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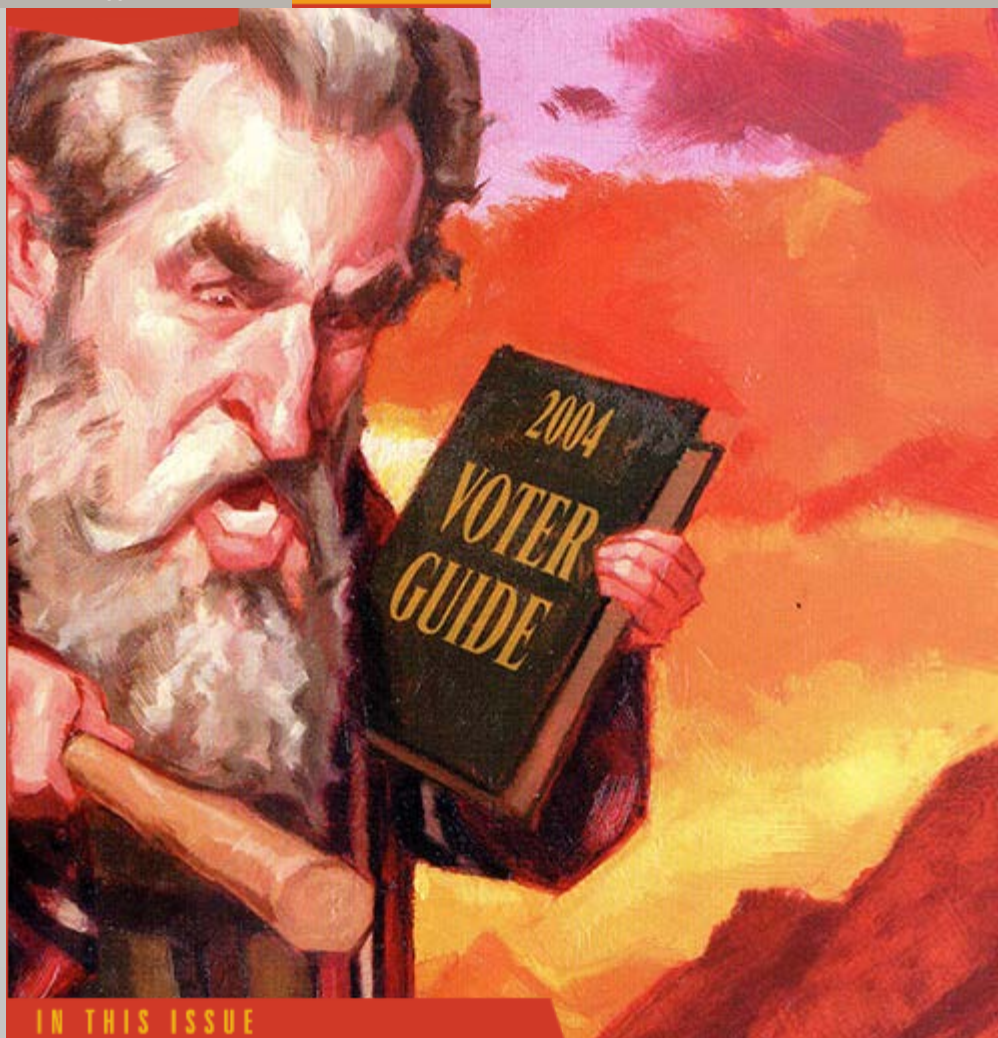
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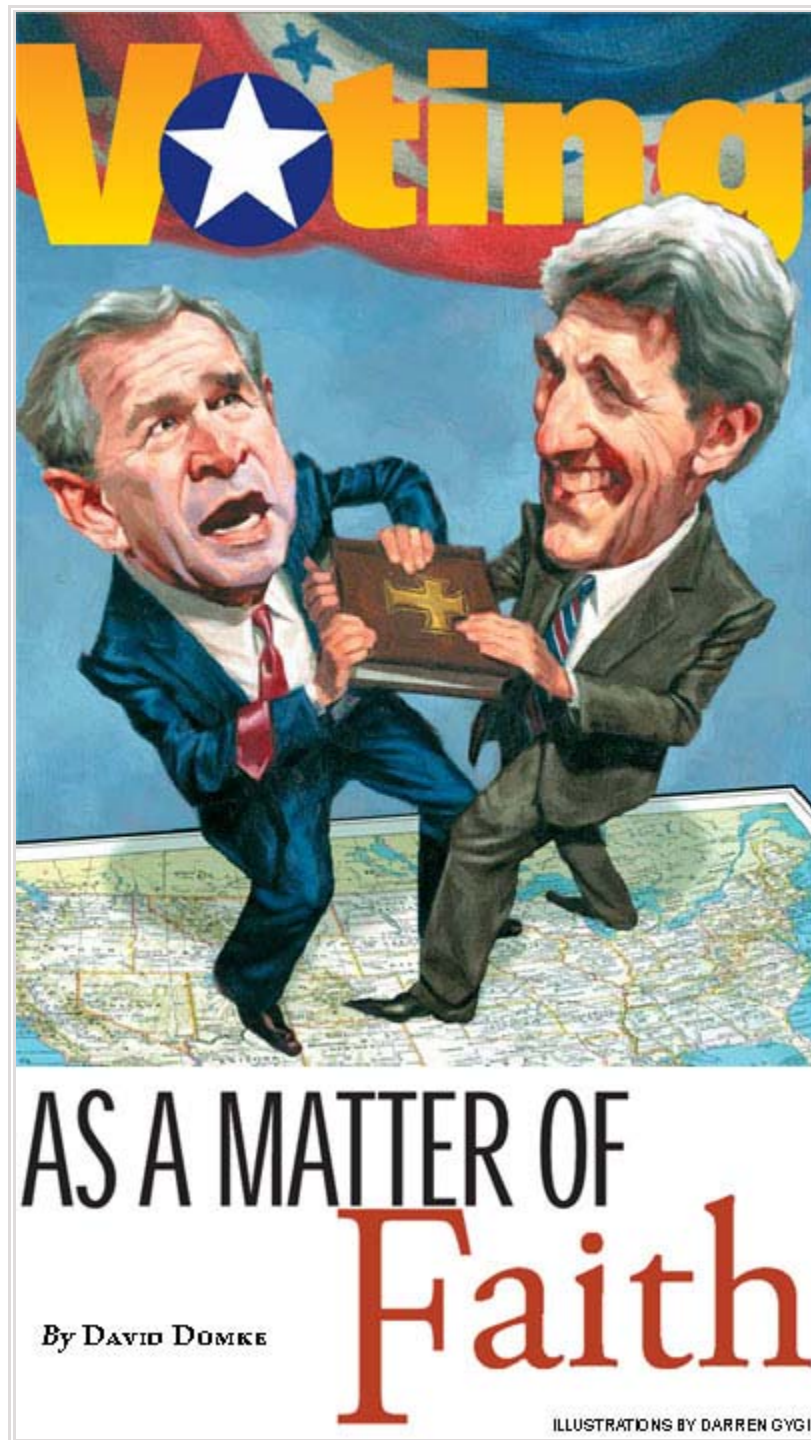
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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2004

Voting As A Matter Of Faith

BY: DAVID DOMKE



The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, ushered religion into the center of American politics. In the three years since, President George W. Bush and his administration have made sure it stayed there. And then earlier this year the Catholic Church turned the relationship between faith and politics into a campaign issue. Civil religion is out this presidential election; religious politics is in.

A useful point of reference for the current campaign is the 1960 election, when John Kennedy became the first and only Catholic

president. Confronted with concerns that his White House would be a Vatican tool, Kennedy told a collection of conservative Protestant clergy in September 1960 that "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote—where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference—and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him."

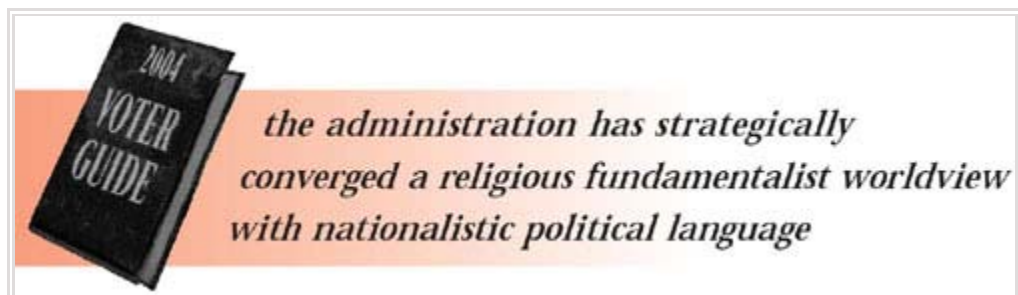
It was a winning message then. It is an unheard one now. Virtually all that Kennedy said he opposed has been commonplace in the 2004 presidential campaign. Consider just a few examples:

- The American Council of Catholic Bishops brokered a compromise between opposing bishops in June when it declared that it was acceptable (but not necessary) for a priest to withhold Communion from Catholics in public office who dissent from church teachings on abortion and homosexuality. At the same time, the council said that politicians "have an obligation in conscience to work toward correcting morally defective laws"—those regarding abortion, in particular—"lest they be guilty of cooperating in evil and in sinning against the common good."
- The *Time* magazine cover story for June 21, 2004, titled "The Faith Factor," included a poll in which 56 percent of likely U.S. voters agreed with the statement "We are a religious nation, and religious values should serve as a guide to what our political leaders do in office," while 11 percent of likely voters answered yes when asked "Have you ever voted for or against a candidate mainly because of the candidate's religious beliefs?"
- Rev. Jerry Falwell, in the July 1 issue of his e-mail newsletter and on his Web site, declared, "For conservative people of faith, voting for principle this year means voting for the re-election of George W. Bush. The alternative, in my mind, is simply unthinkable." He added, "I believe it is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew, every Reagan Democrat, and everyone in between to get serious about re-electing President Bush." This nexus of religious institutions, public opinion, and leaders, in combination with the omnipresent U.S. struggle against a seemingly growing number of terrorists sustained by Islamic fundamentalism, makes the 2004 presidential election at least unusual, perhaps unique.

In particular, two features of the U.S. political system that have received inadequate attention in mainstream news coverage—which is the basis of political knowledge for most Americans—simultaneously are driving the current religious politics and will go far in deciding who is president in January 2005.

The Bush administration's political fundamentalism

George W. Bush is the most publicly religious president since at least Woodrow Wilson. He speaks often and openly about his "born-again" faith, and regularly references a divine power in public statements. These words have been matched by a number of administration policies and goals that are undergirded by a conservative religious worldview—including the creation of "faith-based"



initiatives that allow religious institutions to receive government funding to engage in social service programs, the call for a constitutional amendment to prohibit gay marriage, and the conception of the "war on terrorism" as an epic struggle of good versus evil.

What distinguishes Bush from the civil religion espoused by many U.S. political leaders, past and present, is that this American president not only asks for divine favor or asserts its presence upon the nation, but also evinces a certainty that God's will corresponds with administration policies. For example, in his address before Congress and a national television audience nine days after the terrorist attacks, Bush declared, "The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them." And in his 2003 State of the Union address, with the Iraq conflict looming, the president said:

"Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity."

From this place of certitude about divine plan, it is a short theological (and rhetorical) step to justifying U.S. actions. For instance, at a December 2003 press conference Bush said, "I believe, firmly believe—and you've heard me say this a lot—and I say it a lot because I truly believe it—that freedom is the almighty God's gift to every person, every man and woman who lives in this world. That's what I believe. And the arrest of Saddam Hussein changed the equation in Iraq. Justice was being delivered to a man who defied that gift from the Almighty to the people of Iraq."

Further, this view of divinely ordained policy infuses the public discourse of several administration leaders. I systematically examined hundreds of administration public communications—by the president, John Ashcroft, Colin Powell, and Donald Rumsfeld—about the "war on terrorism" in the almost 20 months between September 11, 2001, and major combat in the Iraq War in spring 2003. This research showed that the administration strategically converged a religious fundamentalist worldview with nationalistic political language, with four particular characteristics:

- Binary, zero-sum conceptions of the political landscape, most notably good versus evil and security versus peril
- Calls for immediate action by other political actors on administration policies as a necessary part of the nation's "calling" and "mission" against terrorism
- Declarations about the will of God for America and for the spread of U.S. conceptions of freedom and liberty
- Claims that dissent from the administration is unpatriotic and a threat to the nation and globe

I also found that news coverage of leading media outlets substantially echoed the administration's views. The result was that the administration's political fundamentalism went largely unchallenged by the political mainstream for nearly two years after September 11.

The Growing Alliance of Catholics and Evangelicals

For Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry—who, like John Kennedy, is a Catholic from Massachusetts—the salience of religion in today's political landscape has presented a sizable challenge. Kerry is by disposition uncomfortable discussing his faith, a point not lost on the public and one that Americans are prone to interpret in less-than-favorable terms. The June Time poll noted earlier found that only 7 percent of likely U.S. voters said they would describe Kerry "as a man of strong religious faith" (compared to 54 percent for Bush). A few weeks later, Beliefnet editor Steven Waldman, in an essay that circulated widely among political and news types, wrote, "If Kerry's uncomfortable with religion, then he's uncomfortable with Americans."

Not coincidentally, Kerry soon developed his religious voice, and Democratic strategists began their first serious outreach to the Religious Left. In his nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in late July, Kerry said: "I don't wear my own faith on my sleeve. But faith has given me values and hope to live by, from Vietnam to this day, from Sunday to Sunday. I don't want to claim that God is on our side. As Abraham Lincoln told us, I want to pray humbly that we are on God's side." Thereafter Kerry has regularly talked about "values" and "faith"—language comfortably within the tradition of American civil religion but nonetheless new for Kerry.

And ultimately, Kerry's discomfort with matters of religious faith (or at least his unease in talking about them publicly) might be enough to seal his political demise on November 2—because Kerry not only faces the always-present challenge of reaching beyond his party's core constituencies, but he also must stem the mounting tide of Catholic voters leaving the Democratic fold. In the late 1980s, according to Pew Research Center data, 41 percent of White Catholics considered themselves to be Democrats, compared to 24 percent Republicans. This gap has shrunk over time, and in summer 2003 for the first time more White Catholics identified themselves as Republicans (31 percent) than as Democrats (29 percent), a shift particularly pronounced among those who attend Mass regularly.

The irony, of course, is that this trend has produced a growing alliance of Catholics and Evangelicals—exactly the reverse of what Kennedy faced in 1960. As a result, when Republican Party campaign strategists asked Evangelical clergy for copies of church rosters in spring 2004, so as to make sure all were registered to vote (for Bush), and suggested 22 "duties" that church leaders should follow to maximize the president's support, Catholics were contacted too. Specifically, a number of Catholic churches were contacted with the hope, according to Republican National Committee documents, of procuring parish directories and membership lists so as to "identify and contact those Catholics who are likely to be supportive of President Bush's compassionate conservative agenda."

Notably, though, midsummer polls conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania suggested that Kerry and Democrats were having more success among White Catholics than did Al Gore and his party in 2000. That's good news for Kerry. However, the data also revealed that Bush's support among White Evangelicals was even stronger than in 2000, when he dominated among these voters.

The choice

It is apparent all around us that the American public is much more engaged with this presidential contest than usual. In the Annenberg data 34 percent of registered voters said they had discussed politics with family or friends at least four days in the past week—well more than double the percentage at the same point in the 2000 campaign. These data held across religious and racial groupings. Clearly, other factors besides the nexus of religion and politics have contributed to this reality. Just as clearly, religion is a salient factor in this election.

Indeed, Bush and Kerry present U.S. citizens with a choice of two distinct religious worldviews. The implications of the election are great, and not just for those in the 50 states. In the words of an Afghan journalist whom I met in the summer during his visit to the United States, "Do Americans know that how they vote affects others in the world as well?" In particular, this presidential election will do much to decide the role of religion in the first decades of twenty-first-century politics—at least in the United States, and almost certainly around much of the globe.



*David Domke, a former journalist, is an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Washington. His research focuses on the relationships among political leaders, news coverage, and public opinion in the United States. He is the author of *God Willing? Political fundamentalism in the White House, the "War on Terror," and the Echoing Press* (Pluto Press, 2004).*

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2007

Bishop To Knight? -- Checkmate Or Camelot?

BY: SCOT CANON, STEVE KRASKE



Eugene Kennedy recalls the New York parish of his childhood, a place where men well-known as gangland bosses walked the streets. Not once, said the man who would grow up to become a priest and confidant to the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, does he remember his church denying those murderous thugs Communion. So he's aghast to hear talk from bishops—a small but bold minority—that lawmakers such as presidential candidate John Kerry should be refused the Eucharist.

"That is not the way we function as Catholics," Kennedy said. "We have to cut some slack to Catholic politicians, or we won't have any Catholic politicians."

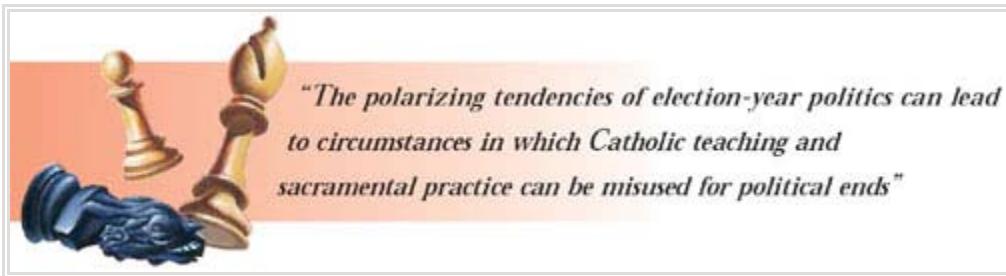
At least four Catholic bishops, including Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis, have said that the staunchly pro-choice Democratic candidate for president, a practicing Catholic, should not take Holy Communion in their dioceses. Among their concerns are Kerry's stands on abortion, stem cell research, euthanasia, and gay marriage—all of which, they say, run contrary to church teachings.

One bishop has gone further. Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs, Colorado, has said that Catholics who even vote for a pro-choice politician should remain seated during Communion.

"For many Americans, this crosses a line," said Karlyn Bowman, who studies public opinion at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "They don't think the church should be involved."

When John F. Kennedy got near a lease on the White House, some voters fretted that the country's first-ever Catholic president would be more beholden to his church. This time a handful of Catholic clergy have pitted private loyalty to church against political philosophy and public policy.

Senator Kerry, who regards his faith as private, told reporters that he will not be pressured by religious leaders. And in fact, other clergy



question the propriety of using a sacrament as a political sanction.

"I am not a spokesperson for the church, and the church is not a spokesperson for the United States of America," Kerry said in June.

How the nation's 64 million Catholics see the controversy could be a factor

in a tight presidential race. As a group, Catholics once tended to vote Democratic, but the partisan divide within the faith has narrowed significantly compared with 30 years ago.

In 2000, Catholics voted for Al Gore over George W. Bush by 50 percent to 47 percent. In Missouri, though, a key battleground state in presidential elections, Catholics sided with Bush over Gore 55 percent to 44 percent, according to an ABC News exit poll. Demonstrators have staged vigils across the country, including in Denver, where 250 U.S. bishops and several cardinals met. The bishops concluded that politicians who regularly back abortion rights or euthanasia are "cooperating in evil," but left to individual bishops whether lawmakers should be denied Holy Communion as a result.

Yet the bishops also seemed to caution against the tactic.

"The polarizing tendencies of election-year politics can lead to circumstances in which Catholic teaching and sacramental practice can be misused for political ends," the bishops said in a statement.

The remaining possibility, however, that a bishop can deny Communion based on political positions leaves open a chance not that government will intrude on political freedom, but that clergy will impose their powers over those in government.

And that's sparked deeply committed anti-abortion forces, for instance, to use the church as a way to pressure candidates on the issue and embarrass those they oppose. In Kansas City protesters recently pleaded for Bishop Raymond J. Boland of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph to join with four other bishops in withholding Communion from Kerry should he ever request it in the Kansas City area.

"You can't be pro-abortion and Catholic at the same time. That is an oxymoron," said Tom Gugger, a 48-year-old Blue Springs, Missouri, grain trader.

The Kansas City bishop has said that he thinks bishops generally want to keep apart the politics of their laity and practice of faith.

"The vast majority . . . are not in favor of bringing their problems right up to the Communion rail," Bishop Boland said.

Kerry is not the first Catholic candidate for president under pressure because of his faith. John F. Kennedy faced suspicions in his 1960 campaign for president over how much he would be influenced by the pope.

Two years later another Catholic, Judge Leander Perez, was excommunicated—a harsher step than denying Communion—for working cut off funding for New Orleans' Catholic schools rather than integrate them.

No one is advocating excommunication for Kerry. Still, the Perez case stands out because it is virtually the only instance scholars can offer of a bishop employing the power of the church to punish someone for public policy.

"It is unheard of," said Jason Berry, a Catholic who has written critically of the church, most recently in a book, *Vows of Silence*. "There are many positions that the church takes relative to human life—the death penalty, abortion, and, in the run-up to the war in Iraq, the pope let it be known very clearly he was opposed."

But to fuse choices on public policy to a politician's treatment in Massachusetts, Berry said, crosses into a new realm. Given the church's shielding of priests in child sex abuse cases, Berry said, "the bishops are not in the position to cast the first stone."

Bishop Sheridan, though, was undeterred. In a pastoral letter in May, he wrote: "The Church never directs citizens to vote for any specific candidate. The Church does, however, have the right and the obligation to teach clearly and fully the objective truth about the dignity and rights of the human person."

Critics say that the bishops who would deny Communion to individuals based on abortion politics conveniently seize issues that put Kerry at odds with the church, while overlooking things such as support for the death penalty or support for the invasion of Iraq.

Bishop Sheridan's assistant, Peter Howard, said that the issues the bishop chose covered an "intrinsically evil nature." And he cited Catholic Church Canon 915, which says that people "who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion."

In that context, scholar George Weigel said, clergy have cause to withhold the sacrament.

"More and more bishops are coming to the conclusion that . . . support for abortion on demand is, in some sense, participating in that grave sin," said Weigel, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Protestant preachers have taken political positions too, from Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s role in the civil rights movement to Rev. Jerry Falwell's conservative Moral Majority. Evangelical clergy have been increasingly important in mobilizing voters about abortion.

But the Catholic pressure differs from the Protestant pressure, because the ability to take Communion figures as a measure of a person's standing with the church.

"With Protestants, we don't have anything commensurate to discipline our members, because we have a different view of the Eucharist," said Molly Marshall, a professor of theology at the Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas.

Many people note that the Catholic Church has been involved in public policy throughout its history. Yet some balk at exploitation of a politician's personal religious standing to influence life in the public arena.

"They're trying to make a political statement in regard to the campaign," said Maureen Fiedler, a nun and board member of the liberal reform group Catholics Speak Out.

She said the denial of Communion would overlook the church's concept of "primacy of conscience." That tells Catholics to follow the teachings of Jesus and the church, but that ultimately they must follow their own conscience.

Early polling on the issue—one certain to overwhelm front pages if a priest turns Kerry away from Communion—hints that Catholics do not want their priests bringing the election into their sanctuaries.

Three fourths of Catholics in a *Time*/CNN poll published in June opposed the denial of Communion to a candidate for his political beliefs.

The electorate divides less and less by denomination. Conservative voters attend church more regularly—polls show that about two fifths say they attended church in the past week—while liberals go less frequently.

So analysts see more in common between devout Catholics and active Evangelicals than between practicing and nonpracticing Catholics.

If anything, political handicappers see the issue as unlikely to move public opinion. Voters strongly opposed to abortion are unlikely Kerry backers. Voters supporting abortion rights are likely to be offended by a politically active church.

"The great majority of Catholic laity would react very negatively against any such action," said Richard McBrien, a theology professor at University of Notre Dame.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, a former editor of the liberal Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, said priests or bishops seen to be using Communion as a political bludgeon could trigger a backlash. Their influence is waning after the church's sex abuse scandal.

"The bishops," she said, "have picked the wrong time to do this sort of enforcement of Catholic teaching."



Scot Canon and Steve Kraske write for the Kansas City Star, Kansas City, Missouri.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2007

When 2 + 2 = 5

BY: ANDREW FOSTER

In Gulliver's Travels Jonathan Swift wrote about the long war between "the two great empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu" over which end of an egg should be broken, the big or the little one. According to earliest historical accounts, when the grandfather of Lilliput's present king broke open an egg in the traditional manner, that is, of the big end, he cut his finger. "Whereupon the emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs." Some, highly resentful of the edict, revolted and fled to Blefuscu, whose leaders were constantly egging on these dissenters in their refusal to stop breaking eggs on the large end (hence known as Big-endians). Eventually war broke out between Lilliput and Blefuscu; many ships were sunk and thousands died.

If Swift's satire, mocking the differences between Prot-estants and Catholics, were written today, the scenario could read like this: There was once a great religion that taught that salvation came only from faith that $2 + 2 = 5$. One day many revolted, claiming that salvation came only from faith that $2 + 2 = 4$. After a long, bitter, and at times bloody divide separated the original church (the Fivers) from the reformers (the Fourers), both realized that their common political aspirations could never be achieved as long as they remained at each other's throat. Thus, after years of interfaith dialogue by their best mathematicians, who employed all sorts of complicated algebraic calculations, both the Fivers and the Fourers finally agreed that indeed salvation did come only from faith that $2 + 2 = 4$. They just had a different understanding of what 4 meant (the Fivers believing that 4 really meant 5). After great pomp and accolades of brotherly love, declarations of unity were signed proclaiming salvation by faith in $2 + 2 = 4$. Who cared that each had a different understanding of what 4 meant? The important point was that both professed $2 + 2 = 4$.



However absurd it might seem in the current religio-political climate in America, Catholics and Protestants, seeking political power, are claiming unity on, of all things, justification by faith, the doctrine that not only caused the Protestant Reformation but also remained at the heart of the split between the two major branches of Western Christianity. After the signing of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT 1), The Gift of Salvation (ECT 2), and most recently The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, the claim is made that the division between Catholics and Protestants on this crucial doctrine is basically over, and now they have great prospects for unity.

"The agreement," said the Washington Post regarding the Lutheran-Catholic accord, "is significant beyond the dispute over doctrine it resolves. It has deep implications for future relations among Catholics and Protestants, said theologians and church leaders. Many said that the accord gives added promise to the ideal their denominations champion—of full

communion, or merger, between the churches."

Have Protestants and Catholics found a common understanding of justification by faith? If not, why do they claim that they have? And, finally, what implications could this newfound unity have for religious freedom?

Faith and Works

However divergent Catholic and Protestant theology on numerous issues, the crucial split has always pivoted along one particular point known as "justification by faith." Since the Reformation, Protestants have insisted that justification by faith is an act by which God declares repentant sinners as righteous. Using verses such as "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28) and "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20), the Reformers taught that justification is something that God does for the sinner, not in the sinner, a crucial distinction. By the Lord's gracious act repentant sinners have the perfect righteousness of Jesus—the righteousness wrought by His sinless life and absolute obedience to God's law—credited (or imputed) to them, as if that sinlessness and absolute obedience were now their own. Christ's history, Christ's obedience, and Christ's righteousness become, legally, their history, their obedience, and their righteousness, and these provide the only means by which sinners can be accepted by a holy, perfect God.

However, the good news doesn't end here. According to the most generic Protestant theology, this legal declaration of righteousness comes—by faith alone. It can't be by works, because people are already sinners, and thus no matter how obedient and law-abiding, they can never achieve the perfect righteousness that a perfect God demands. Nothing that happens in a person gives that person merit that

can, in any way, justify them in God's sight. They are saved only by what God has done for them through Jesus Christ, and that salvation comes only by faith alone in what Christ had done for them.

Vatican Theology

In contrast, for Rome, justification isn't just an act, an extrinsic declaration of righteousness, but includes an ongoing process that is continually making a Christian righteous. Justification isn't just a change in stature, but a change in human nature. What Protestants label "sanctification," the fruit, the personal subjective experience of justification,

Catholics subsume under the name of justification, which includes not just what God does for the sinner but what He also does in him, an absolutely crucial distinction. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man". Justification, therefore, is what happens inside a person as well as outside. Christ's merits, the merits that He wrought out in His perfect life by His perfect obedience to the law, are not just credited to a person but are actually infused into the life of the believer through the sacraments administered by the Roman Catholic Church itself. Rome teaches that this saving merit doesn't remain outside of the sinner, but becomes something that happens inside a person, a change that gives that person merit before God.

"The merits of man before God in the Christian life," says the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace . . . so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God then to the faithful." Rome's idea that God somehow associates man "with the work of his grace" leads it to an understanding of justification that Protestantism has rejected for more than 400 hundred years.

"Moved by the Holy Spirit," says the Catechism, "we can merit for ourselves and for all others the graces needed to obtain eternal life." Yet if we can "merit for ourselves . . . the graces needed to obtain eternal life," then doesn't justification become something different than when it's based only on Christ's merits credited to us by faith alone?

Of course it does, which is why at the Council of Trent (still viewed as authoritative), Rome denounced justification by faith alone: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification . . . let him be anathema"—a denunciation that, after more than 450 years, the church has never repudiated. In fact, the Council of Trent declared that "if anyone says that justifying grace is nothing else than confidence [faith] in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence [faith] alone that justifies us, let him be anathema." If, however, Protestants are correct in their understanding of the gospel, and if "justifying grace" is, in fact, nothing else than faith "in divine mercy," which does, indeed, remit sin "for Christ's sake," and if this faith alone is, truly, what "justifies us," then Rome has cursed the gospel, a slight theological technicality that the Protestant movers and shakers of this newfound unity with the Catholic Church have conveniently overlooked.

Here's the problem: one group says that justification is only what happens outside of us; the other says that justification happens outside and inside us. It can be one, or the other, maybe neither—but certainly not both. This issue allows for no middle ground, no mediating compromise, no golden mean—because none exists; and to assume not only that one does but that it can be extracted through cordial, loving, and open dialogue is like saying that cordial, loving, and open dialogue will lead to a compromise position between those who say that George Washington was the first president of the United States and those who deny it.

Language Games

If, however, such a fundamental difference between Catholics and Protestants on justification by faith exists, how can they claim unity on it? The answer is simple: they agree on words, not meanings. By exploiting the cloudiness of language, by abusing the ambidextrousness of syntax, the signers of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, The Gift of Salvation, and The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification were able to affix their names to strings of words ("salvation by faith," "grace," "justification by faith," etc.) that—though sounding alike, reading alike, and looking alike—were, in fact, as different in meaning as 4 and 5.

Evangelical scholar R. C. Sproul, in a book attacking ECT 1, revealed just how far these people have abused language in order to sign a document with claims as ludicrous as $2 + 2 = 5$. Sproul wrote: "In private conversation Colson indicated that the two sides of the dialogue do not always agree on the meaning of statements in ECT. This is certainly true with respect to the joint affirmation on justification. When, for example, Rome declares that justification is because of Christ, this means something radically different from what



it means to historic Evangelicalism."

Colson admitted that "the two sides of the dialogue do not always agree on the meaning of statements in ECT"—yet they signed their names on it anyway? What is a document, any document, other than statements with meanings? That's all there is to it. Yet Colson admits that they do not always agree on "the meaning of statements." Then why sign? Colson's words are the semantic parallel to saying, "The general is a great military leader, except that he doesn't know anything about inspiring troops, leading an army, or fighting a war."

Protestants say, "We are saved by grace through faith"; Catholics say, "We are saved by grace through faith." Who cares that each group has a radically and irreconcilably different concept than what that statement means? What matters is that both can say it.

Political Agenda

What's going on? Conservative Protestants, once Rome's most implacable foe, now claim unity with the papacy, not just over issues such as abortion, prayer in school, or pornography—but over justification by faith, the very issue that has divided them for centuries? Twice in the 1990s conservative Protestants in the United States signed documents claiming that Roman Catholics and Protestants agree on the essential elements of the gospel, of salvation by faith alone. And, astonishingly, the Lutheran World Federation and Roman Catholics in 1999 signed The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Augsburg, Germany, claiming "a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification," which "shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations" and therefore "the reasons for the rift in the 16th century are no longer applicable for the present moment."

Why are Protestants so eager to claim that Rome has a biblical understanding of salvation by faith alone, when it's obvious that Rome's doctrine of salvation contradicts the core of Protestant theology? To begin with, the good folk involved in these documents live in the postmodern era, a time when Truth, as with a capital T, is deemed nonexistent. Instead, there are only "truths" (as with a small t), opinions that each community bands together and creates for itself according to its own specific needs. There's no overarching metanarrative from which people or individuals derive a history or sense of identity. No one can find the Archimedean point upon which one can see absolute truth, because that point is a fictional place, like Utopia, Atlantis, and Lilliput. There is no absolute, only individual perspectives heavily influenced by culture, heredity, and upbringing. Postmodernism, ultimately, leads to a cold (and potentially dangerous) pragmatism: "truth" is what "works," nothing more, because, given postmodernist presuppositions, what else is there?

Postmodernism has, in fact, created the perfect environment for the kind of semantic fog that these documents need, even if the documents themselves claim that truth exists (how ironic that documents written supposedly by those who on theoretical grounds deny postmodernism would actually use it in the documents themselves).

The second and, perhaps, most important factor, especially in the American context (with documents such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together and The Gift of Salvation), is the political one. If not for the Christian Right and the political rebirth of Evangelicals in the past 25-30 years, these bogus agreements would never have been written because there would have been no need for them. Once, however, the Christian Right—composed primarily of Protestant Evangelicals (historically, those vehemently opposed to Rome)—started to flex its muscles, only to get belted back harder than it itself could belt, the movement realized that it needed the clout and numbers of politically conservative Roman Catholics if it was to succeed. The only problem was that for more than 400 years Protestants—particularly these kind of Protestants—had been bitter enemies of Catholics. And, more than anything else, what kept them apart was their opposite understanding of justification by faith (and all that it entails). Thus, whatever hopes for political unity these people harbored, nothing substantial could happen until this, the most divisive of issues, was dealt with.

Voilà! ECT 1 and ECT 2 are, among other things, the fruits of those endeavors. What they represent (particularly ECT 2) are Catholics and Protestants claiming as a grounds of unity the one point that, more than any other, divides them: the nature of justification. Whatever the individual motives of those involved, there's no question that what spurred on these documents, at least at first, was politics, pure and simple. After all, how could Catholics and Protestants claim a common religion as the basis for political agenda.

Dispensable

More than 200 years ago James Madison argued that the multiplicity of denominations would provide a safety net for the American experiment. Because of their various, and at times contentious, views these faiths would never have the unity that would enable them to wield political power, or at least enough power to be dangerous (history has shown that once the church, be it Protestant or Catholic, gains political hegemony, it has been just as willing to abuse power, to stifle human rights, and to resort to violence as have been secularists, all in blatant contradiction to the most basic ideals of the Christian faith).

And, sadly, there's no reason to think that the church today would be any less willing to concede those ideals than its predecessors were. To the contrary. Everything indicates that they would be every bit as willing. Indeed, if the Protestants involved with these documents, particularly ECT 1 and ECT 2, would compromise the most fundamental aspect of their religion—justification by faith alone—for political power, it's obvious that they deem no principle indispensable, not even something as simple as $2 + 2 = 4$. Or is that

5?



Andrew Foster writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.

1 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 62.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

3 "Faiths Heal Ancient Rift Over Faith," *Washington Post*, Nov. 1, 1999, sec. A, p. 24.

4 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), N. 2019.

5 *Ibid.*, N. 2027.

6 Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P., trans., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books), Canon 9, p. 43.

7 *Ibid.*, Canon 12.

8 R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), p. 37.

9 *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Section 5.

10 Press release "Passing Joint Declaration Is a 'Big Day' for Lutherans," no. 8/89.

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Iraq Diary

BY: BRENDA MALDONADO

As we drove through the Iraqi countryside, I sat in the backseat of the SUV looking out the window in amazement at the pastoral scenes passing before me. With my teammates, Otto and Deanna, I had just crossed from the Turkish border into what is known as the Kurdistan area of Iraq. We were a group of three American nurse educators who had come to teach Kurdish nurses more specialized care. I was curious to see what the hospitals were like there, and the level of nursing skill. I wanted to know what it was like to be a woman living in a Muslim country. And as a Christian, I was also very interested in attitude toward religions other than Islam. There were so many questions in my head, but I was able to enjoy the unexpected beauty of this very war-torn country.

The rolling green foothills were dotted with occasional fields of wheat and barley and an occasional settlement here and there. Behind the hills sharp, rugged mountains pierced the sky. It was hard to imagine that just three hours to the south of us in Kirkuk, soldiers were still exchanging gunfire with insurgents. A war continued to rage on in other parts of Iraq. Out my window were flocks of sheep and goats being tended by a lonely herder in fields of green.

Our final destination was the city of Suleymaniyah, a city of about 900,000 people nestled in a valley just a couple hours' drive from the Iran border. Suleymaniyah is a bustling city with encouraging signs of progress. Many new buildings are under construction, both commercial and residential. There was a new city park being developed just across the street from our hotel. Every day we would see cars decorated with flowers passing by and honking—inside were newlyweds wearing their wedding finery. In the afternoon the children would be walking home in small groups all wearing their school uniforms. Everyone seemed to be carrying a cell phone.

The first morning of class we were each driven to our assigned hospitals. Otto was dropped off at the critical care hospital, Deanna at the pediatric hospital, and I at the maternity hospital. At first glance the hospital buildings appeared very nice, definitely not indicative of a developing country. However, when you go beyond the superficial, there is a glaring discrepancy between the physical atmosphere and the quality of health care. Many patients die daily in Iraq from very preventable causes. The high mortality rate is partly because of an inability to obtain very common medications and blood products, lack of functioning equipment and the knowledge of how to use it, and poor access to current educational materials and training. Interestingly enough, the reasons I just mentioned are all the result of an even larger problem, and that is the lack of a good organizational structure. We were told by several that there is plenty of money for things needed, but there is just no process or plan for how to obtain monies or materials.

One of the first things that I did was to evaluate at what level the nurses practiced. I discovered that the nurses, even though they go through three years of training, are not allowed to take vital signs or to do nursing assessments. They do not have any background in anatomy and physiology, but are then expected to perform highly specialized skills such as delivering babies, inserting chest tubes, and intubating patients for anesthesia. Nurses, prior to being trained by us, did not perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. They would call for a doctor to come if a patient was unresponsive, and then watch the physician perform CPR. There were so many things that needed to be addressed that we just had to start from square one and cover many of the basics with these "experienced" nurses.

Throughout my four weeks there I was able to enjoy many positive interactions with my interpreter and nursing students. I taught maternity care at the only maternity hospital in the city. My interpreter, Dr. Mariam Baker, was a young progressive woman. She spoke very good English and had a passion for learning and teaching. As we got to know each other better, Dr. Mariam began to share with me the different intricacies of the Kurdish culture. She also shared with me old wives' tales and would laugh because some people still put a lot of stock in them.

I learned of female circumcision still practiced out in the more isolated villages. I also learned that parents would bring in a daughter after a fall off of a bike or a car accident to have the doctors verify that the girl's hymen was still intact, and request a formal document stating the fact. This was to ensure that their daughter would still be acceptable for marriage. Dr. Mariam shared with me that on several occasions she had lied when a young woman had been brought in prior to her wedding to be examined, so that the bride would not be rejected by her fiancé and killed by her family.

Every day we saw the cars of newlyweds driving by, and this prompted me to ask questions about the whole process. Some marriages are still arranged by the family, but there is a move toward people choosing their own spouses. It was interesting to discover that there is a practice of a prenuptial agreement. When a man asks a woman's hand in marriage, she will tell him how much gold he will be required to pay in order to marry her. If the man agrees to the amount, he will then present the bride with a portion of the gold at the wedding, with a promise of the rest if he decides to divorce her. This would also be the settlement of the divorce, and he is bound to pay it. Only



On the point of religion, it seems that the followers of Islam are very similar to Christians in the area of having various commitment levels to their religion.



Above: Brenda Maldonado [left] and the nursing students in newly freed Suleymaniyah, Iraq. Left: Brenda tries on a bulletproof vest with soldiers Weber, Deal and Fatulah. Photos: B. Maldonado

the man can choose to divorce, and only the man is able to remarry. There also seems to be an unwritten caste system that says that people in certain professions, education levels, or classes can marry someone only in their class or level.

On the point of religion, it seems that the followers of Islam are very similar to Christians in the area of having various commitment levels to their religion. A large majority of Muslims rarely, if ever, go to the mosque to pray. There are Muslims who faithfully keep Ramadan by fasting the entire month, but otherwise, do nothing else. There are Muslims who go to the mosque every Friday, and study the Koran. And there are the more pious Muslims who stop each day, wherever they are, when they hear the call to prayer being blasted over the city minarets, place their prayer rug on the ground, and kneel facing Mecca for their prayer. There also appear

to be about as many different types of Islamic sects as there are denominations of Christianity, each with its own emphasis. The most interesting conversation I had on religion while I was in Suleymaniyah was with a man by the name of Herish.

Herish is an employee of our in-country host and a well-educated man. He fluently speaks English, Arabic, and Kurdish, and speaks some German and Japanese. Herish worked for the U.N. on a couple of different occasions as an interpreter. At lunch one day I asked Herish if he was Muslim.

He replied, "I am a Muslim on paper only." I asked him what he meant by that, and he said that when he was born, his parents signed his name to a document claiming him to be a Muslim. Herish stated that he had read the Koran and the Bible but that he does

not subscribe to any religion. We spoke at great length about religion, as Herish is very well read on the subject, but has no real opinion toward Islam or Christianity. The most revealing thing that he said was, "If a person were to read the Koran and follow the Five Pillars of Islam as they are written, they would be just like Osama bin Laden." I wasn't sure that I had heard him correctly, so I asked him to reiterate, and he said the same thing. I didn't really know what to say for a few seconds.

We did not perceive any hostility toward our religious preference, and bringing our Bibles into the country was a nonissue when we crossed the border into Iraq.

I did not meet any radical Muslims while in Iraq, nor did I meet any Iraqi Christians. It is said that there are about a dozen Christian families living in the populace of Suleymaniyah. These dozen or so families belong to two different churches, a Chaldean Catholic

church and an Armenian Christian church. Some of the other Kurdish cities are known to have larger populations of Christians living there. Dr. Mariam told me that these Christians have peacefully coexisted with the Muslim community for many years. The Kurdish people that we were working in the hospitals with knew that ours was a Christian organization and that the three of us were Christians. We did not perceive any hostility toward our religious preference, and bringing our Bibles into the country was a nonissue when we crossed the border into Iraq.

As our medical mission drew to a close, we had an opportunity to visit with a group of U.S. soldiers in the parking lot of a supermarket. It was a secure area, and the soldiers were taking a short pause in the realities of war. These men were stationed down in Mosul, and they were telling us of the rigors of daily life and death. They were also sharing with us their frustration at the media and the negativity being portrayed on the news. One soldier named Deal said, "Why don't they report about the people who come up to us every day to shake our hands and thank us for being here? Or how the kids love to hang out with us? Why doesn't the news media show all of the good things that we are doing here?" Another soldier, Weber, said, "The news makes it sound as if all the soldiers here are bad, when in reality it is just a few bad ones." It seemed that our visit with them was a short reprieve from the harshness of the reality they were living. At the end of our conversation I proudly gave each of them a big hug and thanked them for their service and told them that they would be in my prayers.

As I sit in my comfortable home, I can't help being thankful to be an American and live in the United States. I am immensely grateful for the quality of health care available here and the competence of our physicians. I am thrilled to be a woman in this great country, and know without a doubt that I am an equal and have the same rights and opportunities as the next person. I am grateful that I can be a Christian or any other religion I might choose ... and not just "on paper only." Finally, I am thankful for men and women who are dedicated to helping protect our freedoms while putting their lives on the front lines.

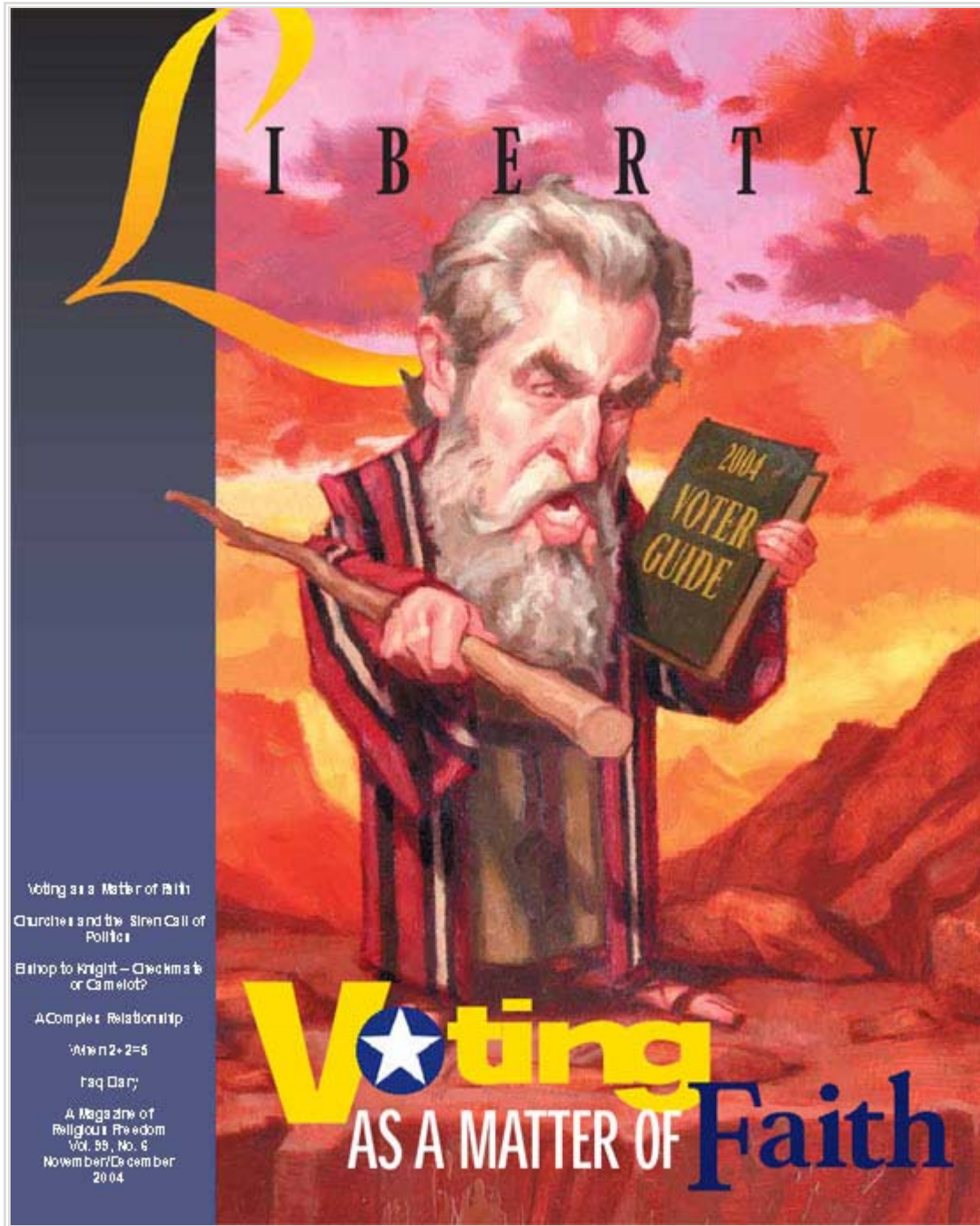


Brenda Maldonado is a medical professional living in Seattle, Washington.

Editor's note: I met Brenda by "chance" on a flight back to the East Coast earlier this year. I had been in Canada for a weekend speaking appointment and had missed my late-night connection through Seattle. The next morning I managed to get a seat on the first flight out to Washington Dulles airport. Just before we pushed back from the gate a woman came on board and sat next to me. (I later found out she had been reassigned that seat at the last minute.) I said hello and little else till the breakfast service began. At that point the flight attendant made much of her and talked at length about seeing her on television the previous day, then introduced Brenda Maldonado to me as "a celebrity." Brenda, it turned out, was beginning an eight-week odyssey to northern Iraq as part of a medical team from Washington State. Their assignment was to educate and advise Iraqi health-care providers. Brenda is a caring person of faith—a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—dedicated to witnessing in a practical way. She had not even told any church people outside her own congregation of the adventure, but she saw it as a way to project her faith values through a caring ministry. Naturally, I asked her to report to Liberty on what she found and to comment on the religious freedoms or the lack thereof that she might encounter. While she found the situation in northern Iraq much more stable, forces are at work throughout Iraq to pit religion against religion.

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November/December 2004 Cover



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I'm Personally Opposed... But

BY: CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



In 2003 the soon-to-be-terminated governor of California, Gray Davis, was warned by his local bishop that the governor's boast of making California "the most pro-choice state in America" threatened his standing in the Catholic Church. When Davis was told by Sacramento bishop William K. Weigand either to change his views or to stop receiving Communion, a Davis spokesperson responded by charging that the bishop was "telling the faithful how to practice their faith."

Horrors! A church leader telling a member how to practice their faith. Isn't that part of what a church leader is supposed to be doing, at least sort of? And, considering the Roman Catholic Church's unwavering position on abortion, it's hard to imagine the church doing anything else.

This question regarding religion and politics has come more to the forefront recently because of the upcoming presidential election, in which the Democratic nominee, John Kerry, a practicing Catholic, is facing criticism from within the Catholic Church regarding his pro-choice stand. The "I'm personally opposed . . . but" position just isn't flying among some of the hierarchy. One bishop, during the primaries, said that he would refuse to give Kerry Communion. St. Louis bishop (now archbishop) Raymond Burke told Kerry a few days before the Missouri primary "not to present himself for Communion" in the St. Louis area while campaigning because of his pro-choice stand.

All this leads into another thorny question regarding the place of religion in politics. What right does the church, any church, have in dictating to politicians who are members of that church what their stands on various political and public policy issues should be? Aren't churches violating the premise of a secular government when they attempt to coerce politicians into positions that fit their own? Isn't this another example of churches trampling on the freedoms of others in order to promote their own agenda?

No! To the contrary. It would be an egregious violation of religious freedom if churches *weren't* allowed to pressure politicians of their own faith into line with their doctrinal and/or public policy positions. In fact, looking at history, one could only wish that in some cases the churches did put more pressure on their politicians to live up to some of the high moral ideals and standards presented in Scripture—all the church-going Nazis in the Third Reich being just one example.

Americans are, the last we heard, voluntary members of their communion. All are adults who have, of their own free will, chosen to be part of their church. None have to be there; none are forced by law to be part of the church. They therefore have freely placed themselves under its strictures and even authority. If they don't like the church's positions, they can either seek to change those positions or leave. Until then the church has the right, some would even say the duty, to use every legal means at its disposal to get its members who are in politics to tow the party line. It would be a terrible violation of free exercise if the church were forced, by law, not to speak out or even pressure members to adhere to certain views.

This isn't just a Catholic issue. In the 1990s Southern Baptists Bill Clinton and Al Gore faced criticism from their church regarding their abortion position. Clinton and Gore, voluntary members, simply chose to disregard that position. If worse came to worst, they could leave, just as Kerry or any other Catholic politician could; or, if it deemed it necessary, the Southern Baptist Convention could throw them out.

Some would argue that the Catholic case is a bit different because refusing to give people Communion is all but excommunicating them, which in some thinking is all but consigning them to hell. So what? Sure, that places more pressure on politicians, but again, they have

chosen to be a part of a tradition that holds such a teaching. If John Kerry really thought he was going to burn in hell because he couldn't eat a Communion wafer, then he should seriously rethink whether he wants to remain pro-choice. But that, in the end, is between him and his church, not between the church and the government.

But what about voters? What about the political process? What rights does religion have in influencing candidates? It has the same rights as do the environmentalists, the National Rifle Association, and the beer lobby. Whatever separation of church and state means, it never meant—nor should it ever mean—that religious organizations shouldn't be able to influence the political process, as long as their actions are within the law; and the last we heard, it wasn't illegal for a Catholic bishop to deny Communion to those whom the church deems wayward. Maybe the beer lobby threatens not to donate to a candidate's campaign chest; maybe the NRA threatens to give money to an opposing candidate; maybe some bishop refuses to offer Communion. In the end, isn't that just part of the democratic process?

However offensive these threats might seem to some, what's the alternative? Tell the Roman Catholic Church it can't deny Communion to a politician who doesn't adhere to its views on abortion? Talk about a violation of religious freedom, or a violation of free exercise. It's hard to imagine any court even hearing such a challenge, much less upholding it. If religious freedom means anything, it means the right of a church to discipline its members.

Since the 1800s there have been a number of cases (*Watson v. Jones*, *Presbyterian Church in the U.S. v. Hull Memorial Presbyterian Church*, *Kedroff v. St. Nicholas Cathedral*) dealing with the question of church discipline and the law; and with few exceptions, such as when property is involved, the government stays out of it. As the High Court said in *Kedroff*, it's up to the religious bodies "to decide for themselves, free from state interference, matters of church government as well as those of faith and doctrine."

The question, however, of whether it's expedient for the Roman Catholic bishops to be issuing these threats is another matter. But it's not a matter of religious freedom or church and state separation. Though the concept of separation places certain restrictions on what houses of worship—or any other nonprofit organizations—can do regarding political activism, threatening excommunication isn't a violation of federal election law, nor should it be.

To be fair, not all bishops are threatening Catholic politicians. Most, in fact, aren't, at least not yet. That more are speaking out now than in the past could, indeed, be the harbinger of a shift in strategy. If so, the Catholic Church should proceed with caution, if for no other reason than that—considering the pro-choice views of many Catholics, much less the American electorate as a whole—such tactics could indeed backfire. For an organization already reeling from the sex abuse scandals, more bad PR is about the last thing the church needs.

In the end, threatening Gray Davis, John Kerry, and other politicians might be poor public policy, but it's hardly a violation of church-state separation, and shouldn't be mistaken for such.

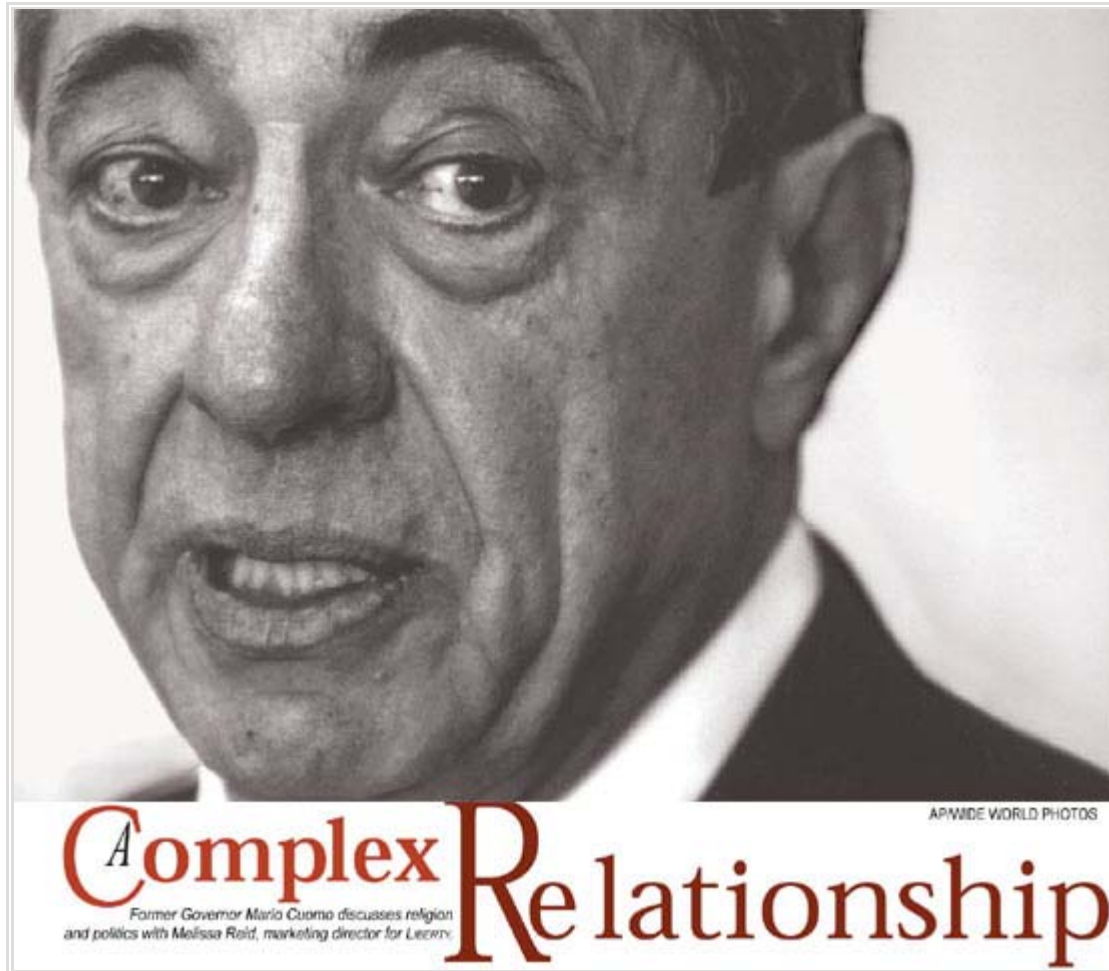


Clifford Goldstein, a former editor of Liberty magazine, writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.

My fellow editor, Goldstein, makes a good point about the right of the Catholic Church, or any other, to demand that its members represent the church correctly or face the consequences. Of course, the issue is not quite so simple, and the current situation evokes parallels to church actions in less pleasant times when it used all means, including force, to obtain compliance, and when it thought to control the state. The United States was founded on a rejection of that pattern, and we must resist it even in a somewhat post-reformation era.—Editor.

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A Complex Relationship

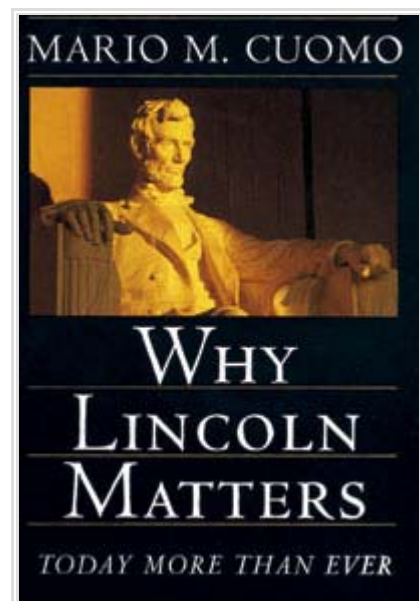


In October 2002 the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life hosted a debate between former New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Congressman Mark Souder entitled "Religion on the Stump: Politics and Faith in America." In this discussion both men candidly revealed how their respective faith convictions have been shaped by and reflected in their careers as public servants.

The timely dialogue initiated by Cuomo and Souder in 2002 has continued in the recent publication *One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics* (edited in part by Brookings Institute senior fellow E. J. Dionne, Jr., one of the moderators of the Cuomo/Souder debate, which is included in the book) and in the July 21, 2004, Pew Forum's discussion of the same name between Congressman Souder (R-IN), Congressman David Price (D-NC), Dionne, Jr., and *New York Times* columnist David Brooks.

Reid: Can you briefly explain how a public servant can reconcile his or her personal religious convictions when serving a pluralistic constituency? Does the separation of church and state imply separation between religion and politics?

Cuomo: A religious commitment binds you personally to certain conduct and to refrain from certain other conduct. And so if you are a Roman Catholic, growing up as I did and have, and continue to, I hope, there are certain prohibitions that you must live by. You get married and stay in the marriage under certain circumstances. You cannot use birth



By Mario M. Cuomo, Harold Holzer,

control devices, and you cannot have an abortion, etc. And there is no difference in your religious obligation if you are in public life or not. If you are a public official or not, that personal responsibility remains your responsibility at all times.

No matter what the civic law is. And then as a politician you have another obligation, and that is to the civil law. Depending on what you are—a lawmaker, executive, or mayor—this takes different forms. But the obligation is to serve the public, and you take an oath to do that. And the oath says that you will live by the Constitution, and that is an oath that is allowed to Catholics and others by most religions. And so you swear to uphold the Constitution.

Now, there are not a whole lot of times when you are confronted with a question of "Well, I am now being asked to do something that my religion wouldn't permit me to do." For example, you are never ordered to commit an abortion or to accept an abortion. You are never ordered to practice birth control or not to, etc. You are never ordered to get married or to divorce. So there aren't many times when you are ordered to act personally against your conscience. So the question comes up, well, what is your obligation to take your religion and make it the religion of the whole society? To what extent are you obliged as a public servant, or even not as a public servant, to proselytize, to take the good rule that binds you within the Catholic Church and insist that all people, whether they are Catholic or not, live by it?

Now, some of the rules in the Christian religions are obviously rules that would appeal as much to our nonreligious, even religion-hating, people as they do to the religious people. For example, murder. You should not kill another human being. You are obliged to this [rule] as a Catholic, as a Christian, and in most religions because it violates the most obvious religious predicates. It also in almost all civil societies violates the civil law, and so there is no collision there. I'll use murder because that's the one that people use most often with respect to abortion. The difficulty with abortion is it starts with your religious beliefs, starts with the proposition that life begins at conception. That life begins at conception is not in the Constitution. It is not in the Declaration of Independence. It is not the statute of any state that I am aware of. It is not in the decisional law of the Supreme Court of the United States. It is basically a religious predicate for Catholics, and incidentally, it wasn't always a religious predicate for Catholics.

And so the question there becomes, What is a Catholic's obligation? Is it to devote every power you have as a voter, as a mayor, as a governor, as a member of Congress, as a president, to make everybody act on the assumption that life begins at conception? Is that your obligation? If that were true, then the church would have to explain why it is not pushing against birth control. And contraceptives. Why it didn't push against slavery in 1865 and why it did allow the bishop to have slaves. You have to go to John Courtney Murray, who made clear in the 1950s that the Catholic Church has a prudential rule that sometimes you push the point and sometimes you don't, depending on whether it works practically to your advantage. And so Catholics as a church formal did not fight slavery. Now, does that mean that they believed in it? Many years before the nineteenth century the pope had said slavery was wrong, but that didn't make the Catholics militant in the nineteenth century because they were so weak in this society that they didn't feel obliged to or even enabled to.

Another example is the law against contraceptives. I don't think that's in any way diminished recently, but I don't hear cardinals or bishops chasing people out of their church and away from the rail because they're involved in contraceptives. So I think it is a prudential question for you and your conscience. What is your role in respect to these things? If the position you take on the subject of abortion as a Catholic is that you believe that abortion is wrong and therefore we must have a constitutional amendment declaring that life begins at conception, and therefore abortion, even if it means the life of the mother, should be forbidden in the United States of America, that is the only Catholic position you could take. You would be obliged—starting with the president of the United States if he were a Catholic, every member of Congress, and every voter—to say that we must have a constitutional amendment. Have you heard the Catholic Church

historical consultant, Harcourt, 183 pp., \$24.00 Reviewed by Charles J. Eusey.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as governor of New York, told a newspaperman that one of his goals was for "us Democrats to claim Lincoln as one of our own." A more recent governor of New York, Mario M. Cuomo, has attempted to carry on this goal by telling us what a resurrected Lincoln would have to say on today's important issues.

Cuomo introduces his readers to Lincoln as one who would help us overcome our lack of identity as a nation. "In recent years we have seemed unable to decide exactly what we want to be as a nation." "We yearn for a vision worthy of the world's greatest nation."

Lincoln's philosophy of government was driven by his respect for individual dignity and the idea that all men are created equal. Implementation of the Declaration of Independence was the great goal to be achieved if America was to fulfill its promise as a democratic government.

If we look to Lincoln, Cuomo tells us, we can find our reason for being. "Lincoln's belief in the American people and the inspiration we can provide the rest of the world was broader, deeper, and more daring than any other person's of his age—and perhaps, of ours, too."

In *Why Lincoln Matters* we learn what Lincoln had to say about war, civil liberties, the role of government, opportunity, global interdependence, religion, the Supreme Court, and race. We shall limit our review to civil liberties and religion.

Cuomo wishes that President Bush had not followed the example of Lincoln, who suspended the writ of habeas corpus (i.e., the right to challenge one's detention before a court or judge), who suppressed two newspapers, and who provided unappropriated funds to purchase military equipment. The U.S.A. Patriot Act is clearly in line with these suspensions of constitutional rights in the name of security. But Cuomo concedes that Lincoln "acknowledged that only in the kind of emergency he faced should a president ignore the Constitution as he did." Lincoln also promised to restore Constitution guarantees as soon as peace returned.

The relationship of Lincoln to religion is

asking for it?

Reid: Recently politicians and judicial nominees on either side have been criticized for being either too Catholic or not Catholic enough. Where is the line between the appropriate probing of a public figure's political view and inappropriate and possibly unconstitutional religious tests for office?

Cuomo: I like what the Founding Fathers do in the Constitution as a practical matter. They don't talk about God; they talk about religion. In the United States of America our Supreme Court has declared that there are several recognized religions—like Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism—that have no God. So "religion" is different from a belief in God. The Founding Fathers don't talk about "God," and the Declaration of Independence doesn't talk about "God"; it talks about "nature's God." That is the natural law that you would have gotten at without anyone coming down a mountain with a beard and a stone tablet. So you have to be very careful about distinguishing between religion and God.

So they say "religion" is presumably a body of beliefs with affirmation and rules and prohibitions and prescriptions, but it is a whole body of belief. And they say that religions, because they are so important to individuals and so different one from another, can cause trouble. Why? By following your religion, you define yourself as different from me, because I have a different religion. And I have a religion that says polygamy is good, and you have a religion that says it's sinful. So we—having had all this experience in the places where we came from—are going to keep the religions separate; we are going to say that we established this country in part to give people religious freedom and liberty as much as possible.

So that is a principle that we are going to put right in the First Amendment. You are free to be a Catholic, a Baptist, a Calvinist, whatever else you want to be. It's absolutely clear that you have the right to be religious; however, we want to avoid a situation where you have a Muslim state or a Catholic state or a Protestant state or a Jewish state, because that will only inhibit your religious freedom. And so the government cannot establish a religion. We don't want the government being in the religion business. And that crude but very clear wisdom is the heart of the matter. You are free to be religious, but the government shouldn't get involved because they'll foul it up by getting involved. It inhibits freedom.

Those are the basic principles. Now the difficulty is in interpreting those basic principles, nailing them down to the procrustean bed of reality. At what point do you say you are establishing a religion? Is it when you say I can use my money that the state gave me to go to a seminary? Some people will say yes; some people will say no. They will both agree with the general propositions, but they will say, "Look, when you said establish, I didn't mean that. I meant having a pope sitting as president." So I am not embarrassed by all the questions that come up.

If you are a religious institution like Catholic Charities in New York, should you have to use your wealth to pay for birth control devices and the practice of birth control by the people who work for you? On the one hand, they will say, "No, we are now pushing something that our religion prohibits." And the other people would say, "No, your religion prohibits it to you; your workers may not be Catholic." And that is the quarrel.

Reid: What are your thoughts on the diminishment of civil liberties since 9/11? How does a country maintain civil and religious freedom during a time such as this, when the fear or threat has a religious subtext?

Cuomo: I have this section on religion and a section on the suspension of civil liberties in my new book [[Why Lincoln Matters: Today More than Ever](#)]. Lincoln set a record: up until him nobody had done to the Constitution what he did to it in terms of suspending the writ of habeas corpus, locking people up, and tearing down newspapers, etc. I am not a Lincoln scholar; however, I have been a Lincoln student all of my adult years, virtually since the collected works by Roy Basler in 1955. So for half a century I've been reading and studying. I do know that he suspended habeas corpus, etc.—I think unnecessarily and therefore wrongfully. I think the Patriot Act is similarly excessive in some regards. And that is what I say in the book, in a chapter on the suspension of civil liberties.

more highly revered by Cuomo. Lincoln, although not a member of a formal church body, was an admirer of religion. We learn, for instance, that Lincoln visited Brooklyn twice during the 1860 campaign to listen to the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher. As president he attended Sunday services, preferring a church "whose clergyman holds himself aloof from politics."

Cuomo tells us Lincoln would not support direct subsidies to religious groups. He would not favor posting the Ten Commandments on public buildings. And he would not insist that his party was based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

How would Cuomo define the religious principles of Lincoln? "We need to love one another, to come together to create a good society, and to use that mutuality discreetly in order to gain the benefits of a community without sacrificing the importance of individual freedom and responsibility."



*That life begins
at conception
is not in the
Constitution.
It is not in the
Declaration of
Independence.*

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Churches And The Siren Call Of Politics

BY: JOHN W. WHITEHEAD



The Evangelical church in America is in real danger today.

As if the effort to save people's souls weren't enough to deal with, today's church must also grapple with sex scandals, skyrocketing divorce rates, debates over gay marriage, and a nation in the midst of what seems to be an escalating religious war.

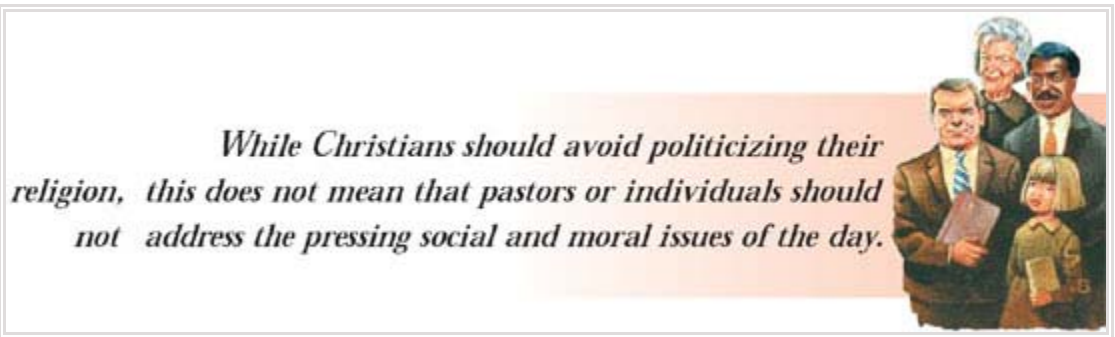
Sensing the vulnerability of Evangelical churches and the potential power of the church to influence large numbers of individuals (according to statistics reported in the *World Churches Handbook*, in 1995 Christians made up close to 70 percent of the total U.S. population), those in politics began circling early on. And given the fact that religion is now the biggest predictor of vote, after party identification, it is evident why churchgoers are being targeted heavily by both parties during a presidential election that could be determined by a few swing states.

This blatant effort by politicians to turn churches into vehicles for garnering more votes can most clearly be seen in the Bush/Cheney presidential campaign's outreach to Christian congregations. A detailed plan of action sent to religious "volunteers" around the country, the Bush/Cheney campaign's directive revolves around a time-sensitive list of 22 "duties" intended to mobilize Bush's base of religious supporters.

For example, the Houston Chronicle reports that by July 31, volunteers were asked to "send your church directory to your state Bush-Cheney '04 headquarters" and "talk to your pastor about holding a Citizenship Sunday and voter registration drive." By August 15 volunteers were to "talk to your church's seniors or 20-30 something group about Bush-Cheney '04" and "recruit five more people in your church to volunteer for the Bush-Cheney campaign." By September 17 they were to host at least two campaign-related potluck dinners with members, and in October to "finish calling all pro-Bush members of your church." Evangelicals were also asked to identify other "conservative" churches in their communities "who can organize for Bush."

These outreach efforts are not limited to the Republican ticket, however. Considering that Democrats are losing the vote of regular churchgoers by a 2-to-1 margin, it is clear why vice presidential candidate Senator John Edwards addressed a crowd of worshippers at St. Mark's A.M.E. Church in Orlando.

These attempts to turn the pulpits of tax-exempt churches into political platforms seem to fly directly in the face of current IRS guidelines for nonprofit entities such as churches. Indeed, these guidelines make it clear that churches or other religious organizations may lose their tax-exempt status if they actively participate or intervene in any way in a political campaign, including supplying the type of information requested by the Bush/Cheney campaign.



This is reflected in a case decided in 2000, *Branch Ministries v. Rossotti* (the IRS commissioner). Four days before the 1992 presidential election, Branch Ministries, a tax-exempt church, placed full-page ads in two prominent newspapers, urging Christians not to vote for then presidential candidate Bill Clinton—supposedly because of Clinton's positions on certain issues. The IRS concluded that the placement of the ads violated the statutory restriction under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code on organizations exempt from taxation. For the first time in its history the IRS revoked a bona fide church's tax-exempt status because of its involvement in politics. The church lost its case in federal district court, and this was upheld on appeal.

There are at present several pieces of legislation before Congress that would ease the restrictions on churches in regard to political activity. However, until the current law is altered (if ever), churches must be mindful of the fact that the IRS is aware of the increased involvement between political parties and churches. Indeed, in June 2004 the IRS sent a memorandum to both the Republican and Democratic National Committees, among others, advising them of the current law on churches and political activity.

Despite the problem with the law, I believe there are much bigger issues to be considered as Christian congregations are encouraged to dabble in politics. These concerns have to do with the true nature of the church.

The church, as Jesus Christ proclaimed, exists to teach the good news (i.e., "the gospel") that there is a God who loved the world so much that He was willing to sacrifice His own Son. This universal sacrifice necessarily means that Christ's message is for everyone, irrespective of their status in life or their politics.

But Christ's message of love is difficult to reconcile with much of what we hear coming from certain quarters of modern Evangelical fundamentalism—a religion steeped in an "us versus them" mentality. "We're in a religious war, and we need to aggressively oppose secular humanism," Tim LaHaye, coauthor of the *Left Behind* novels, said several years ago. "These people are as religiously motivated as we are, and they are filled with the devil." This type of thinking is in opposition to the philosophy of the early Christian church, which cut across all lines that divided people—Jew and Greek, Greek and barbarian, male and female, religious and political philosophies.

These early Christians did not seek to either dominate the political establishment or maintain the status quo. To the contrary, they were not political conservatives. Instead, they were revolutionaries who saw what they had to say as truly universal and relevant to all segments of society.

"One of the greatest injustices we do to our young people is to ask them to be conservative," theologian Francis Schaeffer once wrote. In fact, for Christians to be stridently aligned with conservative politics is to miss the point of their religion. Conservatism, as such, means promoting a political agenda and, thus, maintaining the flow of the status quo. True Christians, however, are revolutionaries against a status quo dedicated to materialism and the survival of the fittest.

Indeed, Christians should stand outside the status quo. This includes politics!

Unfortunately, all too often Christians wrap their religion in the flag, so to speak. For the Christian, country and faith are never synonymous, and they are not two equal loyalties. As Francis Schaeffer noted, "It must be taught that patriotic loyalty must not be identified with Christianity." As Christians in past regimes have found, identifying with the establishment, as much of modern Evangelicalism is doing, can present a grave danger—the establishment may easily become the church's enemy.

Not only is it perilous to identify with the established powers; it also negates the true mission of the church. The church is not to identify with power, but to speak truth to power—even at great costs. Martyrs, past and present, testify to this.

The reason Christians have been willing to sacrifice even their lives for truth is their love of people. In propounding the greatest commandment, Christ said that we should show our love for God by loving those around us. There is no way this can be accomplished if Christians are politicizing their religion. Politics, by way of its very nature, does not speak truth and does not seek the best interests of people. Indeed, politics, by its very nature, is driven toward division, compromise, deceit, and, inevitably, corruption.

All this does not mean that Christians have to be silent. This is definitely not a day for a slumbering Christianity. While Christians should avoid politicizing their religion, this does not mean that pastors or individuals should not address the pressing social and moral issues of the day. Just the opposite is true. Christians need to be clear in what they say, and stand by it. The wishy-washy political correctness that characterizes many churches will simply not meet the challenges of the day.

As one considers involvement in society and culture and, in particular, the political establishment, he or she must be mindful of an essential point: Although it is important to become involved in the activities of everyday society, the true believer must do so without compromising any Christian principles.

Jesus Christ, as we all know, did not seek political power. He was apolitical. Likewise, Christ did not command Christians to seek it either. Indeed, as He says in John 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place" (NIV).^{*}However, Jesus Christ did not say that Christians should not be involved in political affairs. If democratic governments are to survive, Christian influence and involvement in government at all levels are important. At the same time, Christians in politics must avoid being compromised by their involvement in the political establishment.

This will mean that the Christian in politics, as well as in every other area of life, will have to tell the truth. This is especially so in light of the current moral malaise. However, the very words "political" and "politics" imply avoidance of the truth. In other words, Christians may run for government office and get elected, but they must avoid being politicians. Instead, the Christian involved in government matters should be a statesman, which is defined as "one who exercises political leadership wisely and without narrow partisanship." Unlike politicians, statesmen will go against the popular flow for the sake of what they believe.

If Christians do not tell the truth and, if need be, stand against the governmental and political establishment, they will lose their integrity. To some extent believers must always, as John the Baptist did, stand outside the political establishment and criticize (when necessary) the political Herods of this world.

Christians must also be mindful of the proper use of power. The legitimate use of power does not include using it to impose one's will upon others. From the Christian standpoint, the proper use of power is, again, to speak the truth and seek justice for all.

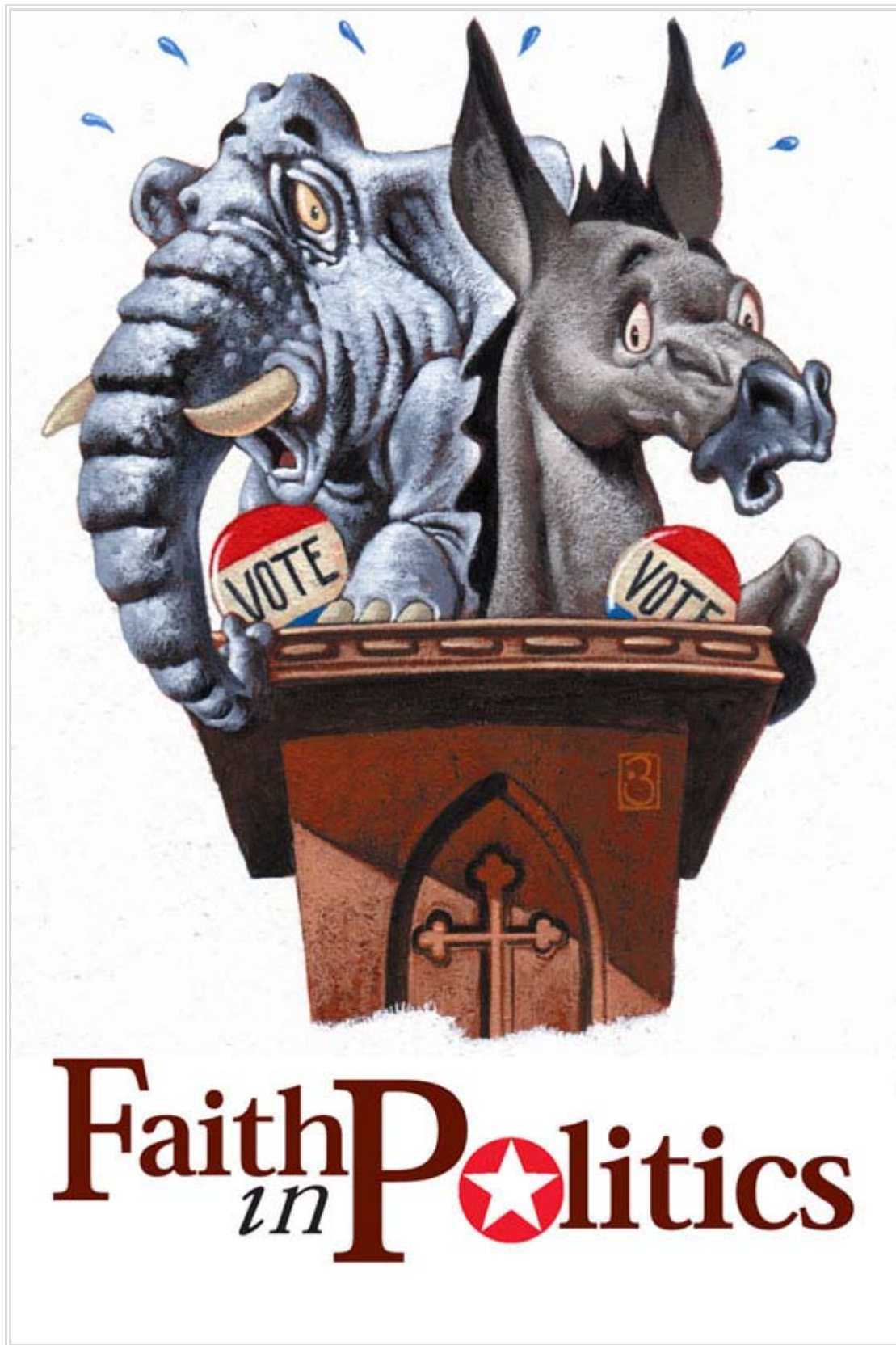
Citizens of any country must be mindful that, even in a democracy, there are no heroes on white horses. Christians, therefore, must be wary of anyone who, while posing as a political savior, preaches a sermon of political power. The goal of the true believer is justice, not power. Believers must avoid forsaking the gospel for a bowl of political porridge or short-term gains. Although we need to be active in our culture and in politics, our real purpose is to extend the grace and mercy of Christ in all areas of life.

Finally, there is a dire need for a compassionate Christianity. Like the early church, the modern church needs to cut across all lines and reach out to every segment of society. If not, as Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, the church will eventually become irrelevant.



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^{*}Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright



Faith *in* Politics

Henry David Thoreau once remarked on the "great flapping ear" of the American public wanting to know everything about everything. And, in spite of the elephantine imagery he seemed to use, the contemporary curiosity crosses all party lines. Yet, at times that curiosity, while insatiable, is a little like an internet search engine let loose on a topic of interest. The result is sensory overload on a topic while other equally significant news goes unread. Certainly, the surfeit of information can itself blind us to something that in isolation might be the news of the century, were it not surrounded by other over-covered events of a lifetime.

Most of the past year has been taken up with the drumbeat of politics against the white noise of a presidential election. It is the "silly" time of the quadrennium, when Americans of the United States variety evidence yet again their enduring optimism. No matter the fix, no matter the apparently insurmountable nature of some of the issues of public concern, a goodly number of party flag-waving supporters respond to balloons and promises. And, yes, America does continue to believe in the man on the white horse! Thank God for the rest of the world that such optimism survives in the bleak times of our new century.

Given the existential issues at play it is probably nothing but inevitable that the faith of the political process has come to assume a capital F, as in religion. And while the aforementioned masking effect of news saturation has sometimes obscured the shift in emphasis, it is very real nonetheless, and deserving of comment in this magazine.

Of course we had a little taste of what might come in 2000 when then candidate Bush selected Jesus Christ as a significant figure, because "He changed my heart." Some even wondered then if we were not being led to vote in a plebiscite on the spirituality of the candidates. As it turned out the hard realities of political war soon overshadowed that "new wave" of campaigning.

And that might have been it but for the events between that election and now. The new administration adopted a take no prisoners style in advancing its Faith Based Initiative against the "wall of separation" norms. Legislation was quickly passed in Congress as HR7. Senate passage was virtually assured, but clearly not fast enough for some. "It's not a dictatorship in Washington," reassured the President in telling an audience in New Orleans about his executive order making faith-based groups eligible for federal subsidies; "but I tried to make it one in that instance."

And since 9/11 the words "God bless America" have become a national political prayer of sorts; heightened by the sense of threat from fanatics who regularly intone the name of God and their holy books. Religion is now not just private devotions and faith. It is related to national security and our sense of who we are.

So it is no surprise that moving toward the election of 2004 religion and faith issues figure mightily in the national debate.

It is no surprise that candidates from both parties are at pains to present their religious credentials. In the case of the president that even meant sitting stoneface through a sermon by a cleric who insisted on lecturing the Sunday crowd on the responsibilities of the wealthy! And John Kerry, of the foursquare reputation but hitherto unremarked public religion, is now regularly seen taking mass. In short these are two men seeking to satisfy the criteria for deacon as well as civic leader.

And how can a public faith be wrong for a public figure? We have become accustomed to politicians with styles more of the rich and famous, and suitably worldly wise. But times have changed and naturally there is a hunger for spiritual substance.

This magazine is foursquare for the separation of church and state—as mandated by the constitution—but we have never argued that personal faith expression has no place in public life. George Washington and others in the pantheon of American life unabashedly spoke of their personal faith in a higher power. Why should we deny that right to contemporary leaders?

I think it healthy for leading figures in a democratic society to be honest and forthright about their faith. Of course talk of personal faith, and the presumed moral tenor of the life that talk implies, is one thing. It is quite another if it signals a particular sectarian agenda. It is quite another thing if it is designed to manipulate faith communities and project a particular agenda apart from the charter of a civil democratic system.

Now the manipulation can just as easily come from the faith community of the political figure, as from they themselves.

That is clearly the case with Presidential candidate John Kerry. In my lifetime I have not seen such a concerted effort by a church to force a member to embrace political directives. Many feared that President John Kennedy would be in thrall to the political leanings of Rome. It proved not to be. But now we have some of the leading U.S. Catholic figures saying that it was a mistake not to demand that Kennedy obey the church agenda—and that with Kerry they will not make that mistake again! It has been a media bonanza to cover the professions of faith by John Kerry, and the threats by various church leaders to withhold communion from him unless he complies. Many people probably think it a silly tussle. But the dynamic is stern: if the Roman Catholic Church withholds the sacraments, it is, as Senator Ted Kennedy's wife pointed out in a letter sent to the New York Times, to basically excommunicate someone—that is remove them from the salvation the church offers.

That is more than the usual leverage on a believer's actions. So far Senator Kerry has held to his personal principles, even as he is cast as an unfaithful son of the church. How he would resist church dictates as U.S. president is another question!

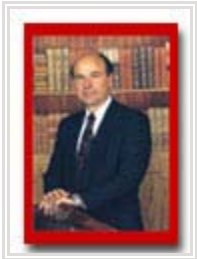
President Bush has never been shy about faith matters. And God bless him for his personal bravery! But his consistent promotion of the faith-based initiative is troubling to those careful of church-state separation. As implemented by the various religious factions that have

clustered around Washington of late, FBI is nothing other than their ticket to power and influence—and that should trouble the electorate.

Just one of the many bad ways that FBI can work against religious freedom is shown graphically in a story run by The Detroit News on August 27 this year. A young Catholic named Joe Hanas was arrested for a non-violent drug offence. Instead of jail time, the judge sent him to a Pentecostal rehabilitation program. It is hardly likely the judge intended it, but in order to complete the rehabilitation Joe was asked to run the gauntlet of religious coercion, that kept him from practicing his faith. Counselors demeaned his church, calling it "witchcraft," and required that he learn Pentecostal principles. His only recourse was to request transfer to another program where he would not be coerced on religion.

As the news item put it: " The judge viewed his early withdrawal from the program as an indication that Hanas was not committed to overcoming his substance abuse...Programs like the one Hanas found himself in are common. In fact, these are the kinds of programs that President Bush funded when he was governor of Texas; drug addiction treated as a sin and Bible study is provided as a treatment. It is also the kind of program that Bush wants to fund under his faith based initiatives, in which religious indoctrination is dressed up to look like social welfare."

Yes, we need even more public expressions of faith by public officials. But we should howl down expressions of religious control. As the Good Book says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." In our democratic system we are doubly free. Free under God to seek and know spiritual truth. And free under the Constitution of the United States from any state coercion to believe.



Lincoln E. Steed,

Editor
Liberty Magazine