

Future News

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GOD'S LAW IMMUTABLE

The lamblike horns and dragon voice of the symbol point to a striking contradiction between the professions and the practice of the nation thus represented. The 'speaking' of the nation is the action of its legislative and judicial authorities. By such action it will give the lie to those liberal and peaceful principles which it has put forth as the foundation of its policy. The prediction that it will speak 'as a dragon' and exercise 'all the power of the first beast' plainly foretells a development of the spirit of intolerance and persecution that was manifested by the nations represented by the dragon and the leopardlike beast. And the statement that the beast with two horns 'causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast' indicates that the authority of this nation is to be exercised in enforcing some observance which shall be an act of homage to the papacy.

"Such action would be directly contrary to the principles of this government, to the genius of its free institutions, to the direct and solemn avowals of the Declaration of Independence, and to the Constitution. The founders of the nation wisely sought to guard against the employment of secular power on the part of the church, with its inevitable result—intolerance and persecution. The Constitution provides that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' and that 'no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States.' Only in flagrant violation of these safeguards to the nation's liberty, can any religious observance be enforced by civil authority. But the inconsistency of such action is no greater than is represented in the symbol. It is the beast with lamblike horn—in profession pure, gentle, and harmless—that speaks as a dragon."

The Great Controversy, 443.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The ministry of *Future for America* is to proclaim the final warning message of Revelation 14 as identified within the prophecies of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The end-time fulfillment of Bible prophecy is no longer future—for it is taking place before our eyes. The historic, prophetic understanding of Seventh-day Adventism is now present truth. We are the final generation. Our emphasis on the prophetic word includes all the counsel of God's Word. To know what lies ahead is useless if we do not possess the experience to stand during these solemn times. Through obedience to God's law, and faith in the promises of God's Word, we are to receive that experience.

Coupled with the prophetic message, *Future for America* emphasizes all aspects of the medical missionary work. The "entering wedge"—medical missionary work—must be practiced by those who are to finish God's work in these final hours.

During this time period, country living becomes more essential with each passing moment. *Future for America* upholds and promotes this end-time truth. God's people must prepare for the coming storm, and that preparation includes the experience of learning how to survive in a simple fashion, away from the great centers of population.

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Ministry Update

The prophecy school at Pinecrest Camp in Ozone, Arkansas was a blessing for those who attended. Although the format was slightly different from previous schools, everything went smoothly. We recorded both English and Spanish prophetic materials and are currently waiting for their editing and production. In the next few weeks we will send you a DVD. This DVD will include a sample of the 2007 Prophecy School meetings. We hope in reviewing the material on this bonus DVD you will be refreshed as many were during this school. Along with the DVD we will include prices for the Prophecy School 2007 packages that will be available. A release date on the entire prophecy school is still in the near future, but we will keep you updated on when to expect it.

The speakers recorded were: Jeff Pippenger, Jamal Sankey, Russell Williams, Manjit Biant, Norberto Restrepo Jr., Pastor Norberto Restrepo, and various ministry updates. Translation was provided by Norberto Restrepo Jr. and David Restrepo. Each speaker spoke using his own material yet the prophecy came through to the listeners as a unified whole. The speakers, although they had not coordinated their messages in advance, shared truths that agreed and complimented each other perfectly while allowing for a variety of voices and presentation styles. In particular the early morning worship hour was a powerful manifestation of God's saving message for His end time people. Pastor Norberto Restrepo opened the word of God each morning with such eloquence and conviction that many lives were renewed in Christ and hearts were melted. In my opinion, this prophecy school is the best so far, due to unity of spirit and the messages brought from Colombia and Venezuela by the Restrepo family.

Although I cannot speak for the Spanish group, they shared the same speakers as the English group, with the addition of Dr. Nelsy Restrepo. Both groups joined together for meals, worship hour, a variety of meetings, and general fellowship. My impression is that everyone, regardless of language, received a blessing and awakened to the times we are living in. The Holy Spirit that worked during these few weeks while we prepared and then gathered together gave each of us a taste of what heaven will be like. Many of us seen a time in the near future when Spanish, German, English, and the many other languages will finally join together to proclaim, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Revelation 15:3

Jeff and Kathy Pippenger are currently in Germany doing a prophecy school. There were some last minute changes and instead of continuing for a second school in Germany they will be joining the brothers and sisters in London during the latter part of August for meetings. Jeff has a busy late summer and fall schedule with traveling in the US and abroad. We will post a travel schedule on our website in the near future. That brings me to our final bit of news.

The website has been seriously lacking in many areas since it's conception. It is not up to our standards and we're working hard to fix the problems. Our goal is to have the new site up and running by September 2007. The web address will be the same, future-news.org. Please be patient with us. More than anyone we would like to see Future for America better represented on the web so that we can share this final message. Thank you for the many suggestions and various tips. In the meantime, many have been blessed with Edgar Pulido's site, theseventhunders.com. It is an excellent representation of quality web development and an effective way to share prophecy. You will enjoy his site!

Until Next Time, Bronwyn

Current Events in Light of Prophecy

LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE THREATENED

“The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the papacy that existed in past ages exists today. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves. The papacy that Protestants are now so ready to honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up, at the peril of their lives, to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty and slew the saints of the Most High.

“The papacy is just what prophecy declared that she would be, the apostasy of the latter times. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish her purpose; but beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon she conceals the invariable venom of the serpent. ‘Faith ought not to be kept with heretics, nor persons suspected of heresy’ (Lenfant, volume 1, page 516), she declares. Shall this power, whose record for a thousand years is written in the blood of the saints, be now acknowledged as a part of the church of Christ?

“It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth in Protestant countries that Catholicism differs less widely from Protestantism than in former times. There has been a change; but the change is not in the papacy. Catholicism indeed resembles much of the Protestantism that now exists, because Protestantism has so greatly degenerated since the days of the Reformers.

“As the Protestants churches have been seeking the favor of the world, false charity has blinded their eyes. They do not see but that it is right to believe good of all evil, and as the inevitable result they will finally believe evil of all good. Instead of standing in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints, they are now, as it were, apologizing to Rome for their uncharitable opinion of her, begging pardon for their bigotry.

“A large class, even of those who look upon Romanism with no favor, apprehend little danger from her power and influence. Many urge that the intellectual and moral darkness prevailing during the Middle Ages favored the spread of her dogmas, superstitions, and oppression, and that the greater intelligence of modern times, the general diffusion of knowledge, and the increasing liberality in matters of religion forbid a revival of intolerance and tyranny. The very thought that such a state of things will exist in this enlightened age is ridiculed. It is true that great light, intellectual, moral, and religious, is shining upon this generation. In the open pages of God’s Holy Word, light from heaven has been shed upon the world. But it should be remembered that the greater the light bestowed, the greater the darkness of those who pervert and reject it.” *The Great Controversy*, 572.

CATHOLIC CHURCH’S SHIFT TOWARD TRADITION

The leader of 1.1 billion Catholics, Pope Benedict XVI, is completing a significant theological shift of the Roman Catholic church — a sweeping change that not only eclipses 40 years of a more moderate and collegial Catholicism, but seeks to reassert the spiritual supremacy of the Vatican and more openly proclaim the authority of the office of pope among all Christians.

Some two years after taking the reins, say Protestant and Catholic theologians and religious experts, the Bavarian-born pope is moving

swiftly to affirm orthodox doctrines and medieval church rituals that undermine the spirit of Vatican II, a period of modernization in which the church appeared to be rethinking its centuries-long insistence that it had exclusive claims to matters of grace, truth, salvation, and church structure in the Christian world.

Liberal Catholics go so far as to characterize Benedict as leading a counterreformation in the church, in which fervent backers of traditional Catholic identity and faith are favored, even at the expense of popularity. "While Vatican II said that the Holy Spirit was in operation among the people, now we are saying, no, the Holy Spirit is operating in the bishops. It is an enormous change," says Frank Flinn, author of the "Encyclopedia of Catholicism." The "impression [previous Pope] John Paul II gave was to emphasize teaching so that all may be one. But Benedict is turning around and saying to churches, 'you aren't all one.' It is destroying the ecumenical movement."

When the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became pope on April 8, 2005, many Catholics felt he might soften his reputation as a hard-line "enforcer of the faith." Yet his tenure has shown few signs of mellowing. In the space of three days this month, for example, he promoted the old Latin Mass, which contains references to the conversion of the Jews, then issued a blockbuster doctrinal clarification statement saying that Orthodox and Protestant churches were "lacking" and only authentic through their relationship with Rome. "Benedict has fought for the same thing for 30 years, and now he is putting it to work," says Frederic Lenoir, editor of *Le Monde's* religious supplement in Paris. "His main aim in being pope is to unify the true believer groups, and he will lose members or destroy religious dialogues, if that's what it takes."

Defenders say that only by a radical reassertion of traditional Catholicism can the church become the body able to bring clarity, order, and moral authority to a troubled world. The various attempts to adapt the church to modernity in the 1960s, they argue, have resulted only in muddled meanings and a lack of proper moral concepts. Beyond that, the opening of the church allowed Jewish, Protestant, atheist, and Islamic ideas to compete against what is seen as God's church, instituted by Christ and the apostle Peter.

Since Vatican II (1964-1969), the Roman Catholic Church in Europe has lost tens of millions of churchgoers at a time when Muslim populations are increasing in Europe. Benedict has stated his central mission is to restore the Catholic Church in Europe and to bridge the gap with Eastern Orthodox churches that more closely share a traditional Catholic suspicion of modernity, the Enlightenment, the Reformation, pluralism, and secularism. "We think this pope may be starting back on the proper pathway," says a friar at the St. Nicolas du Chardonnet church in Paris, a center of the ultra-traditional Lefebvrist Catholic sect. "We think he understands the real faith. What we object to is his visiting of the mosque in Turkey. He shouldn't have done that."

Last September, the pope stirred the Muslim world following an academic talk that made reference to Islamic teachings as inherently violent. It was the kind of religious assertion, described later by the Vatican as a "misunderstanding," that was rarely if ever heard under Pope John Paul II.

"The previous pope was friendly, down-to-earth, and a good pastor," says Daniele Garrone, a Rome-based theologian of the Waldensian church, a reformed faith. "But Benedict is emphasizing theological clarity, and I think he is painting himself into a corner. If you believe the church is the sole authority, and you teach this, you have to pay the consequences. Benedict takes it seriously, so I really feel he is suffering right now. He doesn't take this lightly, but feels it is his duty. I wouldn't want to be pope at this point."

Pope Benedict was a German academic and prolific theologian. In the early years of his career, he studied with Hans Kung, a highly influential liberal Catholic theologian whom Benedict would one day reprimand for questioning the concept of papal infallibility. Pope Benedict also contributed to Vatican II, a period when the church was engaging Martin Luther's concept of the "priesthood of all believers" and vesting more authority in and pastoral attention to ordinary churchgoers.

Yet during the German student riots of 1968, a chaotic time when many young Germans were demanding that their parents face up to the Nazi past, Ratzinger felt deeply

that the Vatican II project was coming unhinged. He became archbishop, then cardinal in 1977, and in 1981 was made prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith at the Vatican, a meteoric rise. Ratzinger began to pursue and censure liberal theologians favorable to Vatican II. He issued a paper, "Instruction Concerning Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" that started to quash liberation-theology movements, particularly in Latin America.

His tenure as prefect became synonymous with a host of conservative positions on abortion, homosexuality, and birth control, earning him the informal nickname of "the enforcer." In 2002, he was made dean of the College of Cardinals, the pope's right-hand man. In the first year, he issued "Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life" that requested bishops not to allow communion to politicians that did not uphold the church teachings on abortion.

Pope Benedict's press officer, Fr. Federico Lombardi, told the Monitor that the church is not changing its theological positions but is simply clarifying them and seeking to "end the confusion" inside Catholic seminaries about church beliefs. He felt the main difference is a stronger emphasis on "Catholic identity," however.

Mr. Garrone argues that the church must appear to have continuity and can't admit it is changing.

"Many nuns, priests, sisters, theologians, and Catholics felt that Vatican II was a new beginning in the history of the church. But by emphasizing 'continuity,' Benedict is saying the second Vatican council was not a new beginning."

The new papal favoring of Latin Mass is an example. Also known as the "Tridentine" Mass, it is performed by priests who turn their back to the congregation and speak in Latin. This Mass was largely abandoned after Vatican II, partly because it was incomprehensible to lay Catholics and because it contained negative references to Jews.

The Latin Mass has long been hated by Jews for its emphasis on the Jewish role in turning Jesus over to the Romans for crucifixion and for its call for Jews to come

into the church. Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, described the Latin Mass initiative as "a theological setback in the religious life of Catholics and a body blow to Catholic-Jewish relations."

While the Vatican is not forcing local Catholic churches to say the Latin Mass, it is encouraging local members who want it to lobby their parishes. Some priests argue that this may create further strains on their resources and possibly bring contention.

On July 10, the Vatican issued "Regarding Certain Aspects of Church Doctrine." It argued that churches emerging from the Reformation outside the direct authority of Rome "cannot be called 'churches' in the proper sense." Protestants, in particular, "suffer from defects," are properly called communities, not churches, and must one day recognize "the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him" — a major affirmation of papal authority. While Catholics may engage in ecumenical activities, they must do so through a stronger sense of Catholicism as the true church.

Not surprisingly, the July 10 statement brought a mixture of anger and irritation in other churches.

The Rev. David Phillips, an Anglican official, described it as "ludicrous" to "accept the idea that the pope is in some special way the successor of the Apostle Peter," and added: "We are grateful that the Vatican has once again been honest in declaring their view that the Church of England is not a proper church. We would wish to be equally open; unity will only be possible when the papacy renounces its errors and pretensions."

The Vatican said it was surprised Protestants would feel anger at being described as less than churches in hundreds of stories in English-language papers around the world and asked them not to "overreact."

"This isn't about Protestants, it is an internal theological document for purposes of clarity," Father Lombardi stated.

Some analysts say that, as with the September controversy over Islam, the Vatican sought to downplay the issue even as the hard-line message was amplified in the world media, putting Rome in the position of defining the issue.

"Benedict wants to say that Vatican II is not threatened, but the document on July 10 shows a very different reading," says Christian Mercier, religion editor of the Paris-based Catholic magazine, *La Vie*.

In the past year, the pope has visited the mosque in Turkey, met with Eastern Orthodox prelates, written to Catholics in China, visited Brazil, and authored a best-selling book about Jesus.

Many theologians say the shifts under Pope Benedict aren't simply a small matter of rules, rituals, clarifications, and a tidying up of doctrine. Perhaps one of the most significant, though little noticed, changes has to do with the changing concept of the meaning of the kingdom of heaven. The current pope has a different vision of time and eschatology. Under Vatican II, it was accepted that the coming of the kingdom is possible to experience on Earth and not simply in the afterlife. Vatican II stressed concepts like "becoming," "change," and "newness," and championed social justice and liberty as linked to ideas of grace.

Pope Benedict has begun to roll back such ideas, says Mr. Flinn, the Catholic theologian at Washington University in St. Louis, and his theology is "pessimistic, in the sense that heaven and Earth are separate concepts, and that Christ's kingdom can't be experienced here."

"It is the old vertical eschatology," Flinn says. "Liberal Catholics read the scriptures as saying the kingdom is already here, but not yet. The Vatican seems to be saying the kingdom is not yet, not yet, until the end of time, when Jesus returns. Meanwhile, the church is in charge, the pope is the vicar of Christ, and the church has the full truth." *www.cbsnews.com*, July 2007.

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue then will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader."

Samuel Adams

CLERICS DOWNPLAY PAPAL CONTROVERSY

Local Reaction to Church Statement

Every summer before popes go on vacation, they traditionally clear their desks of all pressing issues. Before Pope Benedict XVI left for three weeks in the Italian Alps, he dropped a bombshell of a document that has theologians, scholars, clerics, and laypersons wringing their hands and wrestling with his words.

All Christian traditions except Roman Catholicism have "defects," "wounds," or are not true churches, according to the controversial document from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that was personally approved by the Pope before its July 10 release.

Some Protestant clerics and Catholic theologians have described the statement as unnecessarily negative, but also one whose terminology has been widely misunderstood outside of academia.

"To understand Pope Benedict, you must remember that in his heart he is a German academic," said the Rev. Thomas Reese, a Jesuit priest at Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University in Washington. "Benedict is a very smart scholar, but he does not have a politically sensitive bone in his body."

Indeed, the Pontiff's lack of political savvy was apparent in September when he set off an international firestorm by quoting, during an academic lecture, a 14th century Byzantine emperor as saying that Islam was "spread by the sword." He later apologized, saying he was "deeply sorry" that Muslims were offended and the quote did not "in any way express my personal thought."

The Rev. Thomas Reese, left, says Benedict is no politician. Richard Gaillardetz says the Pope has done a poor job of summarizing 'a complex aspect of Catholic teaching.'

A complex subject

Richard Gaillardetz, professor of Catholic studies at the University of Toledo, called the latest Vatican document "unfortunate inasmuch as it tries to summarize a very complex aspect of Catholic teaching and does a poor job of it."

For example, he said, the use of the word "defect" in the Vatican document is a reference to "some objective aspects of the church that Catholics think are very important, things like Scripture, apostolic succession, the papacy, the seven sacraments, etc."

Although the Pope said other Christian traditions "suffer from defects" because they lack these objective elements, he acknowledged that "they still belong to the body of Christ and God is active within their communities," Mr. Gaillardetz noted.

Father Reese said in a newsletter that he thinks Pope Benedict felt it necessary to address these issues because he is concerned that Catholics "are beginning to think that all churches are the same."

Upholding Vatican II

The Vatican document, titled "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church," was written in the form of responses to five questions, starting with "Did the Second Vatican Council change the Catholic doctrine on the church?"

The answer given is that Vatican II "neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine, rather it developed, deepened, and more fully explained it."

"It is important to note that the recent document repeats and upholds what the Second Vatican Council taught theologically about the nature of the church," said Bishop Leonard Blair of the Toledo Catholic Diocese, which has 325,000 members in 19 counties.

"Far from undermining ecumenism, this theology continues to be the fruitful basis of ecumenical dialogue."

Mr. Gaillardetz said the Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962 to 1965, "tried to focus on the positive, stressing the beliefs and practices that Catholics shared with other Christians."

The latest document does not change Vatican II's assertion that "non-Catholic Christians can experience God's saving action through the faithful practice of their own Christian faith," Mr. Gaillardetz said by e-mail from St. Louis, where he is teaching this summer.

"Indeed, Vatican II also taught that non-Christians, whether they belong to some other great religious tradition, e.g. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, or whether they simply be men and women of good will, may also be saved 'in ways made known only to God.'"

'A distraction'

Bishop Bruce Ough of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church called it "unfortunate" that information intended for Catholic audiences has made headlines in the mainstream media.

"It has been a distraction," Bishop Ough said. "It was a technical statement made in part to try to correct some misunderstandings within the Roman Catholic faith about their understanding of the church."

He and others pointed out that the document restated long-held Catholic doctrine and contained nothing new.

"Pope Benedict has said nothing that has not been said before. These are all well-established viewpoints of the Roman Catholic Church for centuries," Bishop Ough said.

Feeling slighted

Some Protestant leaders, however, expressed disappointment that the Pope chose to issue such a harsh statement, saying they feel slighted that the leader of the world's 1.1 billion Catholics believes their tradition does not qualify to be a church, regardless of the statement's academic nature.

"I think it's unhelpful and tragic in terms of how Jesus looks at his people," said the Rev. Adam Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor from Kansas City, Mo., and author of *Confronting the Controversies: Biblical Perspectives on Tough Issues*.

"I think the statement does reflect a bit of a step backward from Vatican II and a more conservative approach to the Roman Catholic Church's relationship with other churches. But my hope is that the flap will blow over fairly quickly. I think there are a large number of Catholics who feel differently than the Pope does on this issue."

'Not just semantics'

The Rev. Marc Miller, assistant to Bishop Marcus Lohrmann of the Northwest Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said, "In reading the document, the first thing that strikes me is the word 'defective.' The truth is, every church is defective. Where there's sin, there's defect."

Although the terminology is technical and academic, Mr. Miller said the Pope's statements highlight "substantive disagreements. It's not just semantics."

He said, however, that he does not think the document will hurt ecumenical relationships among Catholics and Protestants.

Mr. Miller pointed out that Bishop Lohrmann and Bishop Blair are joining together to lead a 10-day public tour of religious sites in Europe in October.

"That whole trip, I think, is going to do wonders in terms of developing the relationship between the churches even further," Mr. Miller said.

He also pointed out the 1999 "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" between the Catholic and Lutheran churches "that resolved a bitter 500-year dispute."

Bishop Blair said while "mutual respect and understanding are essential first steps" toward unity among all Christians, "we are also obliged to dialogue about divisive theological issues in a common search for the truth as to what Christ willed for his church."

Different interpretations

Although the Vatican said Protestant denominations "cannot be called 'churches' in the proper sense," it recognized the Orthodox communities as true churches because they have apostolic succession and "many elements of sanctification and of truth."

But it also said the Orthodox Church is harmed by the "defect" or "wound" of not recognizing the primacy of the Pope. The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches separated nearly 1,000 years ago in the Great Schism of 1054.

The Rev. Paul Albert, pastor of St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church in Sylvania, said that from the Orthodox perspective, "We are a councilor body and no one patriarch speaks with infallibility. The authority is Christ, and he is in the midst of his church."

He said the Orthodox Church has a different interpretation than do Catholics of Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:18, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

"Peter was not in any way above the other apostles and that misinterpretation by Rome has been the source of a lot of problems," Father Paul said.

Some church leaders see the latest controversy as a chance to promote their own beliefs.

Just as Catholics don't consider the Southern Baptist Convention to be a church, "evangelicals should be equally candid in asserting that any church defined by the claims of the papacy is no true church," said the Rev. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., in an online blog. He is president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

'Bearing the wounds'

At least one Protestant leader said the Pope's choice of words was commendable.

Bishop Mark Hollingsworth of the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio said it is "encouraging" to hear Protestantism described as having a "wound."

"It was by his wound that the risen Jesus was identified by his disciples in the upper room and later, again, by Thomas," Bishop Hollingsworth said. "Indeed it is in bearing the wounds of the suffering world that we are all identified as the body of Christ." *www.toledoblade.com, July 2007.*

BENEDICT THE BRANDER MUSCLES HIS MESSAGE

Call him the Bill Gates of the Catholic Church.

Pope Benedict XVI, leader of more than 1 billion Roman Catholics worldwide, is no stranger to controversy. Last Tuesday, he reasserted the primacy of the Catholic Church, stating it is the one true church. This following his approval of the broader use of the Latin Mass, has set critics' tongues wagging and refocused attention on church politics and practice

Benedict's edicts, issued just before his summer vacation, have naysayer's expressing concerns about everything from the political correctness of claiming church supremacy to fears it will soon become impossible to attend mass in the vernacular.

But numbers tell a different tale regarding his appeal to a core population of Catholics. The Vatican's financial statements for 2006, Benedict's first full year as pope, show a huge leap in donations to the papal charity known as Peter's Pence, (\$101 million U.S. in 2006 versus \$64.4 million the year before) in 2006, and the numbers of faithful flocking to St. Peter's Square in Rome are soaring. While

marketing is likely the last thing on the Pope's mind, experts in that worldly field say Benedict's actions serve very powerfully to brand the Catholic Church in the eyes of the world, bringing a muscular "take-it-or-leave-it" approach to church positioning.

"Benedict is very progressive about his brand," says Patrick McGovern, vice-president of Blade Creative Branding, a Toronto-based marketing agency, who gives the Pope credit for clearly expressing the values a core constituency holds dear. "If everybody is wishy-washy, (the institution) will wash away."

For many people, belonging to a church with a unique chain of command leading up to the papacy has great appeal and reassurance, McGovern argues. Windows has Bill Gates. The Catholic Church has Benedict."

The Pope's forceful personality cannot be neglected in a discussion about how the church is perceived, says Clive Veroni, president of Leap Consulting of Toronto. "A few brands are linked to a person. Virgin is not a brand without Richard Branson."

But more powerful than the person are brand values, Veroni states, noting a growing trend in marketing to attract customers by appealing to shared values, such as the environment.

"You will hear, 'Choose our brand not because of how our coffee tastes but because we share values with you about how the people picking the coffee are treated.'"

Nothing speaks more strongly of values than religion, he adds, because "religion is all about values."

The road ahead for Pope Benedict is difficult because of concerns the church has lost focus, Veroni argues, and success means clearly defining and communicating institutional values and beliefs.

"The church must be clear about its own identity," he says.

But ensuring that message is expressed properly and interpreted correctly is critical, Veroni stresses, adding Benedict's reputation as an intellectual works against him. While his predecessor, John Paul II, was a populist who came across as a warm grandfather, Benedict remains burdened with the image of a stern teacher.

Even before his election as pope, in 2005, then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's very name sent a chill through the left wing of the church. As a Vatican theologian, he was known for hard-line stands on a number of hot-button issues, ranging from homosexuality through to the ordination of women.

"Trying to create a sense of community can be a problem if you define yourself by criticizing others," Veroni says.

"Consumers don't like it and long-term loyalty must be created in other ways," he says in reference to Benedict's statement on the primacy of the Catholic Church.

But Benedict might be taking a little too much heat on how this viewpoint has been received, argue theologians, who say the Pope's most recent statements are not new and not designed to drag the church back to the Dark Ages.

"This is not a moment of discontinuity but of continuity for the church," says Fr. Thomas Rosica, CEO of Salt and Light Media Foundation and Television Network. While popular perception may be that the Pope is taking the church in a retrograde direction, his statements are in keeping with the spirit and the directives of the Second Vatican Council, which saw the introduction of the mass in local languages in addition to the traditional Latin Mass, Rosica explains.

Benedict is concerned with the unity of the church and divisions within it, he adds, noting that renewed emphasis on the choice of a Latin mass means appeasing those who miss what they saw as a beautiful tradition, as long as the desire for Latin is for the language alone and not for any political, divisive reasons, he adds.

"This is nothing new," agrees Gord Heath, assistant professor of church history at McMaster University's divinity school in Hamilton. "It's Vatican II all over again, and the discussion of church primacy has been an issue for more than a thousand years."

If there's a problem in perception, Heath argues, it's one of timing. Asserting the Catholic Church as the heart of Christianity while at the same time talking of the Latin mass, a symbol for some Catholics of the bad old days, has caused undue concern about a dramatic shift in church thinking.

"This is not a radical departure, not the end of ecumenism, and not the sky falling," he says.

What may upset people most is the assuredness with which the Pope speaks, he adds.

"We don't like claims of absolute truth in postmodern Western society because we become immediately suspicious," Heath says. "This is Benedict saying `This is who we are.'" *www.thestar.com*, July 2007.

"Defenders say that only by a radical reassertion of traditional Catholicism can the church become the body able to bring clarity, order, and moral authority to a troubled world."

-Statement found on *cbsnews.com* asking readers, "What do you think?".-

CHARACTER AND AIMS OF THE PAPACY

"Marvelous in her shrewdness and cunning is the Romish Church. She can read what is to be. She bides her time, seeing that the Protestant churches are paying her homage in their acceptance of the false Sabbath, and that they are preparing to enforce it by the very means which she herself employed in by-gone days. Those who reject the light of truth will yet seek the aid of this self-styled infallible power to exalt an institution that originated with her. How readily she will come to the help of Protestants in this work, it is not difficult to conjecture. Who understands better than the papal leaders how to deal with those who are disobedient to the church?

"The Roman Church, with all its ramifications throughout the world, forms one vast organization, under the control, and designed to serve the interests, of the papal see. Its millions of communicants, in every country on the globe, are instructed to hold themselves as bound in allegiance to the pope. Whatever their nationality or their government, they are to regard the authority of the church as above all other. Though they may take the oath pledging their loyalty to the State, yet back of this lies the vow of obedience to Rome, absolving them from every pledge inimical to her interests.

"Protestants little know what they are doing when they propose to accept the aid of Rome in the work of Sunday exaltation. While they are bent upon the accomplishment of their purpose, Rome is aiming to re-establish her power, to recover her lost supremacy. Let history testify of her artful and persistent efforts to insinuate herself into the affairs of nations; and having gained a foothold, to further her own aims, even at the ruin of princes and people. Romanism openly puts forth the claim that the pope 'can pronounce sentences and judgments in contradiction to the right of nations, to the law of God and man.'

"And let it be remembered, it is the boast of Rome that she never changes. The principles of Gregory VII. and Innocent III. are still the principles of the Romish Church. And had she but the power, she would put them in practice with as much vigor now as in past centuries. Let the principle once be established in the United States, that the church may employ or control the power of the State; that religious observances may be enforced by secular laws; in short, that the authority of church and State is to dominate the conscience, and the triumph of Rome in this country is assured." *The Great Controversy*, 581.

AMERICA - 10 EASY STEPS TO DESTROY CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOMS. AND GEORGE BUSH AND HIS ADMINISTRATION SEEM TO BE TAKING THEM ALL

From Hitler to Pinochet and Beyond, History Shows There Are certain Steps That Any Would-Be Dictator Must Take To Destroy Constitutional Freedoms. And George Bush and His Administration Seem To Be Taking Them All

Last autumn, there was a military coup in Thailand. The leaders of the coup took a number of steps, rather systematically, as if they had a shopping list. In a sense, they did. Within a matter of days, democracy had been closed down: the coup leaders declared martial law, sent armed soldiers into residential areas, took over radio and TV stations, issued restrictions on the press, tightened some limits on travel, and took certain activists into custody.

They were not figuring these things out as they went along. If you look at history, you can see that there is essentially a blueprint for turning an open society into a dictatorship. That blueprint has been used again and again in more and less bloody, more and less terrifying ways. But it is always effective. It is very difficult and arduous to create and sustain a democracy - but history shows that closing one down is much simpler. You simply have to be willing to take the 10 steps.

As difficult as this is to contemplate, it is clear, if you are willing to look, that each of these 10 steps has already been initiated today in the United States by the Bush administration.

Because Americans like me were born in freedom, we have a hard time even considering that it is possible for us to become as unfree - domestically - as many other nations. Because we no longer learn much about our rights or our system of government - the task of being aware of the constitution has been outsourced from citizens' ownership to being the domain of professionals such as lawyers and professors - we scarcely recognize the checks and balances that the founders put in place, even as they are being systematically dismantled. Because we don't learn much about European history, the setting up of a department of "homeland" security - remember who else was keen on the word "homeland" - didn't raise the alarm bells it might have.

It is my argument that, beneath our very noses, George Bush and his administration are using time-tested tactics to close down an open society. It is time for us to be willing to think the unthinkable - as the author and political journalist Joe Conason, has put it, that it can happen here. And that we are further along than we realize.

Conason eloquently warned of the danger of American authoritarianism. I am arguing that we need also to look at the lessons of European and other kinds of fascism to understand the potential seriousness of the events we see unfolding in the US.

1. Invoke a terrifying internal and external enemy

After we were hit on September 11 2001, we were in a state of national shock. Less than six weeks later, on October 26 2001, the USA Patriot Act was passed by a Congress that had little chance to debate it; many said that they scarcely had time to read it. We were told we were now on a "war footing"; we were in a "global war" against a "global caliphate" intending to "wipe out civilization". There have been other times of crisis in which the US accepted limits on civil liberties, such as during the civil war, when Lincoln declared martial law, and the second world war, when thousands of Japanese-American citizens were interned. But this situation, as Bruce Fein of the American Freedom Agenda notes, is unprecedented: all our other wars had an endpoint, so the pendulum was able to swing back toward freedom; this war is defined as open-ended in time and without national boundaries in space - the globe itself is the battlefield. "This time," Fein says, "there will be no defined end."

Creating a terrifying threat - hydra-like, secretive, evil - is an old trick. It can, like Hitler's invocation of a communist threat to the nation's security, be based on actual events (one Wisconsin academic has faced calls for his dismissal because he noted, among other things, that the alleged communist arson, the Reichstag fire of February 1933, was swiftly followed in Nazi Germany by passage of the Enabling Act, which replaced constitutional law with an open-ended state of emergency). Or the terrifying threat can be based, like the National Socialist evocation of the "global conspiracy of world Jewry", on myth.

It is not that global Islamist terrorism is not a severe danger; of course it is. I am arguing rather that the language used to convey the nature of the threat is different in a country such as Spain - which has also suffered violent terrorist attacks - than it is in America. Spanish citizens know that they face a grave security threat; what we as American citizens believe is that we are potentially threatened with the end of civilization as we know it. Of course, this makes us more willing to accept restrictions on our freedoms.

2. Create a gulag

Once you have got everyone scared, the next step is to create a prison system outside the rule of law (as Bush put it, he wanted the American detention center at Guantánamo Bay to be situated in legal "outer space") - where torture takes place.

At first, the people who are sent there are seen by citizens as outsiders: troublemakers, spies, "enemies of the people" or "criminals". Initially, citizens tend to support the secret prison system; it makes them feel safer and they do not identify with the prisoners. But soon enough, civil society leaders - opposition members, labor activists, clergy and journalists - are arrested and sent there as well.

This process took place in fascist shifts or anti-democracy crackdowns ranging from Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s to the Latin American coups of the 1970s and beyond. It is standard practice for closing down an open society or crushing a pro-democracy uprising.

With its jails in Iraq and Afghanistan, and, of course, Guantánamo in Cuba, where detainees are abused, and kept indefinitely without trial and without access to the due process of the law, America certainly has its gulag now. Bush and his allies in Congress recently announced they would issue no information about the secret CIA "black site" prisons throughout the world, which are used to incarcerate people who have been seized off the street.

Gulags in history tend to metastasize, becoming ever larger and more secretive, ever more deadly and formalized. We know from first-hand accounts, photographs, videos and government documents that people, innocent and guilty, have been tortured in the US-run prisons we are aware of and those we can't investigate adequately.

But Americans still assume this system and detainee abuses involve only scary brown people with whom they don't generally identify. It was brave of the conservative pundit William Safire to quote the anti-Nazi pastor Martin Niemöller, who had been seized as a political prisoner: "First they came for the Jews." Most Americans don't understand yet that the destruction of the rule of law at Guantánamo set a dangerous precedent for them, too.

By the way, the establishment of military tribunals that deny prisoners due process tends to come early on in a fascist shift. Mussolini and Stalin set up such tribunals. On April 24 1934, the Nazis, too, set up the People's Court, which also bypassed the judicial system: prisoners were held indefinitely, often in isolation, and tortured, without being charged with offenses, and were subjected to show trials. Eventually, the Special Courts became a parallel system that put pressure on the regular courts to abandon the rule of law in favor of Nazi ideology when making decisions.

3. Develop a thug caste

When leaders who seek what I call a "fascist shift" want to close down an open society, they send paramilitary groups of scary young men out to terrorize citizens. The Blackshirts roamed the Italian countryside beating up communists; the Brownshirts staged violent rallies throughout Germany. This paramilitary force is especially important in a democracy: you need citizens to fear thug violence and so you need thugs who are free from prosecution.

The years following 9/11 have proved a bonanza for America's security contractors, with the Bush administration outsourcing areas of work that traditionally fell to the US military. In the process, contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars have been issued for security work by mercenaries at home and abroad. In Iraq, some of these contract operatives have been accused of involvement in torturing prisoners, harassing journalists and firing on Iraqi civilians. Under Order 17, issued to regulate contractors in Iraq by the one-time US administrator in Baghdad, Paul Bremer, these contractors are immune from prosecution.

Yes, but that is in Iraq, you could argue; however, after Hurricane Katrina, the Department of Homeland Security hired and deployed hundreds of armed private security guards in New Orleans. The investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill interviewed one unnamed guard who reported having fired on unarmed civilians in the city. It was a natural disaster that underlay that episode - but the administration's endless war on terror means ongoing scope for what are in effect privately contracted armies to take on crisis and emergency management at home in US cities.

Thugs in America? Groups of angry young Republican men, dressed in identical shirts and trousers, menaced poll workers counting the votes in Florida in 2000. If you are reading history, you can imagine that there can be a need for "public order" on the next election day. Say there are protests, or a threat, on the day of an election; history would not rule out the presence of a private security firm at a polling station "to restore public order".

4. Set up an internal surveillance system

In Mussolini's Italy, in Nazi Germany, in communist East Germany, in communist China - in every closed society - secret police spy on ordinary people and encourage neighbors to spy on neighbors. The Stasi needed to keep only a minority of East Germans under surveillance to convince a majority that they themselves were being watched.

In 2005 and 2006, when James Risen and Eric Lichtblau wrote in the New York Times about a secret state program to wiretap citizens' phones, read their emails and follow international financial transactions, it became clear to ordinary Americans that they, too, could be under state scrutiny.

In closed societies, this surveillance is cast as being about "national security"; the true function is to keep citizens docile and inhibit their activism and dissent.

5. Harass citizens' groups

The fifth thing you do is related to step four - you infiltrate and harass citizens' groups. It can be trivial: a church in Pasadena, whose minister preached that Jesus was in favor of peace, found itself being investigated by the Internal Revenue Service, while churches that got Republicans out to vote, which is equally illegal under US tax law, have been left alone.

Other harassment is more serious: the American Civil Liberties Union reports that thousands of ordinary American anti-war, environmental and other groups have been infiltrated by agents: a secret Pentagon database includes more than four dozen peaceful anti-war meetings, rallies or marches by American citizens in its category of 1,500 "suspicious incidents". The equally secret Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA) agency of the Department of Defense has been gathering information about domestic organizations engaged in peaceful political activities: CIFA is supposed to track "potential terrorist threats" as it watches ordinary US citizen activists. A little-noticed new law has redefined activism such as animal rights protests as "terrorism". So the definition of "terrorist" slowly expands to include the opposition.

6. Engage in arbitrary detention and release

This scares people. It is a kind of cat-and-mouse game. Nicholas D Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, the investigative reporters who wrote *China Wakes: the Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power*, describe pro-democracy activists in China, such as Wei Jingsheng, being arrested and released many times. In a closing or closed society there is a "list" of dissidents and opposition leaders: you are targeted in this way once you are on the list, and it is hard to get off the list.

In 2004, America's Transportation Security Administration confirmed that it had a list of passengers who were targeted for security searches or worse if they tried to fly. People who have found themselves on the list? Two middle-aged women peace activists in San Francisco; liberal Senator Edward Kennedy; a member of Venezuela's government - after Venezuela's president had criticized Bush; and thousands of ordinary US citizens.

Professor Walter F Murphy is emeritus of Princeton University; he is one of the foremost constitutional scholars in the nation and author of the classic *Constitutional Democracy*. Murphy is also a decorated former marine, and he is not even especially politically liberal. But on March 1 this year, he was denied a boarding pass at Newark, "because I was on the Terrorist Watch list".

"Have you been in any peace marches? We ban a lot of people from flying because of that," asked the airline employee.

"I explained," said Murphy, "that I had not so marched but had, in September 2006, given a lecture at Princeton, televised and put on the web, highly critical of George Bush for his many violations of the constitution."

"That'll do it," the man said.

Anti-war marcher? Potential terrorist. Support the constitution? Potential terrorist. History shows that the categories of "enemy of the people" tend to expand ever deeper into civil life.

James Yee, a US citizen, was the Muslim chaplain at Guantánamo who was accused of mishandling classified documents. He was harassed by the US military before the charges against him were dropped. Yee has been detained and released several times. He is still of interest.

Brandon Mayfield, a US citizen and lawyer in Oregon, was mistakenly identified as a possible terrorist. His house was secretly broken into and his computer seized. Though he is innocent of the accusation against him, he is still on the list.

It is a standard practice of fascist societies that once you are on the list, you can't get off.

7. Target key individuals

Threaten civil servants, artists and academics with job loss if they don't toe the line. Mussolini went after the rectors of state universities who did not conform to the fascist line; so did Joseph Goebbels, who purged academics who were not pro-Nazi; so did Chile's Augusto Pinochet; so does the Chinese communist Politburo in punishing pro-democracy students and professors.

Academe is a tinderbox of activism, so those seeking a fascist shift punish academics and students with professional loss if they do not "coordinate", in Goebbels' term, ideologically. Since civil servants are the sector of society most vulnerable to being fired by a given regime, they are also a group that fascists typically "coordinate" early on: the Reich Law for the Re-establishment of a Professional Civil Service was passed on April 7 1933.

Bush supporters in state legislatures in several states put pressure on regents at state universities to penalize or fire academics who have been critical of the administration. As for civil servants, the Bush administration has derailed the career of one military lawyer who spoke up for fair trials for detainees, while an administration official publicly intimidated the law firms that represent detainees pro bono by threatening to call for their major corporate clients to boycott them.

Elsewhere, a CIA contract worker who said in a closed blog that "waterboarding is torture" was stripped of the security clearance she needed in order to do her job.

Most recently, the administration purged eight US attorneys for what looks like insufficient political loyalty. When Goebbels purged the civil service in April 1933, attorneys were "coordinated" too, a step that eased the way of the increasingly brutal laws to follow.

8. Control the press

Italy in the 1920s, Germany in the 30s, East Germany in the 50s, Czechoslovakia in the 60s, the Latin American dictatorships in the 70s, China in the 80s and 90s - all dictatorships and would-be dictators target newspapers and journalists. They threaten and harass them in more open societies that they are seeking to close, and they arrest them and worse in societies that have been closed already.

The Committee to Protect Journalists says arrests of US journalists are at an all-time high: Josh Wolf (no relation), a blogger in San Francisco, has been put in jail for a year for refusing to turn over video of an anti-war demonstration; Homeland Security brought a criminal complaint against reporter Greg Palast, claiming he threatened "critical infrastructure" when he and a TV producer were filming victims of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana. Palast had written a bestseller critical of the Bush administration.

Other reporters and writers have been punished in other ways. Joseph C Wilson accused Bush, in a New York Times op-ed, of leading the country to war on the basis of a false charge that Saddam Hussein had acquired yellowcake uranium in Niger. His wife, Valerie Plame, was outed as a CIA spy - a form of retaliation that ended her career.

Prosecution and job loss are nothing, though, compared with how the US is treating journalists seeking to cover the conflict in Iraq in an unbiased way. The Committee to Protect Journalists has documented multiple accounts of the US military in Iraq firing upon or threatening to fire upon unembedded (meaning independent) reporters and camera operators from organizations ranging from al-Jazeera to the BBC. While westerners may question the accounts by al-Jazeera, they should pay attention to the accounts of reporters such as the BBC's Kate Adie. In some cases reporters have been wounded or killed, including ITN's Terry Lloyd in 2003. Both CBS and the Associated Press in Iraq had staff members seized by the US military and taken to violent prisons; the news organizations were unable to see the evidence against their staffers.

Over time in closing societies, real news is supplanted by fake news and false documents. Pinochet showed Chilean citizens falsified documents to back up his claim that terrorists had been about to attack the nation. The yellowcake charge, too, was based on forged papers.

You won't have a shutdown of news in modern America - it is not possible. But you can have, as Frank Rich and Sidney Blumenthal have pointed out, a steady stream of lies polluting the news well. What you already have is a White House directing a stream of false information that is so relentless that it is increasingly hard to sort out truth from untruth. In a fascist system, it's not the lies that count but the muddying. When citizens can't tell real news from fake, they give up their demands for accountability bit by bit.

9. Dissent equals treason

Cast dissent as "treason" and criticism as "espionage". Every closing society does this, just as it elaborates laws that increasingly criminalize certain kinds of speech and expand the definition of "spy" and "traitor". When Bill Keller, the publisher of the New York Times, ran the Lichtblau/Risen stories, Bush called the Times' leaking of classified information "disgraceful", while Republicans in Congress called for Keller to be charged with treason, and rightwing commentators and news outlets kept up the "treason" drumbeat. Some

commentators, as Conason noted, reminded readers smugly that one penalty for violating the Espionage Act is execution.

Conason is right to note how serious a threat that attack represented. It is also important to recall that the 1938 Moscow show trial accused the editor of Izvestia, Nikolai Bukharin, of treason; Bukharin was, in fact, executed. And it is important to remind Americans that when the 1917 Espionage Act was last widely invoked, during the infamous 1919 Palmer Raids, leftist activists were arrested without warrants in sweeping roundups, kept in jail for up to five months, and "beaten, starved, suffocated, tortured and threatened with death", according to the historian Myra MacPherson. After that, dissent was muted in America for a decade.

In Stalin's Soviet Union, dissidents were "enemies of the people". National Socialists called those who supported Weimar democracy "November traitors".

And here is where the circle closes: most Americans do not realize that since September of last year - when Congress wrongly, foolishly, passed the Military Commissions Act of 2006 - the president has the power to call any US citizen an "enemy combatant". He has the power to define what "enemy combatant" means. The president can also delegate to anyone he chooses in the executive branch the right to define "enemy combatant" any way he or she wants and then seize Americans accordingly.

Even if you or I are American citizens, even if we turn out to be completely innocent of what he has accused us of doing, he has the power to have us seized as we are changing planes at Newark tomorrow, or have us taken with a knock on the door; ship you or me to a navy brig; and keep you or me in isolation, possibly for months, while awaiting trial. (Prolonged isolation, as psychiatrists know, triggers psychosis in otherwise mentally healthy prisoners. That is why Stalin's gulag had an isolation cell, like Guantánamo's, in every satellite prison. Camp 6, the newest, most brutal facility at Guantánamo, is all isolation cells.)

We US citizens will get a trial eventually - for now. But legal rights activists at the Center

for Constitutional Rights say that the Bush administration is trying increasingly aggressively to find ways to get around giving even US citizens fair trials. "Enemy combatant" is a status offense - it is not even something you have to have done. "We have absolutely moved over into a preventive detention model - you look like you could do something bad, you might do something bad, so we're going to hold you," says a spokeswoman of the CCR.

Most Americans surely do not get this yet. No wonder: it is hard to believe, even though it is true. In every closing society, at a certain point there are some high-profile arrests - usually of opposition leaders, clergy and journalists. Then everything goes quiet. After those arrests, there are still newspapers, courts, TV and radio, and the facades of a civil society. There just isn't real dissent. There just isn't freedom. If you look at history, just before those arrests is where we are now.

10. Suspend the rule of law

The John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007 gave the president new powers over the national guard. This means that in a national emergency - which the president now has enhanced powers to declare - he can send Michigan's militia to enforce a state of emergency that he has declared in Oregon, over the objections of the state's governor and its citizens.

Even as Americans were focused on Britney Spears's meltdown and the question of who fathered Anna Nicole's baby, the New York Times editorialized about this shift: "A disturbing recent phenomenon in Washington is that laws that strike to the heart of American democracy have been passed in the dead of night ... Beyond actual insurrection, the president may now use military troops as a domestic police force in response to a natural disaster, a disease outbreak, terrorist attack or any 'other condition'."

Critics see this as a clear violation of the Posse Comitatus Act - which was meant to restrain the federal government from using the military for domestic law enforcement. The Democratic senator Patrick Leahy says the bill encourages a president to declare federal martial law. It also violates the very reason the founders set up our system of government

as they did: having seen citizens bullied by a monarch's soldiers, the founders were terrified of exactly this kind of concentration of militias' power over American people in the hands of an oppressive executive or faction.

Of course, the United States is not vulnerable to the violent, total closing-down of the system that followed Mussolini's march on Rome or Hitler's roundup of political prisoners. Our democratic habits are too resilient, and our military and judiciary too independent, for any kind of scenario like that.

Rather, as other critics are noting, our experiment in democracy could be closed down by a process of erosion.

It is a mistake to think that early in a fascist shift you see the profile of barbed wire against the sky. In the early days, things look normal on the surface; peasants were celebrating harvest festivals in Calabria in 1922; people were shopping and going to the movies in Berlin in 1931. Early on, as WH Auden put it, the horror is always elsewhere - while someone is being tortured, children are skating, ships are sailing: "dogs go on with their doggy life ... How everything turns away/ Quite leisurely from the disaster."

As Americans turn away quite leisurely, keeping tuned to internet shopping and American Idol, the foundations of democracy are being fatally corroded. Something has changed profoundly that weakens us unprecedentedly: our democratic traditions, independent judiciary and free press do their work today in a context in which we are "at war" in a "long war" - a war without end, on a battlefield described as the globe, in a context that gives the president - without US citizens realizing it yet - the power over US citizens of freedom or long solitary incarceration, on his say-so alone.

That means a hollowness has been expanding under the foundation of all these still-free-looking institutions - and this foundation can give way under certain kinds of pressure. To prevent such an outcome, we have to think about the "what ifs".

What if, in a year and a half, there is another attack - say, God forbid, a dirty bomb? The executive can declare a state of emergency. History shows that any leader, of any party,

will be tempted to maintain emergency powers after the crisis has passed. With the gutting of traditional checks and balances, we are no less endangered by a President Hillary than by a President Giuliani - because any executive will be tempted to enforce his or her will through edict rather than the arduous, uncertain process of democratic negotiation and compromise.

What if the publisher of a major US newspaper were charged with treason or espionage, as a rightwing effort seemed to threaten Keller with last year? What if he or she got 10 years in jail? What would the newspapers look like the next day? Judging from history, they would not cease publishing; but they would suddenly be very polite.

Right now, only a handful of patriots are trying to hold back the tide of tyranny for the rest of us - staff at the Center for Constitutional Rights, who faced death threats for representing the detainees yet persisted all the way to the Supreme Court; activists at the American Civil Liberties Union; and prominent conservatives trying to roll back the corrosive new laws, under the banner of a new group called the American Freedom Agenda. This small, disparate collection of people needs everybody's help, including that of Europeans and others internationally who are willing to put pressure on the administration because they can see what a US unrestrained by real democracy at home can mean for the rest of the world.

We need to look at history and face the "what ifs". For if we keep going down this road, the "end of America" could come for each of us in a different way, at a different moment; each of us might have a different moment when we feel forced to look back and think: that is how it was before - and this is the way it is now.

"The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands ... is the definition of tyranny," wrote James Madison. We still have the choice to stop going down this road; we can stand our ground and fight for our nation, and take up the banner the founders asked us to carry. www.dissidentnews.wordpress.com, May 2007.

REQUIEM FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE

The Supreme Court Monday issued its long awaited decision in *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation*, a case to determine whether ordinary Americans may challenge Executive Branch spending on religion allegedly violating the Establishment Clause. The answer: no American may challenge Executive Branch spending on religion. The case challenged President Bush's so-called "faith-based initiative," but the Supreme Court threw out the challenge.

This decision drives an enormous hole through the wall of separation between church and state. It effectively gives the American Presidency the power to engage in a wide range of religious activities without fear that anyone can raise Establishment clause legal challenges. For example:

In fighting the war on terror, the President could offer funding to all mosques that accept Department of Religion drafted sermons for use in weekly worship services. [Turkey both funds clergy and provides official sermons to prevent terrorist ideology from being preached.]

To make inroads in Democratic strongholds, a Republican President could offer substantial funding to African American pastors for social service programs with ample religious content. [i.e., the very "faith-based initiative" at issue in the case.]

With its decision, the Court snubbed established precedent. When Florence Flast began to challenge government spending on religious schools in the 1960s, and the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Flast v. Cohen*, giving taxpayers the right to challenge government spending on religion, the logic was unassailable: unless taxpayers could sue to enforce the Establishment Clause, then the First Amendment would be a dead letter. Today, the wall of separation now binds Congress, but no longer binds the Executive Branch for all practical purposes.

Justice Kennedy acknowledged in a concurring opinion that government officials cannot be compelled to obey the Constitution, but ought to comply with constitutional mandates voluntarily. This is a bizarre

development. It is an ancient legal maxim that there is no right without a remedy. Since the Supreme Court has now ruled that there is no remedy to enforce the Establishment Clause to restrict actions of the Executive Branch, it follows that we must not have any Establishment Clause "rights."

Despite Justice Kennedy's urging that government officials voluntarily comply with the Establishment Clause, the opposite is much more likely: government officials have now been given a blank check to conjure up religious mischief. How can the wheels of state be manipulated to gain political advantage from spending on religion? What religious activities can be promoted in order to appeal to various political constituencies?

Deliberate snubbing of constitutional norms is not required in order for significant violations to occur. The case heard by the Supreme Court involved a challenge to the "faith-based initiative." The Bush Administration has consistently argued that this program is constitutional. Many critics disagree. According to the Supreme Court, there is no independent judgment of such conflicts. The Executive Branch gets to determine what is constitutional. Why not expand this principle to other areas in dispute, like the legality of the Bush Administration's domestic surveillance activity? Can you see the problem?

From a prophetic standpoint, the description of the United States in prophecy uses the symbolism of two horns. In prophecy, horns represent power. Two horns indicate a separation of powers. The two horns are described as "lamb-like," which is to say, meek and gentle as the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. In the U.S., we separate church and state, and the branches of government, and through both forms of separation, preserve both civil and religious freedom in America. Today's decision has decimated the separation of church and state and the separation of powers in a critical area: the Establishment Clause. This is a very troubling step toward tyranny. www.religiousliberty.info, June 2007.

WITH FISA LAW, DEMOCRATS GIVE BUSH A BLANK CHECK FOR DOMESTIC SPYING

Responding to fear-mongering by the Bush administration, the Democrat-led Congress put its stamp of approval on the unconstitutional wiretapping of Americans. George W. Bush has perfected the art of ramming ill-considered legislation through Congress by hyping emergencies that don't exist. He did it with the USA Patriot Act, the authorization for the Iraq war, the Military Commissions Act, and now the "Protect America Act of 2007" which amends the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

FISA was enacted in 1978 in reaction to excesses of Richard Nixon and the FBI, who covertly spied on critics of administration policies. FISA set up a conservative system with judges who meet in secret and issue nearly every wiretapping order the administration requests.

But that wasn't good enough for Bush. In 2001, he secretly established his "Terrorist Surveillance Program," with which the National Security Agency has illegally spied on Americans. Instead of holding hearings and holding the executive accountable for his law-breaking, Congress capitulated once again to the White House's strong-arm tactics. As Congress was about to adjourn for its summer recess, Bush officials threatened to label anyone who opposed their new legislation as soft on terror. True to form, Congress — including 16 Senate and 41 House Democrats — caved.

The new law takes the power to authorize electronic surveillance out of the hands of a judge and places it in the hands of the attorney general (AG) and the director of national intelligence (DNI). FISA had required the government to convince a judge there was probable cause to believe the target of the surveillance was a foreign power or the agent of a foreign power. The law didn't apply to wiretaps of foreign nationals abroad. Its restrictions were triggered only when the surveillance targeted a U.S. citizen or permanent resident or when the surveillance was obtained from a wiretap physically located in the United States. The attorney general was

required to certify that the communications to be monitored would be exclusively between foreign powers and there was no substantial likelihood a U.S. person would be overheard.

Under the new law, the attorney general and the director of national intelligence can authorize "surveillance directed at a person reasonably believed to be located outside of the United States." The surveillance could take place inside the U.S., and there is no requirement of any connection with al-Qaeda, terrorism or criminal behavior. The requirement that the AG certify there is no substantial likelihood a U.S. person will be overheard has been eliminated.

By its terms, the new law will sunset in 180 days. But this is a specious limitation. The AG and DNI can authorize surveillance for up to one year. So just before the statute is set to expire around February 1, 2008, they could approve surveillance that will last until after Bush leaves office.

There is provision for judicial review of the procedures the AG and DNI establish to make sure they are reasonably designed to ensure communications of U.S. persons are not overheard. But that requirement is also specious. They must submit their procedures to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court 120 days after the effective date of the act. The court doesn't have to respond to their submission until 180 days after the effective date of the act, and the standard of review is appallingly low. It's limited to whether the government's determination is "clearly erroneous." Even if the court were to find the proffer clearly erroneous, the AG and DNI have another 30 days to fix it. That takes the entire review process beyond the 6 month sunset period. Meanwhile, the surveillance can continue.

The Supreme Court held in the 1967 case of *Katz v. United States* that government wiretapping must be supported by a search warrant based on probable cause and issued by a judge. In 1972, the Court, in *U.S. v. U.S. District Court (Keith)*, struck down warrantless domestic surveillance. The Court has recognized the "special needs" exception to the warrant requirement. The special need must be narrowly tailored to the problem. However, the new law is much too broad to come under this exception. Congress eliminated any need that the person surveilled be a foreign power or an agent of a foreign power.

The government need only show it is seeking "foreign intelligence information." There is no requirement of any connection with terrorism. The special needs exception also requires an absence of discretion in the implementing authority. There is unlimited discretion now as long as the target is reasonably believed to be outside the United States.

The AG is required under the new law to report to Congress semi-annually, but only on incidents of non-compliance. Can we really trust Alberto Gonzales to be forthcoming about compliance with this law? Senator Christopher Dodd told Glenn Greenwald at the YearlyKos convention last week that neither he nor the other senators have any idea of how the Bush administration has been using its secret program to spy on Americans.

Finally, the new law requires telephone companies to collect data and turn it over to the federal government. It also grants immunity against lawsuits to these companies, many of which are currently defendants in civil cases.

Indeed, the mad rush to push this legislation through last week was likely a preemptive strike by Bush to head off adverse rulings in lawsuits challenging the legality of his Terrorist Surveillance Program. On August 9, a federal district court in San Francisco heard oral arguments by lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild in *CCR v. Bush*. And on August 15, Guild lawyers and others will argue *Al-Haramain v. Bush* in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In six months, when the "Protect America Act of 2007" is set to expire, there will be even more political pressure on Congress to appear tough on terror in the run-up to the 2008 presidential election. We cannot expect a Congress that so easily caved in to the fears hyped by the Bush administration to stand firm in support of the Constitution. *www.alternet.org*, August 2007.

"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Matthew 24:43