovereignties—state and federal—embodied in the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. But that political experiment lasted only six years, from 1783 to 1789. The Constitutional Convention did not create American exceptionalism; it destroyed it.

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MUSIC

Berlioz: A Musical Apotheosis

by Ralph de Toledano

Until the advent of the long-playing record, almost all of the music of Hector Berlioz was, for most Americans, a silent enigma, available only to those who could read a score and really hear it. Otherwise reasonable critics wrote of his “half-crazy ideas.” Some argued that he achieved his effects, both good and bad, “by accident.” *Grove’s* bemoaned his lapses into bad taste and deplored his emphasis on “emphasis” rather than “beauty”—mystified by the intensity that marks his work. Such “advanced” musicologists as Paul Henry Lang, *ex cathedra* from Columbia University, blamed Berlioz for being both too tied to past practices and reaching too far forward into the future. And two composers who owed much to Berlioz, Debussy and Stravinsky, dismissed him as a “musical monster” and a “romantic ogiast.”

I do not hold music critics in the same easy contempt that was George Bernard Shaw’s stock-in-trade. But I have found it shocking that they should allow non-musical considerations to lead them astray. Much of Berlioz’s reputation derived