

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE
Santa Paula, California
Commencement Address by Lewis E. Lehrman
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You honor me with this invitation to speak at Thomas Aquinas College, an honor because of what you stand for. I know your college name is no accident, no mere gesture to a vaguely remembered man or tradition, but instead, bespeaks the spirit of a saint whose every thought animates all the teaching and learning here.

I understand that when asked, “What did you learn at Thomas Aquinas?”, graduates have been known to answer...“the truth”. Well, this is a bold and refreshing reply -- when, for the greater part of our century, some of the most prominent intellectuals at the most prestigious universities have been teaching that the only truth is...there is no such thing as truth.

Let truth, then, preoccupy us today. Nay, more than one truth -- indeed, those several truths on which this great country, America, is founded -- those truths we say, think, and do -- because we are Americans.

Like so many of you, I, too, was a lucky grandson of four immigrant grandparents -- as I was born in America. My immigrant grandpa, Louis, was a peddler -- and a patriot, who believed, with the religious founders of our country, that America was the New Jerusalem. At home, I grew up under grandpa's influence. But, politically speaking, I grew up under the shadow of the legendary “Pop-Pop” Taylor, the republican boss of Pennsylvania, who actually put Warren Harding over the top in 1920. I can remember “Pop-Pop” Taylor patting me on the head as a boy and giving me some advice. “Pop-Pop” said to me, “Lew, never touch cigarettes, whiskey or women -- until you reach your twelfth birthday.”

But, my grandpa's leadership prevailed and it was he and my parents and my teachers who passed on to me the values and standards I learned in my childhood -- Faith, Family, Freedom, Fidelity to the Flag of the Republic for which we stand.

These are the things in life worth fighting -- and dying for. And make no mistake. Today, we are engaged in a great civil war -- an intellectual civil war, testing what kind of nation we shall choose to be in our third century.

The great issue, before all Americans, is whether we shall fulfill, at home, the promise of the Declaration of Independence and hold out abroad this charter of our liberties to a world longing to be free.

This is the true issue, not only for reasons of national interest; but more importantly, because it is the Declaration of Independence -- the first principles of the American Founding -- which truly reflect the glory of the new and everlasting covenant, the code of Judeo-Christian civilization. It was this sacred code, this truth, which set the world free; and no citizen should doubt that it was this code of freedom -- hammered out in our Constitution and American common law -- which accounts for the rise of 13 impoverished colonies by the sea to the most bountiful nation the Earth has ever known.

You see, July 4, in the year of our Lord, 1776 was a world historical event, not because a new nation was founded on the shores of the Atlantic, but because a new nation, the very first of its kind, was founded “under God,” begotten, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, according to the “Laws of Nature and of Nature's God” -- a nation dedicated to a religious proposition, a principle of natural theology; and it was this: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”; that among these are: the unalienable right to life..., to liberty..., and to the pursuit of happiness.

This proposition, as the Great Emancipator proclaimed, is “the Father of all moral principle” among Americans. By reason of this, our Founding Principle, Abraham Lincoln anointed his countrymen “the almost chosen people”. And it was Thomas Jefferson himself who proposed that the national seal depict Moses leading the chosen people to the promised land.

If therefore we elevate the American Revolution above all political revolutions, that is because of the irresistible light of universality with which, in the form of a Declaration to a darkening world, our Revolution burst suddenly upon the face of the Earth -- with an elemental spiritual force and a liberating doctrine, the ultimate possibilities of which you and I, even now, can only begin dimly to see. And this is so because never before has an Empire of freedom been conceived and consecrated to a principle of natural law, applicable to all men, everywhere, and for all time to come. This we know because the American Freedom Fighters of 1776 did not base their independence on some ancient title to an ancestral place; they did not assert a parochial claim based on racial or ethnic roots; they did not say -- all Americans are equal to all Englishmen, nor that all white men north of the Mason-Dixon Line are equal, nor all white and black men living in the Western Hemisphere, nor even all free men and women living behind the shield of the NATO Alliance -- they said all men are created by God, free AND equal. This is what the Founders said and this is what they meant; and thus we see that the birthright of America is in fact no less than a title deed to equal rights in every nation and on every continent. But, if ours is a nation founded on the unalienable right to life and to liberty, it must then be true -- despite the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade* -- that a child-about-to-be-born is in fact protected by the Declaration of Independence, the irrevocable covenant of our national birth, binding thereby all Americans who came after. The Declaration of Independence does bind us, for it is no glittering generality, but instead the first law of the land, the founding law which is

still put at the head of the statutes-at-large of the U.S. Code of Laws, and described therein as “organic” law, that is, the law in virtue of which America was created a self-governing nation, the citizens of which are, of God, heirs and co-heirs to certain unalienable rights.

Moreover, it is by reason of this unalienable right to life that an American is endowed with the unalienable right to liberty and thus to the right to the fruit of his labor freely given. For to have and to hold life, all men must have the right to delve for the means to sustain that life. And only in America, a virgin land, the garden of the New World, where wealth came first from the work of human hands, could the dignity of human labor, as in Eden, be seen clearly as primary, and capital, so decisive among the aristocracies of the Old World, be recognized as secondary.

Thus it is that the Founders of our country knew that the free market is nothing, if it is not grounded upon the objective values and standards of a just social order, only true and enduring, that is, if the free economy -- by itself conditional -- is derived from the first right of the Declaration, the God-given right to life. Abandon this first, transcendent, objective principle of the Republic, and lose also the ground of the free market! Thus we see it was no accident that the unalienable right to life precedes -- in our founding document -- the right to liberty. For liberty was made for life. Not life for liberty. Indeed, liberty must be a right without substance, if the right-to-life be rejected -- and, at once, the Declaration becomes a nullity.

I have often reflected whether it could have been fortuitous that the right to life and the right to the fruit of free labor should have been vindicated for all modern time by President Abraham Lincoln in The Gettysburg Address, and reinforced a generation later by Pope Leo XIII in his extraordinary encyclical, the condition of labor! I think not. Lawgivers of genius, both men were determined to create a world in the image of a just and merciful God. From their

prophetic writings, we know that both men read from the same Bible and prayed to the same living God that Church and Nation might secure life, and set men free.

In the example of their teachings, we are taught to see clearly that today in *Roe vs. Wade* we Americans face for the second time in our history, as first we did in the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision of 1857, the legalization of a crime against the ultimate law of God and, moreover, the supreme law of the land. It is no use, in extenuation, to invoke the pluralism of opinions or, falsely, the absence of consensus as if, in the struggle over *Roe vs. Wade*, all were merely a friendly historical debate; that, indeed, there were no lives at stake, no ultimate judge to whom to make an appeal -- neither to the binding rule of the Declaration of Independence, nor to the eternal law of the Decalogue. It is this binding appeal to the higher American tribunal we must understand, that is, to the natural law of life enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. But there is also the pontifical teaching that “the life of a child prevails over all opinions.” Both the organic law of the American nation, and the divine law prevail over all positive law, and, a fortiori, over all the litigious subtleties and the cunning dissimulations of politicians and judges. While each of us, at different moments of our pilgrimage, discovers the truth of life -- that conception, birth and life are one -- the very moment we come to know and to understand this truth, it is then, with no delay that we must love and obey this truth. And this truth is unavoidable in the Declaration of Independence, wherein a child-about-to-be-born is protected from conception, because the founders said “all men are created” with the unalienable right-to-life, not all men are born with the right-to-life. That is from the moment of creation or conception, the life of the child is protected by the first law of the land, the Declaration of Independence.

Coming from New York as I do, from the home of His Eminence, the Archbishop of New York, John J. Cardinal O'Connor, I cannot help but recall to you his modest but direct admonition in 1984 to all citizens but especially to Catholics that: "I do not see how a Catholic in conscience could vote for an individual explicitly favoring abortion." Now, I ask you to consider what would happen if Cardinal O'Connor were to say, as Bishop Guerra Campos of Cuenca, Spain wrote in a Pastoral letter of July 13, 1985: "The general rule is clear. Catholics in public office who facilitate by laws or acts of government -- or in any case protect juridicially -- the practice of the crime of abortion will not be able to escape the moral qualification of public sinner. They will have to be treated as such -- particularly regarding the reception of the Sacraments until they repair, to the best of their abilities, the most grave evil and scandal they have caused." So said the Bishop of Cuenca.

Now it is fitting that we should ask: How is it that in the land of Lincoln, the Supreme Court of the United States came to find in the XIVth Amendment of 1868 a right-to-privacy which, the Court argued in 1973, sanctioned the right to abortion on demand in all 50 states? How could it be, I ask, that the XIVth Amendment, which (along with the XIIIth) made the black slave a human person under the law -- how could this very same amendment be used to make a human non-person of a child-about-to-be born. In truth there is no answer to this question for in fact there is no truth, even if there is sincerity in the Supreme Court's *Roe vs. Wade* decision -- and this we know because the inescapable historical truth of 1868 was that 28 of 37 states held abortion to be a criminal act prior to "quickening," two by common law, the remainder by statute. Over the next 15 years, 1868-1883, seven more states made abortion a criminal act. By the time the U.S. Supreme Court authored the spurious right to abortion, many states had enacted strict laws to prohibit abortion, except only to save the life of the mother. For all those who have

eyes to see and ears to hear there was only one historical truth in 1868 and also in 1972, and it was this: A consensus of the American people did exist -- to restrict abortion, not to legalize it. And those politicians who falsely say there is no consensus cannot repeal either the truth of 1868 or of 1972, even though the Supreme Court has tried to do so for 13 years.

The Supreme Court's authority to decide as it did in *Roe vs. Wade* had absolutely no warrant in the XIVth Amendment -- an amendment actually ratified by legislators who believed there was no inconsistency between the XIVth Amendment, as written in 1868, and abortion laws, as then prevailing -- because those who drafted and approved the XIVth Amendment were fully aware of the contemporaneous common law and statutory prohibitions -- against abortion. If the XIVth Amendment calls for anything, it calls for reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*. Thus we must conclude that the Supreme Court decision of 1973 can be strictly limited to that particular case, alone, and shall have no binding authority on us or our countrymen as a permanent rule of law or a general rule of political action.

Roe vs. Wade may be a legal decision of the Supreme Court; but it is unlawful in the full sense of the word -- and also unlawful by customary construction of the plain meaning of the words in all relevant constitutional articles and amendments.

In the full light of logic, the moral law and American history -- *Roe vs. Wade* is absurd; it cares to just nothing -- but "raw judicial power." And thus we have no choice but to go for reversal of this decision by the Supreme Court; or reversal by congressional statute; or by constitutional amendment. This we shall do in good conscience, and in good time, because we are advised that we can do so in the original manual for interpreting correctly the American Constitution, "The Federalist Papers". In Federalist #81, Page 545, we are told by the Fathers of the Constitution: If judicial "misconstructions and contraventions of the will of the legislature"

do create constitutional defects, there is a constitutional remedy. Because, even if the Legislature cannot “reverse a [judicial] determination once made, in a particular case,” it can “prescribe a new rule for future cases.” And this is precisely what Congress did in 1862, when, under Lincoln’s leadership Congress prohibited any further extension of slavery in the territories of the United States; this despite the 1857 Supreme Court opinion that Congress had not the power to do so...Co-equal in authority but separate in powers, Congress did have the power to legislate and thus overruled the Court. In the absence of a clear and manifest constitutional constraint on Congress. As President Andrew Jackson demonstrated in the struggle over the Second National Bank, the opinion of Congress as to the constitutionality of its own laws has equal weight with that of the Court in constitutional disputes. In such a standoff, if the people agree with the Court and not Congress, they may, every two years, remove the Congressmen, and every four the President, if he, too, opposes and nullifies the Court’s decision. And this is as it should be in the constitutional American Republic, where primary authority resides in “We the people” who “ordained” the Constitution. (See Article 3, Section 2).

We can also take hope from a buried fact of our history that our fallible Supreme Court has reversed itself over 250 times.

Let us go on and now consider the social doctrine of Pope Leo XIII in Rerum Novarum -- that all life and work emulate divine creation -- as does the natural law. Let us hear what His Holiness wrote in 1891: -- “For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own...Man is older than the State and he holds the right of providing for the life of his body prior to the formation of any State...” Thus, “Private ownership is according to nature’s law”...But “it is in the soul that sovereignty resides, in virtue of which man is commanded to rule the creatures below him, and to use all the Earth and ocean for his profit and advantage...In

this respect, all men are equal”. But now we quickly see that this doctrine of the Magisterium is not only holy and Catholic, it is also genuinely American -- believed and upheld by the Founders and proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence at the very beginning of our country -- as “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”. We must never forget that these are the very words which inaugurate the American Experiment: -- Lincoln in 1863 did not say three score and 15 Years ago...(that is, 1789); on the contrary he said “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth...a new nation”: -- that is to say, it was in 1776 that a new nation was “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” On equality, Lincoln and Leo XIII are one.

Furthermore, not unlike Leo XIII, our forefathers held that each calling was sanctified, every spiritual and economic advance a glory to our Creator. If one goal was to increase and multiply, the Founders had clear views on the means to this goal. In the realm of commerce, they held -- along with their immigrant successors -- that government secured the unalienable rights of its citizens and created some of the conditions, the law, the incentives, which lead, not to welfare, but hard work; not to subsidies, but savings; not to hoarding, but risk taking; not to indulgent consumption, but investment; not to austerity, but growth; not the dole, but full employment; not therefore to despair but to hope and to victory.

And here, I pray it is fitting that I make a few tentative remarks on the Bishop’s Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. economy. That theirs is a sincere effort, none should doubt. That theirs is a finished work we may, with respect, question. Our Bishops put the issue at the conclusion of their draft. They refer to “the Christian perspective on the meaning of economic life.” And they suggest at the beginning of the Pastoral that Christian “justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of [economic] participation by all persons in the

life of the human community..." I agree. So do you, I know. So do almost all Americans. None of us who accepts the prophets and the gospels could deny the just claims of the least among us. None should want to. But, as I am taught, Church doctrine gives this as a goal, but the teaching allows faithful men and women to choose, in good conscience, the best means by which to reach this goal.

And thus, many of us ask, do we give a fish to him, who has none, in order to fill him for a dependent day; or, as fishers of men, do we make a fisher of this man, and teach him to fish for himself, that he may feed his family all of his days?

Do we lower unemployment, as the Pastoral suggests, by "Public Service Employment and...Public Subsidies," as for example in the scandal-ridden CETA and Public Job Corps Programs; or, do we fashion a world of inward values and outward incentives in which free men and women naturally create lasting jobs -- especially for the least among us -- in new and growing firms? Which is the way to our goal of full human dignity, the way to personal self-esteem, to the independence of the self-governing family? Do we really bestow the dignity of economic independence, as the Bishops compassionately imply, by once again raising the level of welfare payments -- a scheme which during the past generation gave rise to trillions of welfare state spending -- with anomalous and pathetic results sincere liberals did not then expect and cannot now escape namely, even more poverty and dependency. For example, the percentage below the poverty line actually rose from 12.6% in 1970 to 13% in 1980 after 10 years of the great society. Almost one out of four children now grows up in female-headed homes, three times the immediate postwar level; and the percentage of teen-age unemployment is more than twice its level before the exponential rise of welfare payments and the minimum wage.

I raise these questions for each of us to examine by the light of faith, prudence, and evidence. For myself, I believe a certain truth of practical wisdom; and I also believe this truth can help to keep us free. And it is this. To desire a goal should cause us to desire the most equitable and effective means to reach that goal. To do otherwise is to court disaster. Thus, while I share the Bishop's goal for the U.S. economy, I believe the means to that goal are spelled out in the Declaration of Independence and thus lie deep in the natural law, and in our democratic way of life -- in the free enterprise economy and the 108 million jobs it has created in America. The evidence is compelling. In the past 15 years, the U.S. free economy has created almost 30 million jobs; the social-democratic welfare economies of all Western Europe have lost a million jobs in the same period. While America's free farmers still can feed the world, government-ruled economies in the Sudan, Ethiopia, in almost all of Africa and much of the Third World create only the famine we try to relieve with American alms. Fastened to the yoke of farm socialism, which has caused a flight of capital from most of Africa, socialized commerce and collectivized agriculture have collapsed. In the last 15 years, food production per person has actually fallen in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa -- now 20% below 1960.

This result has less to do with the drying up of the weather and much more to do with the drying up of the incentives and the freedom to cultivate the land. These thoughts of mine do no more than confirm those of Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Pittsburgh. In His Excellency's words, the Pastoral Letter "Omits...Scriptural references which favor economic freedom", for example, the tale of the talents, wherein "we are urged to use our resources and ability in a free environment...we are even urged to take risks, not to bury what we have but to use it and multiply its value." Even our Lord's advice to the rich man to sell all and give it to the poor implies a world of freedom and voluntary action.

But this truth should be no surprise to any of us...was it not two thousand years ago that we were liberated by the light of the world, that our lives might be grounded in that freedom without which there can be no virtue?

Still, our faith reminds us, what of the least among us? Those unable to fish, to farm, to forge a living wage on the anvil of the workplace? Americans have tried to answer this question, too. They are the most generous givers in history, at home and abroad. With Lincoln, you and I hold that our government was created to do those things for our people which they cannot do for themselves, or do so well for themselves. But again we see that this Lincoln proposition is the American principle of Federalism, itself the analog of the timeless Catholic social teaching of Subsidiarity -- that each decision of the social order should be taken at the appropriate level of authority.

Who can deny that Americans have shown through voluntary charity and mutual welfare that the infirm can and must be sustained? But for the able-bodied, it is and must be different. Americans, all free peoples, know that hard work is of man, and not of government. Should we not therefore tear down the wailing wall of the welfare state which dooms millions of the able-bodied to dependency and despair, and build in its place a value-centered social order, the virtue and incentives of which will bring out the best in free men and women? Living together under the law, a free people can surely create an economy which offers a real job, with a full and growing wage to every man and woman who wants honest labor. Is there any better hope for the world of work which only human hands can make?

This is the world we have in mind when we say with the Holy Father that the economy is made for man, not man for the economy; that government, too, is made for man, not man for the government. But this is also what we mean when we say with the great Americans gone before

us: I have a dream, an American dream. And if we are asked by what warrant we Americans offer the universal principles of our constitutional democracy to all Peoples, to be applied on every continent, we answer: There originates only one authentic American foreign policy in the Declaration of Independence, in virtue of which we took life as a nation. And this we know because -- again -- the Founders said in this charter that all men are created equal, by God. By this they did not mean all men are, or must be, equal in all respects. Instead, they meant -- we mean -- that no man has a natural right to rule over any another man, as God does over man, and thus a man may rule over another, his equal, only with his consent.

Therefore, given what we know about the birth of America, who can deny that the proposition, "All men are created equal", must be the first principle of American conservatism -- just because equality before the law is the first principle of the American Founding -- which, above all, must be conserved.

Now we also see that the American Revolution was always intended to be a world revolution, designed as it was to establish on Earth the natural right of all men to be free. But in 1776, America was too doubtful and too poor for the spirit of its Declaration to engirdle the world. But now, in 1986, all the world waits upon American leadership for a new birth of freedom.

Thus, especially today, our country needs an authentic foreign policy which will gradually lead the world peacefully to abandon communism and socialism, as they now are doing, wherever people are even partially free to choose. Nations everywhere now consider the injustice of dictatorships of the right and of the left -- and they are rejecting them, in favor of the American proposition -- free men, free soil, and free labor. Democracy has swept over Latin

America, Spain, Portugal, East Asia, even Eastern Europe -- where in Poland and Czechoslovakia it could be suppressed only at gun point.

The Europeans, the new nations, even we Americans are relearning the original truth of the American Founding: that government dependence everywhere enslaves the spirit of man and destroys also the family, just as government respect for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness can restore a future of faith, hope, and charity.

We must never again forget that the American experiment began with God-fearing men and women, who in economic affairs guided themselves by a dominion covenant -- a principle which stemmed from their faith in the truth of the Bible -- the protection for which they wrote into Amendment V of our Constitutional law. And the underlying principle was this: In a social order founded on voluntary contracts, economic justice must mean that before any able-bodied citizen should make a demand on society, he should first make a supply. From the value of this supply, no man could be involuntarily separated without due process of law. Only thus could man subdue all the earth to his work -- and, to the product of his labor, rightfully take title.

When acted upon, this axiom of free enterprise completely alters human conduct -- to which the history of our nation is a living witness. For 350 years in America we have seen the miraculous fruits of this underlying moral principle of free labor. Why should we, the legatees of this tradition, or anyone else, be amazed by the American miracle? We know that to supply is, in another form, but to give -- to offer. And to give is to produce -- to make an offering in the market. But to receive is to consume, to take. Thus it is rightly said: Freely do we give. Then we receive.

With rules drawn from the teaching of faith and natural law, elaborated in the great works of Judeo-Christian jurists -- in Blackstone's Big Book, Joseph Story's Commentaries, and in

Chancellor Kent's Writings -- the American Founders and their interpreters had designed a blueprint, not only for individual and family success; but, in fact, they had passed to us, their beneficiaries, the general principles which lead not only to national greatness, but also, to global prosperity.

Thus we can see that the link between religion and American politics is indissoluble, because the American Revolution itself rested on the natural law -- also written, as the Apostle said almost two thousand years ago, in the heart of man. And this link Thomas Jefferson himself held to be beyond dispute, writing as he did that the "God who gave us life also gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just..."

The irony would amuse me if it were not a public scandal -- but today, critics of American religious tradition argue that our Founding Fathers, in their care to separate an established Church from the state, meant to remove almost every trace of the living God from our public life. This doctrine is not only pernicious; it is false law.

In fact, the constitutional debates show that the Founding Fathers sought to prevent the legal establishment of a government-owned Sectarian Church -- such as the Anglican Church in England. And chief among hundreds of unimpeachable witnesses present at the creation of the Republic, I bring forward President Washington -- "First in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen" -- who declared in his Farewell Address that religion and morality are the necessary supports of popular government -- of, that is, American and democratic government in general.

It is a fact of early American history that the First Amendment was never a license for government to suppress religious practices in public places; nor was it a pornographic license to

destroy the faith, the future and the mind of a child; neither was it a warrant for the Supreme Court to prohibit prayer in public places. Indeed, the First Amendment, read rightly, according to the common canons of statutory and constitutional construction, means plainly: Congress shall make no law abridging the free exercise of religion.

Moreover, the Supreme Court of the United States cannot maintain much longer the absurd construction of the religion clause itself, where it broadly construes the free exercise part to include atheism and humanism among protected religions, but narrowly construes, on a completely different principle, the establishment clause of the same amendment -- with the effect of removing true religion from almost all public life.

Even the Supreme Court, divided against the nation this way, cannot last. Either both parts of the freedom of religion rule shall change and come under one authentic Supreme Court principle, consistent with right reason and the intent of the Founders, or the nation will reform the Court -- and vindicate the original principle of free exercise of religion.

If, as a nation under God, our faith has made us mighty and free, so too did we wax prosperous by exalting the family, a way of life grounded in the Bible and in our common law -- a common law which stemmed in part from the ecclesiastical courts of Christendom. And, if I dwell on these wellsprings of our world greatness -- faith, family and the natural law -- it is only because I believe that, cut off from the fountainhead of first principles, the deep river of our national life must eventually run dry -- and the hope of the world with it.

In this, our time of social troubles, when almost one out of four American children grows up in single-parent, female headed homes, when one of two black babies and one of six white babies are born out of wedlock, need we look much beyond the destruction of the family, the

decimation of the home, and the demolition of the neighborhood for the root causes of pervasive drug addiction and teenage joblessness?

As I look around me, in the great cities of America, at the consequences of this chaos the courts have sown in the soil of the Republic, I must ask aloud: Can it really be our lot as free men to inherit the whirlwind of social disorder, and then be required to live by a criminal law, the preoccupation of which is often a mindless inquiry into the inadvertent workings of police procedures, and not a search into the guilt or innocence of a violent criminal? Can it really be true that the principal purpose of the Court should be an investigation into the propriety of a policeman's conduct instead of the search for simple justice?

That our criminal courts have in fact been immobilized in great cities is an ultimate threat to every American's first freedom -- the freedom of person, the security of life from violence and fraud.

And of this general social degradation, graduates of Thomas Aquinas, beware -- by means of the desolation of the self-governing family, the ax has been laid unto the root of the tree. There is a balm for these afflictions; and the remedy is easy to grasp, even if it is hard to apply...and it is this; our laws and policies must be reformed -- indeed, they must be reconstructed -- so that our children, all the children of this land, may be given not only the shelter of a house, but the love of a home. And this we must do because the family way of life is the cradle of civilization, the source of love, trust, loyalty, and hope. Indeed without the family - - our children and grandchildren -- how can there be any future at all?

And so, we must work confidently toward the day men Americans will again pray in public places as they please, when abortion on demand shall be no more, when the child exemption in the tax code shall be raised to \$5,000 and the tax code shall thus be an unapologetic

pro-family social institution; when the courts shall do their duty -- when all America shall go to school again to the Declaration of Independence. This is what we mean when we call for the restoration of the American Republic.

And to that end, we must defend our country whose way of life is the hope of the world. And therefore it is now clear we must put aside the suicidal and immoral offensive nuclear strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction. This offensive strategy, called MAD, now holds hostage to nuclear annihilation all Americans and innocent peoples the world over. MAD violates our faith and our national traditions. In place of this mutual terror of Mutual Assured Destruction, we must put forward the Just War Doctrine, the only military strategy consistent with our faith and the American tradition -- because it is a strategy based on self-defense.

Self-defense can become a New Shield of the Republic. Let it be called the Star Wars Defense -- the Strategic Defense Initiative, SDL. And do not be self-conscious about the phrase "Star Wars Defense" because the force is with us.

To vindicate and carry through this national renewal, originating both in the principles of our faith and of the American Founding, let us echo a great statesman and say: We shall fight in the cabinet councils; we shall fight in the state legislatures; we shall fight over the open airwaves; we shall fight this battle over our future in every neighborhood, every village, every town -- in the halls of the United Nations, and in support of Freedom Fighters the world over -- from the Bushlands of Jamba and Nicaragua, to the Afghan and Cambodian frontiers, and even unto the innermost citadels of spiritual slavery in Soviet Russia and Communist China.

But our opponents -- fellow Americans of goodwill, but different opinions -- ask us now to compromise, to withdraw from the field, to grow quiet on the great and controversial issues -- such as prayer, pornography, abortion, victory over communism -- holding sincerely, as they do,

that these issues lead to divisive debates over the role of religion and morality in American life, and fundamental controversy over the future of the world.

Then must we ask those who implore us to yield -- who or what was the provocative agent which dug up this domestic debate in the first place?

None can deny it was the Supreme Court of the United States itself, which overthrew, in one ruling or another, the objective moral order and the American consensus established in law and precedent by our forefathers -- and with recent rulings, destroyed a century and a half of settled common law and constitutional traditions. Our opponents say, yes, you may be right about that; but, alas, the Supreme Court has ruled against you on prayer, on pornography, on abortion; and, as its rulings are the supreme law of the land, you must obey, and in the interest of harmony, you must be quiet.

We answer with respect: obey a particular Supreme Court ruling for the time being, yes; but be quiet about fundamental principles, no, never. And furthermore, it is we who hold to the supervening opinions of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln, and thus we deny, with them, that the Supreme Court, alone, can permanently decide the meaning of the supreme law of the land. Hear Lincoln who argued decisively in his First Inaugural: "If the policy of the government on vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court... The people will have ceased to be their own rulers..."; or as President Jackson argued in 1832 "the opinion of the [Supreme Court] Judges has no more authority over Congress than the opinion of Congress has over the Judges."

Nor can the Supreme Court, in any way, repeal the divine or natural law which we are obliged to obey for two reasons: first because our faith commands us; but also because, as

American citizens, our Declaration of Independence, in its very own words, also enjoins upon us “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.”

In these words, Thomas More and Thomas Jefferson become one.

Let us, therefore, be guided by them. Hear first, Thomas More, at the supreme moment: “I die loyal to God and the King, but to God first of all.” Now, hear Jefferson, the author of our title deeds to freedom: “To consider (Supreme Court) Judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions (is) a very dangerous doctrine indeed and one that would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy.” Moreover, Jefferson declared, “the Constitution has erected no such single tribunal.”

Now for a moment let us reflect upon Abraham Lincoln who, in the agony of obedience, not unlike that of Saint Thomas More, did defer briefly to the Supreme Court’s incendiary Dred Scott decision which Lincoln abhorred -- and rejected. Rendered for the majority of Supreme Court Judges by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney in 1857, the Dred Scott decision declared that the black man was a mere article of merchandise, that the black man could, under the Constitution, never be an American citizen -- that, in Taney’s words, the black man had no rights which the white man was bound to respect. And therefore, under this ruling of the Supreme Court -- as the world famous Senator Stephen Douglas argued against little known private citizen Lincoln in the immortal debates of 1858 -- the earthly fate of a black man had been fitted neatly into the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, the property clause, where, instead of a child of God, he would become, by virtue of a Supreme Court decision, a forsaken slave, a mere chattel -- a living mockery of the unalienable right to life and liberty. Thus, did Senator Douglas and Chief Justice Taney argue. Thus, in America, did the Supreme Court decide.

But two years later, in 1860, all the world stirred to discover that Abraham Lincoln was President, and Stephen Douglas driven from the field, at a great divide of human history. Only ten years later, in the form of the Congressional statute of 1862 and the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution, the principles of the Declaration of Independence had overthrown slavery, the Dred Scott Supreme Court, and its spurious opinion -- forever!

Abraham Lincoln was dead -- dying as Thomas More died, a martyr. But the Union, and the natural law of its birthright, lived anew. More than any President, but following Madison, Jefferson and the Founders, Lincoln rightly insisted that the principles of the Declaration are the first principles by which we interpret the intent and the law of the Constitution.

So I ask, who now laments the overthrow by the American people of the Supreme Court's Dred Scott opinion, rendered in 1857 by a majority of the Justices? Who now holds up the memory of Chief Justice Taney for the honor of the ages? Who now mourns the death of the unacceptable Supreme Court decision that, according to the Constitution, the black man was not a person?

But who today can ever forget what he, Lincoln -- borne up by his faith in a just God, against all odds and conventional opinion -- did for free men on this hallowed ground of our Lord's creation.

Faithful friends of Thomas Aquinas, in the light of the law as we interpret it, and in full awareness of our ancient faith, as we understand it, can we yield either to our sincere opponents, or to our dissenting friends, wherever and whomsoever they may be -- when they counsel compromise on the fundamental principles of the American Founding -- faith, family and free enterprise; when our opponents urge withdrawal from the only fields of battle where the fate of Mankind's unalienable rights to life and liberty will be settled?

No American can hold back the true answer to this question -- as the measured and melancholy chords of memory relentlessly rollout over the Union from the Rotunda of the Lincoln Monument: --

If our opponents were right, and we wrong, all they ask of us, we should give them; and then we should silence ourselves -- and conform. But if they are wrong, as we believe, and we right, surely they cannot justly ask us to do as they do. For, if they ask, we must say, with Lincoln, holding our standards to be true, as we do -- can it ever be right to do wrong?

Thus, we cannot yield; we shall not yield. We shall never give up.

You see, our ancestors were Protestants from England, Catholics from the Continent, Black Slaves from Africa, later the Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants, to mention only a few -- and today, from every forsaken comer of the Earth they flee, having no other bond than their common humanity, and the uncommon boldness to break free into our New Jerusalem. These new immigrants witness, by their work and their way of life, that they know and honor the first watchword of our national faith -- the Declaration of Independence. Thus now do we see why the founding American proposition, all men are created equal, must also be the first proposition of future American conservatism; for this proposition is the only common bond which can join all Americans together, especially those of us without blood ancestors present at the creation of the Republic. We know, as my grandfather knew, that whatsoever, the faith of the Founders is true -- and everlasting -- just as you know, and I know, that everything I am, everything you could ever be, arises from the fact that we can say -- our lives, our liberty are gifts of God, not of the government.

To those of you graduating today let me say a few personal words.

Honor your faith and your country, as true patriots. For all that you are, all that I may ever be, originates also in our unique legacy to say “I am an American citizen.”

Honor your Fathers and your Mothers for sacrificing, so that you could graduate from Thomas Aquinas College. Honor the dedicated teachers here, the men and women who gave their all to provide a spiritual endowment to pass on to you and to your children’s children. Honor the faculty here who have come to be your friends, bridging the gap of generations. Forget their shortcomings, but remember well their wisdom and virtue. And when the time comes, perhaps twenty-thirty years in the future, when your own children seek truth and right belief, give them the priceless gift Thomas Aquinas gave to you.

If you do, then we should have no doubt about the ultimate victory of our faith -- and of the American way of life -- the faith of our fathers -- living still. But if we desire not merely success for ourselves, but triumph, triumph for all Americans who strive for independence, self-esteem, and honor -- and freedom for all members of the family of man on Earth, we must be bold; so that for all time to come, this dream of victory, this good news, shall not perish from the earth.

Now, let us ask for ourselves what the Apostle, himself, asked from the Church at Ephesus: “And pray for us, that we may be granted the right words when we open our mouths, that we may boldly and freely make known his hidden purpose, for which we are his Ambassadors (EPH.6.19).”

Leaders, parents, students of Thomas Aquinas College: let us pledge never to be moved from our Lord’s purpose by fear, by threats; but let us go forward, from this your day of graduation, full in our knowledge that it is up to us, to you, the standard-bearers of faith and freedom, to make the American dream come true.

And, it is time to begin.

Good luck and God bless you.

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