

# The Church – Not America – is the “Light of the World”

Intelligence Report

American Foundations #3

**ALTHOUGH THE LIBERAL POLITICAL TRADITION** is full of references to the “natural law”, “virtue” and “human happiness”, these time-honored concepts denote something quite different to men and women schooled in the Christian and classical philosophical tradition. This difference rests upon divergent liberal and classical conceptions of the human intellect and of the human person. Classical and Christian thinking about man and society begins with the work of the “*speculative intellect*”, the part of the intellect that thinks about abstract universal spiritual substances such as God and the human soul. The speculative intellect endeavors to apprehend, understand, and conceptualize the inner nature of things, what they are (and what they are capable of becoming) when their innate potentials are actualized. The speculative intellect provides a universal definition of what a thing is, its essence. **It is by knowledge of what a thing is, and of what its potentials are, that the *speculative intellect* is further able to derive knowledge of its ends, of what it capable of becoming.**

According to Classical and Christian philosophy, the universal definition of human nature provided by the speculative intellect is necessary for the work of the “*practical intellect*”, which follows it. The job of the practical intellect, working from knowledge acquired from the *speculative intellect*, **is to derive practical means** calculated to achieve human ends, *viz.*, the actualization of human potentials necessary to live a good life culminating in human happiness, which is the goal of politics. In short, the speculative intellect provides knowledge of human nature, its powers, operations and potentials, which all point towards its end: *Happiness*. **Political thinkers** tend to agree that happiness is the end of politics.

*“Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all*

*divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man” (John Adams, “Thoughts on Government” Apr. 1776 Papers 4:86-93).*

Thus, the American Framers identified the “pursuit of happiness” as an *inalienable right* and enshrined it in the “Declaration of Independence”.

The natural law tradition rooted in *liberalism* understands that human action is aimed at happiness, but it tends to identify happiness as sentient pleasure disconnected from the spiritual soul . Because men and women schooled in the liberal tradition tend to disdain metaphysics and speculative philosophy, they do not know the essence of the human soul nor do they make any attempt to know; instead they rest content with knowledge gained from common-sense and practical everyday sentient observations of human actions (that is observations of the practical intellect unguided by prior metaphysical knowledge of the human soul derived from philosophy). This general regard for *common sense* accompanied by disdain for *metaphysics* is summed up well by Thomas Jefferson, one of the patriarchs of American liberalism:

*“Laws are made for men of ordinary understanding and should, therefore, be construed by the ordinary rules of common sense. Their meaning is not to be sought for in metaphysical subtleties which may make anything mean everything or nothing at pleasure” (Thomas Jefferson letter to William Johnson, 1823).*

Because adherents of the liberal school believe that common sense of the *practical intellect* is *all there is*, they are left to reason about man and society from everyday sentient observations unguided by philosophical insight about the nature of the human soul. Common sense observations are limited observations; they do not rise to any empirically or logically valid understanding of the universal nature of substances. Such observations always proceed from

apparent surface knowledge of what a thing or person "*appears to be*", not necessarily, "*what they are*". They therefore possess a somewhat limited and particular degree of validity. This validity is increased when human behavior is observed. Because few human beings tend to pursue wisdom and live a life of virtue, lack of virtue becomes the observed norm and expectation.

Liberalism, due to its rejection of metaphysics, is left to articulate political ideas about the pursuit of happiness based solely upon limited observations of human behavior, often times corrupt human behavior. Liberal political philosophers, beginning with Machiavelli, term corrupt human action manifest in political behavior as "*real politik*", how men and women really act, not as they might act. These philosophers are not interested in human potential implicit in human nature; they are not interested in making men and women better. Rather, they accept men and women as they are or appear to be, *viz.*, corrupt and underdeveloped. Political philosophers in the classical tradition do not ignore the persuasive force of *real politik*; nonetheless, they insist upon studying human nature and politics with the purpose of improving society by promotion of virtue, which, they argue, should guide the correct exercise of political power. In short, liberal *real politik* is politics in its raw form starting with what men and women actually do, *that is, from what they appear* on the surface to be as determined by their political acts. Classical philosophers in the Christian and natural law tradition are well aware of real human limits; they factor them into their analysis. Nonetheless, they begin with a much deeper metaphysical perspective that provides a universal definition of human nature, something possessed by every human being, a summation of what they are by nature (not be mere observation) thereby culminating in knowledge of *what every person is capable of becoming* if their innate human potentials are properly nurtured and educated.

Liberals like Machiavelli and Jefferson, *et al*, begin their study of politics and human behavior without *first* attempting to know what a human being is. Rather, they began their study of politics with the presumption (based on common sense observations) of what a human being appears to be: an ungrateful and fickle deceiver who acts selfishly out of greed for profit:

*“One can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers, they shun danger and are greedy for profit” (Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter 17).*

If this is true, every prince, according to Machiavelli, must be ready to act against virtue, if necessary.

*“The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous” (The Prince, Chapter 15).*

This “Machiavellian” or “modern approach” to *real politics* (an approach that begins with observation of human acts usually done out of self-interest) contains a significant degree of truth, but it is, nonetheless, built upon a colossal deficiency, a deficiency that was recognized as early as the 4th century BC by “The Philosopher”, Aristotle. Aristotle understood that, as a human science, politics rests upon an in-depth understanding of the human person, body and soul. Knowledge of the latter requires more than mere observation of everyday acts obtained by the senses and lower sentient mind. Knowledge of the human soul, and of the intellectual and moral virtues associated with it, is obtained through the study of metaphysics, which is properly speaking, the work of the “speculative intellect”, which is properly *ancillary* to the study practical study of politics.

*“By human virtue we mean not that of the body but that of the soul; and happiness also we call an activity of soul. But if this is so, clearly the student of politics must know somehow the facts about the soul, as the man who is to heal the eyes or the body as a whole must know about the eyes or the body; and all the more since politics is more prized and better than medicine” (Aristotle, Ethics Book I, Chapter 13).*

Therefore,

*“The student of politics...must study the soul”[\[1\]](#) before he begins his study of politics.*

Because liberalism proceeds without any metaphysical knowledge of the soul (it doesn't study the soul at all), it is forced to begin political analysis with a potent yet deficient sentient based knowledge of the body complemented by a limited definition of human ends, what they appear to be on the surface”: physical pleasure and avoidance of pain (more sophisticated liberals include *mental pleasures* such as peace, and a good conscience). Because it does not attain deeper understanding of human nature, of the human person, body and soul, liberalism is stripped of an ability to make accurate moral decisions based on the full actualization of inherent human potential (it does not know what this potential is). So deprived, the practical intellect is reduced to moral decision making by means of a probability calculus (because all practical decision making is based upon probability) rooted in the utilitarian principle of maximizing self-interest, which liberals reduce to material interests (including peace of mind) rather than the fuller actualization of a person's physical and spiritual potentials known only by the speculative intellect resulting in a *much higher form* of authentic “self interest” rooted in human nature (body and spiritual soul). Clearly, there is a difference in methodology. Classical political philosophy begins with

metaphysics (the speculative intellect) and is open to input from the Christian faith. Liberal political philosophy proceeds from *real politik*, the practical intellect unaided by metaphysics and disdainful of the Christian faith, at least in the public forum, which is the forum of politics and political action. [\[2\]](#)

Pope Benedict XVI discussed this reduction of human thinking from a healthy synthesis of speculative and practical intellect working together to a diminished form of thinking consisting of practical intellect working alone. Benedict, in his "*Regensburg Address*", examined the diminution of reason initiated by Protestant Reformers who, in their zeal for faith and scripture discarded the study of metaphysics, thereby leaving *faith alone*; that is, no longer aided by philosophy and the speculative intellect. Protestant divines, who successfully conducted the intellectual severance of the practical intellect from the speculative, in the 16th century, were philosophically unarmed and unprepared for the onslaught of modern philosophy (liberalism), which assailed them in the difficult 18th century during which they *unsuccessfully* confronted deism, practical atheism, American Epicureanism and Stoicism. *All the great political questions floating on the difficult philosophical waters of the 18th century demanded a command of metaphysics*, which the Protestant divines had scuttled two hundred years earlier. If the Protestants and Catholic clergy had harnessed forces, the unfortunate secularization that was about to occur could have been avoided.

When, in 1789, the American founders privatized religion and then subsequently made education a public affair, they initiated a long process of ever-increasing secularization that is still bearing its irreverent and unholy fruits. Due to the excommunication of philosophy from Protestant culture and the privatization of religion as a result of the First Amendment, the young Christian nation was left without a

sufficient anecdote for what was beginning to happen in the federal and state governments and in the public schools: Education, increasingly divorced from religion and subjected to a sophisticated regiment of secular practical reason (the philosophy of liberalism) alienated from *both* (1) speculative philosophy (metaphysics) and (2) the bulwark of Christian faith, education under these circumstances could not provide sufficient *reasonable* answers to pressing questions such as the spiritual nature of the human person and the divine origin of the universe<sup>[3]</sup>. The combined lack of philosophy and theology, in the schools and broader political arena, inevitably led to a rising tide of materialism in the social, behavioral, and life sciences, which were not long after inundated with Marx, Freud, and Darwin, without Augustine, Aquinas or Aristotle to help.

Pope Benedict XVI recognized the ill-fated bifurcation of theology *and* philosophy, of speculative reason from practical reason:

*“Looking at the tradition of scholastic theology, the Reformers (incorrectly) thought they were confronted with a (Catholic) faith system conditioned by philosophy....The principle of sola scriptura, on the other hand, sought faith in its pure, primordial, form, as originally found in the biblical Word. Metaphysics appeared as a premise derived from another source, from which faith had to be liberated in order to become once more fully itself” (Regensburg Address, Sept. 12, 2006).*

As if to prove Benedict’s point, Martin Luther (a leading Reformer) did little to mask his contempt for speculative reason and scholastic metaphysics.

*“Since the devil’s bride, (speculative) Reason, that pretty whore, comes in and thinks she’s wise, and what she says, what she thinks, is from the Holy Spirit, who can help us,*

*then? Not judges, not doctors, no king or emperor, because [speculative reason] is the Devil's greatest whore."*

Elsewhere,

*"Reason is a whore, the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but more frequently than not struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God."*

Unfortunately, like Luther, many American Protestants failed to see that "reason" rather than being faith's "greatest enemy" was indeed, one of the faith's "greatest friends" (*fides et ratio*); without which America's Protestant communities would succumb in their soon to be bout with secularist and materialist philosophers who dotted America's Northeastern shores. Inspired Christian successors of the Pilgrims and Puritans, and those who had come to life during the "Great Awakening"[\[4\]](#), were soon to see who their real enemies were – men whom they oftentimes thought were their friends.

It was not long after, in the 18th century,

*"When Kant stated that he needed to set (speculative) thinking aside in order to make room for faith, he carried this programme (of divorcing faith and reason) forward with a radicalism that the Reformers could never have foreseen. He thus anchored faith exclusively in practical reason[\[5\]](#), denying it access to reality as a whole" (Pope Benedict XVI).[\[6\]](#)*

Kant, and then 18th century deists and associated philosophers, like Luther before them, upheld practical reason but, unlike Luther, they further extracted the supernatural elements from the faith thereby leaving only a rational moral system based on practical reason and experience alone without the corresponding support of the supernatural aspects of the



Christian faith.[\[7\]](#) First, the Reformers extracted metaphysics and then the 18th century philosophers extracted faith itself and all of its sacred mysteries. In the process, Jesus was “presented as the father of a humanitarian moral message” (Pope Benedict XVI) and Christianity was brought into

*“...harmony with modern reason, (seemingly) liberating it (Christianity)... from seeming philosophical and theological elements such as faith in Christ’s divinity and the triune God (a few others include the incarnation virgin birth and resurrection)” (Pope Benedict XVI).*

According to Kant, and to later thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson[\[8\]](#),

*“What (the New Testament) is able to say critically about Jesus is, so to speak, an expression of practical reason....Behind this thinking lies the modern self-limitation of reason (no faith), classically expressed in Kant’s ‘Critiques’” (Pope Benedict XVI, Regenesburg Address).*

Thus, there was no longer any recourse to faith or to metaphysics. Jefferson despised metaphysics as much as Kant or Luther. According to Jefferson, metaphysics was for the “insane”:

*“The metaphysical insanities of Athanasius, of Loyola, and of Calvin (Protestants and Catholics), are, to my understanding, mere relapses into polytheism, differing from paganism only by being more unintelligible.”[\[9\]](#)*

When it came to faith and reason, the Protestants, in Jefferson’s mind, did not fare any better than the Catholics:

*“It would be more pardonable to believe in no god at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin.”*

*“The truth is that the greatest enemies to the doctrines of Jesus are those calling themselves the expositors of them, who have perverted them for the structure of a system of fancy absolutely incomprehensible, and without any foundation in his genuine words. And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding, and restore to us the primitive and genuine doctrines (known by reason) of this the most venerated reformer of human errors.”*[\[10\]](#)

Revealed mysteries such as the Trinity are simply “*artificial scaffolding*” that must be “*done away with*” by the “*dawn of reason*” freed from both the speculative intellect and the “*atrocious attributes*” of faith. For Kant, and later for deists and epicureans such as Jefferson[\[11\]](#), normative judgments, such as the morals of Jesus, are derived by practical reason alone and thus have nothing to do with mysteries of revealed religion and therefore do not require faith. Moreover, because they lack a metaphysical foundation, practical moral judgments, made by men such as these, are *not* derived from universal norms rooted in human nature (as much as they might claim to be), nor are they derived, as stated, from the sacred precincts of the Christian faith. In short, the leading political “lights” of the 18th century had reverted to practical pagan Roman philosophy devoid of the Christian faith and shorn of its Athenian metaphysical moorings established by Aristotle. All that is left is practical thinking!

Shorn of these moorings, practical reason is divorced from faith and no longer synchronized with speculative reason; it is not rooted in anything deeper than *common sense*.

The Founding Fathers consumed bottles of ink writing about virtue and philosophy. Virtue however, is difficult to understand and even more difficult to acquire; in the last analysis, *the practical intellect is not adroit enough to withstand the concupiscence of the flesh*. Because it is rooted in nothing deeper than common sense, practical reason is easy to dissuade. Because it does not carry with it any eternal sanctions (no faith, no heaven, no hell) or universal metaphysical truths about human nature (and unchanging intellectual and moral virtues based on this knowledge), it is “free” to justify just about anything or any course of action, because just about anything can be made to sound reasonable (at least practically reasonable). Practical reason can be employed much like a psychological “defense mechanism”. In fact, psychoanalysts have a name for this defense conjured by the unconscious in cooperation with the practical intellect: “Rationalization”. Benjamin Franklin provides an illustrative example of rationalization at work in the practical intellect taken from his autobiography:

*“Hitherto I had stuck to my resolution of not eating animal food, and on this occasion I considered, with my master Tryon, the taking every fish as a kind of unprovoked murder, since none of them had or ever could do us any injury that might justify the slaughter. All this seemed very reasonable. But I had formerly been a great lover of fish, and when this (fish) came hot out of the frying-pan, it smelt admirably well. I balanced sometime between principle and inclination, till I recollected that, when the fish were opened, I saw smaller fish taken out of their stomachs. Then thought I, “If you eat one another, I don’t see why we mayn’t eat you.” So I dined upon cod very heartily,... so convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do”. [\[12\]](#)*

It seems that Ben Franklin had no qualms about violating a previously held principle as long as he could find a “reason”,

any suitable reason. This helps explain why Mr. Franklin understood “venery” to be a virtue when exercise with moderation[\[13\]](#) while metaphysicians like Aristotle thought it a vice, and Christian theologians and *common folk* think it a sin. Even the great Cicero, pagan philosopher of Rome, recognized this problem:

*“It is as much as I can do to endure, a philosopher speaking of the necessity of setting bounds to the desires (inordinate passions). Is it possible to set bounds to the desires? I say that they must be banished, eradicated by the roots. For what man is there in whom appetites dwell, who can deny that he may with propriety be called appetitive? If so, he will be avaricious, though to a limited extent; and an adulterer, but only in moderation; and he will be luxurious (wanton) in the same manner. Now what sort of a philosophy is that which does not bring with it the destruction of depravity, but is content with a moderate degree of vice?”*[\[14\]](#)

– So much for morality derived from practical reason.

Classical moral philosophy of men like Cicero and mystical spirituality articulated by the Masters of the Spiritual life, such as Saint John of the Cross, quite escape carnal minded men.

*“The necessity to pass through this dark night (the mortification of the appetites and denial of inordinate bodily pleasures) to attain divine union with God arises from the fact that all of a person’s attachments to creatures are pure darkness in God’s sight. Clothed in these affections, people are incapable of the enlightenment and dominating fullness of God’s pure and simple light; first they must reject them. There can be no concordance between light and darkness; as St. John (the evangelist) says: Tenebrae eam no comprehenderunt (The darkness could not receive the light) [Jn. 1:5].*[\[15\]](#)

From the 18th century forward, American political leaders infected with liberalism derived their moral judgments from practical reason by means of practical mental calculations severed from philosophical understanding of the human soul and further divorced from the Christian faith. They increasingly embraced the darkness of the New Order of the Ages, which they mistook for light and thought it their duty to pass it on to the rest of us. As long as the practical intellect can convince its owner that (1) his motives are derived from pure civic love of country and pursuit of science, that (2) his passions are under the control of (practical) reason, and (3) as long as he is able to avoid the *appearance* of any impropriety, then he can account himself virtuous without actually being virtuous as understood by authentic philosophers (not mere dilettantes) and Christian theologians.

*“A prince, therefore, need not necessarily have all the good qualities..., but he should certainly appear to have them.... He should know how to do evil, if that is necessary” (The Prince, Chapter 18).*

The growth of liberalism and its faulty understanding of the natural law and of human nature divorced from metaphysics and also from faith, was unwittingly facilitated by the Reformers who ridiculed philosophy while praising human liberty manifest in their false exaltation of “freedom” necessary to justify the *private interpretation* of scripture contrary to scripture itself. Both common sense and the scriptures reveal that neither they nor any of many arbitrary and widely varying claims to inspiration from the Holy Spirit are the bulwark of truth. Clearly the “freedom” to privately interpret scriptures cannot be the bulwark of truth, such so-called freedom has resulted in over 20,00 divergent and contentious sets all claiming to have the truth. Nor are the scriptures themselves the bulwark of truth. Rather, as the scriptures state, the “church” is the only legitimate interpreter of revelation and the “pillar and support of

truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The scriptures proscribe private interpretation, "No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). No scripture is of private interpretation because scripture is difficult to understand:

*"Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, also wrote to you, speaking of these things as he does in all his letters. In them there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures" (2 Peter 3: 15-16).*

Strangely, the Reformers reduced human thinking by divorcing it from (speculative) reason (philosophy) and then compounded the problem by elevating human liberty so high that they placed the understanding of sublime mysteries in untutored but "free" minds who subsequently came up with some pretty crazy things; in this they were acting in agreement with the principle of liberty advocated by the liberals; in this they unconsciously aided and abetted the growth of liberalism and the craze for unbridled freedom that they so ardently oppose.

Even Martin Luther had to acknowledge that liberty of interpretation when left in the hands of "every man" led to unforeseen difficulties, as when the peasants of Germany rose up against their overlords on the authority of their own private interpretation of scripture.

*"They cloak this terrible and horrible sin with the Gospel, call themselves 'Christian brethren', receive oaths and homage, and compel people to hold with them to these abominations. Thus they become the greatest of all blasphemers of God and slanderers of his holy Name, serving the devil, under the outward appearance of the Gospel, thus earning death in body and soul ten times over. I have never heard of a more hideous sin. See what a mighty prince the devil is, how he has the world in his hands and can throw*

*everything into confusion".* [\[16\]](#)

It is not difficult to understand the disdain in which the confused emotionally charged farmers and frontiersmen (the democratic minded "New Lights" awakened by first Protestant revival), or the cold sect of intellectuals and judgmental Puritans (the more stern and authoritarian minded "Old Lights",) were held by many of the founding fathers who prided themselves as "natural aristocrats" [\[17\]](#) on the sophistication of their philosophy, their intellectual attainment, genteel manners, calm comportment, their warm cordiality, broad toleration and acquired talent.

The final jolt to 18th century Christian morality (which was being sustained with difficulty by the Congregational Old and New Lights, on a diet of faith alone exacerbated by the flood ecclesial competition and associated contradictions let loose by the further multiplication and democratization of competing Protestant sects unschooled in philosophy and formed almost exclusively on private interpretations of scripture) came when America's Protestants ran into the American Philosophers, Deists, and Epicureans of the "Enlightenment" who being extremely sophisticated dilettantes deeply rooted in philosophy, disdainers of the faith, and experts in the craft, "took them for a philosophical ride" on the constitutional train to secularism in the name of "nature's God".

The Protestants were suffering from faulty and divisive private interpretation, excessive notions of liberty, and a disdain for all things Catholic and metaphysical. Like them, the leading lights among the secular leaders disdained metaphysics and the Catholic faith as well. But the leading political lights called themselves, "philosophers". Unfortunately, unlike the Catholic philosophers who had gone before them, these men, proceeded solely by means of practical reason cut off from spiritual understanding (either theological or metaphysical). Practical philosophy reached

such heights that it became the arrogant arbiter of political thinking and even of the Christian faith; thereby leading men such as Thomas Jefferson, who opposed the Christian faith, arrogantly conferred upon themselves the authority to interpret scripture, something they denied to Catholic priests and Protestant ministers whom they variously referred to as yahoos, and Antichrists” as we shall see in other Intelligence Reports.

*“Making good on a promise to a friend to summarize his views on Christianity, Thomas Jefferson set to work with scissors, snipping out every miracle and inconsistency he could find in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then, relying on a cut-and-paste technique, he reassembled the excerpts into what he believed was a more coherent narrative and pasted them onto blank paper – alongside translations in French, Greek and Latin”.*

Jefferson insisted that he knew the mind of Jesus better than any apostle, doctor, father, saint or clergyman. Not even Luther attempted anything as brazen. In Jefferson’s own words:

*“We must reduce our volume (of the bible) to the simple evangelists, select, even from them, the very words only of Jesus, paring off the amphibologisms into which they have been led, by forgetting often, or not understanding, what had fallen from him, by giving their own misconceptions as his dicta, and expressing unintelligibly for others what they had not understood themselves. There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.”*

So from the Jeffersonian perspective the apostles, the first pillars of the church, and the evangelists, who wrote the



gospels, were ignorant men whose additions to the bible are anything but inspired because, according to Jefferson, and men like him, the evangelist's scriptural writings are equivalent to a pile of "dung". Deists, like Jefferson, arrogantly claimed to have wisdom enough to know the true teachings of Jesus Christ (something they denied to the apostles and church fathers) based upon the use of practical reason, which they held to be superior to both Christian philosophy and theology, to speculative reason enlightened by, and working in unison with, supernatural faith.

They called themselves "philosophers" and "philosophes", and to be sure, there is such a thing as a "false philosophy" rooted in vain deceit "according to the tradition of men" and an antithetical "true philosophy" rooted in truth and "according to Christ":

*"Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).*

So, there is a *false philosophy* according to men and a *true philosophy* according to Christ. The Philosophes, materialists, Epicureans and Deists were all self-styled "philosophers", but what they taught by deceit according to human traditions, and elements of the world was not according to Christ. Because the native Christians were often frontiersman and yeoman farmers unschooled in Christian philosophy, they were not only ridiculed by the sophisticated whiged Philosophers, who enjoyed Roman toga parties in their classically designed estates situated along the shores of the Potomac, they were also deceived into accepting a secular government by educated men using such concepts as God and virtue as well as the name of Jesus in their writings. The Christian philosophy of such men as Saints Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, men who honored God and stood in awe of the Trinity and the ethereal mysteries

of the faith were ridiculed and disdained by their Protestant brothers, but, as time would tell, to the latter's chagrin.

In summary, the Classical and Catholic understanding of the human soul, of natural law, and of nature, in short of metaphysics, was diminished by the growth of liberalism, which was aided by the reduction of theology to private scripture studies and individual interpretations exacerbated by the rejection of classical philosophy, thereby leaving Protestant ministers unprepared for the philosophical onslaught of the anti-Christian philosophers who appeared in the garb of godly men, even of Christian men, but who were in actuality disdainers of Christianity. This first step was followed by a second, whereby the tenets of faith were reduced to practical reason followed by the secularizing of politics and the subsequent removal of religion from the public realm (not the realm of culture *per se*, but the public realm of government) by liberal political philosophers, many of whom soon took hold of the reins of government, a government which has subsequently done little to promote Christianity but much to inhibit it. These historical facts coupled with the universal mandate for public education under the auspices of the state, have, overtime, led to the secularization of American religion and the increased fusion of church and state. This is not the type of theocratic fusion envisioned by the Puritans, but a secular fusion giving rise to a "civic religion" that might be termed "Americanism" (also explored more deeply in other Intelligence Reports that follow).

*"The interesting fact historically is that these two anti-rationalist traditions-that of the liberal skeptic and the Protestant revelationist- should originally have come from two opposite views of man. The Protestant dependence upon revelation arose from a great pessimism about human nature. . . . The immediately apprehended values of the liberal originate in a great optimism. Yet . . . after all, is not the dominating tradition in North America a Protestantism*

*which has been transformed by pragmatic technology and liberal aspirations?*[\[18\]](#)

Due to this process of liberal transformation, the theological principle of charity, the fruit of faith, along with metaphysical knowledge of the soul, and the philosophical principle of justice (rooted in Christian faith and ontologically written into human nature) have been swallowed whole, undigested, and regurgitated as “philanthropy” and secular “do goodism”, as modern “liberalism” and “conservatism”, political programs articulated with religious fervor. Following the privatization of religion, the removal of philosophy from public education and the reduction of metaphysics to private Catholic colleges, subsequent moral and political decision making has been necessarily limited to the calculative work of the practical intellect divorced from both metaphysics and from faith, which have become private affairs. Faith was completely removed from public education and metaphysics was replaced by the uniquely Anglo-American liberal philosophy of utility and the misunderstood principles of natural law, liberty, self-interest and the pursuit of happiness. Given these historical verities, it is not surprising that both the right and left wings of both Protestant and Catholic churches in America have become increasingly supportive of various liberal American ideals morphing with them into a new civic or, what Abraham Lincoln referred to as, a new “political religion”, a religion replete with its own saints, altar and sacrifice:

*“Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six died to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor... Let reverence for the*

*laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;—let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars”.* [\[19\]](#)

To the extent that Catholics and their Protestant “brothers” in the faith, on both sides of the political spectrum, continue to believe that America, rather than (or more than) the Church is the “City set on a Hilltop” (and thus adopt secular American values such as feminism, same sex marriage, unregulated markets, contraception, and Neoconservative foreign policy), they can be counted as disciples of the new secular religion more than disciples of Jesus Christ.

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ENDNOTES:

[\[1\]](#) *ibid*

[\[2\]](#) Classical political philosophy is an exercise of the practical intellect, which is subsequent to and dependent upon metaphysics apprehended and understood by the speculative intellect; it is an integral approach to politics. Liberalism begins with the practical intellect, with man as he appears to be, and thus is a more limited approach.

[\[3\]](#) The secular philosophers of the modern world were craftily challenging them, but they did not have the gift of philosophy to sustain them in the match and religion was not allowed in the public arena where the debates were occurring.

[4] A period in the early 18th century typified by emotional release experienced in Protestant communities. The Great Awakening emphasized, *broader private interpretation* of scriptures by *members* of the congregation *vis a vis* top-down control that had been exercised by clerical elites. The Great Awakening might simply be referred to as the further *democratization* of the Protestant faith in America. An appeal to the masses to wake up and express their faith, an appeal to bring vivacity and spirit to the Gospels, to make them more alive and less intellectually cold. The Great Awakening thus occurred at an opportune time for the American Revolution, which was also an appeal to the masses for more democracy, an appeal to wake up against the elitism of English monarchs and aristocrats who were stifling the common spirit.

[5] That is, Kant not only dumped metaphysics (a feat easily accomplished because of what the Reformers had previously done to metaphysics), he went much further, and reduced faith a matter of practical reason. After removing speculative reason and the mysteries of the faith, all that was left was practical reason. Kant thus fused faith and reason until they were no longer distinct.

[6]

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/sep-tember/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060912\\_university-regensburg.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/sep-tember/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html)

“We certainly fall into error if we think reason can *know* a world beyond the senses. Indeed, Kant insists that such knowledge would corrupt practical reasoning, by imposing an external incentive for moral action—fear of eternal punishment and hope of heavenly reward, what he will later call “heteronomy.” Nonetheless, *human reason* still has an unavoidable interest in *belief* in God, immortality and freedom. Kant develops this claim more systematically in the second *Critique*” (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

[7] This was the state of morality when seized upon by the deists, epicureans, materialists, among America's founding elite who accepted the moral code implicit in Christianity because it was "reasonable" but rejected the central mysteries, such as the incarnation and resurrection, because, they insisted, they were not reasonable.

[8] Jefferson, upon retirement, made it his project to decide which parts of the bible were the true teachings of Jesus and which were added later by the "untutored apostles." He cut verse by verse from the Gospels using practical reason as his guide to abstract all the sacred mysteries that ran contrary to his practical reason (but not to metaphysics, which Jefferson lacked). As a result of this sacrilegious exercise Jefferson was able to distinguish "what is really his (Jesus') from the rubbish in which it is buried."

[9] Thomas Jefferson, letter to Rev. Jared Sparks, November 4, 1820.

[10] Thomas Jefferson letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823.

[11] In a letter to William Short (1819), Jefferson proclaimed his allegiance to the philosophy of Epicurus: "As you say of yourself, I too am an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us.

[12]

<http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/page18.htm>

[13]

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*Autobiography:*

<http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/page38.htm>

[14] Marcus Tullius Cicero: *Second Book "Of The Treatise On The Chief Good And Evil" (Treatise de Finibus).*

[15] Saint John of the Cross: Chapter Four, "*The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*".

[16] Against the Robbing and Murdering Herd of Peasants (May, 1525).

[17] According to Jefferson there was both a natural and a pseudo aristocracy: "There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents... There is also an artificial aristocracy founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society."

[18] George P. Grant, "Plato and Popper," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* (May 1954): 191-92.

[19] Abraham Lincoln, July 27, (1838) *The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions: Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois.*  
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>