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From The Editor

Fie on Happenstance

The *Washington Post* for October 8 headlined "Russia's Night on the Brink." A subhead to the article reported "Fate of the Country Was Decided Largely by Chance."

Whether this judgment was that of authors Fred Hiatt, Margaret Shapiro, and Lee Hockstader or only the headline writer's is not conclusive. The article's most pertinent observation, credited to *Post* correspondents, reports that the "overwhelming mood in Yeltsin's government during the uprising was one of confusion, fear and hope in the power of happenstance."

Let my judgment be clearly attributable and unequivocal: fie on the "power of happenstance." As editor of *Liberty* I've too often seen the hand of God in history to credit chance or happenstance. As with Gorbachev's victory over plotters so with Yeltsin's: my reaction was to ask, "I wonder what the 'Prince of the kings of the earth' will do about this!"

We have seen.

Gary Ross, U.S. Congress liaison and correspondent for *Liberty*, was in Moscow during the uprising. *Liberty* editors usually are pretty close to where history is being made, particularly if it involves church-state affairs,

as the Russian uprising did. In fact, Ross, B. B. Beach, head of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty and formerly chairman of the *Liberty* editorial board, and I had been in Moscow in May working with the Moscow chapter of the International Religious Liberty Association. New restrictions on religious freedom being enacted by parliament and



Photo by Dennis Crews

Dr. Gary Ross: barbed wire from "Russia's Night on the Brink"

subsequently placed in President Yeltsin's hands for signing, could have severely damaged Protestant interests (see "Of Dreams and Songs to Sing," *Liberty*, September-October 1993).

Parliament's pressure on Yeltsin is transparent in the words of Orthodox priest Vyacheslav Polosin, chairman of the Committee on Freedom of Conscience. As reported in an August 4 *Pravda* interview: "The President and executive

powers are now facing a clear-cut choice. This is actually the first legal act of the Supreme Soviet that specifically guards the national interests of Russia. The President must choose either his own people—its tradition, lifestyle, interests—or yield to the blackmail of foreign politicians. This is a very symbolic choice and I would even call it sacred."

In August Yeltsin returned the legislation to parliament, asking that the prospective law be brought into harmony with provisions in the international religious freedom documents to which Russia is signatory. Polosin's committee actually made the restrictions more harsh, and parliament returned the document to Yeltsin for his signature. The deadline: September 4. On September 21 Yeltsin dissolved the parliament.

I do not imply that Yeltsin dissolved parliament because of its revisions to the 1990 Law of Religious Freedom. No question, Yeltsin needed and sought Orthodox support; considerable question existed as to whether he could survive without it.

But many other issues dominated the headlines. Economic conditions. The country's moral collapse, with crime extending from the street vendor to the

offices of the Kremlin. Armed conflicts in the former Russian republics. The need for foreign aid. Nascent nationalism. Parliamentary obfuscation. And resurgent Communism. Each issue worth a revolution. And each worth the intervention of the Prince of the kings of the earth. But none more so than the threat to religious freedom.

As I write this column, Ross has just returned from Moscow. He sports the shell-shocked look of a historian who has unexpectedly witnessed a historic event. His meeting with Genrich Alexandrovich Mihailov, Yeltsin's director of Confessional Affairs, turned out to be incidental to a revolution. From a post near the barricades Ross watched the guns of October. His comments: "Seldom does one see, within days, a revolution and a counter-revolution, along with the death of one constitution, the 'aborting' of another, and projected elections that will determine the fate of a third.

"The first constitution was, of course, the 1990 document; the 'aborted' constitution was in process of birth by the hardliner parliament, and the third is Yeltsin's, which he says he will submit to the people in a soon-coming referendum."

And what was the significance of the Yeltsin

victory? Says Ross: "First, restrictive amendments to the 1990 religious liberty law, which were protested by much of the religious world, perished with the parliament.

"My second judgment comes from a Russian guide who responded to the naive query of an American visitor: 'When did the communist era end?' His answer: 'Three days ago.'"

The prophet Isaiah referred to Cyrus, a heathen king, as God's "Messiah," a term used only twice in the Old Testament. Cyrus was accorded this honorific because he acted to set God's people free—free to return to Jerusalem where they might freely worship their God. Other rulers—Nebuchadnezzar, Darius,

Artaxerxes come to mind—receive heaven's accolades because of actions beneficial to God's people. Yeltsin sent word to Protestant leaders that he would not sign the restrictive law sent him by parliament. His proposed constitution contains guarantees of religious freedom consistent with those in international accords.

So, did the "Prince of the kings of the earth" act through Gorbachev and Yeltsin to set His people free, whatever their denominational affiliations?

I will not insist on my conclusion. But fie on chance! Fie on happenstance!

After all, Coincidence is the name of the anonymous God.—R.R.H.

From Our Readers

Animal Sacrifices: A Hands Off Reply

How sad that a group who claims to represent Christianity would agree with the High Court that animals can be sacrificed in the name of religion ("The *Hialeah* Animal Sacrifice Case," March-April). I'm sure that God and Christ would not agree with you since Babalu Aye Santeria is no more than a cult.

You should witness Santeria animal sacrifice. Early one morning, in Central Park in New York City, I was walking my poodles when we came upon a chicken running wildly in circles. It had been debeked by a group practicing Santeria. Another Saturday, in Central Park, my poodles and I were in the restroom when a priestess—well over six feet tall—emerged from the stall. She wore a headdress with a half moon down her forehead, a long skirt, and over her shoulder she had a large straw bag with a shriveled human hand hanging from it. She walked like a zombie in a swaying gait. I asked her if the hand was real and she replied that it was. She informed me that she was a high priestess in her religion.

What if an off-shoot of the ancient Incas, or Egyptians—those who

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The God-given right of religious liberty is best exercised when church and state are separate.

Government is God's agency to protect individual rights and to conduct civil affairs; in exercising these responsibilities, officials are entitled to respect and cooperation.

Religious liberty entails freedom of conscience: to worship or not to worship; to profess, practice and promulgate religious beliefs or to change them. In exercising these rights, however, one must respect the equivalent rights of all others.

Attempts to unite church and state are opposed to the interests of each, subversive of human rights and potentially persecuting in character; to oppose union, lawfully and honorably, is not only the citizen's duty but the essence of the Golden Rule—to treat others as one wishes to be treated.

practiced human sacrifice—were to surface today. Would they also have the right to practice religion in their own way?

May all of you be reborn an animal to be sacrificed!
SAL GIOVANIS
New York, New York

[There are two fallacies in your argument. First, to say that allowing animal sacrifices will lead to human sacrifices is like saying that a drink of water will lead to alcoholism. Second, the High Court would differentiate between sacrificing a chicken for religious purposes and chopping off a human hand for the same reason. Also, what is the difference between being “reborn as an animal to be sacrificed” or as one to be eaten? None (as far as the animal is concerned), which helps explain why the Court voted as it did.—Eds.]

Bill Clinton and the Moral Vacuum in the White House

Leafing through the pages of my July-August *Liberty*, I was dismayed at the two articles discussing the moral qualifications (or lack of them) of President Clinton.

Foundational to the premise of both was a comparison between the reported moral failings of President Clinton and the

clearly depicted sins of King David. Certainly, they surmised, if God could forgive adultery, conspiracy, premeditated murder, and a coverup eclipsing Watergate, then He can forgive President Clinton’s past moral lapses and peccadilloes. Personal conduct is only one measure of the character of a nation’s leaders. What about the nature of their public policies? Do they promote respect for morality and personal responsibility, or do they erode beliefs in principles of right and wrong? King David’s entire tenure as ruler was established upon teaching and upholding morality, not employing every new tactic and subterfuge designed to lead the people into licentiousness and perversion.

In the machinations of the Clinton administration, we find the exact opposite: Militant homosexuality is courted and rewarded; abortion is protected, expanded, and financed with public tax revenues; children are taught all about sex (except, of course, the responsibilities and consequences) and given condoms to facilitate sexual experimentation; “artists” (sexually arrested adolescents and perverts would be more appropriate titles) are given public money to promote vulgar filth and offend Christians, and the pursuit of confiscatory tax policies guaranteed to bankrupt this

country. Moral equivalence between King David and President Clinton? Wanna buy a bridge?

DAVID MICELI
Spencer, Tennessee

Slick Willie

I was sorry to see *Liberty*, a magazine I have respected and supported, join in kissing up to Slick Willie, alias Bill Clinton (especially by trotting out tired old James Michener as a stalking horse).

Michener and Johnsson used two pieces of specious sophistry to bolster their drooling support of Clinton: that King David lusted after the wife (Bathsheba) of another man (Uriah), and had him killed so he could have her, and when he was old and cold, a young virgin was brought to David so she could lie with him and keep him warm.

With that background, Johnsson piously proclaimed, “Bill Clinton is more qualified morally to lead the United States than King David was to rule over Israel.”

There are several things wrong with that argument:

1. David’s sins were committed *after* he became king. Clinton’s were committed *before* he became president.

2. David, who had shown a kind, generous heart prior

to being named king, was selected by God. Clinton was chosen in an election by the people.

3. When the prophet Nathan braced David about murder and adultery, he immediately confessed. Clinton has never owned up to any of his sins.

Clinton has taken to closing his speeches with “God bless America.” Does he really believe God will bless what he is doing to America? We’ll find out.

Fire may not come down from heaven as it did on Mount Carmel with God condemning Ahab’s idolatry and sanctioning the prophet Elijah’s morality.

Fire and brimstone may not fall as it did on Sodom and Gomorrah for the wicked homosexuality Bill Clinton is eagerly promoting in America.

But judgment, sooner or later, will come.

JESSE J. MERRELL
Washington, D.C.

Faulty Analogy

Michener’s analogy between David and Bill Clinton misses the mark completely. Michener left out the most important part of the story of David and Bathsheba: his confession and repentance. When confronted by Nathan, David admitted: “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13). God, in His grace, forgave David his sin.

Unlike David, Clinton

never acknowledged his sin, and not having acknowledged his sin, he obviously is in no position to express repentance.

President Clinton may yet make a great leader. While I disagree with his politics, I do not view him as an antichrist, or other similar evil incarnate. And I join Michener in prayer for our nation and our president.

MARC BOND
Anchorage, Alaska

Blasphemy

If Bill Clinton is God's man in the White House, we are of all nations most miserable. To compare him to King David is blasphemy.

President Clinton blatantly ignored God and his own personal teachings and upbringing in the Southern Baptist Church by embracing the homosexual and pro-choice movements. So much so that the Southern Baptist Convention made an effort to withdraw fellowship from both Clinton and vice president Al Gore because of their positions.

JERE ALLAN
Blythe, California

Removes Restraints

President Clinton's moral agenda, particularly with regard to abortion and homosexual rights, is well

known. A president who rushes to remove all restraints on abortion does not honor the Creator of life, nor can he view homosexual behavior as normative and push for its acceptance while honoring the God of the Bible.

I won't be so arrogant as to say that Bill Clinton CANNOT be God's man in the White House. But I will say there is little to suggest, at least to this point, that he is now or ever will be.

J. THOMAS BISSET
General Manager
WRBS Radio
Baltimore, Maryland

Rigid Ideology

After 12 years of disparaging presidents Reagan and Bush, *Liberty* is now calling for generosity of spirit in politics. Sadly, bigness has been scuttled with Bill Clinton's hoarse denunciations of the "rich" Republicans, the military, conservative Christians, foreign leaders, members of the media, and anyone who does not believe in his rigid ideology.

When will *Liberty* publish articles concerning Clinton's anti-right-to-work positions? What about liberal Democratic efforts in Congress to stifle free speech on the radio and the administration's designs to undermine the traditional family and promote "alternative" lifestyles. Are you going to address Clinton's

potential affinity for taxing churches?

Model citizenship requires first that a president be a leader who is honest, loyal, and principled. Clinton has three and a half years to become this type of leader in public if not in private.

MICHAEL TOMLINSON
Wake Village, Texas

Silver Lining

I would like to remind you that while David, at age 16 went to the front lines for his country and killed Goliath, Bill Clinton dodged the draft and demonstrated against his country.

You are right. Bill Clinton is our leader and we must respect him for the office that he holds. The silver lining is that throughout history, God has used both good and evil people to accomplish His will for mankind. I'm sure He can do it one more time.

OWEN T. RUGG
Springfield, Illinois

Comparing Bill Clinton to King David is like comparing the prophet Elijah to James Jones simply because they were both "prophets."

JESSE A. KELLER, Attorney
Florence, Alabama

God's Man?

I was appalled and outraged at the implications

in the article "Is Clinton God's Man in the White House?" The neo-Marxist Clinton ideology is one of enslaving people with dependency, not freeing them. Unlike Clinton's, God's ideology reveres human life. I do not perceive God to be a liar, so why would he put a liar in the White House as "His man"?

MARK L. GABRIELSON
Enumclaw, Washington

You're Joking!

William G. Johnsson's article "Is Clinton God's Man in the White House?" was surely written in jest.

KARL J. KOLGER
Attorney
Richmond, Virginia

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Theology

A Church-State Debate in a Restaurant Parking Lot

As I was pulling out of a restaurant parking lot in my “previously owned” Toyota Tercel, a man motioned me to roll down my window. “How come you have that bumper sticker?” he asked, pointing to the rear of my car, where a white bumper sticker with black letters urged “Separate Church and State.” “That view doesn’t fit the gospel.”

How had he—I peered at him again. Oh. The man in the restaurant. As I’d paid the bill, I’d said “God bless you” to the woman behind the register. He’d overheard, then seen the bumper sticker, and now was asking whether I was a Christian. When I said yes, he seemed surprised.

Now, I don’t have a ponytail down my back, nor was I wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the face of Karl Marx or Jean-Paul Sartre. Yet this stranger seemed skeptical about my Christianity. As he confronted me in the parking lot, I understood where he was coming from.

“Well, brother,” I answered, “one doesn’t have to be against Christianity, or religion in general, to believe in separation of church and state. Actually, church-state separation is the best protection of religion.”

“But the Soviet Union had separation of church and state,” he retorted, “and look what it did to Christians.”

“Yeah,” I answered, “but Communism wanted to annihilate the church. True separation means that noninterference of the state in the church and vice versa, certainly not what the Soviets had, which separated the church from society. It’s not church-state separation that leads to intolerance, but the dominion of one over the other or the joint action of both that has caused religious persecution. Separation stops that from happening.”

BY BRIAN JONES

This Christian patriot went back inside unconvinced.

Since then, I have thought about our talk, and have wondered why so many Christians are hostile to church-state separation, especially when Jesus Himself—by His words and deeds—taught principles that are best expressed by keeping church and state separate.

First, Jesus believed that religion and government have different spheres of authority, the basic principle behind church-state separation. “Render therefore unto Caesar,” Jesus said, “the things that are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In that succinct sentence, Jesus established the concept of church-state separation.

Unlike those who would establish religion by law, which happens when church and state unite, Jesus taught that His kingdom was not an earthly one, and that His church should never use force to establish it. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said. “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” (John 18:36).

When the Pharisees asked about the kingdom of God, Jesus answered, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21). Obviously, Christ’s kingdom was not legislatively decreed, nor did it come by political activism. As a spiritual entity, it was by nature separate from the state.

Jesus also opposed punishing those who refused to follow His ways, another principle best protected by keeping church and state apart. After being rebuffed by Samaritan villagers, His disciples asked if Jesus would “command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them” (Luke 9:54). Jesus responded: “Ye know not

Brian Jones is a freelance writer residing in Frametown, West Virginia.



what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (verses 55, 56).

Not only did Jesus refuse to attack those who rejected Him, He did nothing to coerce the conscience, something the church is prone to do when united with governmental authority. A rich young ruler rejected Christ's counsel to sell all that he owned and then follow Him. Jesus knew the consequences of his decision, but He never threatened the young man, nor did He ask the state to coerce him into conformity.

Indeed, Jesus said that the church was to expect persecution, not to inflict it. "If they have persecuted me," He warned, "they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Jesus warned His followers that prior to His second coming, they would be slain, betrayed, put into prisons, and "brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12). Obviously, Jesus envisioned His faithful church being persecuted by the state, not united with it.

Ultimately, God Himself will deal with the spiritually disobedient; therefore, He doesn't need the state to do it for Him. "And shall not God," Jesus said, "avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them

speedily" (Luke 18:7, 8).

My friend in the parking lot didn't understand that Jesus authorized no government to usher in His reign of righteousness. Jesus showed that His church did not need the power of the state to help preach the gospel. And,

knowing humanity's intolerance concerning religious issues, Jesus never commissioned anyone to coerce another into religious conformity.

Of course, Jesus Himself knew firsthand the dangers of mixing church and state: He was killed when the religious power of His day, uniting with the state, hung Him on a cross. No wonder Jesus taught principles of religious freedom that can be best expressed by separation of church and state.

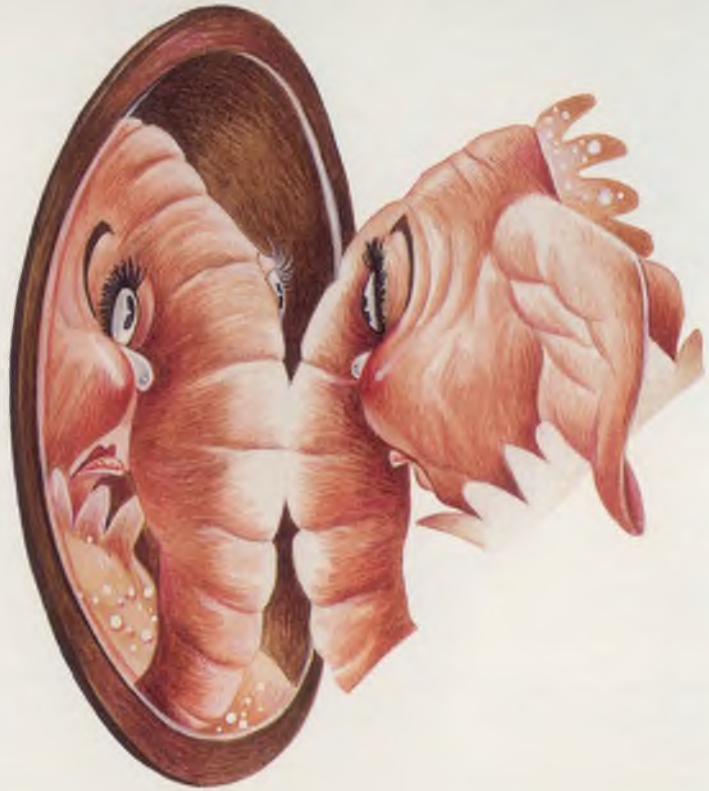
Like the fellow in the parking lot, many Christians don't understand the principles behind church-state separation. They see it as hostile to religion, when, in fact, separation is the best protection for the religious expression of all faiths.

Fortunately, some Christians appreciate the importance of church-state separation, such as the woman from whom I bought the Toyota. Indeed, though my parking lot interrogator gave me a hard time about the bumper sticker, I hadn't even put it there.

It came with the car.



MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE



W

hen the New Right decided that marriage would advance its political aspirations, it had to wed the Republicans. After all, its only other option would have aborted their babies and given it AIDS.

It was never love at first sight. Both simply needed each other. And now, in the aftermath of the 1992 election, many within the Republican Party would like to see this union, formed “partly of conviction, partly of convenience,”¹ end in divorce.

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University, Berrien
Springs, Michigan.*

BY DANIEL J. DRAZEN

"Why should we reward the Pat Buchanans, Pat Robertsons, and Jerry Falwells with anything but a kick in the pants?" said James Smith, grandson of former Republican National Committee chair Louise Smith. "They have done nothing for the Republican Party except turn it into a platform for pro-life and 'Hee Haw' visionaries . . . [who] seek to recast the party in exclusionary values, dripping with hatred."²

Obviously, this was no marriage made in heaven. For most of the twentieth century, the Republican Party was defined by its positions on limited government spending and anti-Communism, not abortion and school vouchers. Nevertheless, fundamentalists who had become disillusioned by four years of Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter in the White House deserted the Democrats. They looked to the Republican Party to enact their social agenda. To them, the party was a means to an end.

Republicans, however, concerned with implementing broad conservative changes in fiscal policy, weren't that interested in the social agenda. When party operatives looked at the fundamentalists, they didn't see prophets showing them the paths of righteousness, but only "votes, donations, and political carriers of water and hewers of wood."³

Ronald Reagan was the great matchmaker. Relying on the truism that "a fundamentalist is an evangelical who's angry," he pressed all the evangelical hot buttons: opposition to abortion, legislated school prayer, and voucher for parochial school students. At the same time he formulated the conservative fiscal policy known as "Reaganomics." This was the "Reagan Revolution": the uniting of traditional economic conservatives and Christian fundamentalists in a coalition that captured the White House. The differences between them were hazed over in the honeymoon glow of that 1980 victory.

Fading Magic

As president, Reagan continued to address Religious Right concerns, making appearances at the annual conventions of the National Religious Broadcasters and the National Association of Evangelicals. He also appointed conservative evangelicals to his administration, most notably James Watt to the Interior and Dr. C. Everett Koop to the office of surgeon general. Yet even by 1982, fundamentalists were complaining that the administration wasn't moving fast enough on issues that concerned them. Ron Godwin of the Moral Majority spoke of the "underlying frustration over the lack of initiative and action

by this administration concerning moral and social issues."⁴

By 1986 the magic was fading. In that year's congressional elections, the Republicans lost their majority in the Senate, and almost all candidates backed by the Religious Right went into electoral perdition, even in the Bible Belt.

Nevertheless, their influence in the Republican Party was still strong enough to impel George Bush to woo the New Right in his 1988 and 1992 presidential campaigns. Point man to the fundamentalists was Vice President Dan Quayle. But, like Reagan, Bush enacted little of the Christian Right social agenda. With few exceptions, such as the "gag rule," which prohibited federally funded clinics from even discussing abortion, Bush didn't deliver.

A Stern Note

By 1992 the tensions and frustrations of both became apparent. The perception had grown that the fundamentalists were calling the tune, one the old Republican Party faithful didn't want to dance to. The sight of people praying all over the floor of the Republican convention had many GOP faithful asking, "Has the party of Jerry Ford become the party of Jerry Falwell?" Mary Matalin, deputy campaign manager for Bush's reelection effort, clearly alluded to Patrick Buchanan's incendiary address at the 1992 convention as a factor that made campaigning difficult. "We were spending our entire time denying that the Republican Party was a bunch of homophobic bigots."⁵ Conservative doyen William F. Buckley, Jr., while defending a place for fundamentalists in the ranks of the party, said that the best response to the rhetorical excesses from Christian Right figures such as Pat Robertson would be to send him "a Valium and a stern note."⁶

Ken Rhuberg, executive director of the Republican Majority Committee, which has sought to steer the party back to the center, acknowledges the New Right's ability to help elect Republicans in congressional races. Yet he warns that "in terms of some of the activism, fundamentalists tended to polarize the electorate."⁷

Nevertheless, while admitting that "there was rhetoric that hurt the party," Leigh Ann Metzger, a deputy assistant to President Bush, still considers Fundamentalists to be a "viable, critical part of the party." Despite press accounts, she said, "I think there's a good relationship."⁸

Matthew Moen, author of *The Transforma-*

tion of the Christian Right rejects as "revisionism" the charge that fundamentalist activity cost Bush and other Republican candidates the election. Fundamentalists, he says, have "a fairly substantial role to play" in Republican politics, especially at the state and local levels. He sees Fundamentalists and traditional GOP conservatives leavening each other.

The Religious Right doesn't see it that way. The Republican Party is a means to achieve their undiluted goals. Gary Bauer, director of the Family Research Council, has said that "we are willing to work with anyone who will embrace the pro-family philosophy we have."⁹

Where else could they turn? Their differences with traditional Republicans were far less than with the Democrats, whose 1992 platform was distasteful, if not blasphemous, in their eyes. Says Leigh Ann Metzger: "As long as Democrats embrace . . . a certain value system . . . [Fundamentalists] won't support them." In a cautionary editorial to President-elect Clinton, the editors of *Moody* magazine cited scriptures that contrasted Clinton's stated positions and those of the Fundamentalists.¹⁰ Before the

"Christians beware. . . .

To vote for

Bill Clinton is to sin

against God."

election, Operation Rescue founder Terry Randall mailed a pamphlet that warned, "Christians beware . . . To vote for Bill Clinton is to sin against God."

No wonder 61 percent of Fundamentalists and evangelicals voted for George Bush. No wonder, too, that the Religious Right is firmly entrenched in the Republican Party. Of the 2,000 delegates at the 1992 GOP convention, an estimated 300, or 15 percent, were members of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition.

As to be expected, then, the GOP platform was not merely a repetition of conservative political philosophy. George Bush pointed out that the Democrats had left the letters "G-O-D" out of their platform, while the GOP, on the other hand, ratified His existence. Bruce Buursma, former religion editor at the *Chicago Tribune*, said that "Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell had


the platform locked up in their hip pocket."¹¹

After the 1992 election defeat, many Republicans sought to counter the fundamentalist impact on the party. B. Jay Cooper, director of communications for the Republican National Committee, called the GOP "a diverse party" not controlled by any one group. To help rescue the party from perceived Religious Right excesses, GOP moderates and fiscal conservatives last December formed the Republican Majority Coalition. Though its leader, Representative Tom Campbell of California, denies that the new coalition is out to "declare war" on the Religious Right, it will seek to strip the party platform of its opposition to abortion and gays.

Meanwhile, however much a disaster 1992 was for the standard GOP, its fundamentalist wing is "barely able to contain its excitement at the election of a pro-abortion, pro-homosexual, 'five-star liberal' Democrat."¹² Ed McAteer of the Religious Roundtable "predicted that conservative religious groups will work harder than ever, targeting local school boards and city council races."¹³ In increasingly militant language, Fundamentalists say that they are looking forward to the "hand-to-hand combat" of the next four years.¹⁴

Yet they may spend much of their time combating other party faithful. Fundamentalists already have proven, by readiness to criticize President Bush for his perceived backsliding, that their first loyalty is not to the party, but to an agenda they believe has the force of divine origin. One recent battleground was the Republican Party of California, which chose former Reagan cabinet member John Harrington as state party vice-chairman. Harrington wants the Republican Party to take no position on abortion. In this case the battle was won by the old-line fiscal conservatives, the "country clubbers" who "have deep pockets" and were unwilling to let fundamentalists call the tune by insisting on a hard line against abortion. State parties in Washington, Oregon, and Iowa, on the other hand, are firmly under Religious Right control, and it is seeking to dominate many more.

Despite the family squabble and domestic discord, the matrimony between the GOP and the Fundamentalists, at least nationally, seems solid enough that a divorce is unlikely. The Republican Party, so long as it remains predominantly conservative and recognizes the need for the votes and vitality of the Fundamentalists, will continue saying the things that will keep the marriage together. They have no choice. Irving Kristol, the godfather of neoconservatism,

wrote: "Coping with religious revival, however, is something that conservatives and the Republican Party are not yet prepared to do. . . . But if the Republican Party is to survive, it must work at accommodating these people. . . . One way or another, in the decades ahead they will not be denied." Fundamentalists, for their part—in order to outlaw abortion, reintroduce compulsory school prayer, and to enact other features of their social agenda—will endure those fiscal conservatives who couldn't care less about these social issues. In short, the party will stay married to the Fundamentalists "to keep up appearances," and Fundamentalists will stay married to the Republicans "for the sake of the [unborn] children." With no real love between them, it promises to remain a troubled marriage. 

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Roy Beck, "Washington's Pro-Family Activists," *Christianity Today*, Nov. 9, 1992, p. 23.
- ² James M. Smith, "Republicans Must Return to Their Roots," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1992, sec. 1, p. 10.
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THE CASE FOR ANNULMENT

Don't Wait for

the Next Reagan Era

L

iving in Washington, D.C., is like living in a war zone. First one army occupies the city, then the other.

Now the conquering Democrats have swept into town. They have found the natives friendly. Washington's restaurants are filled with new faces brokering power lunches; real estate agents gleefully peddle D.C.'s inflated housing. First Cat Socks prowls the White House; Millie is in a distant doghouse. And so are many Republicans.

(continued)

BY CHARLES COLSON

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Evangelical leaders seem particularly forlorn. For 12 years they enjoyed unusual access to places of power; now the White House doors are slamming shut. Many fret about the future.

And regardless of one's partisan persuasion, some of the new administration's positions *are* cause for concern for Christians. President Clinton supports the Freedom of Choice Act, fetal tissue research, abortion pill RU 486, and gays in the military.

Evangelicals and moral conservatives have sounded the alarm. After the election, Jerry Falwell said he was "inundated" by requests to crank up the Moral Majority. A direct-mail expert predicted banner fund-raising for conservative Christian groups. Yet another (apparently forgetting the biblical injunction to respect and pray for one's leaders) talked about "torpedoing Clinton," and recapturing the White House in 1996.

Most of the rhetoric is political—a rerun of 1980s plans to reverse this nation's moral decline by seizing political power. But that strategy didn't work. Do we really think more of the same will fare better now?

Not by Politics Alone

Don't get me wrong.

I am not suggesting political disengagement. By my theology, Christians must contend for biblically informed morality and justice in the halls of power. Justice Fellowship continues to do so, as do many Christian groups, like Jim Dobson's Focus on the Family and the legislative arms of the right-to-life movement. We must press on.

But the flaw of the 1980s was to rely on politics *alone*.

Admittedly, seeking a quick fix to our nation's ills was appealing; but the excessive politicization damaged us in ways that now seem self-evident.

1. Conservative Christians were stereotyped as "the New Religious Right" and thus dismissed as just another special-interest group—and a dangerous one at that. The news media seized on some of the more inflammatory rhetoric, creating a backlash that hurt the cause we cared so

much about.

2. Many married the gospel to a particular political agenda—and when their political spouse lost power, so did they. Now we are reminded that those who live by the sword die by the sword.

3. Many Christians focused so much on politics in the kingdom of man that they forgot the first duties of membership in the kingdom of God: worship, evangelism, and discipleship.

The political obsession blinded us to an elementary lesson of history: reforming a culture involves more than just changing leaders and laws. As I wrote in *Kingdoms in Conflict*, politics, while critically important, is not the *prima* means of cultural change. In a free society, political values rest on an underlying moral consensus formed by what Tocqueville called "the habits of the heart."

This is why powerful movements transforming society so often move not from the top down but from the bottom up. Two centuries ago John Wesley preached to working-class crowds across England. Hearts changed. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Great Awakening began. And political reforms—the abolition of slavery, improved conditions for the poor, educational reforms—inevitably followed.

This is not the time for more clichés or political saber rattling. Nothing could be more damaging to the evangelical cause than to further politicize—and thus marginalize—the movement. No, this is a time for genuine soul-searching, asking ourselves some hard questions: Who are we? What are our priorities? How do we act with biblical fidelity in an increasingly secular society?

Exporting What We Don't Have

As we take stock, I think we will awaken to the profound truth that *being precedes doing*. What we *do* must flow from *who we are*. We cannot export something we don't have. Before we can bring a holy influence in society, we must first *be* holy people. And the institution by which we are equipped to be holy people is the church: the community whose identity, purpose, and mission transcend political agendas, and whose power comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This means getting back to basics. The church must be the church: holy communities of men and women being equipped to *be* God's people in the world, witnessing His love and truth in society.


*By my theology,
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of power.*

This being is the key to our influence. We will never win the culture war because "our man" is sitting in the White House. (Nor will we lose it if "our" candidate is defeated.) We will win by building up the body of Christ. We will win it one house, one block at a time, as God's people are equipped by the church to live out their faith in the world.

As we do this, we must keep our priorities straight, remembering the great paradox: If we see the church as God's instrument to reform culture, we will fail—as we have before. If the church is to have any culture-reforming influence, its first priority must be, as the people of God, to worship and serve our King. All else

flows from this.

Christians apprehensive about Washington's new leadership should take heart from the Christians in Eastern Europe. Under a hostile government, they built communities of believers. They knew that the church is the one institution Jesus promised the gates of hell could not stand against. They clung to that truth in the face of persecution.

They knew that real power was not in the bayonet—as in our democracy, real power is not in the ballot box. It is in the cross, the supernatural might of Jesus Christ to transform individual hearts and minds—and thereby, to reform society at large. 

THE CASE FOR CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

*To try to improve society is not
worldliness but love.*

*To wash one's hands of society is
not love but worldliness.*

I

It is a paradox of the Christian life that the more profoundly one is concerned about heaven, the more deeply one cares about God's will being done on Earth. The Christians who show most passion to serve others in this world are regularly those with the strongest hold on the other-worldly realities. This has always been true, whether we look at ministers, missionaries, public officials, reformers, industrialists, physicians, men of wealth and power, or ordinary lay folk.

(continued)

BY J. I. PACKER

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Service to others, as an expression of love to them, is a Christian priority. But citizenship is a form of service, as most Christians have seen from the start. Despite the Marx claim that religion anesthetizes one to the needs of Earth, we instead find that, other things being equal, those whose citizenship is in heaven (I echo Paul's phrase in Philemon 3:20) make the best citizens of any state, democratic or totalitarian, Christian or pagan, secular or even atheist.

The Biblical Basis for Public Activism

In the New Testament, civic obligation is emphatically commanded alongside—indeed, as part of—the obligation to serve God. When Jesus answered the question about taxpaying with the words, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17), his was not a clever evasion of the issue, but a clear acknowledgement that rendering what is due to the existing political regime is part of the Christian calling. When Peter in one breath says, “Fear God. Honor the Emperor” (1 Peter 2:17), he spotlights the same truth; as does Paul when, in the course of his overview of the life of gratitude for grace that is true Christianity, he teaches the Roman Christians to “be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), and tells them that “for the sake of con-

science” they should “pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due” (verses 6, 7).

Paul speaks of each state official as “God’s servant for your good” (verse 4). Note that it is pagan Roman officials, from the emperor down, that he has in view! And he further explains that God instituted the state as such to maintain law, order, justice, and “good.” “Good” here evidently embraces protection and well-being, and is thus not far removed from the opportunity to pursue happiness, which the American Constitution enshrines.

Hence, although Christians are not to think of themselves as ever at home in this world but rather as sojourning aliens, travelers passing through a foreign land to the place where their treasures are stored awaiting their arrival (see 1

Peter 2:11, Matthew 6:19-20), Scripture forbids them to be indifferent to the benefits that flow from good government. Nor, therefore, should they hesitate to play their part in maximizing these benefits for others, as well as for themselves. The upholding of stable government by a law-abiding life, and helping it to fulfill its role by personal participation where this is possible, is as fitting for us today as it was for Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Daniel (to look no further). We must see it as service of God and neighbor.

As one Christian member of the European Parliament, Sir Frederick Catherwood, trenchantly put it: “To try to improve society is not worldliness but love. To wash your hands of society is not love but worldliness.”¹

Some Misguided Christian Developments

Here, however, we must note three developments in modern Christendom that have set up perplexing cross currents with regard to political duty. Each requires some discussion before we can go further.

1. *The politicized intentions of some Christian relativists.* When I speak of Christian “relativists,” I have in mind certain Protestants who treat biblical teaching, not as God’s revealed truth, but as man’s patchy pointer to God’s self-disclosure, couched in culturally relative terms that today’s Christians are not bound to use and voicing many sentiments that today’s Christians are not bound to endorse.

When I speak of “politicized intentions,” I mean that their goals reduce the Christian faith from a pilgrim path to heaven into a socio-political scheme for this present world. This scheme is often referred to as establishing God’s kingdom on earth by ending society’s collective sins—racism, economic and cultural exploitation, class division, denial of human rights—and setting *shalom* (the Hebrew word for communal well-being under God) in its place.

What is wrong here? Not praying for *shalom*, nor working for it as one has opportunity. Neighbor-love in the global village requires every Christian to do this—and to do it on an international as well as a domestic scale. But it is surely disastrous when Christian faith (our grasp of God’s revealed purposes among men) and Christian obedience (our efforts to do God’s revealed will) are reduced to and identified with human attempts at social improvement. The heart is cut out of the gospel when Christ is thought of as Redeemer and Lord, Liberator and Humanizer only in relation to

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particular deprivations and abuses in this world. This view, however, has become the standard of liberals and radicals among the Protestant leadership. It is expressed and reinforced by the World Council of Churches. (The "liberation theology" of Roman Catholic Latin America also embodies and feeds these tendencies, but I shall not discuss that now; Protestant North America is my present concern.)

Political Theology

What has happened, putting the matter bluntly, is that clergymen and clericalized laymen in the mainline Protestant bodies have allowed themselves to reinterpret and redefine their basic religious values as political values. Thus they have secularized Christianity under the guise of applying it to life. In doing so, they have turned it more or less into a leftist ideology, in which even revolutionary violence and guerilla warfare against lawful governments get baptized into Christ. A flow of semi-technical books expressing this viewpoint, the entrenching of it in liberal seminaries, and the verbal dignifying of it as the discipline of "political theology" have made it respectable. Steady propaganda in its favor from Protestant denominational headquarters now leads many laity to equate the Christian citizen's role with pushing this program everywhere.

The basic mistake in all this is that Christianity's transcendent reference point has been lost sight of. Those who revere Bible teaching as divine truth, who see Jesus in New Testament terms as first and foremost our Savior from sin, delivering us from wrath to come, renewing us in righteousness, and opening heaven to us, who view evangelism as the basic dimension of neighbor-love, ought to oppose social evils just as vigorously as anybody else. To do that is part of the practical Samaritanism to which all Christians are called—that is, the relieving of need and misery every way one can. But it is all to be done in the service of a Christ whose kingdom is not of this world, and who requires mankind to understand this life, with its joys and riches on the one hand and its hardships and sorrows on the other, as a moral and spiritual training ground, a preparatory discipline for eternity. Lose that perspective, however, as the relativists of whom I am speaking have lost it, and the entire enterprise of neighbor-love goes astray.

2. *The pietistic inhibitions of some Christian absolutists.* "Absolutists," as I here use the word, are either those Protestant, Roman Catholic, or

Orthodox who believe that God's unchanging truth is given to the church in Scripture, and that only by obeying this truth can one please God. They may be called Christian conservatives, or even conservatives, by reason of their unwillingness to recast or diminish the historic biblical faith. Among Protestant absolutists, many, perhaps most, would prefer to be called evangelicals, since the gospel (the evangel) of Christ is central to their Christianity.

"Pietistic" points to concern about achieving holiness, avoiding sin, winning souls, practicing fellowship with Christians, and opposing all the forces of anti-Christianity on the personal level.

Pietistic inhibitions take the form of political passivity and unwillingness to be involved in any level of civil government. Some will vote but not run for office, others will not even vote, and all incline to treat political issues as not directly their business. Their stance as Christian citizens is thus one of withdrawal from, rather than involvement in, the political process.

Social Gospel

Why is this? Several factors seem to operate. One is a reaction against the "social gospel" of the more liberal Protestantism such as was described above, from which evangelical pietists want to disassociate themselves as fully as possible. A second is a faulty inference from their eschatology (i.e., their view of the future), which sees the world as getting inevitably and inexorably worse as Christ's coming draws near, and tells us that nothing can be done about it; therefore it does not matter who is in power politically. A third factor, linked with this, is the stress laid on separation from "the world," with its moral defilements, its compromises of principle, and its earthbound, pleasure-seeking, self-serving way of life. Politics, thought of as a murky milieu where principles are constantly being sacrificed in order to catch votes and keep one's end up in the power game, is seen as an eminently "worldly" business, and so off limits for Christians. A fourth factor, potent though imponderable, is an individualism that resolves all social problems into personal problems, feels that civil government is unimportant since it cannot save souls, and so is fundamentally not interested in the political process at all.

But none of this will do. Whatever mistakes the "social gospel" may enshrine, and however true it is that ministry in the church and in evangelism should be our first concern, there remains a social and political task for Christians to tackle.

(Continued on page 27)



Is it a sinister right-wing attempt at subversion?

Is it the end of church-state separation as we know it?

Is it the loss of our freedoms in America? No—

It's the School Board, Stupid!

BY SOPHIA WATSON*



School board elections don't usually make front-page or national news. But then again, most don't usually incite fears of AIDS epidemics, of sinister right-wing religious cabals seeking to unite church and state, and of plans to sodomize New York schoolchildren. Nevertheless, these elements, and more, made New York City's school board elections earlier this year a microcosm of the bigger issue regarding the struggle for the "soul" of America, and the media double-standard in reporting about it.

The battle lines were clearly drawn. Local newspapers saw in the election an overt attempt by "right-wing religious extremists" to take over public education; others saw in it merely concerned parents trying to protect their children from what they deemed immoral influences in the classroom. And judging by all the media hoopla and apocalyptic rhetoric surrounding the elections, one would think the issues at stake were nothing less than the future of not only New York City but of moral purity, church-state separation, and America itself.

Even before the elections, the New York school system had been making national news. In February the city board of education voted 4-3 not to renew the contract of school chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez, who had caused controversy by distributing condoms in high schools and by pushing the Rainbow Curriculum, which conveys positive views of homosexuality. With lessons like "Heather Has Two Mom-mies," the curriculum was designed to teach children to see homosexuality as a normal and

thus acceptable way of life.

By the elections, many parents sought candidates who would support the teaching of abstinence as the preferred means of avoiding AIDS (rather than passing out condoms and discussing the pros and cons of oral and anal sex) and who would not endorse teaching that homosexuality is a valid alternative lifestyle.

The debate took on new fervor when the Catholic Church and a New York chapter of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition formed an alliance to influence the vote. The chapter queried candidates about their views on sexual morality, prayer in school, and parental rights, and in a voters' guide publicized the answers of those who responded. The Catholic Archdiocese of New York then helped distribute these guides through its 213 city parishes.

For some, especially the more liberal community, alarm bells rang at the potential public strength of a Catholic Church-Christian Coalition voter bloc. The American Civil Liberties Union saw this strategy "the first step in an all-out assault on civil liberties in our schools."

Cardinal John J. O'Connor, Catholic archbishop of New York, was highly unpopular with liberals because of his firm stance against abortion and homosexuality. He was also seen as having played a significant behind-the-scenes role in the school board decision not to renew Fernandez's contract. Though the cardinal didn't speak out publicly about Fernandez before the board's decision, he afterward commended two board members at St. Patrick's Ca-

*Sophia Watson
is a pseudonym.

ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN CHADWICK

thedral mass for voting their conscience. The *New Yorker* magazine interpreted the cardinal's comments as "demonstrating to many New Yorkers once again that, no matter who is elected in any November, he [Cardinal O'Connor] is the city's most powerful politician."

False and Counterproductive Symbolism

Thus, the thought of Robertson and O'Connor joining hands to get candidates of their outlook elected agitated some New Yorkers, including the press. Headlines such as "In God's Name: Christian Right's Battle Plan to Seize Control of School Boards" in the *Daily News* exemplified the media's response to the cooperation between these religious groups. Many who liked the way Fernandez had been leading the school system organized to support candidates of their outlook. Even some liberal clergy joined the battle to counter what they feared was a threat from the Religious Right, which would mean banning books, teaching creationism, and eliminating sex education. The liberal group People for the American Way countered with its own voters' guide. Even some Catholics were disturbed. Though having raised questions about the direction Fernandez had been taking the schools, a New York-based lay Catholic magazine, *Commonweal*, called the alliance with Robertson's group "a large mistake" because of the alliance's "false and counterproductive" symbolism.

Cardinal O'Connor, on the other hand, writing in his archdiocesan weekly *Catholic New York*, called the talk of an alliance with Robertson "nonsense." He said that they had met only once, years ago, and had not been in contact at all recently. But he said that he found many evangelical clergy worthy of respect and had no objection to cooperating with them in support of common moral positions.

Despite the headlines and the warning about homosexuals invading the schools or stealthy candidates enforcing Judeo-Christian morality on New Yorkers—only 12.5 percent of eligible voters bothered to go to the polls (a big jump, nevertheless, from the 7.2 percent in the last school board election, held in 1989).

In the final tally, some candidates who were clearly the choice of the Christian Coalition won; some who were endorsed by homosexual groups won; and some not clearly identified with either won. Thus, no clear winner emerged.


What was clear, however, was what many call the "usual media double standard" in reporting

about conservative Christian involvement in politics. For example, O'Connor said that the criticism of church involvement in public affairs was largely determined by those whose ox was gored. He noted that though the voters' guides the Christians handed out were criticized, the liberal *Village Voice* prepared voter guides that were handed out at the interdenominational Riverside church, considered to be theologically and politically liberal, and yet were not criticized by the press.

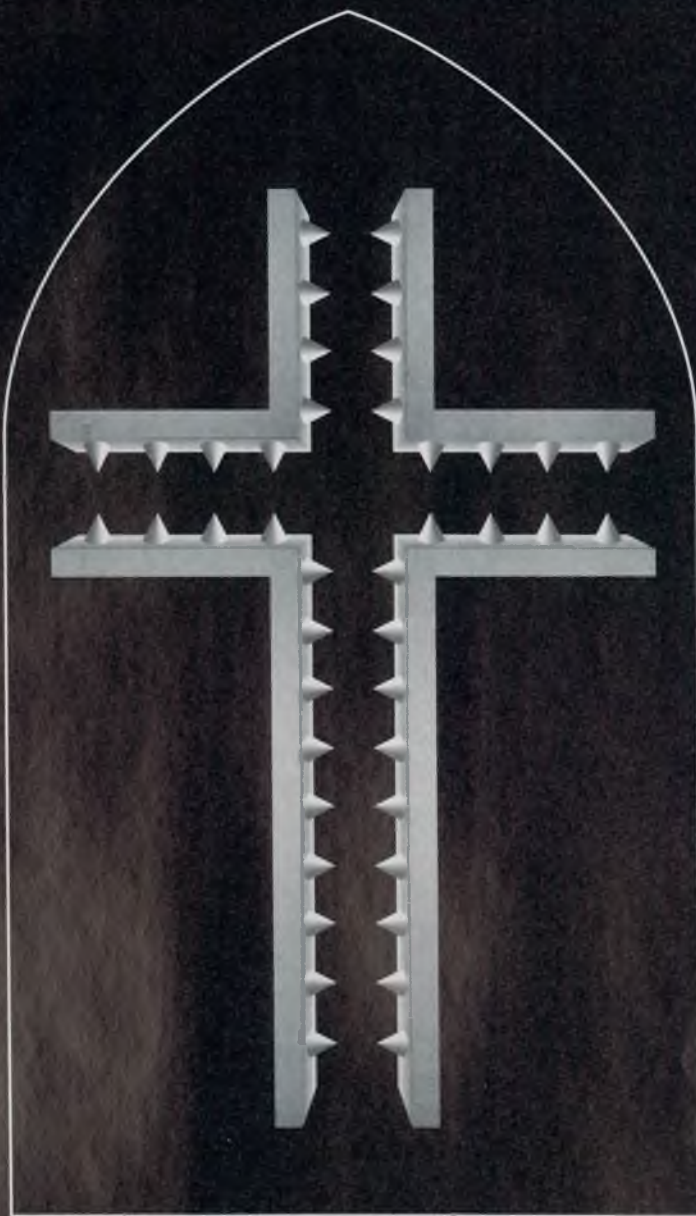
Why weren't the media there to warn Americans about other breaches in the wall of separation of church and state? Earlier that year, retired Episcopal bishop Paul Moore, Jr., of New York, serving as interim rector of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church on Manhattan's Park Avenue, invited Mayor David Dinkins, an Episcopalian, to address the congregation after a Sunday service. Dinkins, a liberal Democrat in a campaign for reelection, used the occasion not to explicitly ask for votes but to talk about what he viewed as the accomplishments of his administration and its worthy goals. No doubt the press would have been there had Cardinal O'Connor invited Ralph Giuliani, a Catholic, to talk about his goals as the Republican opponent of Dinkins.

The Real Issue

Whatever the media tried to make of the school board elections, the real issue was simply parents seeking to use the democratic processes to protect their children from what they viewed as detrimental influences in the schools. Naturally, they wanted their churches to show some concern for the issues that concerned them. One critic of Catholic involvement in the school board elections said that because Catholic kids go to parochial schools, the church should stay out. Yet, according to Catholic officials, 70 percent of the city's Catholic children go to public schools, so the church, echoing the concerns of the parents, had a legitimate interest in the outcome of the election.

Whenever churches get involved in politics, Christian Coalition goals included, dangers to church-state separation exist. But the right of parents, aided by their churches, to support officials who they believe best represent their moral values is not one of those dangers. Thus, the real issue in the New York elections wasn't religious freedom, gay bashing, or church-state separation. A button made during the heat of the campaign best expressed the bottom line: "It's the School Board, Stupid!" 

COERCION FOR CHRIST



Augustine and the Theological Roots of Christian Persecution

BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

M*en never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction"* (Blaise Pascal).

No responsible Christian leader today, of course, advocates violence or persecution in the name of the gospel. Nevertheless, many Christians still find the coercive power of the state in some form an attractive means of accomplishing great things for God in society. The goals pursued by religious groups in which governmental authority is instrumental range from human rights and economic justice to traditional morality in the public schools and restriction of abortion.

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*Augustine (after Paul the most influential thinker
in the history of Christianity) provided theological legitimation for
the use of force against the unorthodox.*

Reflection on alliances between state power and churchly power provides indispensable orientation in analyzing the efforts of today's religious coalitions in the public square. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) provides a good starting point, because he forged the original and lasting ideological links between the goals of the church and governmental coercion in Western Christianity.

Augustine came onto the scene in the early years after the church first became linked with the government. How did Christians, once persecuted and marginalized followers of a crucified Messiah who rejected violence, eventually find in the state an ally? The Edict of Milan (313), issued after Constantine's decisive victory at the Milvian Bridge, granted "both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired." The purpose of such liberty to worship all gods, from Constantine's standpoint, was that "whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority."¹

Suddenly, after two and a half centuries as an illegal sect, the Christian church was free. But imperial patronage came quickly on the heels of freedom. The emperors reasoned that for the empire to enjoy the favor of the Christian God, orthodoxy and unity in the faith must prevail. Thus Constantine showered the church with imperial largess and summoned the Council of Nicaea to establish Christological orthodoxy and decide issues of church order. His successors used violence against theological opponents, and Theodosius (379-395) placed in the imperial code laws for the suppression of heretics and pagans.²

Augustine (after Paul the most influential thinker in the history of Christianity)³ provided theological legitimation for the use of force against the unorthodox. After he was appointed bishop of Hippo in North Africa in 396, Augustine was confronted with the massive and fundamental threat posed by the Donatists to the

unity of the church.⁴ Following the Great Persecution (303-305) under the emperor Diocletian, the North African church split over the status of bishops who had handed over copies of the Holy Scriptures to pagan authorities to be burned. Like the German churches after the Nazi period and the churches in Eastern Europe and Russia today, North African Christians of the fourth century had to sort out the complicated issue of what constituted collaboration and what to do about collaborators.

The Donatists insisted that ordinations performed by the compromising bishops, the *traditores*, were invalid. Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage, they said, had been ordained by just such a *traditor*. Donatus had received the authentic ordination and was therefore a "pure" bishop. Thus, they maintained that the ordinations and other sacraments administered in the North African Catholic churches were tainted by their connection with unfaithful, impure clergy. The Donatists conceived of the church as an alternative to the surrounding society, a refuge of the holy and faithful under fire, which the Catholics had failed to maintain.

Constantine had tried unsuccessfully to resolve the controversy, and it raged on for decades. By the late fourth century the Donatists had gained the upper hand in much of North Africa. In Hippo, the Catholics were a minority.

For Augustine, the situation was intolerable. Donatist sectarianism, narrow and provincial, was incompatible with his majestic vision of a universal church in communion with the great apostolic sees. "The clouds roll with thunder, that the House of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth: and these frogs sit in their marsh and croak—We are the only Christians!"⁵

If the Donatist view prevailed, the grounding for the holiness and unity of the church that resided in the sacraments would be utterly eviscerated. The efficacy of church rites was derived from the objective holiness of Christ, not from the subjective moral quality of the administrant. The lineal succession of Roman bishops from

Peter to the present Bishop Anastasius was the channel guaranteeing transmission of the benefits of Christ to the universal church. "Thus the stability of the hope of the faithful," declared Augustine, "is secured, inasmuch as being fixed, not in the man, but in the Lord, it never can be swept away by the raging of impious schism."⁶

Moreover, the Donatists were trying prematurely to divide the wheat from the tares in the church, a task reserved for the final judgment. Augustine turned their arguments about purity against them by pointing out that their schismatic, judgmental character manifested a lack of charity—the worst of sins.⁷

For Augustine, the stakes could not have been higher for the cause of Christ as he launched his campaign against the Donatists. In some ways a peace-loving and sensitive man, he initially opposed force. Two general characteristics of his theology, however, predisposed him toward eventually changing his mind.

First, Augustine was deeply pessimistic about human ability to will and do right. He viewed sin as a pervasive corruption of human character, not just as particular wrong acts. He differed from other theologians of the time in his acute recognition that Christians are not suddenly free of that inner debilitation. The Donatist view that the church could be an ark of sanctity was, he thought, naive. Christians, weak and corrupted, needed the discipline of "the Catholic Church, the most true mother of Christians." He frequently likened church leaders to physicians, ministering remedies to the faithful still infected with the disease of sin. Extreme measures were sometimes necessary, and it was not up to the patient to question the prescribed cure.⁸

Now that the emperors were Christian, the Donatist conception of a pure church set in opposition to a sinful society was not only naive but anachronistic. The church could now comprise the entire population of the empire. As biographer Peter Brown puts it, Augustine believed the church's purpose now was to "absorb, transform, and perfect the existing bonds of human relations." It was "no longer to defy society, but to master it." To the church, Augustine declared: "You link citizen to citizen, nation to nation. . . . You teach kings to rule for the benefit of their people; and you it is who warn the peoples to be subservient to their kings."⁹

In sum, the radical nature of original sin necessitated external pressure to produce prop-

er Christian behavior. Spiritual resources, Augustine now believed, were no longer enough. And now that Christianity had won the favor of the state and the two were linked in the ordering of all society, government could be an instrument for application of the church's therapeutic discipline. "It is Augustine's theology of the Fall," writes historian Elaine Pagels, "that made the uneasy alliance between the Catholic churches and imperial power palatable—not only justifiable but necessary—for the majority of Christians."¹⁰

Second, Augustine's understanding of eschatology and history, which he set forth in developed form after the Donatist controversy in his classic *City of God*, contributed to his somewhat hesitant inclusion of force as an instrument in the church's mission. In Augustine's view, the millennium prophesied in Revelation did not refer to a radical, imminent divine inbreaking to remake the world, but to the history of the church. Unlike some of his less-sophisticated interpreters in later centuries, Augustine did not equate the church with the transcendent City of God. But the church, despite its imperfections, was in his view the vehicle for the earthly pilgrimage of the saints to the City of God, which lay beyond history in a far distant eternity. It was through the church that the earthly glory of the millennium was being realized. Apocalyptic symbols previous interpreters had generally applied to the second coming of Christ, Augustine applied to the first coming and subsequent earthly triumph of the church. The stone in the book of Daniel that strikes the image representing earthly empires and then fills the whole earth, said Augustine, referred to the spread of the Catholic Church throughout the world, not a future realization of the kingdom of God.

Thus Augustine's eschatological thinking contributed to the full institutionalization of "the history and the means of salvation" through the church. A church having already entered the era of millennial reign and having won the allegiance of emperors had broad prerogatives, including the use of force if necessary, in the direction of human affairs. In other words, Augustine's eschatology tended to absolutize rather than bring into question the existing world order of church and empire ruling in tandem.¹¹ This view of history helps explain Augustine's strained exegesis of a gospel parable in his effort to provide biblical justification for force against dissenters. In the parable of the wedding feast, the master of the house first instructs his servant to bring in guests from the

streets. After these are brought in, he issues a second command instructing his servant to go to those remaining in the “highways and hedges” and “compel them to come in.” The two sets of instructions, said the bishop of Hippo, referred to two eras in the history of the church. The first command, to “bring them in,” applied to the “incipient condition of the Church” when it was growing toward strength. But now that the prophecy, “All kings shall fall down before Him; yea, all nations shall serve Him,” had been fulfilled, “the Church wields greater power, so that she may not only invite but even compel men to embrace what is good.”¹²

The violent context of the times in part explains Augustine’s embrace of compulsion on behalf of the gospel. In fact, in that context he can be seen as a voice of restraint. Under the leadership of the imperial commissioner Count

Macarius, the Catholics had initiated violent suppression of the Donatists a half a century before Augustine’s episcopate. Bitterly remembered by the Donatists as the “Time of Macarius,” the period of persecution was followed by an era of tolerance beginning in the 360s. The Donatists surged in popularity and social influence during this period. In the 390s they took advantage of imperial laws against heretics in order to regain basilicas lost to schismatic bishops within their own movement.

Moreover, a group on the Donatist fringe, the Circumcellions, took up arms. The first Christian liberationist movement to employ revolutionary violence, they championed the oppressed peasantry against the landowners and ruling class.¹³ Their sporadic attacks provided the Catholics with stories of “atrocities” useful to discredit the Donatists in general.

In the early years of his involvement in the controversy, Augustine opposed the use of force, mainly on the grounds that it could not induce genuine conversion. In his letter of 408 to Vincentius, a bishop in one Donatist faction (the Rogatists), he wrote that originally his view had been “that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ, that we must act only with words, fight only by arguments, and prevail by force of reason, lest we should have those whom we knew to be avowed heretics feigning them-

selves to be Catholics.”¹⁴

He changed his mind in a pragmatic or expedient response to unfolding developments. In the late 390s, a political rebellion served to identify the Donatists more closely with enemies of the empire and Catholics with imperial rule. Gildo, the Moorish count of Africa, rebelled against his overlord, the Roman emperor Honorius. A leading Donatist bishop, Optatus of Thamagudi, supported the rebellion. Augustine, by now a practitioner of what Brown describes as “ruthless journalism,” denounced the influential Donatist as “a most monstrous enemy of the Roman order.” Both Gildo and Optatus were executed in the suppression of the rebellion in 398. The new imperial count of Africa was Severus, Catholic bishop of Milevis and a close friend of the bishop of Hippo.¹⁵

In 404 the Donatists in Bagai went on a rampage when their bishop announced a switch to Catholicism. They attacked the ecclesiastical traitor and left him for dead. Some Catholic leaders called for a resumption of the persecutions under Count Macarius, but Augustine stood against them, still not wanting to employ force. However, when the imperial court in response to the incident in Bagai issued an “Edict of Unity” in 405, outlawing the Donatist church and placing it under the general laws against heresy, Augustine accepted the action as providential.

The effectiveness of such repressive measures confirmed in Augustine’s mind their utility in the cause of Christ. As he explained to Vincentius in 408, events in his own town controverted his earlier opinion that coercion should not be used. Although Hippo “was once wholly on the side of Donatus,” it “was brought over to the Catholic unity by the fear of imperial edicts.”¹⁶

The edict of 405, however, did not succeed in crushing Donatism. Conversions to Catholicism were matched by conversions to Donatism. Thus, Augustine arranged a climactic debate between the two sides in 411 at a conference in Carthage. An imperial commissioner presided, and even though both sides were equally represented in the lengthy and often bitter debate, it is not surprising that the ruling affirmed the Catholic claim to be the one authentic Christian church in North Africa. An imperial edict issued in January 412 mandated the confiscation of property held by the Donatist church and imposed heavy fines on those who refused to become Catholics.

The death penalty was not included. Augus-

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tine opposed it because it precluded the possibility of repentance. However, the Donatist church was driven underground and, despite a brief revival in the sixth century, never recovered.

Augustine's insights into the state's function of restraining evil in society provided a basis for realistic Christian action for the common good in subsequent centuries. But in making the state's coercive power a tool in the church's saving mission, he became the "father of the Inquisition."¹⁷ His campaign succeeded in bringing North Africa under Catholic control, but his theories, caricatured and oversimplified, became the basis for near absolute identification of the earthly church with the City of God and justification for bloody repression of all opponents and dissenters.

With his profound understanding of the radical nature of sin and need for grace, the bishop of Hippo provided a lasting antidote to all pretensions, individual or group, to the embodiment of righteousness. Yet he so stressed human weakness that he lost sight of the New Testament picture of a visible community of faith distinguished from the world in its commitment to the way of the cross. This distinction was to come from the church's rejection of the carnal weapons of coercion, violence, and dominance in order to wield the spiritual weapons of freedom, love, and service. His great sensitivity to the power of sin limited his conception of the power of the gospel to liberate sinners and move them to a life of love—a free response of gratitude and devotion that cannot be forced. A deep concern for the unity of the church and the salvation of souls drove Augustine to embrace imperial power for the church's program of mastering society.

Today, American Christians, frustrated by a loss of mastery and alarmed about the nation's spiritual decline, may find Augustine's course attractive. One fundamentalist leader recently

declared that the United States was founded as a "Christian nation," and, denouncing separation of church and state as "bogus," told his followers, "We must take back what is rightfully ours."¹⁸ He means that they need to take it back through political means, which necessitates the coercion of law. This viewpoint is increasingly common among conservative Christians in America. Those who seek mastery for a particular religious outlook in a pluralistic society, and who are willing to use coercion to achieve it, must come to terms with the Augustinian legacy, which, as Pascal observed, can lead to evil, even "completely and cheerfully" done. □

FOOTNOTES

¹ J. Stevenson, ed., *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to A.D. 337*, revised with additional documents by W.H.C. Frend (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 284-286.

² W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 483-488; 498-501; 639, 640; 670.

³ Contemporary theologian Langdon Gilkey makes this judgment in a sympathetic overview of Augustine's contribution, "Ordering the Soul: Augustine's Manifold Legacy," *The Christian Century*, Apr. 27, pp. 426-430.

⁴ On Augustine and the Donatists, I have relied particularly on Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 212-243; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 488-492; 668-673. See also Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

⁵ Brown, p. 221.

⁶ *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1875-1892), vol. 6, pp. 300; 302, 303; 191-193; 195.

⁷ Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 669.

⁸ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 117.

⁹ Brown, pp. 224, 225.

¹⁰ Pagels, pp. 98-126.

¹¹ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 155, 156; 167, 170; LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946-1954), vol. 1, pp. 473-491.

¹² *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, vol. 13, pp. 347; 352, 353.

¹³ Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 572-574.

¹⁴ Cited in Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 671.

¹⁵ Brown, p. 230.

¹⁶ Cited in Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 671.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 672.

¹⁸ "Falwell Returns to the Fray," *The Christian Century*, Apr. 7, 1993, pp. 362, 363.

Sins of the Flesh

WHEN PREACHERS SEXUALLY TRANSGRESS



highly respected, retired Methodist minister confessed to sexual improprieties with female parishioners, calling his behavior a “violation of power and position of authority.” The pastor is undergoing psychiatric counseling; the church is working through its grief.

The highest-ranking parish priest in the Episcopal Church resigned in the wake of disclosure of sexual misconduct with teenagers and young adults. Ironically, he had chaired the Episcopal Church’s committee that deals with sexual misconduct among ministers.

Adults who had been sexually abused as children by priests picketed the semiannual meeting of the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops in Washington, D.C. These victims have formed advocacy groups, e.g., Victims of Clergy Abuse Linkup (VOCAL), and are determined to expose church "cover-ups" of these crimes. So far, the Catholic Church has spent more than \$400 million in settlements.

These cases represent just a few examples of what appears to be an epidemic: clergy sexual misconduct. It's a devastating problem. When ministers abuse their positions of trust and power to exploit vulnerable parishioners and gratify their own libidos, lives are shattered, marriages are broken up, children are scarred for life, and careers are ruined.

As a result, the law is responding. More lawsuits are brought against clergy for sexual misconduct than for any other type. Courts around the country are revising traditional legal doctrines in ways that make it easier for victims to recover damages from the miscreant clergy and the church, its members and denominational agencies. In essence, courts are becoming less inclined to wink at bad behavior on the part of ministers and their churches. Churches must take steps to prevent sexual misconduct of its clergy, primarily for the sake of potential victims but also for its own protection.

The Church's Peril

In the secular world, employers can be held liable when they negligently hire, supervise, and retain their employees. Courts now appear willing to extend this principle to the employment of ministers as well. Employers must exercise a reasonable degree of care when hiring employees. What is "reasonable" depends on the nature of the job and the risk to third parties. Because of the fiduciary relationship between minister and parishioner (i.e., expectation that a minister will act in the best interests of the parishioners and not abuse his or her position of power and trust), churches must exercise a relatively high degree of care in order for it to be deemed "reasonable." Usually, this care will involve in-depth interviews of the prospective minister or employee and a careful background check, including references. If a church fails to take these precautions, or if it ignores evidence of past sexual misconduct when hiring or retaining clergy, it does so at its peril.

The Supreme Court of Alaska re-

cently elevated this duty to near-absurd heights. In *Broderick v. King's Way Assembly of God Church* (1991), a mother sued a church for hiring a nursery worker who allegedly sexually abused her child. The lower court dismissed the case, but the Alaska Supreme Court reversed and sent the case back for trial. Although no proof was found that the worker had engaged in inappropriate sexual activities, there was evidence that she herself had been abused as a child. Because abused children are statistically more likely as adults to abuse others, the court suggested that a jury could find the church negligent for failing to ask if the prospective employee had been abused as a child.

Vicarious Liability

Even if churches exercise reasonable care in hiring and supervising their ministers, they may still be held liable. Where an employee injures someone while acting "within the scope of his or her employment," the employer can be held "vicariously liable" even if he or she has exercised extraordinary care in hiring and supervision.

Traditionally, this legal theory rarely operated to impose liability on an employer for an employee's intentional sexual misconduct. Such behavior was properly considered outside the scope of employment. But this rule may be changing, too. In another case, the Alaska Supreme Court expanded an employer's potential vicarious liability for an employee's sexual misconduct.

In *Doe v. Samaritan Counseling Center* (1990), the plaintiff sought help at a counseling center. According to expert testimony, she had a history of emotional instability and was "easy prey" for any counselor who wished to exploit her condition. Allegedly, during two counseling sessions, the pastoral counselor kissed and fondled her. After terminating the counseling relationship, the two were soon engaging in sexual intercourse. As a result of these activities, the plaintiff claimed that she had suffered severe emotional and psychological damage. In addition, she alleged that the counseling center should be held liable for the sexual misconduct of its pastoral counselor.

The court ruled that the center could be held vicariously liable for the employee's wrongdoing, because the alleged misconduct "arose out of" and has "reasonably incidental to the employee's legitimate work activi-

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ties.” Though one of the justices found that sexual misconduct should never be considered “reasonably incidental” to legitimate work activities, a majority of the justices disagreed. The court reached this conclusion, even though the sexual relationship occurred outside the employer’s workplace and more than a month after counseling had been terminated!

Although this case involved a counseling center, this same expansive understanding of vicarious liability for sexual misconduct with counselees could just as easily be applied to a church.

Punitive Damages

Sometimes one who suffers injury is entitled to money damages from the wrongdoer to compensate for the injury suffered (i.e., compensatory damages). But where the wrongdoer’s conduct is particularly outrageous, willful, or wanton, the court often awards additional damages as punishment (i.e., punitive damages). Historically courts have been loath to assess punitive damages against churches, but no more.

In *Mrozka v. Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis* (1992), a child and his parent charged that a Catholic priest had sexually molested the child and others over a period of years. The plaintiff alleged further that the archdiocese had learned of the priest’s illicit behavior on several occasions but continued to place the priest in situations where he would come into contact with children. The jury awarded the victim \$855,000 in compensatory damages and \$2,700,000 in punitive fines. The appeals court affirmed, although it allowed the trial judge to reduce the amount of punitive damage. The court ruled that neither the constitution nor the public policy of Minnesota barred the award of punitive damages against a church. Thus, churches that ignore or cover up the sexual sins of their clergy need to get out their checkbooks and prepare to pay shocking damage awards.

Because these cases reveal a trend toward an expansive understanding of vicarious liability on the part of an employer, as well as a propensity for awarding punitive damages in egregious violations, churches should conduct a thorough background investigation when hiring a minister. They should pay particular attention to allegations of sexual misconduct. A minister is inevitably placed in intimate relationships with emotionally vulnerable people, and any suggestions that the minister has problems in this area should be taken seriously. The church may want to inquire about whether the minister was ever the victim of physical or sexual abuse. Referenc-

es should be solicited and contacted.

If a minister is accused of sexual misconduct, he or she should be suspended with pay until a full investigation can be conducted. Obviously the investigation should be conducted quietly to avoid harming the reputation of the minister. An accusation should not be equated with guilt. If the accusation turns out to be true, discipline or termination of the minister should be conducted as discreetly as possible and not be discussed outside the church membership, excepting certain circumstances. Though it has a constitutionally protected right to discipline clergy, the church should not violate privacy rights by disseminating sensitive facts. A church should always follow an established procedure for discipline.


On the other hand, the church has a moral and legal obligation to protect other unsuspecting congregations from a minister who has demonstrated a propensity for sexual misconduct. If a prospective employer inquires about a former minister’s employment record, failure to disclose incidents of sexual misconduct could expose the church to additional liability.

If a church decides not to terminate a minister guilty of sexual misconduct, professional rehabilitative treatment should be required. Failure to insist upon such a program could have devastating spiritual and legal implications. If the minister becomes sexually involved with another church member, not only does the church suffer but it may be liable for punitive damages.

Healthy Realism

Many churches—particularly large ones with multiple staff—may want to consider purchasing sexual misconduct insurance, which often can be tacked on to existing coverage for a small premium.

No church is immune to the problem of clergy sexual misconduct. Churchgoers tend to believe that the minister walks on water (at least at first). Also, they often err on the side of grace instead of judgment, forgive indiscretions, and give a second chance. Forgiveness and trust are laudable. But these traits need to be tempered by a healthy dose of realism.

For the sake of the children and other vulnerable parishioners—no less than for biblical stewardship of the church’s financial assets—church leaders need to heed Jesus’ admonition to be as wise as serpents as well as gentle as doves. In today’s litigious society, that’s particularly good advice. 

Even if the Second Coming is near, we need not think that we cannot under God make this world temporarily a little better if we try, and in any case the fear of not succeeding cannot excuse us from trying when God in effect tells us to make the attempt.

Politics is certainly a power game, but it has to be played if social structures are to be improved, and though it belongs to this world it is a sphere of service to God and men that is not intrinsically "worldly" in the proscribed sense. Moreover, political compromise, the basic maneuver, is quite a different thing from the sacrificing of principles, as we shall see.

Finally, the individualism that destroys political concern is a kind of myopia blurring awareness of the benefit that good government brings and the damage that bad government does (think of Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin). No. Pietistic passivity cannot be justified, and its present practitioners need to be educated out of it. This is no more valid a stance for the Christian citizen than was the politicized posture that we rejected above.

3. *The political imperialism of some Christian biblicists.* I have in mind the crusading spirit that currently animates certain members of Bible-loving churches and fellowships. They would call themselves "fundamentalist" rather than evangelical, because they feel that the former word implies more of the uncompromising fighting stance.

Here there is no hesitation in announcing objectives and plunging into the hurly-burly of the political world in order to gain them. Problems arise, however, through the temptation to view the democratic power game as the modern equivalent of holy war in the Old Testament, in which God called upon his people to overthrow the heathen and take their kingdom by force. It is because of this temptation that I spoke of "imperialism" in my heading.

In biblical holy war, the heathen had no rights and received no quarter, for God was using his people as his executioners, the human means of inflicting merited judgment. Viewed as a revelation of God's retributive justice (an aspect of his character that shines throughout the whole Bible), holy war made coherent, if awesome, moral sense. But holy war is no part of God's program for the Christian church. Leave

retribution to God, says Paul in Romans 12:19. And it makes no moral or practical sense at all if taken as a model for Christian action in the political cockpit of a modern pluralistic democracy like the United States, India, or Britain.

In a democracy, you cannot govern except as public opinion backs you and retains you in office. Therefore the quest for consensus, and the practice of persuasion with a view to achieving consensus, is all important. Riding roughshod over others as if they did not count will always have a self-defeating boomerang effect. Pressure groups that seek to grab and use power without winning public support for what they aim at will provoke equally high-handed opposition and will typically be short-lived.

Protestants may well rejoice that Roman Catholicism has now given up its long-standing conviction that error has no rights. Should Protestants themselves now flirt with that discredited principle, however, there will very soon be egg on their faces. And the danger is constantly present. As Paul Henry has pointed out, "righteous zeal" can be very "detrimental to the practice of politics. For 'true believers' of any stripe are always tempted to become hard-core ideologues seeking to impose their truths on society at large."² Christian citizens, who ought to have strong beliefs about communal right and wrong, will always need to be careful here.

Why We Support Democracy

Representative democracy as we know it—in which the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive have separate status, the public information services (media) are not under government administration always faces an elected opposition, and popular elections on a one-man, one-vote basis recur at regular intervals—is not the only form of government under which Christian citizens have lived and served God. However, there is no doubt that from a Christian standpoint it is a fitter and wiser form than any other.

The Christian recommendation of democracy rests on two insights.

The first is the awareness that government of the people, by the people, for the people, in an open community system that in principle allows anyone to qualify for any office, best expresses in political terms the God-given dignity and worth of each individual.

The second is the perception that, since in this fallen world, as Lord Acton put it, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, the separation of powers and the building of checks and balances into executive structures

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will limit the dangers of corruption, even if such procedures for restraint will never eliminate them entirely.

These Christian insights mesh with the worldly wisdom that sees that the more citizens can feel they have shared in making the decisions that now shape their lives, the more resolutely they will adhere to them. The pattern of government, therefore, that maximizes public consent will ordinarily be more stable than any other system.

Making Democracy Work

Christian citizens, then, may be expected to show a firm commitment to the principles of democracy, and to see themselves as bound to do all they can to make democracy work. But that means conscientious commitment to the

democratic process as the best way of decision making within the body politic.

In democracies that are philosophically and religiously pluralist, like those of the West, the democratic process that achieves consent out of conflict is vitally important. In this fallen world, conflict arising from limited vision and competing interests is an unavoidable part of the political scene. The intensity and integrity of the public struggle whereby a balance is struck between the contending parties then becomes an index of community health and morale.

The name given to the resolution of political conflict through debate is *compromise*. Whatever may be true in the field of ethics, compromise in politics means not the abandonment of principle, but realistic readiness to settle for what one thinks to be less than ideal when it is all that one can get at the moment. The principle that compromise expresses is that half a loaf is better than no bread.

Give-and-take is the heart of political compromise, as compromise is the heart of politics in a democracy. To see this is a sign of political maturity. By contrast, a doctrinaire rigidity that takes up an adversary position towards all who do not wholly endorse one's views and goals implies political immaturity.

Democratic decision-making is as public a

process as possible, and officials are expected to publish their reasons for action wherever this can be done without jeopardizing the future. But all major political decisions prove to be both complex in themselves and controversial in the community. This is inescapable for at least three reasons.

First, everyone's knowledge of the facts of every case is partial and selective.

Second, values, priorities, and opinions of the relative importance of long- and short-term results will vary. Think, for instance, of the debates that go on about conserving the environment.

Third, calculations of consequences, particularly unintended and undesired consequences, will vary too, and many actions that seem right to some will seem wrong to others because they predict different consequences. Because executive decisions regularly have unwelcome by-products, they become choices between evil— attempts, that is, to choose the least evil and avoid evils that are greater. Think, for example, of the debate about using large-scale nuclear devices in war.

The Christian citizen must accept that in politics no black-and-white answers are available, but God wills simply that all be led by the highest ideals and ripest wisdom that they can discover. The case of Solomon (1 Kings 3) shows that God's gift to rulers takes the form of wisdom to cope creatively with what comes, rather than ready-made solutions to all problems.

What Should the Christian Citizen Do?

The New Testament does not speak about active political participation, for the very good reason that this was not an option for first-century believers. The Roman Empire was not a democracy, and many if not most Christians were not Roman citizens. They were a small minority from the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, and were viewed as eccentric deviants from the older eccentricity of Judaism. They had no political influence, nor any prospect of gaining any. (It took a longer period than the 200 years of American independence before Christians secured even political protection; prior to Constantine, their faith was illegal, and they lived everywhere under spasmodic persecution.)

So the only politically significant things they could do were pay their taxes (Matthew 17:24-27, 22:15-21; Romans 13:6, 7), pray for their rulers (1 Timothy 2:1-4), and keep the peace (Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:13-15).

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Present-day representative democracy, however, opens the door to a wider range of political possibilities and thereby requires of us more in the way of responsible commitment than circumstances required in New Testament times.

That commitment may be summarized:

1. All should keep informed; otherwise we cannot judge well about issues, vote well for candidates, or pray well for rulers. Political ignorance is never a Christian virtue.

2. All should pray for those in power, as 1 Timothy 2:1-4 directs. The secret efficacy of prayer, as Scripture reveals it, is enormous.

3. All should vote in elections and referendums, whenever expressions of public opinion are called for. We should be led in our voting by issues rather than personalities, and not by single issues viewed in isolation, but by our vision of total community welfare. This is one way, real if small, in which we may exert influence as the world's salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16).


4. Some should seek political influence, by debating, writing, and working within the political party with which they are in nearest agreement. Clergy should not ordinarily do this, since it will be a barrier to the acceptance of their ministry by people who disagree with their politics. It is, however, very desirable that lay people with political interest should be encouraged to see the gaining and exerting of political influence as a field of Christian service, alongside the fields of church life, worship, and witness, with which they are likely at present to be more familiar.

5. Some should accept a political vocation. Who should do this? Those in whom interest, ability, and opportunity coincide, and on whom no rival career has a stronger claim; those with a vision for improving man's lot globally, advancing international peace, replacing unprincipled discrimination with justice, and furthering public decency; those, finally, who are prepared to work hard, with patience, humility, tolerance, and integrity, fleeing fanaticism, riding rebuffs, and putting the public interest before their own. The Bible histories mentioned earlier show that God wants some of his servants as professional politicians, leading and shaping society well, and the discovery that one is fitted for the role is a *prima facie* summons from God to go ahead and embrace it.

Let none, however, be starry-eyed at this point: The choice is costly. The political path is rough traveling. The goldfish bowl of public life exposes one constantly to pitiless criticism, and to live there requires resilience and involves

major self-sacrifice. As Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard have written: "The work is often thankless and discouraging, and it sometimes means psychological strain and heart-break for those involved in it. The problems are difficult, and, no matter what a politician does, invariably someone will be dissatisfied and complain about it. Every person in the community has the right to criticize the acts of any public official, and the critics have the advantage of hindsight, a privilege denied the decision-maker. . . . From a personal standpoint, political endeavor places heavy demand upon one's time, family, and financial resources. Many friends will automatically assume that an individual is in politics for some ulterior motive, and they will reveal this by the knowing look or sly remark . . ."³ Politics is a power game, and the envy, hatred, malice, and self-seeking duplicity, which the power game regularly draws out of the sinful human heart, is too familiar to need comment here. No politician of principle can expect an easy passage, certainly not the Christian.

But who ever thought that the fulfilling of any aspect of Christian vocation would be easy? The words with which Sir Frederick Catherwood ends his book *The Christian Citizen* are worth frequent pondering:

"We must be humble and not opinionated. We must be prepared to find that we are sometimes quite wrong and be able to admit it. We serve our fellowmen because of our love for a Lord who gave His life for us, a debt which, however well we serve, we can never repay. So whatever we do, we do it from a sense of duty and because it is right. We do not, like the cults, claim instant satisfaction. We do not, like the salesmen, guarantee success. The Christian's timespan is not immortal. One sows and another reaps. One labors and another enters into his labors. One day with God is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Christian knows the meaning of patience and endurance. But he also knows the meaning of action."⁴ This is the right formula for Christian politics, just because it is the right formula for every single part of the Christian life. 

FOOTNOTES

¹ Sir Frederick Catherwood. "Reform or Revolution?" in *Is Revolution Change?* ed. Brian Griffiths, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972, p. 35.

² Paul B. Henry. *Politics for Evangelicals*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974, p. 69.

³ Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard. *Politics: A Case for Christian Action*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973, pp. 107 ff.

⁴ Catherwood. *The Christian Citizen*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969, p. 177.

H A N U K K A H

BY ANTHONY CARDINALE

Hanukkah is a lighthearted festival, but its origins are nearly as heavy as the Holocaust. It wasn't Nazi Germany, but Syria under the Greek kings, that tried to trample Judaism into the ground a century and a half before the Common Era.

Although the festive holiday comes during the Christmas season, Hanukkah celebrates not the birth of a messiah but the rebirth of the Jewish state long after the fading of the golden years under King David and King Solomon. It commemorates the Jews' independence as a people and the failure of Syrian kings to destroy Judaism.

The First and Second books of Maccabees, written toward the end of biblical times, tell the true story of King Antiochus Epiphanes, who came to power in Syria in 175 B.C.E. A Greek, he used Syria as a stepping-stone to extend Greek culture throughout the Middle East.

Antiochus determined to make himself king of Egypt. With chariots and elephants and a great fleet, he invaded and plundered Egypt. Then he advanced on Jerusalem, where he broke into the holy sanctuary of the Temple and removed the precious altar vessels.

Two years later, believing that King Antiochus had been killed while campaigning again in Egypt, Jewish dissidents executed the Hellenistic party leaders in Jerusalem. Infuriated, King Antiochus—very much alive—sent forces to pillage and torch Jerusalem. The Temple ran red with blood. Antiochus began a campaign to eradicate the Jewish religion and force Jews to adopt Greek customs, dress, language, and values.

The king ordered the Jews to build altars and shrines to strange idols, to sacrifice pigs and other unclean meat, to profane the Sabbath, and to stop circumcising their sons. Refusal meant execution. Then, on December 8, 167 B.C.E., Antiochus erected in the Temple a statue of the Greek god Zeus, which the Jews would come to call "the abomination of desolation."

The Scriptures were burned, and those possessing holy books put to death. Women who had circumcised their sons were killed and their babies hung around their necks. King Antiochus' acts in the Temple reenacted what the

Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had done four centuries earlier. Psalm 74 recounts the earlier tragedy and foreshadows the later:

"Pick your steps over these endless ruins:
the enemy have sacked everything in the sanctuary. . . .

Determined to destroy us once and for all,
they burned down every shrine of God in the country. . . .

Rise, God, say something on your own behalf,

do not forget the madman's day-long blaspheming" (*Jerusalem Bible*, verses 2-23).*

Rather than endure the unendurable, many Jews renounced their faith. Beautiful Greek-style cities with their colonnades, statues, and athletic gymnasiums enticed them.

"So far had the apostasy gone," writes historian Laura Knott, "that it seems more than likely that Judaism would have been absorbed and have quietly disappeared from the face of the earth."

Much troubled was a priest named Mattathias who had left Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons, including Judas Maccabaeus, or "the Hammerer."

"Alas," cried Mattathias, "that I should have been born to witness the overthrow of my people, and of the Holy City, and to sit by."

When the king's inspector came to Modein to force sacrifice to Zeus, the inspector singled out Mattathias.

"You are a respected leader," he said. "You have sons and brothers to support you. Be the first to step forward and conform to the king's decree. You and your sons will be declared friends of the king."

"Even if every nation living in the king's dominions obeys him," Mattathias retorted, "I and my sons and brothers will still follow the covenant given to our ancestors by the God of Israel."

As he finished speaking, a Jew came forward to offer sacrifice on the king's altar. Stirred by the desecration, Mattathias slaughtered the man on the altar. He then killed the king's inspector and destroyed the altar itself. Striding through Modein, he shouted: "Let everyone who has a fervor for God's Law come out and

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follow me!”

Many followed Mattathias and his sons into the hills. On hearing this, Antiochus had a detachment of soldiers slaughter a thousand Jewish men, women, and children on the Sabbath, the holy day of rest. When Mattathias and his followers heard the news, they agreed that if attacked on the Sabbath, they would fight. Strengthened by thousands of refugees from the persecution, Mattathias and his men made a foray, overthrowing the altars to Zeus in every town and forcibly circumcising all boys whose parents had been afraid to do so. As the war lengthened, Mattathias appointed his son Judas Maccabaeus general.

Antiochus immediately dispatched one of his commanders, Apollonius, with a large force of Mysian mercenaries from Samaria. Judas Maccabaeus routed them and killed Apollonius.

Seron, commander of the Syrian forces, vowed “I will make a name for myself. I will fight Judas and his supporters who are so contemptuous of the king’s orders.”

As the Syrians approached, Judas was asked how he could hope to win with a few exhausted men who hadn’t even eaten that day. Remembering the experience of Gideon, he replied: “Victory in war does not depend on the size of the fighting force; it is from heaven that strength comes. They are coming to destroy us, our wives, and our children. But we are fighting for our lives and our laws. We will crush them.”

And so it was. The Maccabees charged Seron and overwhelmed his forces.

Infuriated, Antiochus opened his treasury, distributed a year’s pay to his troops, and ordered horrible acts of cruelty.

The Second Book of Maccabees recounts the martyrdom of Eleazar, a foremost teacher of the Law. At a banquet, soldiers forced pig’s flesh into the 90-year-old man’s mouth which he spat out.

Friends urged Eleazar to save his life by sneaking in kosher meat and pretending it was pork. “Such pretense,” he retorted, “does not square with our time of life. Many young people would suppose that Eleazar at the age of 90 had conformed to the foreigners’ way of life and might themselves be led astray on my account.” His defiance cost him his life.

Seven brothers at the banquet also refused the pork. Infuriated, the king ordered pans and cauldrons to be heated. Then, one by one, the brothers were ordered to eat pork. When each refused, his tongue was cut out, his head scalped, his limbs cut off, and his body fried in the pan.

The author of Maccabees says in an aside: “Such visitations are not intended to destroy our race but to discipline it. . . . In the case of other nations, the Master waits patiently for them to attain the full measure of their sins before He punishes them. But with us He has decided to deal differently, rather than have to punish us later, when our sins come to a head. And so He never entirely withdraws His mercy from us. He may discipline us by some disaster, but He does not desert His own people.”

As the Maccabean Wars raged, King Antiochus needed more money. Leaving half of his forces with Lysias to deal with Israel, he marched the rest to Persia, seeking the gold left there by Alexander. But fierce resistance forced him to retreat to Babylon.

Here, he learned that Lysias had retreated before the Jews, who, led by the fierce Maccabees, had overthrown the statue of Zeus built over the altar in Jerusalem.


Profoundly shaken, Antiochus took to his bed.

“I have been asking myself how I could have come to such a pitch of distress,” he told friends. “But now I remember the wrong I did in Jerusalem when I seized the vessels from the Temple and ordered the extermination of the Jews. This is why these misfortunes have overtaken me and I am dying of melancholy in a foreign land.”

In Jerusalem, Judas Maccabaeus and his companions restored the city and the Temple, pulling down the pagan altars and purifying the Holy of Holies. They lighted the lamps, set out loaves of bread, and striking fire from flints, offered the first sacrifice to God in two years.

Then prostrate they implored God never again to let them fall into such adversity—that if they should sin again, to correct them with moderation and not deliver them to barbaric nations.

They kept eight festal days with rejoicing. Then, carrying branches, they offered hymns to God for the cleansing of the Temple.

Jewish tradition holds that the Maccabees found one day’s supply of olive oil to burn for the eternal light in the sanctuary. But this oil fed the flame in the Temple for eight days while the Jews went through the lengthy ritual of pressing new, sanctified olive oil. This is the miracle of Hanukkah. 

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“O

ur way of living

together in America is a strong but delicate fabric.

It is made up of many threads. It has been woven over many centuries by the patience and sacrifice of countless liberty-loving men and women. It serves as a cloak for the protection of poor and rich, of black and white, of Jew and Gentile, of foreign and native born. Let us not tear it asunder. For no man knows, once it is destroyed, where or when man will find its protective warmth again.”

—Wendell L. Willkie, American industrialist, politician (1892-1944).