



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

A Revolutionary Manifesto **by Anthony Gregory**

[The Revolution: A Manifesto](#) by Ron Paul (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008); 173 pages.

Ron Paul's grassroots campaign — a decentralized undertaking that always had much more to do with the principles of the American Revolution, liberty, free enterprise, and peace than with narrowly defined electoral success — has shaken this nation, and his new book, *The Revolution: A Manifesto*, rightfully reached the very top of the bestsellers' list of that establishment bulwark *The New York Times*.

Some have lamented that the book did not come out before the primaries wound down. But the Ron Paul *Revolution* is about ideas, and here we have today's classical-liberal program and philosophy, traditional yet never before more relevant, summed up in well fewer than 200 pages.

Of course, no book can cover everything and be agreeable to everyone, while adhering to libertarian principles and yet appealing to wide audiences. There is no one work to be read to the exclusion of all else; and yet this addition to the great literature of the libertarian movement stands aside the best introductions to the ideas of liberty and is perfect for what America faces right now. While it is an excellent book for the fledgling libertarian or the casually interested, it is also a germane and insightful read for anyone interested in freedom.

Ron Paul has often spoken passionately about American foreign policy, and this book covers the topic with precision and force. He takes on the war on Iraq, which he has opposed since 1998, when it was foreshadowed in a congressional resolution, and warns against the immoral and unspeakably foolhardy drive to war with Iran. The book goes further: arguments for the war on terror are broken down and refuted; the theory of blowback is explained; modern war myths are exploded; the American empire is described and condemned; national-security-state violations of civil liberties, due process, the Fourth Amendment, and habeas corpus are exposed; the unitary-executive and preemptive-war doctrines are uprooted with reasoned, moral clarity; the agendas of Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon Johnson, and George W. Bush are discredited; and the

old liberal/Old Right opposition to foreign war and foreign intervention is reclaimed. Discussing the horrific and widely ignored matter of imperial detentions and torture, Paul offers up a stirring assessment:

It is time for us to wake up. We have allowed the president to abduct an American citizen on American soil, declare him an “enemy combatant” (a charge the accused has no power to contest, which is rendered by the president in secret and is unreviewable), detain him indefinitely, deny him legal counsel, and subject him to inhumane treatment. How can we not be concerned about such a thing? Have we been so blinded by propaganda that we have forgotten basic American principles and legal guarantees that extend back to our British forebears eight centuries ago? This is an outrageous offense against America and her Constitution. Claims that these powers will be exercised only against the bad guys are not worth listening to.

Leviathan’s attack on freedom

This, as well as his greater treatment of foreign policy, national security, civil liberties, and empire, is nothing out of step with what he said in every single national debate, yet the deeper detail and explication are alone worth the price of the book.

Ron Paul describes the American leviathan’s steady and century-long attack on free markets, civil liberties, and the Constitution. He defends the principles of free enterprise and gives examples of how energy, health care, and other markets have been distorted and violated by the state. The sections on Social Security and education are grand. He has a principled and compelling defense of free trade and its blessings, countering both the belligerence of protectionism and the corporate statism of managed international trade agreements. His discussion of immigration focuses on the economic aspects and indicts the welfare state.

On the drug war, he shows his profound understanding of an issue that has not been in the national debate, almost at all, for the last several decades. His revisionist historical narrative teaches of the racist and propagandistic origins of drug prohibition, and along the way Paul gives the ethical, constitutional, and economic arguments for drug freedom. The reader is made to acknowledge the tragedy of this failed crusade and is offered the libertarian way out.

Speaking of issues neglected on the national scene, the subject of money and banking has not been anything resembling a campaign issue or household topic for five generations. But Ron Paul’s campaign has managed to educate the public about this issue that, however marginalized it has been, must be widely discussed and debated if we are to understand the nature of the economy and the warfare state. One of his great successes has been generating interest — especially among many thousands of college students — in monetary policy. This is a sign that this issue will become more appreciated in the near future.

While Paul was able to touch on this on many occasions during debates and interviews, there are some complexities and a historical context one must grasp to fully understand the fundamentals of the Federal Reserve and inflation. The book has a wonderful treatment of how the central bank makes us poorer, finances tyranny and corporate welfare, and brings on the business cycle and recession. What's more, he does all this with such clarity and depth that it will be impossible to honestly and intelligently dismiss it as nothing but crankiness, paranoia, and gold fetishism, as some have done in the past.

The issue of abortion

One issue contentious to Americans and many libertarians is that of abortion, and this is explored in what is perhaps one of the more controversial sections in the book. Ron Paul is pro-life, but, unlike much of the pro-life movement, he explains his position without yielding to demonization or total deference to government power. Libertarians, as well as people who genuinely want to stem abortion, can see his principled thoughtfulness and unambiguous sincerity. Devoted to constitutionalism and having delivered thousands of babies and witnessed unsettling spectacles of late-term abortion, he stands out in distinction from the many hypocritical "pro-life" Republicans who use abortion as a tool to grab political power and campaign money, talking about the value of life on one day and voting for war spending on the next.

To the consternation of many on both sides, Paul the constitutionalist does not want the federal government to set abortion policy for the 50 states, and believes that in the end government force is not the answer.

Ultimately, law or no law, it is going to be up to us as parents, as clergy, and as citizens — in the way we raise our children, how we interact and talk with our friends and neighbors, and the good example we give — to bring about changes to our culture toward greater respect for life.

On abortion as on the other issues, Paul speaks in accord with his view that politics is not the ultimate solution to America's problems, and that what is instead needed is a revolution of ideas. After that, the political world will follow to reflect public culture. Whether it concerns the question of abortion, racism, social strife, economic turmoil, foreign dictators, bad local government, or the problem of tyranny itself, the solution is not to be found in political life, and surely not in Washington, D.C., but rather in social cooperation, free exchange of ideas and goods, peace and friendship between neighbors and nations, adherence to moral principles, and respect for the individual.

A libertarian manifesto

At the same time, the book has its priorities right. Not neglecting the importance of principle in philosophy and remarkably comprehensive in treating an impressive litany of topics, *The Revolution* nevertheless provides some realistic yet fundamental reforms that can be taken with minimal pain and shock to American society. If not these precise reforms, something must be done soon about those areas Paul most highly prioritizes and passionately targets — the empire, military-industrial complex, unbridled economic profligacy, and the unconstitutional national police state — if libertarians are to reverse the trend toward full-blown authoritarianism and reclaim their freedom.

We can understand now why this book has become a blockbuster even as the GOP was readying itself to crown McCain. The Ron Paul revolution — characterized by spontaneous populist activism, ideological discourse, and the emphasis on love and peace — transcends the political landscape and Electoral College. It transcends time, proud of its historical roots and yet totally attuned to today's problems. It transcends party and superficial political labels, offering much that would appeal to liberals, conservatives, independents; people of all ages, classes, and demographic background; constitutionalists, radicals, and freedom fighters of all stripes.

For those who after this short and powerful read are thinking of joining the struggle for liberty and learning more about the libertarian tradition, its ideas, and the issues, Paul closes with a neat, succinct bibliography of recommended works. He points his readers to books on philosophy; treatises on economics by such brilliant minds as Ludwig von Mises; policy analyses published by such outfits as The Future of Freedom Foundation; historical tracts by Robert Higgs and others; and recent books critiquing the empire in great detail. Most important, the book as a whole sets the reader up to pursue these ideas in any of uncountable directions. The book is intellectually satisfying yet elicits an unquenched thirst to learn ever more.

The U.S. empire crumbling and reviled, the war on terror distrusted and ridiculed, the housing collapse and rising prices eliciting new public hunger for answers — now more than ever libertarians need to reach their compatriots, remind them of their birthright that is liberty, and get them excited about the movement to take it back. With enough facts to avoid only giving topics superficial treatment, yet with enough pith and punch to inspire people after an afternoon's worth of reading to dedicate themselves to the cause, Ron Paul's manifesto is the right book at the right time.

Anthony Gregory is a research analyst at the [Independent Institute](#), a policy adviser for the Future of Freedom Foundation, and a columnist at [LewRockwell.com](#). Anthony's website is [AnthonyGregory.com](#).