

Christian View of the News



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THE POWER OF WORDS

A Christmas story from Luke (KJV). Against the modern depreciation of language, Michael Dirda, writer and editor for *The Washington Post Book World*, comments on his experience hearing the Christmas story read from the Gospel of Luke. *As a boy, I would hear these words spoken aloud toward the end of December, year after year, and they never failed to deliver a shivery thrill of pleasure. I used to wonder why. The sentences were utterly plain, both in diction and syntax. Neither did they possess any narrative excitement, since I knew the story already, indeed knew it far better than any other in all the world. But the language - like that of so many other passages from the Bible - enchanted me with what I now think of as its deeply felt seriousness.*

He explains: *The solemn harmonies of such prose are largely ignored in these days of text-messaging and political newspeak. Even among our stylists, we prefer breeziness and irony, sometimes laced with snarky wit and street vulgarity. This "in your face" writing somehow feels personal and honest, more sincere or authentic than an elevated and poetical diction. No one wants epithets like "pontifical," "sermonizing" or "artificial" attached to his writing. Nonetheless, there are times when only the full organ roll of liturgical prose can match the glory or sacredness of the occasion.*

To his credit, Dirda recognizes the deep Christian roots of this tradition -- and the influence of Christianity upon the very development of the language itself. *In English there are five main sources for this kind of religious eloquence: The King James version of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, the hymns of writers like Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley and others, and the classical traditions of oratory and homily. What links them all is a Shaker plainness and cleanness of diction, just barely covering profound spiritual conviction and emotion. This is, in short, the speech of men and women doing the Lord's work, honoring him and praising him with due reverence, ceremony and fervor.*

He acknowledges the influence of figures such as George Whitefield ("so magnificent a speaker that the atheist philosopher David Hume declared that he would travel 20 miles on foot to hear him") and the power of preaching: **In our era of so much bland speech-making, we sometimes forget about this sheer power of oratory. Great preachers even now preserve its tradition, one in which human elocution alone, backed by passionate conviction and a desire to save souls, can bring people to tears, to their knees or to their feet.** "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 1:13) - *AlbertMohler.com, 12/5/05*

THE ALITO CAMPAIGN

Is Judge Samuel Alito stumbling on the road to confirmation for

the Supreme Court, instead of following Chief Justice John Roberts' smooth path to Senate approval? Not really, but pro-and-con Alito campaigns are hitting full stride in the holiday season prior to Senate hearings beginning Jan. 9. The process becomes a debate over who this judicial nominee really is.

The impression that Alito's nomination may be in trouble is being created by left-wing interest groups and their Senate allies, who project what the judge's defenders call the "jack-booted thug theme." Alito's past decisions are used to depict him supporting strip searches of little girls and legalization of machine guns. In a pre-emptive strike against more such attacks, his conservative backers this week have dubbed this "law enforcement week," to paint Alito as the scourge of crime.

Little of this has much to do with how Alito actually would conduct himself as a justice, but Supreme Court confirmations have taken on the characteristics of American elections. In truth, the Alito campaign is one part of a relentless, sustained struggle for control of the Supreme Court extending far into the future. Nan Aron of the Alliance for Justice in 2004 declared she will do "whatever it takes" to keep conservatives off the Supreme Court. This year, when Aron was asked what she would do to stop Alito, she replied, "You name it, we'll do it."

The notion that Sam Alito has been scrutinized by liberals and found wanting is an illusion. Anybody that President Bush would select to the high court would be opposed by Aron and her collaborators, Ralph Neas of People for the American Way and Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Even Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, the possible Bush nominee least acceptable to conservatives, would be opposed by these three horsemen of the Left.

Roberts was just as unacceptable to them as Alito is, but the activists were unable to find critical mass for the future chief justice because his paper trail was so skimpy. In contrast, in two pieces of paper prepared 20 years ago by Alito (one of them a job application), he described himself as anti-abortion. That was enough to mobilize the senators who most dependably follow the special interest groups: Charles Schumer of New York, Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Barbara Boxer of California.

But abortion is not an issue that will broaden the anti-Alito block beyond the 22 hard-core senators who voted against Roberts. Accordingly, Alito's 15 years as an appellate

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judge have been mined to yield controversial decisions that could not be found in Roberts' two years on the District of Columbia circuit court, which dealt largely with administrative cases. Alito's dissents on criminal-search and gun-control cases are cited to turn him into a "jack-booted thug." This characterization might seem more credible for Alito, the son of an Italian immigrant, than for Roberts, whose father was a corporate executive.

Alito's strategists reply with "law enforcement week," emphasizing his endorsement by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). To assail Alito's decisions, said FOP President Chuck Canterbury, is "like attacking a police officer for doing his job and making arrests."

An Internet ad distributed by the conservative Judicial Confirmation Network to over 10 million users this week will fire back on critics of Alito's dissent validating the search of the young daughter of a suspected drug dealer. It contended that "left-wing extremists opposing" Alito "may have found new allies -- drug dealers who hide drugs on children." The ad is also sent on the Internet to Grassfire.org, a conservative activist group with 1.5 million members that produced 700,000 signatures in support of an amendment opposing homosexual marriages.

The intent of this effort is to keep Alito's opposition in the Senate below the 41 votes needed to defeat a cloture motion stopping a filibuster. But even if his foes fall just short of that level, the hope on the left is that such a showing will dissuade Bush from naming another Roberts or Alito to the next vacancy on the court. The Senate's confirmation process has been degraded into an endless political campaign. - Robert Novak, *townhall.com*, 12/12/05

BOOKS: I have recently read 3 books with great blessing. "*Winning the Inner War*" (formerly known as "How to Say No To a Stubborn Habit") by Erwin Lutzer; "*There Really is a Difference*" (explains the difference between Covenant and Dispensational Theology, and Pre-A - Post Millennialism, and Law and Grace by Renald Showers; "*This Little Church Went to Market*" (marketing the church in the age of entertainment - **powerful**) by Gary E. Gilley.

CLEAR PROGRESS IN IRAQ

The "Cut and Run Crowd" are proving to be the worst kind of pessimists on Iraq - refusing to see the significant evidence that things are starting to go our way militarily.

No, no one should be turning cartwheels just yet over security and stability in Iraq - there is still a lot to be done. But several favorable developments should make even the "Doom-n-Gloomers" take note.

The U.S. military is having significant success securing the Syrian border - previously a sieve for Iraqi and foreign insurgents/terrorists seeping into Iraq. Result: It's tougher for Syria-based Sunni insurgents to orchestrate or support attacks in Iraq. Suicide bombings are down 30 percent since the October referendum.

International pressure on the Syrian regime - including the possibility of punitive U.N. economic sanctions over the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri - may also be "encouraging" Damascus to decrease its support for the Iraqi insurgency.

Abu Musab al Zarqawi's cast of al Qaeda killers seems to be in increasing disarray. Recent intelligence reports suggest near-mutiny in al Qaeda's ranks - most likely thanks to U.S. forces capturing killing operatives in large numbers, cash crunches and an influx of "green" recruits.

The American military's new "Clear, Hold and Build" strategy is plainly putting the squeeze on al Qaeda. It improves upon the "Whack

a Mole" (i.e., - random search-and-destroy) strategy by establishing a permanent Iraqi security presence that makes it harder for the insurgents to return once they've been evicted.

Still, some Iraqis continue to sign on to become suicide bombers - still the most deadly form of attack in Iraq. While locals can often readily discern foreign terrorists/fighters, it's much harder to disrupt attacks by native Iraqis.

Some Sunnis - insurgents, supporters and intermediaries - are coming to the table to talk with the Iraqi government and U.S. forces about ways to end the conflict. Not surprisingly, one of the major issues is an American withdrawal, which is obviously in the cards at some appropriate point in the future.

Negotiating a phased - not immediate - withdrawal of Coalition forces based upon the Sunni insurgents' cessation of hostilities could be a win-win situation. In a best-case scenario, after reaching an agreement, Iraqi and Coalition forces would turn their attention to crushing the remaining al Qaeda elements in the country.

It's even conceivable that marshalling Iraqi and Coalition forces against the foreign terrorists could make Iraq al Qaeda's last stand. A high-visibility defeat for Zarqawi would be a severe blow to al Qaeda's prestige as a movement - hindering operations, fund-raising and most importantly, recruitment.

Zalmay Khalizad, America's highly capable ambassador to Iraq, is opening quiet talks with the neighboring Iranians, who have been causing significant trouble in Iraq. Getting Tehran to drop its support for the insurgency - which includes weapons, training and financing - would go a long way toward ending the death and destruction.

The training of Iraqi security forces (e.g., police, military and intelligence) is increasingly effective and (finally!) making headway. This is not only important for short-term dealings with the terrorists, but also for providing for Iraq's long-term national defense against the likes of Iran and Syria.

As President Bush said last week, more than 30 Iraqi Army battalions are controlling their own areas of operation, including some of the toughest Baghdad streets. The Pentagon says more than a dozen military bases have been turned over to the Iraqis, including a former Saddam Hussein palace.

If political/economic progress persists, and security trends continue along these lines, it's very likely that the American force level in Iraq will be able to shrink to 50,000-75,000 troops by next summer. (It will be necessary to keep more troops in the neighborhood to allow a U.S. "surge capability" in case it's needed.)

Next week's historic elections will put more wind in the sails of the new Iraqi ship of state.

The United States and Iraq still have to navigate dangerous insurgent shoals, and maneuver a course around tricky political, economic and social buoys for a while yet. But we're plotting a course for total victory in Iraq, and as hard as it is for the Nervous Nellies and Henny Pennies to swallow, the bottom line is that the security situation in Iraq is showing a lot of promise. The nattering nabobs of negativism shouldn't be afraid to acknowledge it. - Peter Brookes, *townhall.com*, 12/5/05

MAN FOR A GLASS BOOTH

Of all the mistakes that the Bush administration has committed in Iraq, none is as gratuitous and self-inflicted as the bungling of the trial of Saddam Hussein.

Although Saddam deserves to be shot like a dog -- or, same thing, like the Ceausescus -- we nonetheless decided to give him a trial. First, to demonstrate the moral superiority of the new Iraq as it

struggles to live by the rule of law. Second, and even more important, to bear witness.

War crimes trials are, above all and always, for educational purposes. This one was for the world to see and experience and recoil from the catalog of Saddam's crimes, and thus demonstrate the justice of a war that stripped this man and his gang of their monstrous and murderous power.

It has not worked out that way. Instead of Saddam's crimes being on trial, he has succeeded in putting the new regime on trial. The lead story of every court session has been his demeanor, his defiance, his imperiousness. The evidence brought against him by his hapless victims -- testimony mangled in translation and electronic voice alteration -- made the back pages at best.

"This has become a platform for Saddam to show himself as a caged lion when really he was a mouse in a hole," said Vice President Ghazi Yawar. "I don't know who is the genius who is producing this farce. It's a political process. It's a comedy show."

There hasn't been such judicial incompetence since Judge Ito and the O.J. trial. We can excuse the Iraqis, who are new to all this and justifiably terrified of retribution. But there is no excusing the Bush administration that had Saddam in custody for two years, and had even longer to think about putting on a trial that would not become a star turn for a defeated enemy.

Why have we given him control of the stage set? We all remember the picture of him pulled out of his spider hole. That should be the Saddam we put on trial. Instead, with every appearance, he dresses more regally, emerging from cowering captive to ordinary prisoner to dictator on temporary leave. Now., he carries on as legitimate and imperious head of state. He plays the benign father of his country, calling the judge "son," then threatens the judge's life. Saddam shouts, defies, brandishes a Koran. The judge keeps telling him he's out of order. He disobeys with impunity, the guards daring not to intervene.

What kind of message does that send to Iraqis who have been endlessly told that Saddam and his regime were finished? "The performance has heartened his followers," writes the Washington Post's Doug Struck from Baghdad. "In Tikrit. . . a large crowd of demonstrators chanted their loyalty on Tuesday. Several marchers said they were emboldened by his courtroom bravado."

This is absurd. If anything, Saddam should be brought in prison garb, perhaps in shackles, just for effect. And why was he given control of the script? Saddam shouts, interrupts and does his Mussolini histrionics unmolested. Instead of the press being behind a glass wall, it is Saddam who should be. Better still, placed in a glass booth, like Eichmann, like some isolated specimen of deranged humanity, symbolically and physically cut off from the world of normal human values.

Instead, he struts. And we are witness to a political test of wills between the new Iraq represented by an as yet incompetent judicial system and the would-be tyrant-for-life defiantly raising once again the banner of Baathism, on a worldwide stage afforded him by *us*.

Until now, the Baathists who constitute the bulk of this Sunni insurgency had no symbolic presence, no political platform, no visible leadership. We have now given that to them, gratis.

Both President Bush and his opponents in Congress are incessantly talking about "benchmarks" to guide any U.S. withdrawals from Iraq. But there is one benchmark that is always left unspoken. We cannot leave until Saddam is dead, executed for his crimes. No one will say it but everyone knows it. As long as he is alive and well-dressed, every Iraqi will have to wonder what will happen to him and his family if Saddam returns. Only Saddam's death will assure them

that he will not return.

Which is why the lateness of this trial is such a tragedy. And why its bungling is such a danger. Our only hope, as always with Saddam, is that he destroys himself with his arrogance and stupidity. He has stupidly walked out of his own trial. This is our opportunity. He should not be allowed back, certainly not without a glass booth. Only Saddam can save us from our own incompetence. We should let him. - Charles Krauthammer, *townhall.com*, 12/10/05

PRO-CHOICE MOTTO: SAFE, LEGAL & OFTEN

Dr. William F. Harrison of Arkansas calls himself an "abortionist." "I am destroying life," he proclaims. But Harrison, who estimates that he has aborted over 20,000 unborn children, also sees abortion as a life-giving procedure, describing his patients as "born again." "When you end what the woman considers a disastrous pregnancy, she has literally been given her life back," he proudly states. Harrison's goal is to "try to make sure [a woman who chooses abortion] doesn't ever feel guilty for what she feels she has to do."

Dr. George Tiller of Kansas has terminated over 60,000 pregnancies; his website brags that the good doctor's clinic has "more experience in late abortion services over 24 weeks than anyone else currently practicing in the Western Hemisphere, Europe and Australia." Most babies are considered viable (that is, can live outside the womb with the help of medical technology) at 23-24 weeks. These are viable, living children.

Dr. Dennis Christensen of Wisconsin, who has aborted between 80,000 and 100,000 fetuses, celebrates his career as a moral good. "When I meet my maker," he grins, "I think she's going to say, 'Way to go!'"

Current liberal thought posits that abortion should be "safe, legal and rare" in the words of former President Bill Clinton. Only by stipulating that abortion should remain "rare" can liberal politicians escape popular outrage. Yet these same politicians refuse to answer just *why* abortion should remain rare. If abortion is a moral good under any circumstances (as abortion-on-demand advocates declare), why should it remain rare? And if keeping abortion rare is a rational goal, why should state government be barred from taking steps to discourage abortion?

The fact of the matter is that mainstream pro-choice liberals are lying through their teeth when they mouth the "safe, legal and rare" mantra. Abortionists are celebrated as heroes, no matter what type of abortions they perform. The Los Angeles Times' glowing profile of Dr. Harrison ends with a description of the doctor's solemn determination to "keep at it as long as his stamina holds, or as long as it is legal." The National Abortion Federation (NAF), dedicated to unfettered access to abortion, awarded Dr. Tiller its prestigious Christopher Tietze Humanitarian Award. Incredibly, New York Times Magazine describes the NAF as "a mini-AMA" (American Medical Association). Of course, the difference between the AMA and the NAF is as simple as the distinction between preserving life and destroying it, but to the pro-choice crowd, all medical procedures are equal.

The pro-choice crowd has never wanted abortion to be rare. We re abortion rare, women considering abortions would feel subtle societal pressure to preserve the life growing within them. Such societal pressure would create a "coercive" environment for women, inhibiting their ability to choose. For abortion to thrive, it must be common.

With abortion statistics shockingly high (25 percent of pregnant women abort their babies, and one third of women will have an abortion by age 45), abortionists and their advocates can make women who abort feel accepted. At Dr. Harrison's office, abortion statistics

are posted on the exam-room mirror; a nurse rhetorically asks, "You think there's room in hell for all those women?" Of course, no religion has ever considered a population cap on Divine punishment -- surely, there is room in hell for whomever God chooses to place there. But the nurse's point is simple: You are not alone.

And the message works, as Harrison's patient "Amanda" demonstrates. According to the LA Times, Amanda, a 20-year-old administrative assistant, says it's not the obstacles that surprise her -- it's how normal and unashamed she feels as she prepares to end her first pregnancy. 'It's an everyday occurrence,' she says as she waits for her 2:30 p.m. abortion. 'It's not like this is a rare thing. . . It's not like it's illegal. It's not like I'm doing anything wrong.'"

This is the pro-choice agenda. For pro-choice activists, abortion is a good in and of itself. It allows a woman to exercise her "freedom of choice" at any time. The high school volleyball player who aborts her child because she does not want to ruin her body for nine months -- "I realize just from the first three months how it changes everything" -- is just as valid as the woman who aborts because her life is seriously endangered by pregnancy. Abortion must remain an absolute right, commonly exercised, if women are to be truly free.

For years, pro-life advocates have described their opponents as pro-abortion. After viewing the pro-choice movement's support for across-the-board abortions, that description seems apt. - Ben Shapiro, *townhall.com*, 11/30/05

THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN AND ABORTION

Guilt, distress, and mental distress among women who have experienced an abortion are far more common and long-lasting than abortion rights proponents have claimed. Researchers with the Norwegian Council for Mental Health and the University of Oslo evaluated 40 women who had experienced miscarriage and 80 women who had experienced an abortion. The women were then followed by the researchers for five years.

According to a report in "The Washington Times:" *Out of the entire group of women, only a dozen -- one who had miscarried, the rest who had aborted -- did not describe the experience of losing a baby as difficult. The researchers also reported that seven women who had abortions dropped out of the study all together "because it was too difficult for them to answer questions about the pregnancy termination." Although the women who had miscarried experienced more immediate grief, those feelings abated and began to resolve over time -- a pattern "expected after a traumatic and sad life event," the study stated.*

More: *In the aftermath of abortion, women "experienced more mental distress long after the event -- two and five years afterwards -- than women who had a miscarriage," the researchers reported. Along with "high levels" of anxiety and feelings of guilt and shame, the women who had voluntarily ended their pregnancy also "had to make efforts to avoid thoughts about the event," the study also noted. Avoidance, in fact, "was consistently elevated." . . .*

Abortion, like miscarriage, involves the loss of a baby; unlike miscarriage, the loss is the result of a conscious decision. And the operation itself, as Germaine Greer has taken to reminding her fellow feminists, is a gruesome one. No wonder that a fifth of women continue to feel depression, shame, or guilt.

Why are American newspapers giving this story so little attention? That fact speaks for itself. - *albertmohler.com*, 12/13/05

MEDICARE'S MUDDLED MEDDLING

What if Medicare threw a really lavish party and nobody showed

up?

Last week, as Medicare cheerleaders valiantly attempted to persuade, bribe or threaten seniors to sign-up for one of dozens of different prescription drug plans, there were numerous reports of people being so totally befuddled they might just take a pass.

Each plan has its own formulary, which decides how much of which drugs will be covered and which of those covered will be placed in a higher "tier" with a co-payment of \$60 or more. I found one plan that charges \$20.87 a month yet pays nothing on six of my wife's seven prescriptions. Making such choices sufficiently risky and difficult to scare many away might be one way to save money, but there are wiser solutions.

The cost to taxpayers of Medicare Part D was initially estimated at \$400 billion over the next 10 years, but that was soon revised to \$520 billion and then \$760 billion. Those first 10 years would be cheap compared with the following 20. The number of people eligible for Medicare will nearly double by 2030. Medicare is projected to rise from 12 percent of the federal budget to 25 percent by 2025, which is literally unsustainable because young taxpayers will not sustain it.

We got into this mess as a result of 40 years of political hubris. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, legislators and bureaucrats continue to believe they should dictate what sort of insurance coverage seniors should be allowed to buy. . . .

When it comes to the new Medicare drug plans, Congress assumes folks in their 80s must be sufficiently proficient with computers to log on to *medicare.gov* and pick between dozens of different Medicare drug plans. Yet that same Congress imagines those same seniors must be protected from any opportunity to choose insurance that makes economic sense. . . .

Fixing the problem of untangling stand-alone drug insurance from the Medigap straightjacket did not require hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer subsidies. It did not, in fact, require one cent. All that was needed was for the government to admit it made an inexcusable blunder by prohibiting the sale and purchase of stand-alone prescription drug benefits.

The solution to 90 percent of the problem Medicare Plan D hopes to fix at such huge bother and expense has always been obvious, simple and free: Just announce that seniors will henceforth be entirely free to purchase whatever drug insurance policy they prefer -- just as free men and women under the age of 65 have always been free to purchase every other sort of insurance. - Alan Reynolds, *townhall.com*, 11/17/05

IMMIGRATION POLICY

In light of the pictures we have seen of the rioting in France, the president should re-shape his immigration policy from one that works best for immigrants, to one that protects the life and culture of the majority (for now) of us. . . .

Paul Weyrich said it best: "As conservatives, we need to make it clear that we will not vote for any candidate who refuses to close our borders to illegal immigration and cut back on legal immigration, at least until we can acculturate the immigrants we already have". . . .

President Bush has rediscovered illegal immigration as a political issue. After previously focusing on "welcoming" all who come to America by whatever means, the president spent most of his recent speech in Tucson, Ariz., sounding like Rep. Tom Tancredo, Colorado Republican, who has been the most vocal proponent of sealing U.S. borders to illegal aliens.

Ninety percent of the speech was about the president's new "get tough" policy. The rest focused on his "guest worker" program, which

is amnesty by whatever name he calls it. He says he wants to end the government's "catch and release" policy in which non-Mexican illegals are apprehended, detained and then released, but that there aren't enough beds in detention centers to hold all of those apprehended. By some estimates, sufficient housing won't be available for at least six years. . . .

The president acknowledged that, "securing our border is essential to securing the homeland." Absent from the speech were proposals to sanction businesses that knowingly hire illegals. As long as there is a demand for cheap labor and insufficient disincentives, they will continue to come. It is why the government has had minimal success curtailing illegal drug shipments. Demand produces supply.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center and the Center for Immigration Studies, there are nearly 11 million illegal aliens in the United States, of which approximately 7 million are workers. In 2002, it was estimated that households headed by illegal aliens used \$10 billion more in government services than they paid in taxes. They cost California taxpayers \$10.5 billion in education, medical and other expenses.

There is another dimension to illegal and even legal immigration the president did not mention. We have failed to make Americans out of many of them. This is part of a larger cultural problem that tells immigrants they should hyphenate their heritage with "American," retaining their language, traditions and even loyalty to the country from which they originated.

The CIS sponsored a forum in Washington recently titled "Dual Allegiance: A Challenge to Immigration Reform and Patriotic Assimilation." John Fonte, senior fellow, and director of the Center for American Common Culture at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., noted that previously when immigrants became American citizens they took a solemn oath to "absolutely and entirely renounce" all previous political allegiances. They transferred their loyalty from the "old country" to the United States. Too many, he says, maintain dual allegiances in violation of the oath.

Immigrants need to be transformed into full Americans, not only by their citizenship, but also by their language (English), by their allegiance, voting habits (for American candidates and not for candidates in the nations from which they emigrated) and by their attitude. This was the profile of earlier immigrants, who wanted to come to America to become Americans.

In recent years, certain cities have taken the view that there is something better about other countries. In this view, immigrants should keep their allegiance and cultural heritage and not assimilate. This is a strategy for the death of any culture. While a nation cannot exist "half slave and half free," in Abraham Lincoln's words, neither can it exist in a state that is culturally subdivided.

John Fonte believes, "Congress should exercise its undisputed authority in this arena and prohibit certain acts (e.g., voting in a foreign election) that indicate dual allegiance. The purpose of such legislation would not be to punish people who have acted in good faith in the past, but to establish clear rules for the future in order to discourage and restrict dual allegiance."

Along with a much stronger and workable border control policy and penalties for businesses that knowingly hire illegals, attention to fully assimilating the non-native-born population would go far to fulfilling our national motto: E Pluribus Unum - out of many, one. - Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 11/17 and 12/2/05

TORTURED REASONING ABOUT TORTURE

Some people seem to see nothing between zero and infinity. Things are either categorically all right or they are categorically off-

limits. This kind of reasoning -- if it can be called reasoning -- is reflected in the stampede to ban torture by Congressional legislation.

As far as a general policy is concerned, there is no torture to ban. Isolated individuals here and there may abuse their authority and violate existing laws and policies by their treatment of prisoners but the point is that these are in fact violations.

When some individuals violate laws against murder, no one thinks that requires Congressional legislation to add to the existing laws against murder. What it calls for is enforcement of existing laws.

Banning torture categorically by federal legislation takes on a new dimension in an era of international terrorist networks that may, within the lifetime of this generation, have nuclear weapons.

If a captured terrorist knows where a nuclear bomb has been planted in some American city, and when it is timed to go off, are millions of Americans to be allowed to be incinerated because we have become too squeamish to get that information out of him by whatever means are necessary?

What a price to pay for moral exhibitionism or political grandstanding!

Even in less extreme circumstances, and even if we don't intend to torture the captured terrorist, does that mean that we need to reduce our leverage by informing all terrorists around the world in advance that they can stonewall indefinitely when captured, without fear of that fate?

This is not only an era of international terrorist networks but also an era of runaway litigation and runaway judges. Do we really want a federal law that will enable captured terrorists to be able to take their cases to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals?

Regardless of what the free-wheeling judges in that unpredictable body may end up deciding, they are not likely to decide it soon. Anybody can call anything "torture" at virtually no cost to themselves but at huge costs in money and delay to the efforts to protect Americans from terrorism.

There is no penalty for false claims but potentially deadly consequences for letting international terrorists tie up our legal system by exercising rights granted to American citizens and now thoughtlessly extended to people who are not American citizens and who are bent on killing American citizens and destroying American society.

After decades of ignoring the fact that rights and responsibilities go together, it was perhaps inevitable that an under-educated and easily confused generation should include some who do not understand that the rights granted to captured troops by the Geneva Convention apply to those who have accepted the terms of the Geneva Convention. It does not apply to people who are not troops and who have blatantly violated the whole framework of that convention.

For more than two centuries there has been a tendency on the political left, here and overseas, to make wrong-doers look like victims rather than people who are victimizing others. So it was perhaps inevitable that some would extend this attitude from criminals to terrorists.

But it was not inevitable that most would carry things this far or that so many others would be taken in by the rhetoric of moral superiority -- or be oblivious to the implications of an international network of cut-throats bent on destroying us even at the cost of their own lives.

Think of those implications. During the last election, Osama bin Laden warned Americans that those places that voted for President Bush would be targeted for terrorist reprisals.

We could ignore him then. But will our children and grandchildren be able to ignore similar threats after the terrorists are given nuclear weapons by Iran or sold nuclear weapons by North Korea?

This is a chilling prospect under the best circumstances. It is madness to tie our hands in any way in trying to forestall or counter the catastrophic potential of international terrorism. - Thomas Sowell, *townhall.com*, 11/23/05

NORTH KOREA: A DEPRAVED SOCIETY

Very few Westerners understand what life is really like for the average North Korean, because the country's dictatorship keeps all conduits of information and trade sealed as tight as a drum.

I know, because I've witnessed the stunning reality of daily existence in the North

In July 1999, I traveled to North Korea as a member of a German medical aid organization offering humanitarian medical assistance. I remained in North Korea for 18 months and worked in ten different hospitals around the country. . . .

There are two worlds in North Korea: One is the world of senior military officers, Communist Party members, and the country's ruling elite. They enjoy a lavish lifestyle, fancy restaurants, diplomatic shops with European foods, nightclubs, even a casino.

The world for ordinary people in North Korea is completely different. In their world, one can see young children, undersized, undernourished, mute, with sunken eyes and skin stretched tight across their faces, wearing uniform blue-and-white-striped pajamas. Anyone who's seen pictures of Dachau or Auschwitz would find the scene distressingly familiar.

Most of the patients in the hospitals suffer from psychosomatic illnesses. They're worn out by compulsory drills, innumerable parades, mandatory assemblies beginning at the crack of dawn, and constant, droning propaganda. They are tired and at the end of their tether. Clinical depression is rampant. Alcoholism is common. Young adults have no hope, no future. Everywhere you look, people are beset by anxiety.

Everyday workers and farmers are starving and dying. Unwarranted arrest and detention are common, and one can only imagine what the conditions are like in the so-called "reform institutions," where entire families are imprisoned when any member does or says something to offend the regime. These camps are closed to all foreigners, even to stringently non-confrontational organizations like the International Red Cross.

The only way to rescue the people of North Korea from obscene poverty and hardship is to let the world know the real state of this country. . . .

I interviewed hundreds of North Korean defectors at the Chinese-North Korean border and elsewhere, in order to learn more about the cruel realities of life in their home country. Former prisoners of North Korean concentration camps told me about mass executions, torture, rape, murder, and other crimes against humanity -- all performed as punishment for "anti-state criminal acts."

The international community, working closely with the media, must put serious pressure on the North Korean regime to open up to the outside world and save the lives of their ordinary citizens. As a German born after World War II, I know all too well the guilt of my grandparents' generation for remaining silent while the Nazis committed indescribable crimes. I believe it is my duty as a human being to expose the crimes and tyranny of the North Korean regime. - Norbert Vollertsen, *American Enterprise*, July/August/05

THE MEDIA'S WAR

The media seem to have come up with a formula that would make any war in history unwinnable and unbearable. They simply emphasize the enemy's victories and our losses.

Losses suffered by the enemy are not news, no matter how large, how persistent, or how clearly they indicate the enemy's declining strength.

What are the enemy's victories in Iraq? The killing of Americans and the killing of Iraqi civilians. Both are big news in the mainstream media, day in and day out, around the clock.

Has anyone ever believed that any war could be fought without deaths on both sides? Every death is a tragedy to the individual killed and to his loved ones. But is there anything about American casualty rates in Iraq that makes them more severe than casualty rates in any other war we have fought?

On the contrary, the American deaths in Iraq are a fraction of what they have been in other wars in our history. The media have made a big production about the cumulative fatalities in Iraq, hyping the thousandth death with multiple full-page features in the New York Times and comparable coverage on TV.

The two-thousandth death was similarly anticipated almost impatiently in the media and then made another big splash. But does media hype make 2,000 wartime fatalities in more than two years unusual?

The Marines lost more than 5,000 men taking one island in the Pacific during a three-month period in World War II. In the Civil War, the Confederates lost 5,000 men in one battle in one day.

Yet there was Jim Lehrer on the "News Hour" last week earnestly asking Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about the ten Americans killed that day. It is hard to imagine anybody in any previous war asking any such question of anyone responsible for fighting a war.

We have lost more men than that in our most overwhelming and one-sided victories in previous wars. During an aerial battle over the Mariannas islands in World War II, Americans shot down hundreds of Japanese planes while losing about 30 of their own.

If the media of that era had been reporting the way the media report today, all we would have heard about would have been that more than two dozen Americans were killed that day.

Neither our troops nor the terrorists are in Iraq just to be killed. Both have objectives. But any objectives we achieve get short shrift in the mainstream media, if they are mentioned at all.

Our troops can kill ten times as many of the enemy as they kill and it just isn't news worth featuring, if it is mentioned at all, in much of the media. No matter how many towns are wrested from the control of the terrorists by American or Iraqi troops, it just isn't front-page news like the casualty reports or even the doom-saying of some politicians.

The fact that these doom-saying politicians have been proved wrong, again and again, does not keep their latest outcries from overshadowing the hard-won victories of American troops on the ground in Iraq.

The doom-sayers claimed that terrorist attacks would make it impossible to hold the elections last January because so many Iraqis would be afraid to go vote. The doom-sayers urged that the elections be postponed.

But a higher percentage of Iraqis voted in that election -- and in a subsequent election -- than the percentage of Americans who voted in last year's Presidential elections.

Utter ignorance of history enables any war with any casualties to be depicted in the media as an unmitigated disaster.

Even after Nazi Germany surrendered at the end of World War II, die-hard Nazi guerilla units terrorized and assassinated both German officials and German civilians who cooperated with Allied occu-

pation authorities.

But nobody suggested that we abandon the country. Nobody was foolish enough to think that you could say in advance when you would pull out or that you should encourage your enemies by announcing a timetable.

There has never been the slightest doubt that we would begin pulling troops out of Iraq when it was feasible. Only time and circumstances can tell when that will be. And only irresponsible politicians and the media think otherwise. - Thomas Sowell, *townhall.com*, 12/13/05

HOLLYWOOD'S LATEST SHARE IN CULTURE

Nominations for the 63rd annual Golden Globe Awards were announced Tuesday, and the movie identified as a "cowboy romance" has taken the lead with seven nominations. . . .

Directed by Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* is based on a short story of the same title by author Annie Proulx. The story is quite graphic, depicting an unexpected homosexual romance between two cowboys who find themselves alone in a tent. As the story unfolds, the homosexual relationship is continued even as the two men get married and establish families. The story -- and the movie -- includes explicit sex and depicts the hurt and turmoil experienced by the families of these two men as they periodically take what are described as "fishing trips in which there is no fishing." Nevertheless, the movie presents the homosexual romance as a relationship to be admired -- insinuating that if our society could be freed of its hang-ups about homosexuality, these two could have gone on to live together happily ever after.

The movie opened in only three cities across the nation, and it is not expected to be a big winner at the box office. But as an indicator of where Hollywood thinks the culture should be headed, *Brokeback Mountain* is one of the most celebrated movies among Hollywood critics, the media, and the cultural elite. - AlbertMohler.com, 12/14/05

WILL 'DA VINCI' MOVIE BE ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

Execs at Sony must be elated that they've got the film rights to Dan Brown's hit novel "The Da Vinci Code."

Theoretically, the flick has a good shot at blockbuster status, since it's based on a work that has been on the best-seller lists for 117 weeks and sold over 25 million books in 44 different languages.

Inconveniently for Hollywood PR, though, Brown's novel makes the following claims:

- Jesus is not God; he was only a man.
- Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.
- Mary Magdalene is a goddess and should be worshipped.
- Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a daughter.
- The Bible was put together by a pagan Roman emperor.
- The Gospels have been altered to support the claims of Christians.
- Mary Magdalene was directed to establish the Church.
- The Catholic Church is aware of all these things and, in order to keep it secret, has resorted to murder.

Apparently not content with having readers take the novel as mere fiction, Brown has sought to make the book appear as though it is based on history. The book starts with a page titled "Facts," falsely claiming that the Priory of Sion "is a real organization," "a European secret society founded in 1099." He also informs readers that all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals are accurate. - *NewsMax*, 8/05

VAN IMPE EULOGIZES POPE & ROME

The death of John Paul II and the installation of his successor Pope Benedict XVI gave Jack Van Impe a chance to announce to his television audience that he was a changed man, that he had learned to embrace "his Catholic brothers and sisters in Jesus." Andy Foster wrote in the May-July *Canadian Revivalist*: "Dr. Van Impe uses the language of conversion to describe the 'change' that occurred in his own thinking about Roman Catholicism." He claims that the Church of Rome believes the fundamentals of the faith and that Protestants who separate from Roman dogma are carried away with minor issues. He slandered the witness of Dr. Ian Paisley, calling him a "religious leader who often leads the Protestants up to the front to kill the Catholics." [This is especially sad for this editor, since Van Impe in the early 70s was a favorite preacher!] - *Calvary Contender*, 8/05

U.S. PORN FEEDS INTERNATIONAL SEX TRADE

An authority on the sex trade has named a United States industry as a major contributor to this modern-day form of slavery. Researcher Jeffrey Satinover says America must take responsibility as a major contributor to the problem of sex trafficking around the world.

...The pornography industry, he explains, "provides the emotional fuel for the international sex slave trade."

America's porn industry generates billions of dollars a year, and Satinover believes this growing business has gained a foothold due, at least in part, to law enforcement policies. Porn is recognized as a legitimate business in America, and he contends, "Its legitimacy is largely due to the fact that we aren't actually aggressively prosecuting our own obscenity laws"

In testimony before a Senate subcommittee in March, Patrick Trueman of the Family Research Council - a 20-year veteran of fighting against the porn industry - observed that pornography is "closely linked to an increase in prostitution, child prostitution and human trafficking." His suggestion? Give federal prosecutors the freedom to pursue all violators of obscenity laws. - *The Sword of the Lord*, 8/26/05

JIMMY CARTER'S NEW BOOK

Former president Jimmy Carter's new book, "Our Endangered Values" is reviewed by R. Albert Mohler (*Baptist Press*). We quote an excerpt from the review. Mohler says in the review that the book criticizes fundamentalists for simplistic and superficial convictions while Mr. Carter offers superficial and simplistic assessments of urgent moral questions. Some of the most vitriolic language concerns Mr. Carter's criticism of the Southern Baptist Convention and its leaders. [Mr. Carter cut ties with the SBC a few years ago.] Carter argues that fundamentalists are militant in fighting against any challenge to their beliefs ["contend for the faith"] and are likely to be angry and abusive against those who oppose their goals. Mr. Carter says that "fundamentalists" believe that "the past is better than the present." He argues that fundamentalists err when they "draw clear distinctions between themselves as true believers, and others, convinced they are right and anyone who contradicts them is possibly ignorant and evil." He continues a pattern of arguing that others are wrong when they assert that he is wrong. Even in this new book, he continues that pattern. Per Carter's own worldview, he reveals: "In the religious realm, I shall depend on the Holy Scriptures...On political issues, I shall rely as much as possible on my own personal experiences and observations." Just what are the "values" that Carter believes to be so endangered? For one, he blames fundamentalists for being primarily responsible for the raging controversies that now mark America's public life. As he sees it, America is

being ripped apart by fundamentalists who push their concerns about abortion, marriage, homosexuality and other issues in the public square. He has been a strong proponent of women as pastors. He has strongly opposed the death penalty. He condemned the SBC for adopting a revised [stronger] version of its confession of faith. - *Calvary Contender*, 11-12/05

CALVARY CONTENDER - FINAL ISSUE - This will be the final printed issue of the *Calvary Contender*. My health problems have advanced more rapidly than expected this past year. The Parkinson Disease symptoms, eye problems and osteoarthritis have made it too difficult for me to continue the *CC* ministry. - Jerry Huffman

For twenty-three years Jerry Huffman has been "warning and informing" through the *Calvary Contender*. The *CC* has been a beacon of light for many of us in the ministry - Dr. Greg McLaughlin (Amen, and thank God for you, Brother Huffman. - N.P).

KATRINA: THE MEDIA'S HURRICANE

As I've been assessing press accounts of what was clearly the story of the year for 2005, it's become clear that press hysteria delayed rescues, prodded some politicians into making mega-billion dollar promises and may have created a long-term backlash.

How bad was the reporting? You probably saw and heard stories of mayhem at the Superdome and the Convention Center, and on the streets of New Orleans. You may have missed the admissions weeks later by NBC, and numerous newspapers noted, stories about "murders, rapes and beatings have turned out to be false."

"Hundreds of armed gang members killing and raping people"

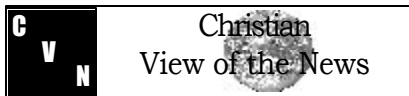
inside the Dome -- never happened. "Thirty or 40 bodies" stored in a Convention Center freezer -- not one. Rampaging "armed mobs" -- none. "Bands of rapists, going block to block" -- never happened. Geraldo Rivera's "scene of terror, chaos, confusion, anarchy, violence, rapes, murders, dead babies" -- well, that's Geraldo Rivera.

Orleans Parish District Attorney Eddie Jordan said four murders occurred in the entire city during the week after Katrina hit, making it a typical week in a city averaging 200 homicides per year. . . The Superdome had one shooting: a Louisiana National Guardsman accidentally shot himself in the leg. New Orleans Coroner Frank Minyard said he had seen only seven gunshot victims during hurricane week: "Seven gunshots isn't even a good Saturday night in New Orleans."

Why the hype? Official sources like the mayor and the police chief were hysterical, and some reporters merely became megaphones for them. Crying and yelling made for better ratings than calm assessments of damage. Network stars wanted to display what passed as compassion. Since few reporters knew what was happening, a pack mentality kicked in, as reporters congregated in places of safety.

Politics also played a role, with liberals framing the story as one of rich people not caring about poor people and whites not caring about blacks.

But media exaggeration was not a victimless crime. It delayed the arrival of responders who, relying on press reports, had to plan their missions as military rather than philanthropic endeavors. . . - The long-term effect of Katrina propaganda will probably be more cynicism. Reporters who lie or exaggerate create skepticism and suspicion. - Marvin Olasky, *townhall.com*, 12/15/05



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