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Bludgeoning Heroes and Building False Idols Honoring Himself No Longer Works for Trump



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President Donald Trump's newest multimillion dollar folly is revealed: plans to transform his West Palm Beach golf club into a presidential retreat to take over the role of Camp David. He has also now suggested naming an ocean, the Atlantic or Pacific (he didn't decide which), "The Trump Ocean." Apparently, meme coins, the Kennedy Center, White House Ballrooms and Helipads were not enough.

This all follows an August Supreme Court decision that allowed Trump's White House ballroom construction to continue has cleared the path for his next political bequest — a 250-foot-tall golden triumphal arch.

The president doesn't seem to realize you can't bludgeon your way to being a hero, and you can't build false idols.

The Second Commandment finds an ironic echo in each of Trump's recent controversial ventures: a golden arch that will block major D.C. monuments, demolition of the 200-year-old East Wing and a failed attempt to rename the Kennedy Center, among others.

No matter the translation, Exodus 20:4 strictly warns against creating idols to yourself:

Berean Standard Bible: "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath."

King James Bible: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

New King James Version: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

An analysis of the motives behind each project reveals that they are not merely infrastructure. Trump is creating edifices to himself, or "graven images," in an attempt to immortalize his presidency in the American historical imagination.

In doing so, the president effectively overshadows the work of true American heroes that have made significant contributions to our society. There is a difference between putting your name on a building and leaving a mark on history.

North Carolina's William "Billy" Graham is an exemplar of an American hero who has earned the public's veneration. Graham was an evangelist, Southern Baptist minister and civil rights advocate whose powerful sermons garnered national attention. He was born on a farm near Charlotte and built his organization's headquarters in the city. In 2024, he was posthumously immortalized with a statue -- that he did not ask for --that was unveiled in the U.S. Capitol.

Despite a complicated political history, Graham's feats are undeniable. His captivating preaching style and raw charisma allowed him to attract royalty and presidents to seek his counsel. He occasionally used his platform to denounce segregation and encourage racial tolerance in the Jim Crow South.

Graham's contributions to American society go further than his theology, and he earned the privilege of having his statue represent North Carolina.

The president's self-entitled washing of history seemingly aims to forget the heroes of both the past and present — renowned names like Billy Graham and John Kennedy.

The public chooses its own heroes and decides how they will be remembered, not a singular person.

Trump's approval ratings, on the other hand, support the idea that his recent projects function as self-praising edifices rather than mementos of a great presidency.

The president has defended his controversial constructions by citing national security needs, physical deterioration of existing structures and the desire to create grand monuments. Supporters of these actions echo Trump's security concerns, arguing the need for things like an "impenetrable ballroom."

A recent Truth Social post by the president announced that the golden arch, originally proposed as an observational deck, will now house a one-of-a-kind military complex for reasons of "national security."

The president's desire to create graven images is antithetical to Christian values.

History is what separates monuments from legacies, and history will remember the legacy that created each monument.

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