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The Organization of the Islamic Conference has already established the rationale for worldwide shari'a through its islamist Cairo Declaration (1990), which is a rival to the socialistic Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Now, more explicitly than ever, the OIC is targeting the practice of Christianity. Thus the Bible -- which, as Rene Girard has argued, reveals the scapegoat mechanism at work in the origin of religions and cultures -- is itself being scapegoated.

The OIC has chosen perhaps the most appropriate forum ("A Dangerous Place") for accomplishing its purposes, even though, at least for now, its efforts appear to be losing ground. But we should never underestimate the power of bad ideas. They take on a life of their own. Friedrich Nietzsche complained that Christianity is an expression of ressentiment: a revenge of base priestcraft against what is good and noble. But Nietzsche got his categories backwards. It is the proud sinner who would prefer to shoot the humble messenger and smash the message rather than countenance having his behavior reflected back upon him in a mirror. It is, as usual, the bearers of good news who are treated as "prophets without honor."

PS I came across this haiku by the historian Richard Landes, which nicely summarizes the above:

do arabs export
more oil or hate? and
which do people value more?

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/dec/20/nick-cohen-rape-jury-law

I would not recommend a peerage for any members of this jury.


I had missed this earlier piece by Nick Cohen on Sarah Palin. Written just a week after her introduction as the VP nominee, it is clear that a great fear transfixed the chattering classes from the moment she was introduced. It is also clear that nothing short of demonization would suffice to ward off their dread. Subsequent events have shown how deftly Cohen, an erstwhile Leftist, sized things up. As he puts it: "Hatred is the most powerful emotion in politics." It is a hatred born of envy and what René Girard calls mimetic rivalry. Sarah Palin became the designated scapegoat of the Left from the moment she was introduced. Few have commented on the sheer uncanniness of that reaction.

http://townhall.com/columnists/MichelleMalkin/2009/12/11/hollywood_and_howard_zins_marxist_education_project
When Howard Zinn refers to a "people's pedagogy," he is alluding to The Pedagogy of the Oppressed by the Brazilian radical, Paulo Freire. The Left is making its big play on several fronts simultaneously, as should be evident from recent postings.


"Since we operate an overwhelmingly carbon-based economy, the EPA will be regulating practically everything." If this sounds familiar, it should. Krauthammer cites the internal revenue code, but he could just as well have cited the post-Civil War legal tender cases followed by the Federal Reserve System, Woodrow Wilson's war mobilization, FDR's NRA and other alphabet soup agencies, the extended uses of the interstate commerce clause, and countless other administrative entanglements. All of these and more betray our penchant for political idolatry. Years ago I read Herbert Schlossberg's Idols for Destruction. I am currently reading the chapter entitled Idolatry in Yoram Hazony's The Dawn on the political teachings of the Book of Esther. We are in sore need of bulls to run amuck in our idol shops.

http://pajamasmedia.com/rogerlsimon/2009/12/20/copenhagen-wrap-up-i-have-seen-the-future-and-it-stinks/

Now that Rousseau's mad "General Will" Symphony is blaring at us in stereo from Copenhagen and the hollowed-out halls of Congress, perhaps we should reflect on what a fragile thing our liberty has become. Marshall McLuhan extolled the global village in the 1960s. But then came the children's rights movement of the 1970s. By the 1990s Hillary gave us "It Takes a Village," or as P. J. O'Rourke put it in his review: "It takes a village to raise a child. Washington is the village. You are the child."

Ben Nelson is now joining Mary Landrieu in selling out his home state for more pork. Nebraskans were at least more colorful once upon a time: a century ago Mother Jones promised to raise less corn and more hell. Has a brisk market in pork bellies become the defining essence and evidence of political success, even of statesmanship? Pork at home and what Herb Schlossberg called "khadi law" are greasing the skids along our collective Road to Serfdom.

Monday 21


We may have to come up with a new word, a variant of defenestration, to describe murder (or suicide) via stairwell. Defenestration became something of a custom in Prague during the Thirty Years War and again in 1948. I have been trying to find a follow-up to this story, which I read in David Solway's piece on the United Nations, but the story appears to have been effectively spiked. I am unable to access the piece in the Mirror that raises the possibility of murder.

http://frontpagemag.com/2009/11/18/u-n-cover-up-on-iran-by-joseph-klein/
The previous piece on Timothy Hampton amasses some useful information, including excerpts from the *Mirror*, although I find his conclusion to be muddle-headed. David Solway linked this piece to his recent article on the United Nations. The plot thickens.

http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/the-united-nations-public-enemy-number-one/

Here, at last, is the piece by David Solway, which led me to start searching for information about Timothy Hampton. Solway has published a couple of books that I would like to examine. I use Dore Gold's *Tower of Babble* in my International Relations class. I will probably add this piece to the class's reading list for next term.


If anyone believes that the dumbing down of the curriculum is accidental rather than done with malice aforethought, here is an example from that tiny congressional reservation known as the District of Columbia. Any honest Leftist would have to admit that neo-colonialism is alive and well in our nation's capital.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704398304574598221889538680.html

The cost of the DC voucher program may be roughly half the per-student spending on the public schools. John Dewey, among many other progressives, devalued the intellectual side of public education in favor of socialization. Those of us who work in higher education are daily confronted with the spoiled fruits of decades of educational incompetence. In fact, to the degree we accept the socialization of any public good, Bastiat's concept of legal plunder virtually guarantees poor service, bureaucratic highhandedness, budgetary overruns, taxpayer revolts, vicious turf battles, ideological wrangling, interest group meddling, professional stand pat-ism, and gradual disintegration of the society in general. There is a word for what we have achieved through high taxes, rising deficits, market gluts, and diminishing returns: Decadence. One major magazine ended its run late in the Carter years with a cover article on Decadence. The so-called Reagan Revolution gave us a needed respite, but we are suffering from a famine of leadership. As Christ spoke to the church of Ephesus: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." I have walked through the ruins of Ephesus. Even today the amphitheater is an acoustic marvel. But we should heed Christ's warnings. The Parable of the Prodigal Son seems to describe the spiritual destitution that Amos foretold: "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." We have too long consented to our destruction and supported it with our taxes.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091221/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_iran

This remembrance of Grand Ayatollah Montazeri reminds me of a point made by Yoram Hazony in *The Dawn*, in which he contrasts the evident political pluralism of the first chapter of Esther with the newly installed despotism of the Haman as the
grand vizier. Montazeri broke with Ayatollah Khomeini over his choice of direct clerical rule. Having rid Iran of a Xerxes, the mullahs installed a Haman in his place.

Thus history repeated itself. Instead of a multitude of counselors, the earlier Xerxes (Ahashverosh), who had been shamed by Vashti and soon afterwards defeated by the Greeks, now sought the protection of a single facilitator/enforcer, who may have already been highly experienced in playing such a role.

"So long as Ahashverosh took decisions through broad consultation with a range of advisers, there was every reason to hope that that the laws and actions of the Persian state would tend towards at least the roughest approximation of a just settlement among competing perspectives, interests and truths in the empire. Haman's installation, however, eliminating as it did the action of interests other than his own, in principle suppressed the search for a greater truth on the part of the state; henceforth it would become that defined by the perspective and desires of a single man, Haman. Since it would be his desires rather than truth which would now determine right and wrong for much of mankind, his elevation transformed him (and Ahashverosh, as well) into a usurping god, a pretender to knowledge and power he did not have, an idol. To serve his whim would be as service to the Canaanite gods. . . . (pp. 67-68).

Hazony believes this resistance to idolatry would be sufficient to account for Mordechai's refusal of obeisance to Haman. The question is whether, today, following the death of Montazeri, the clerical Xerxes (Khamenei) and the political Haman (Ahmadinejad) can be marginalized or destroyed.

Good pluralists that we Americans are, we seem to take comfort in a multitude of Hamans. We call them czars without a hint of irony.


Andy passed this along. We are quickly becoming a proverb and a byword. Neel Kashkari's story is a fable for our times. Imagine having the responsibility for disbursing $400 billion in order to jumpstart the economy? The procedure used to be called "priming the pump." But who can fathom such numbers, such numerology? Perhaps we are living in a mythical world these days. The money may be legal tender, but is it in any way, shape, or form a store of value? It is fiduciary in character, but what if we lose faith in it? Could such vast sums lose purchase with us? It is hard to imagine something less material, less substantial, than a congressional stimulus package. It is an ill wind that blows where it pleases and crushes everything in its path like a juggernaut.

Practically nothing was moving on Saturday. Sally and I managed to get off two Christmas cards. Sally stayed at the hospital all day Saturday. The highway was littered with stranded cars until late yesterday. Andy and I picked Sally up in his 4-wheel drive Sunday morning and returned her that evening. She managed to drive her car home this morning. We dug out the other cars later in the morning and at least made sure they were able to move onto the main part of the driveway. Debbie drove to work, Sarah picked up the Korean student who is staying with us, and Andy and I went to school, where I finished posting final grades. The snowfall broke records and may have exceeded a foot.
The public education establishment started giving us accreditation of schools and certification of teachers back in the post-Civil War era. Teachers College at Columbia University was founded in 1887. John Dewey’s “My Pedagogical Creed” was penned a decade later. The Bible was still part of the curriculum. This started to change with the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (1918), which opened the door to the amalgamation of various subjects together, such as the creation of social studies as a replacement for geography, civics, and history. The National Council for the Social Studies was founded in 1921. For two generations, assessment tests have been designed around Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956). This is also why we have educational psychologists: to ensure that our children are well-adjusted (a term that could easily have been borrowed from chiropractic).

John Dewey sought to secularize the curriculum and concentrate on the socialization of the curriculum. In Democracy in Education (1916), Dewey's emphasis on socialization came to the fore: “Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community” (163). As for this common end, Dewey's anti-Christian program of secularization is given particular attention in A Common Faith (1934). The problem with Christianity, he claims, is that it separates the sheep from the goats. Instead of religion, he offers open-mindedness. In his piece on "Open-Mindedness," Dewey wrote: "Efficiency in accomplishing ends which have been settled upon as unalterable can coexist with a narrowly opened mind. But intellectual growth means constant expansion of horizons and consequent formation of new purposes and new responses.” But G. K. Chesterton offered the perfect squelch for such postmodern drivel: "The point of having an open mind, like having an open mouth, is to close it on something solid."

So what are the results of all the attention that has been lavished on teacher education and certification, accreditation of schools, assessment of curricular standards, socialization of students, and the systematization of educational objectives? Johnny can't read, write, spell, or do simple math in his head, let alone have even a basic grasp of geography, history, or civics.

The Detroit public schools are singled out in this article, but they are only the worst sample drawn out of a rotten barrel. It should be evident, in an empirical sense, that this is the larger point that Walter Williams is making.

Mike Adams once again holds forth on one of his favorite subjects: sociology professors, especially those of the Marxist/feminist variety. His comments reminded me what feminists call "patriarchy" or "male chauvinism" may originate
in pagan Susa rather than in Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, Wittenberg, or Geneva. As Memuchan put it in Esther 1: For this deed of the queen [Vashti’s refusal to be flaunted before hoi polloi as a trophy worthy of a king] will become known to all the women, and their husbands will become contemptible in their eyes." Thus the battle of the sexes is engaged. The loss of face is equated with the loss of authority: perhaps quelling "the appetite to rule." If there is a deep ancestral memory to evoke, perhaps this is it. As Huey Long would have it: "Every man a king."

As Yoram Hazony notes on page 19 of his commentary on Esther: "Memuchan therefore offers the king a response calculated perfectly to reassert his battered sense of power [i.e., his Vashti-wounded amour propre]: Ahashverosh will at once (i) prove to Vashti and all his kingdom that he alone rules, and absolutely; (ii) annihilate the queen's challenge to his control forever by ensuring that she is never in a position to shame him again; and (iii) cement the adherence, gratitude and honor of the people by promulgating a decree which amounts to a gift of power to every adult male in the kingdom -- that same gesture Ahashverosh wished to achieve through the free drinking of the king's wine. Thus vindicated by law and handed back the leadership of all Persia, Ahashverosh responds enthusiastically [perhaps a play on spirits-filled]. The king issues the decree as proposed, publishing it in every language spoken in the empire and in every province, 'that every man should rule in his own house.'"

Today it is the feminists' ego that must be stroked. These feminists nurse a sense of betrayal because so many women choose to raise their own children rather than farm them out like Rousseau's foundlings. Their idea of "the general will" will remain unfulfilled as long as so many women choose to be "scabs" rather than join their union. As long as humanity chooses to "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," such feminists must content themselves with subduing and converting other people's children. Perhaps they will prove to be as fertile as the Shakers. Or, as John Maynard Keynes put it: "In the long run we are all dead."


A "panel of experts" has labeled Sarah Palin's remark about "death panels" to be the biggest lie of the year. See


And yet. . . . Harry Reid is proposing a new entitlement for long-term care that is going to further exacerbate the costs of medical practice and drive more healthcare providers out of the field at a time when the general population is aging. Now that medical ethics is increasingly utilitarian in its outlook ("the greater good for the greater number of people"), it appears that "death panels" are just waiting to be discovered by the policy entrepreneurs of tomorrow. Someone will start the ball rolling by "thinking the unthinkable" and, before long, governors will start talking about a "duty to die." But, wait, that already happened in the 1980s.
Consider the logic of Bastiat's legal plunder applied to the health-care bill. To be a successful instrument of revolution, health care must be mandated for all. No one may opt out of Rousseau's "general will." We must be "forced to be free," just as we are in the case of what is called "compulsory free public education." [I just love that phrase; it is so insensible, so insulated from the least hint of irony]. Bastiat would observe that, once health care is universally mandated ("universal plunder"), all of us would be co-conspirators. All would now be ensnared in a collective guilty conscience. Who would dare object to a program from which he has been deriving unearned benefits? This is the very reason why gangs initiate their new members by having them commit a crime. This is the Chicago way and it is now going national.

The peril is evident on the other side of the ledger, as well. Just as subsidization of health care produces greater malingering (one way of describing Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" as applied to "free" medical care), the costs of providing health care equally for all must escalate and rationing inevitably must follow, along with the prospect of "death panels" when the financial burden becomes too great. No wonder Igor Shafarevich claimed that socialism compasses the death of humanity. For deep ecologists, that's just the remedy!

The Senate bill has become a Democratic shibboleth as well as something of a magical incantation: perhaps something that presages a long spell in the political wilderness, or so one may hope.

Wednesday 23


It appears that the balance of power is finally shifting in the Middle East in favor of the "strong horse" (the Iran-Syria axis) over the "weak horse." Turkey has already been strengthening its ties with Iran and Syria. Saad Hariri, whose father was evidently assassinated through Syrian connivance, is making his peace with Iran and Syria. Some observers have been predicting this strategic shift for some time now. Time and tide wait for no man. And it appears that American foreign policy is controlled by no man.


A solid wall of opposition to American policy is forming before our very eyes. We have been playing poker but the Iranians have been playing chess.


This completes the sweep of U.S. troubles from the Near East to the Middle East to South Asia. Our strategy in the first area was edging Syria out of Lebanon. In the second area it was containing Iran and protecting the Saudi regime. In the third area it has been propping up the central government in Pakistan because
state failure is such a nightmarish prospect. Afghanistan is most important for its strategic location between Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asia. But the collapse of Pakistan would effectively end American leadership throughout the region.

http://www.thefire.org/article/11422.html

One small step away from ideological screening for teacher trainees in Minnesota. This is a follow-up to an earlier story from last month.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/charlesmoore/6840557/Our-human-rights-culture-has-now-become-a-tyranny.html

More judicial meddling for our own good: A 3500 year old precedent defining who may be considered a Jew is overturned by Britain's Supreme Court. Kenneth Minogue has referred to such thinking as "political moralism." It is simply the latest form of despotism. In fact, Paul Rahe has published a book entitled Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift. The Court's ruling may even be the latest application of the idea of mortmain (dead hand) that restricted religious endowments.

The purpose of limited government is to protect political pluralism and prevent tyranny. John Marshall once remarked that "the power to tax involves the power to destroy." But so does the power to redefine, as an assistant attorney general, Zachariah Montgomery, who served under Grover Cleveland, noted of the bowdlerization of Webster's Dictionary in Poison Drops in the Federal Senate. Come to think of it: That is a great title for the current health care bill, now that the Hippocratic Oath has joined our Constitution (read Montgomery!) as a dead letter.


Here is one of the rotten fruits of the children's rights movement. [See The Best Interests of the Child series, another outpouring of Rousseau’s general will]. Sweden, which claims to adhere to a middle way, appears to be the parens patriae not only of all orphans but also exercises its own version of mortmain. It can vacate the parentage of a child in the interest of strict religious conformity.

This reminds me of the old Soviet era joke about a Russian school inspector asking a boy about his parents:

"Who is your father?"
"The Soviet Union."
"Who is your mother?"
"The communist party."
"And what do you want to be when you grow up?"
"An orphan."

Thursday 24
Michael Gerson summarizes the costs to taxpayers of the health care bill. Instead of "pie in the sky when you die," it is "pay to play" some fine day in the future. That's the Chicago way: the rules of the road along this Fabian Freeway.

The audacity of it all is that the program kicks in only after the president and both this Congress and the next may be voted out of office. The whole maneuver appears to be a feint. The bill itself is simply a “loss leader,” a “promissory note” whose terms will be spelled out in the future.

So what about those seven new taxes? We might say: Read our lips, no new taxes. But we are now under a new regime. As Rehoboam put it to the people: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (1 K. 12:14).

What is the game plan? Not only is the health care bill a Trojan horse, it is a veritable Fifth Column. The taxes will consume our fortunes for at least three years and, as a result, become heavily fortified against all challenges. After all, we will have spent the money for nothing if we dismantle the program in 2013. The psychology of sunk costs will eventually make it politically untouchable, like Social Security.

This is the kind of thinking that has prevented us from reforming Social Security and Medicare. But guess what? To even talk about reform shows that we operate under an illusion. Medicare was never going to be reformed anyway. Instead, it is going to be emptied, the same way our Constitution is being emptied of all of its security features. Eventually the same will finally with Social Security. It is a sacred cash cow designed to entrench the New Deal and protect its flanks. In principle it is a kind of tontine, only it is a tontine in which the undertaker inherits. Or is it the underwriter? No wonder Congress exempts itself from its own laws! Robert Samuelson has even raised the prospect of national bankruptcy.

Yes, Sen. Ben Nelson ended up accepting a cheap date contrary to his intentions. Only it appears to be at the Piggly Wiggly meat counter. And it will be subject to further negotiation once the conference committee tries to reconcile the irreconcilable. Count me among the Irreconcilables.

We Westerners should become better acquainted with the Islamic concept of taqiyya: deception. Different translations of official documents are nothing new. Some of our treaties with the Barbary States evidently contained substantive textual discrepancies, such as a reference to the United States as a Christian nation in the Arabic version. As I recall, this observation was made in a book by Robert Cord.
The practice of taqiyya might also help us understand what has been happening lately in exotic places like Copenhagen, the University of East Anglia, and Capitol Hill.

http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/climategate-how-to-follow-the-money/?print=1

In this rather detailed analysis, Charles Martin shows how legal plunder is going global in a Huey Long-style share the wealth scam. Bastiat attributes the motive for legal plunder to two factors: stupid greed and false philanthropy. Both may be seen at work here.

The bottom line is that the Copenhagen Treaty, although it is considered non-binding, keeps the carbon offset market afloat. Thus the credits have not yet reached the "worthless as a Continental" stage. But, like greenbacks, these credits are taking on a life of their own. "Cap and trade" follows its own inner logic apart from any real environmental benefit.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/KL24Ag01.html

Today David Goldman (Spengler) offers us a two-fer: an appeal to geopolitical realism and an appeal to financial realism.

These days a discussion of the implications of waning American hegemony is always the best place to start a discussion of geopolitical strategy. Although Spengler concludes with a summary of what should or could be done, everything he recommends hinges on a degree of realism and resolve that is lacking in this Administration. What we are seeing cannot be wished away.

The Pax Americana is quickly ending and this Administration will do little to fortify it. Restoring a Pax Americana, once it has passed, would then require a commitment of resources and a degree of ruthlessness such as would make the Reagan-era strategy to defeat the Soviets appear mild by comparison. The interregnum of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter saw the geopolitical advantage start to shift toward the Soviet and Chinese blocs.

Today, a new Ahmadinejad-Chavez-Lula bloc is the rising axis. Whether it reaches higher levels of influence in the future may depend on how far Russia and China are willing to encourage or support them. I suspect that all share a nearly bottomless desire to see American policy thwarted and its power curbed.

http://blog.atimes.net/?p=1287

Here are David Goldman's "Top 10 Reasons to Expect the Yield Curve to Flatten." A robust recovery does not appear anywhere on the horizon.

http://www.miniatur-wunderland.com/

Urban architecture, landscape gardening, and panoramic vistas wedded to German organization and efficiency. What's not to love? If the Roman concept of the cursus honorum is correct, these brothers may be ready to run a city or a country next.
Here is a commentary on David Broder's critique of the health care bill ("A Health-Care Victory That Stinks"). It also has a link to the original column. The following line recalls Yoram Hazony's discussion of idolatry in The Dawn:

"He [Harry Reid] reduced the negotiations to his own level of transactional morality. Incapable of summoning his colleagues to statesmanship, he made the deals look as crass and parochial as many of them were."

"Transactional morality" here stands in the place "moral relativism" and "parochial" for "local truths" on pp. 63-64 of The Dawn:

"Both in thought and in action, the system of the idolaters was what we refer to in today's terms as moral relativism: The belief that in every time and place, human suffering is governed by local truths relevant to each place and each people, and ultimately emanating from the perspective and the will of local, individual men. Judaism came into being as the categorical denial of the effectiveness of such local prescriptions as well as the desirability and permissibility of acting on the basis of such claims. Instead, it insisted that the appearance of evil is governed by universal principles determined by the nature of mankind and creation, as established by the Eternal, God of Israel, whose Decalogue opens with a comprehensive rejection of the relativistic epistemology of idolatry."