



# Christian View of the News



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## BUSH: SERIOUS ABOUT HIS JOB

Add "domestic spying" to the long list of botched attempts to unseat **George W. Bush**. The New York Times' would-be bombshell alleging Nixonian snoopering has detonated in its builders' faces. The story not only hasn't shaken Washington, it has restored the president's standing by reinforcing popular suspicions that he, unlike leading Democrats, **takes seriously (a) terrorists' intentions and (b) the necessity of winning the war.**

The seriousness gap is important. While the president attempts to press the case for continued engagement, key Democrats respond with hollow grade-school cant. Not even they believe their claims that the president is a liar, a slaver, a BTK-type voyeur, a draft-dodging mass murderer. Nor do they buy the alternative scenario -- that George Walker Bush is a feckless dope in the thrall of the Rasputin-like Dick Cheney and a cadre of cigar-munching, rib-eye slurping, back-slapping, conniving oilmen.

Similarly, the media have failed to depict the Commander-in-Chief as a petrol-punk. One-by-one, the would-be exposes have crumbled into dust: Abu Ghraib, the Koran in the Guantanamo toilet, secret prisons, horrifying interrogations, endless Halliburton conspiracy theories and, now, the "domestic spying" tale.

For whatever reason, the president's critics are dodging the one question that really matters: Is the war morally justifiable? Americans care about such things. We have a national desire to do the right things for the right reasons at the right times.

Until recently, just-war questions were easy to answer: Nations had a right to fight back against aggressors and oppressors. Japan bombs, FDR responds.

But what happens when the invader isn't a nation, doesn't have formally constituted or uniformed armies, doesn't play by rules, doesn't declare its martial intentions and doesn't even have leaders with whom one might reason or negotiate?

And what do you do when that enemy doesn't want to seize ground but merely wants to commit scattered acts of mass destruction? How should the world's pre-eminent superpower respond to jihadis who strike indiscriminately -- against Christians, Jews and Muslims, on the soil of Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Arabia?

Statecraft won't do the trick. The Clinton administration tried it after al Qaeda attacked New York (the first World Trade Center bombing), Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Tanzania and Yemen. It turned down the chance to take custody of Osama bin Laden, citing legal concerns, and instead tried to scare him by bombing some empty tents and taking out the night watchman at a Sudanese aspirin factory.

Bin Laden interpreted these actions as weaknesses and ordered the hijackers to board their jets on Sept. 11. Team Clinton responded to the killing of 500 Americans by attempting a mix of diplomacy -- negotiations through third parties -- and symbolic action. Al Qaeda

responded by killing another 3,000.

That scenario lays the groundwork for a new definition of a just war is one in which peace is not an option -- and the alternative to war is not tranquility but carnage. As Michael Novak argued three years ago, "The aim of a just war is the blocking of great evil, the restoration of peace and the defense of minimum conditions of justice and world order."

By those standards, the war in Iraq is just. Saddam Hussein was the perpetrator of great evil. Far more Iraqis died by his hand in "peacetime" than have perished in the three-year war. Furthermore, he was active in trying to organize and foment global terror.

Meanwhile, contrary to the frettings of the pant-soiling Murtha brigades, the war hasn't failed. Previously inimical Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish factions are busy cutting deals and forming a new government -- that's progress -- and we haven't had a repeat Sept. 11. That's progress, too.

As for establishing conditions for justice and global order, the war has put terrorists to flight, reducing al Qaeda to little more than a production company for bad jihadi videos. Death-loving Islamosadists, while still active, have been forced to alter their plans and targets. And tiny seeds of democracy have begun to sprout throughout the region.

The one argument used most commonly against the war -- that it was for oil -- hasn't panned out. The people chiefly interested in Iraqi oil were the ones most opposed to the war -- the French, Germans, Russians and Chinese.

This leaves critics with a simple put-up or shut-up choice. They can look for principled arguments against the moral basis for the war, or they can continue playing the "I'm for the troops but against the war" game. Either way, they'll have to explain how the abandonment of Iraq would make the world a safer place. - Tony Snow, *townhall.com*, 1/5/06

### IRAQ: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO BACK

**Iraq's huge voter turnout** last week **was a clear step forward** for the Bush administration's policy and for a stable Iraqi government, if all sides can learn to live together. But what happened in Washington last week will undercut the war on terror and encourage those who want to reprise Sept. 11, 2001 on a much grander scale.

It was probably not coincidental that on

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the same day the Senate voted against extending the USA Patriot Act, the New York Times printed a story it had held for a year that contained numerous anonymous, and therefore unaccountable, sources claiming President Bush authorized the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on American citizens and others after Sept. 11. Just once it would be nice if the anonymous would leak something beneficial to their country.

In his Saturday radio address, the president said he personally reauthorized the eavesdropping program more than 30 times since 9/11 and did so while consulting members of Congress. He also defended his decision, because listening in on conversations of actual or possible terrorists is "crucial to our national security."

After the N.Y. Times story appeared, **the Senate failed to extend the Patriot Act**, falling short of the 60-vote majority needed to overcome a filibuster led by Democrats. Some senators expressed concern about damage to civil liberties. But civil liberties mean nothing if you're killed by a terrorist who has manipulated the Constitution to achieve his or her objectives. The Senate's refusal to extend the Patriot Act increases the likelihood that more of us will die sooner than we expect.

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Guiliani wrote in a Dec. 17 N.Y. Times column that failure to extend the Patriot Act beyond its Dec. 31 expiration date "represents a grave potential threat to the nation's security." When another attack comes, will those senators whose concern for civil liberties trumps the saving of lives step forward to acknowledge their role in weakening America?

Those relatively few who were spied on and had their cell phones monitored must have demonstrated their intention to aid in another terrorist attack on U.S. soil. Waiting for a judge to give permission to monitor a suspect's cell phone often takes too long. Before a court order can be obtained, the terrorist suspect can disconnect, or change numbers and the trail quickly grows cold. The law -- especially the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) - has lagged behind the technological innovation and cunning of our enemies. President Bush did what he swore he would do in his oath of office; protect this country and its citizens from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

You can't win a chess game when only one side plays by the rules. You can't win at the terror game when one side is preoccupied with civil liberties and charges of torture instead of victory and the other is concerned only with how many of us they can kill.

The second step back from victory came in a bill by Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, to **ban "cruel, inhumane and degrading" treatment of prisoners in American custody**. One wishes our enemies would adopt such a standard, but they won't because they are more interested in winning than behaving nicely. The major flaw in McCain's thinking is similar to what one sees in our dealings with Israel and her enemies. It is that what we do affects what the other side does and if we will be "humane" to them, they won't blow us to smithereens. That is dangerous wishful thinking and there is no evidence to support it.

Surely the word has gone out to the terrorists that if they are captured they have little to fear because Americans won't torture them. When information we might otherwise have obtained is not extracted from them and thousands, or millions, more of us die; will those who favor restraining interrogators be held accountable?

Jimmy Carter said he was "surprised" when Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev lied to him and invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Carter apparently forgot that communists lie.

It is that same naivete and failure to understand the threat confronting us now that produces the thinking which opposes monitoring

eavildoers among us. We lower our guard at a time when it needs to be raised to new levels. - Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 12/20/05

*I have the privilege of speaking at Grace Baptist Church in Anderson, Indiana February 11-14. My brother Howard and I and our wives started Camp Cameron in the Atlanta area in 1961, the second year of our pastorates here. This ministry lasted 25 years with hundreds saved and thousands in attendance.*

*Leigh Crockett, pastor of Grace Baptist and his assistant, Ben Evans, were both campers at Camp Cam as teenagers. I look forward to renewing fellowship with them as I speak at a church-wide Valentine Banquet, both Sunday services, School chapel and to the "Keenagers." (I am re-reading "Master Secrets of Prayer" by Cam Thompson, one of the greatest little books on this subject.) - N.P.*

## WHY THE NOMINATION OF ALITO MATTERS

"One of the indispensable matters of Western Civilization is the rule of law. That rule is central to democratic government, a vigorous economy, and individual liberty." With those words, Judge Robert H. Bork affirms the rule of law--and points to the important role played by judges. The rule of law, he argues, "requires that the law be understood to have force and moral weight of its own, independent of the political and cultural struggles of the moment." That is another way of saying that the rule of law, when it is observed, guarantees the supremacy of process in political affairs, self-government, stability, and safety depend on that supremacy.

Judge Bork's warning--reminding us of the importance of the rule of law--should serve to underline the importance of the nomination of Judge Samuel A. Alito, Jr. to the United States Supreme Court.

Judge Alito brings to his nomination a distinguished career in the law and years of experience on the federal bench. In making his nomination, President George W. Bush stated: "As a Justice Department official, federal prosecutor and judge on the United States Court of Appeals, Sam Alito has shown a mastery of the law, a deep commitment to justice. . . and he is a man of enormous character. He's scholarly, fair-minded and principled, and these qualities will serve our nation well on the highest court of the land" . . . .

In accepting President Bush's nomination, Judge Alito was mindful of his decade and a half as a federal judge. "Every time that I have entered the courtroom during the past 15 years, I have been mindful of the solemn responsibility that goes with service as a federal judge. Federal judges have the duty to interpret the Constitution and the laws faithfully and fairly, to protect the constitutional rights of all Americans, and to do these things with care and with restraint, always keeping in mind the limited role that the courts play in our constitutional system. And I pledge that if confirmed I will do everything within my power to fulfill that responsibility."

With those words, Judge Alito signaled his understanding of the judiciary and the role of judges. In doing so, he knew full well that this is the very issue around which controversy emerges every time a nomination is made to the Supreme Court.

Over the last several decades, the Supreme Court has assumed a role never envisioned by the founders of the American republic. Forgetting the principle of judicial restraint, generations of activist judges have pushed a social agenda that, in their minds, would bring America into the modern age. Of course, the framers of the U.S. Constitution did not conceive of judges as legislators who would press their own agenda. To the contrary, the founders envisioned the Supreme Court as a final court of appeal, described as the "least dangerous branch" of government.

Phyllis Schlafly, a keen observer of the court, has warned that a cadre of judicial "supremacists" has used the federal courts to transform the culture. "The United States Constitution did not create judicial supremacy or consign us to be ruled by a judicial oligarchy," Mrs. Schlafly insists. "On the contrary, the Constitution separated the vast powers of the federal government into three branches--legislative, executive, and judicial--with an ingenious system of checks and balances so that each branch can serve as a continuing check on the others." Judicial activists understand the rule of judges very differently. As Mrs. Schlafly explains, "The judicial supremacists refuse to be bound by the words of the United States Constitution or the intent of its Framers. Instead, they espouse the theory that the Constitution is a 'living document' which can change according to judicially directed 'evolution.'"

Similarly, Robert H. Bork argues that "the law has become the instrument of the intellectual classes that are opposed to middle class values and hold America in contempt." In recent years, Americans have been frustrated to see the federal courts, and especially the U.S. Supreme Court, reverse the will of the people as enacted through Congress, state legislatures, and voter initiatives. . . .

Over the last half century, forces pushing for a revolution in America's social and cultural landscape have been largely unable to gain success through legislative action. They simply lack popular support for their proposals and have been thwarted in their efforts to force their revolution through popular politics. For example, pro-abortion forces would never have been able to force a legal authorization for virtually unrestricted abortion in all fifty states through judicial action, and activist judges responded with a cavalcade of invented rights and social policies.

In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court declared abortion to be a constitutional right, even as the justices had to admit that no such right was even mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Just a few years before this, the justices had found the constitutional "right to privacy" on the issue of contraception.

Fast forward thirty years, and the nation's high court would strike down laws against sodomy and homosexual behavior, declaring that such laws violate the U.S. Constitution. The nation's courts have invented liberties and interpreted the Constitution according to their own political predilections.

Thus, when Judge Alito spoke of his own commitment to restraint and "the limited role that the courts play in our constitutional system," he was affirming his more limited and restrained understanding of the judicial role. Just months earlier, John Roberts, now Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, made a similar point in referring to the role of judges as "umpires" rather than players in the context of politics. . . .

The nomination hearings for Judge Alito before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary has started. Look for a lively and potentially contentious series of hearings, but expect Judge Alito to acquit himself well as he describes to the senators--and to the watching nation--his understanding of the judiciary and the judge's role. . . .

As the nation's highest court, the U.S. Supreme Court fulfills an indispensable purpose in our national government. The future of this nation will be influenced by those who sit on this court and protect the proper role of the judiciary while honoring the rule of law. For these reasons, we should call and encourage our United States Senators to confirm Judge Samuel A. Alito, Jr. quickly and enthusiastically. We need to get this umpire in the game. - albertmohler.com, 12/13/05 (*With the exception of a true spiritual awakening, there is probably nothing that can possibly affect the moral and spiritual direction of our nation for years to come as the appointment by President Bush of*

*Judges Alito and Roberts and other Constitutionalists. That's my opinion. - N. P.)*

## FALSE JUDGE MOCKS 'INTELLIGENT DESIGN'

Federal Judge John E. Jones III issued his ruling in the Dover, Pennsylvania school case on December 20 with a 139-page rant against anyone who objects to force-feeding public schoolchildren with the theory of evolution. He accused parents and school board members of "breathhtaking inanity" for wanting their children to learn that "intelligent design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Charles Darwin's view."

Contrary to most media coverage, the Dover case was not about whether Darwin's theory of evolution, as set forth in "The Origin of the Species," or the theory of "intelligent design" is correct or should be taught. The Dover school board did not propose to say intelligent design is scientific or valid, or even to decrease its teaching of evolution.

Students were merely to be read a brief statement asserting that "gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence," and that intelligent design provides an explanation for the origin of life that could be further explored by consulting a book in the school library. While not denying that those statements may be true (it is undeniable that evolution has gaps), the judge nevertheless permanently enjoined the school board "from requiring teachers to denigrate or disparage the scientific theory of evolution" and from saying that the theory has gaps.

Jones exhibited his bias for judicial activism with public remarks that should have caused his recusal. Signaling that he would exploit the dispute, Jones boasted, "It certainly is one of the most significant cases in United States history. . . . Even Charles Darwin's great grandson is attending the trial." . . .

He lashed out at witnesses who expressed religious views different from his own, displaying a prejudice unworthy of our judiciary. He denigrated several officials because they "staunchly and proudly touted their religious convictions in public."

The atheist evolutionists would not have made such a big case out of the four innocuous paragraphs ordered by the Dover school board unless they were pursuing an ideological cause. They converted the trial into a grand inquisition of religious beliefs instead of addressing science or the statement to be read to students. . . .

In an era of judicial supremacy, Judge Jones' biased and religiously bigoted decision is way over the top. His decision will ultimately hurt the evolutionist cause because it shows that the evolutionists cannot defend their beliefs on the merits; they can only survive by censoring alternate views. - Phyllis Schlafly, *townhall.com*, 1/2/06

## UNINTELLIGENT DESIGNS

Cal Thomas, writing on the same subject on December 27, 2005, concluded as follows:

Religious parents should exercise the opportunity that has always been theirs. They should remove their children from state schools with their "instruction manuals" for turning them into secular liberals, and place them in private schools--or home school them--where they will be taught the truth, according to their parents' beliefs. Too many parents who would never send their children to a church on Sunday that taught doctrines they believed to be wrong, have had no problem placing them in state schools five days a week where they are taught conflicting doctrines and ideas.

Private schools or home schooling cost extra money (another reason to favor school choice) and extra time, but what is a child worth?

Surely, a child is more valuable than material possessions.

Our children are our letters to the future. It's up to parents to decide whether they want to send them "first class" or "postage due."

Rulings such as this should persuade parents who've been waffling to take their kids and join the growing exodus from state schools into educational environments more conducive to their beliefs. (*Bible Baptist Christian School offers such an opportunity in our area of Greater Atlanta.* - N.P.) - *townhall.com*, 12/27/06

I am presently reading **The Evolution of a Creationist** by Dr. Jobe Martin. It is called *A Layman's Guide to the Conflict Between the Bible and Evolutionary Theory*. He quotes profusely from the Bible and dozens of others on this subject and makes the profound, simple. It is the best I have read on this in decades. - N.P.

## EDUCATORS HAVE BEEN LYING TO US

After 40 years and trillions of tax dollars plunged into public education at all levels, **how stands public education?**

Well, it depends. Sam Dillon reports in Sunday's *New York Times*: "After Tennessee tested its eighth-grade students in math this year, state officials at a jubilant news conference called the results 'a cause for celebration.' Eighty-seven percent of students performed at or above the proficiency level."

Mississippi's fourth-graders did even better at math, with 89 percent performing at or above proficiency levels. Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia, Texas and Alaska reported equally exhilarating results.

**Fly in the ointment.** These were the results of tests designed by state officials. On the national test mandated by No Child Left Behind, only 22 percent of Tennessee's eighth-graders passed, and only 18 percent of fourth-graders in Mississippi could do fourth-grade arithmetic. By national standards, four of every five kids in the Tennessee and Mississippi public schools are failing.

**Inescapable conclusion:** State officials are dumbing-down tests so even the slowest kids can pass, to keep the federal dollars flowing in and federal sanctions from being imposed.

Put crudely, state officials are colluding in a fraud to deceive parents, kids and themselves about the progress or lack of it being made by the public schools. They are like baseball officials who, unhappy with the paltry production of home runs, lower the mound, narrow the strike zone, create a new rabbit ball, bring in the left-and-right-field fences and look the other way at steroid use -- then celebrate all the great hitters who beat Babe Ruth's record.

In four states -- Missouri, Wyoming, Maine and South Carolina -- states test scores closely tracked federal scores. In South Carolina, which sets world-class standards, 30 percent of the kids passed the feds' eighth-grade math test, but only 23 percent passed the state test. Apparently, educators in South Carolina don't believe in lying to themselves.

The ultimate test is how American kids stack up in a world where leadership in math and science eventually translates into military power and global dominance. In all recent world tests where they have competed, the Chinese on the mainland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea come in at or near the top, as Americans bring up the rear. We may lie to ourselves about how well we are doing, but the world will one day find us out.

The lying has been going on a long time now. Between the mid-1960s and mid-1990s, Americans wrung their hands at failing SAT scores of high school seniors in math and English. Some educators wailed that the tests were cruel, unfair and culturally biased. So, testing criteria were made less rigorous and altered to make comparisons with earlier years more difficult. Now, the SAT scores are no longer

cause for concern.

"Humankind cannot stand too much reality," said T.S. Eliot. The reality is that a vast acreage of U.S. public education is a wasteland.

**"Rarely is the question asked: Are our children learning?"** said George Bush pungently in Florence, S.C., in the 2000 election. As we now know -- and, in truth, have known for decades -- American children are not learning as once they did. And the ethnic gaps in achievement that existed 40 years ago persist up to today. Nothing has changed.

Why? Classrooms are far smaller. Teacher salaries are far higher. School budgets are far larger. Where it cost \$250 a year to educate a child in Washington, D.C. in 1950, which probably translates into \$2,500 today, the per-capita cost of educating kids in Washington schools is over \$10,000. While that is among the highest in the nation, Washington test scores remain among the lowest. We have Head Start and school lunches, and every demand the reformers have made has been met. The I.Q. tests have been thrown out, and the track system abolished.

Explanations for the failure are many. The collapse of the family. Kids coming to school unmotivated and unprepared. Disruptions in the classroom. Violence and drugs in the schoolyard. The lure of TV, videogames and the street pulling kids away from desks, where generations spent hours doing homework. But are these the explanations, or excuses? Does it make any difference?

At the turn of the millennium, pundits were saying that not only had the 20th century been "the American Century," the 21st would be, as well. Brits were probably saying the same thing back in 1900.

Great, indeed, is our capacity for self-deception. - Pat Buchanan, *Conservative Chronicle*, 12/14/06

## NEA'S MILLIONS GO TO 'LEFT-WING' CAUSES

A union watchdog group says a new disclosure report confirms that the nation's largest teachers union, the National Education Association (NEA), is heavily involved in the wider liberal political movement and the Democratic Party.

Earlier this week, the Wall Street Journal reported that the NEA gave \$65 million last year to liberal groups such as People for the American Way, the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and the Human Rights Campaign, which is the largest pro-homosexual lobby in the U.S.

In the past, unions with at least one private sector member have had to report their costs and expenses, but they have been able to lump them into large categories such as contributions, gifts, and grants. But now, under new federal rules, the NEA must detail where all its grants have gone, down to \$5,000.

Mike Antonucci with the California-based Education Intelligence Agency has been monitoring the NEA for years. He says the new rules have not changed the NEA's political activity, but they help reveal the union's extensive contributions to left-wing causes. . . .

Although the NEA says it has favored the disclosure rules all along, Antonucci notes the union claimed the regulations were onerous when it unsuccessfully sued the U.S. Department of Labor.

Reportedly more than half of the NEA's 600 employees make six-figure salaries, yet the average teacher made only \$48,000 last year. - Jim Brown, *AgapePress*, 1/6/06

## COMPUTERS: THE PROBLEM OR SOLUTION?

David Gelernter is no Luddite. Indeed, he is a professor of computer science at Yale University. According to his biographical statement at Yale's Web site, his current interests include "information man-

agement, parallel programming, software ensembles and artificial intelligence." This man is not resistant to technology.

Nevertheless, he refuses to get on the bandwagon for the use of computers in education. As a matter of fact, he argues that if computers are used too much, learning suffers.

In "Misinformation Age: More Computers, Less Learning," published in the current issue of *The Weekly Standard*, he presses his point.

Consider his introductory paragraph: *We are supposed to be living in the "Information Age." If we are, exactly what topic are people so well-informed about? Video games? The same experts who know for sure that we are in mid-Information Age take it for granted that young people are colossally uninformed. And young people are more likely than anyone else to spend long hours beating their way happily through the dense, trackless electronic jungle. They grow up with computers, the web, cell phones, hundreds of cable TV channels, and digital electronics in countless forms.*

Nevertheless, they are not well informed about current events, important news stories, or many other matters of significance.

*The most important solution to the problematic Information Age has nothing to do with the web. Eventually, we will get over the idea that playing with computers and the Internet is inherently virtuous. Schools ought to take the same line on web-browsing as they do on poker; it can be profitable if you're lucky, but do it on your own time. It's true that some schools have made sound educational use of computers and software. But my guess is that, on balance, American schools would do better if they junked their Macs and PCs and let students fool around somewhere else. Schools should be telling students to read books, not play with computers.* - *albertmohler.com*, 1/5/06

## A SLAP IN THE FACE FOR CHRISTIANS

The *New York Times* ushered in the new year with a nice gift for Christians -- one it did not give to anyone else: a slap in the face.

The slap came in the form of a piece written by Thomas Vinciguerra. It was titled, "The Pre-Blogger: Find Mencken at nature-abhors-a-moron.com." Sixty years ago, H.L. Mencken was one of America's most acerbic social critics, and the *Times* was speculating on whether Mencken would have become a blogger. Vinciguerra then offered entries from a hypothetical Mencken blog -- entries that were indicative of both the bigotry and ignorance of the *New York Times*.

One entry read: "Sanity has triumphed in Dover, Pennsylvania, where the boobs who tried to foist intelligent design on the local lyciums have been soundly thrashed . . . Would that this victory were permanent. It will take more than jurisprudence to retire the forces of ignorance. Meanwhile, we can only hope they engage in less egregious forms of buncombe -- like installing the Ten Commandments in public squares, or speaking in tongues."

Ha, ha, ha. Very funny.

Of course, Mencken referred to Christians as "rustic ignoramuses" when he wasn't calling us worse things. But he also had insulting things to say about women, Blacks, and Jews -- comments that today we recognize as both ignorant and offensive. To its credit, the *Times* would never dream of trying to be funny by calling Blacks and women mentally inferior, or by imitating Mencken's viciously anti-Semitic comments. But when it comes to Christians, all bets are off. And like any bigot, the newspaper that celebrates itself for politically correct tolerance and exquisite sensitivity can't seem to recognize its own blind prejudice.

The *Times* also exposed its ignorance of the kind of people who espouse intelligent design. Does it realize it is calling Albert Einstein a

boob? Einstein once said: "God does not play dice with the cosmos" -- he found design in the universe. Scientist Fritz Schaefer -- four times nominated for a Nobel Prize -- is another "boob" who believes in the intelligent design theory. So does Professor Michael Behe, the Lehigh biochemist who has proven the "irreducible complexity" of the human cell structure. And then there is Oxford Professor Antony Flew, the famous British philosopher. Throughout his long career, Flew argued that there was a "presumption of atheism" -- that is, the existence of a creator could not be proved. Intelligent design caused Flew, at the age of 81, to reverse himself and acknowledge God as creator. Flew is "ignorant?"

For Christians, being attacked is one of the realities of life. The secular world, and the *New York Times* in particular, detest us because we stand for absolute truth. But our response to attacks like this is to overcome evil with good. For all of its faults, the *Times* now and then expresses grudging admiration for the human rights work evangelicals perform in the trenches. We need to strengthen our witness there and continue defending the truth.

We also ought to keep a sense of humor when we are attacked like this. After all, Mencken once observed, "All successful newspapers are ceaselessly querulous and bellicose. They never defend anyone or anything if they can help it; if the job is forced on them, they tackle it by denouncing someone or something else" -- not my idea of a good sport, but there it is. - Chuck Colson, *townhall.com*, 1/5/06

## PROTECTING LIFE BY TAKING IT AWAY

Last month, by a vote of 237-4, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a pastoral statement calling for an end to the death penalty. The 20-page document -- "A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death" -- makes a number of claims. Among them: that the execution of murderers "violates respect for human life and dignity," that it fuels a "cycle of violence [that] diminishes us all," and that "we have other ways to punish criminals and protect society." The bishops acknowledge in passing that Catholic teaching has never banned the death penalty outright or declared it "intrinsicly evil." Nevertheless, they insist, since the modern state "has other non-lethal means to protect its citizens, the state should not use the death penalty."

They aren't breaking new theological ground. Pope John Paul II made a similar argument about the death penalty in his 1995 encyclical "Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)." But the new document is shockingly blunt in brushing aside the suffering of the victims, or the viciousness of the murder, as irrelevant to the question of capital punishment. "No matter how heinous the crime," it says, "if society can protect itself without ending a human life, it should do so."

Executing killers, in other words, has nothing to do with justice. No act of murder, however calculated or cruel or catastrophic, requires as a matter of sheer decency that the murderer make atonement by forfeiting his life. In the world according to bishops, the death penalty never balances the scales of moral judgment. Timothy McVeigh shouldn't have been executed. Ted Bundy shouldn't have been executed. Not even Osama bin Laden, with the blood of thousands on his hands, would deserve to be executed if we had him in our power.

This is what it means, the bishops claim, "to reject a culture of death and to build a culture of life." Their pastoral statement closes with a quotation from Deuteronomy 30: "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live." Choose life, that is, by keeping murderers alive.

But is that really what Deuteronomy teaches? Does God frown on the death penalty even when it comes to the worst killers in our

midst?

I am neither Catholic nor a theologian, and I wouldn't presume to teach religion to a bishop. On the other hand, the new statement's authors write that their purpose is to "encourage engagement and dialogue" on the subject about which "people of goodwill disagree." In that spirit of dialogue and goodwill, then, some reflections:

The point of view the bishops express is sharply at odds with the Judeo-Christian tradition in which American law is rooted. It is no coincidence that the United States is the only advanced Western nation in which (some) murderers are still put to death. The United States was founded by religious believers; its culture to this day remains deeply influenced by faith and the Bible. And on this point, biblical tradition is unambiguous: For premeditated murder, death is an appropriate punishment.

No passage in the Bible -- Old or New Testament -- disapproves of the death penalty, which is why the bishops do not cite one. The Sixth Commandment (in Catholic reckoning, the Fifth) is clearly no bar to capital punishment. The penalty for those who violate "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) is made explicit just a few lines later: "Whoever strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:12). The text goes on to specify that this applies only to deliberate murder, not unintentional killing. Accidents are not capital crimes. But for a willful killer, there can be no sanctuary: "Take him even from My altar and put him to death" (Exodus 21:14).

Similar declarations appear in all five books of Moses, nowhere more dramatically or universally than in Genesis. Speaking to Noah after the Flood, God enjoins him -- and through him, all of human society -- to affirm the sanctity of human life by making murderers pay the ultimate price for their crime. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has man been made" (Genesis 9:6). *By man shall his blood be shed.* Scripture could hardly be more explicit, yet the bishops make no mention of Genesis 9:6. They deride the idea that we can "teach that killing is wrong by killing those who kill."

Of course, American law is not governed by biblical quotations. But our legal system is deeply influenced by Judeo-Christian morality -- the same moral framework to which the bishops' statement appeals. And Judeo-Christian teaching has always been clear: When murderers keep their lives, human blood is cheapened. That is why reverence for life and capital punishment belong to the same ethical tradition - Jeff Jacoby, *townhall.com*, 12/12/05

## MOURNING IN WEST VIRGINIA

"It's a miracle," said Loretta Ables, who said her fiance, Fred Ware, was among the survivors. "Everyone was telling us they were probably dead." Sadly, they were. After a night that saw elation turn to sorrow, we now know that only one miner survived the horrible accident in the West Virginia coal mine.

News that 12 of the 13 trapped West Virginia coal miners had been rescued reverberated around the nation Wednesday morning. The rejoicing was mixed with the grief and sorrow experienced by those who knew and loved the miner whose body was found earlier on Tuesday. Nevertheless, the fact that 12 had been rescued was big news -- and a big surprise after deadly levels of carbon monoxide were detected in the damaged area of the mine. Sadly, it now appears that the report of 12 survivors was wrong. . . horribly wrong.

This tragedy -- and the relief experienced in this rescue -- should remind those of us who work in relative safety that our lifestyles depend upon millions of workers in coal mines, steel mills, and other places who face very real and present dangers.

Those of us described by the late Peter Drucker as "knowledge workers" and by former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich as "symbolic analysts" should take this opportunity to pay humble respect to those who, for example, dig coal deep in the earth in order that we might have heat and electricity.

*When the whistle blows each morning, And I walk down in that cold, dark mine; I say a prayer to my dear Savior, Please let me see the sunshine one more time.*

*When oh when will it be over, When will I lay these burdens down? And when I die, dear Lord in heaven, Please take my soul from 'neath that cold dark ground. - Dwight Yoakam, Miner's Prayer, 1990 - AlbertMohler.com, 1/5/06*

## BIBLICAL LITERACY IS DYING

"On the whole, and outside committed Christian groups, biblical literacy is a thing of the past," says the author of a major work on the history of the English Bible. "That long moment of Christian civilization is over." Adam Nicolson suggests that the change is an unfortunate one, that biblical language, specifically that of the King James translation of the Bible, has made English-speaking Western culture richer. But, he says, the tides of change have swept Britney Spears into the place of Bethel, Madonna into the place of the Madonna. (*Wall Street Journal's Opinion Journal*, 9/3/05) - *What In The World*, Vol. 39, #9

## WHAT THE CONSTITUTION IS AND ISN'T

It would be a hopeful sign if the Senate could get away from its obsession with abortion on demand and consider, during its Supreme Court confirmation hearings, what the Constitution is and what it isn't.

Some people seem to be under the erroneous belief that the Constitution grants us our rights. It does no such thing. To understand the Constitution, you have to remember the Declaration of Independence, which preceded it by several years. It is the Declaration that contains the philosophy of the American Revolution. The Constitution merely implements that philosophy.

The philosophy of the American Revolution contains three basic premises. *One* is that rights come from God and are unalienable. *Two* is that men create governments to protect those rights. *Three* is that when government fails to protect those rights and becomes abusive of those rights, men have a right and even a duty to overthrow that government and create a new one.

Some Americans have so neglected their study of American history that the idea of violently overthrowing a government strikes them as well, communist or some such. Of course, if the Founding Fathers had not violently overthrown the colonial government of Great Britain in North America, we would not be an independent nation.

If you read the Constitution with those three premises in mind (and both documents were written to be read by ordinary folks, not legal scholars), it makes perfect sense. The main part of the Constitution simply establishes the framework for the federal government and its three parts, defines their respective duties and establishes what the federal government can do and what the states can do. None of that has anything at all to do with individual rights or with social issues.

The Bill of Rights, which is a set of amendments added after ratification to reassure opponents of the Constitution that the new government would not usurp their rights, simply forbids the new federal government from abusing or abridging already-existing rights. The right to free speech and all the others existed prior to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The language of the First Amendment tells what the intent was: "Congress shall pass no law." Only the new federal

government had a Congress.

The Second Amendment does not grant people the right to keep and bear arms. They already had and continue to have that right. It simply says the already-existing right cannot be abridged. You can't abridge something that doesn't exist. Remember, too, that the same people involved in the Constitution were involved in the Revolution. Obviously, if you believe people have a right to overthrow a government, then no government must be allowed to disarm them.

It is also good to keep in mind that the Constitution is a textual document, not a "living document." That was a false metaphor intended to provide cover for judges to legislate and amend by interpretation so that the Constitution would mean whatever they said it meant. Not so. It means what it says. It cannot be amended by interpretation or by Congress ignoring it, though modern politicians have committed both sins.

The Constitution is a written contract between the sovereign people and their government. It was ratified by the people, and only the people can change it through the amendment process. Every single American, liberal or conservative, should be fiercely adamant on that point. Otherwise, we have a nation of men, not of laws.

Finally, keep in mind that the Constitution was never intended to deal with moral and philosophical issues, such as abortion. The Founding Fathers properly left those to elected legislatures. That's why *Roe v. Wade* is a profoundly flawed decision. The court usurped the powers of the 50 state legislatures and, by interpretation, created a right to privacy that the words of the Constitution do not support.

It is said that when the Constitutional Convention ended, a lady asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government they had given the people. "Madam, we have given you a republic -- if you can keep it," was the reply. That is still an open question. If Americans continue to allow lawyers and academics to tell them what is so and not so, instead of thinking for themselves, then most surely we won't keep it. - Charley Reese, *Conservative Chronicle*, 9/26/05

## DOES ANYONE ACTUALLY PLAY MUSC?

Charles Rosen, an influential music critic, reviews Robert Philip's new book, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* in *The New York Review of Books*.

*Before 1900 in Europe and America, it was at home that music was most often experienced, by family members who played some instrument or sang, and by, willingly or unwillingly, the rest of the family and friends. (In Western society among the lower middle class and upward, most music was made by women, who were generally expected to learn to cook, sew, and play the piano. The majority of professional musicians may have been male, like the majority of professional cooks, but most of the cooking and piano playing was the lot of women. Music, like breakfast and dinner, was part of life at home.) More exceptionally, music could be heard in some public places -- concert hall, opera house, or church. The public realm was essentially a complement to the private. It set standards and added glamour.*

*By the twenty-first century, all this has changed. Both private and public music are being displaced by recordings. Few people make music themselves at home anymore. Because of more cramped living space, it is now inconvenient to house a piano, a once indispensable piece of furniture for any household with even modest pretensions to culture and the instrument that for more than a century was the mainstay of classical music. Outside the big cities, live public music is disappearing as well. Most of the smaller towns that used to have a classical concert series have lost that, and if they are too insignifi-*

*cant to sponsor a popular rock group event, their public music must be confined to clubs. Even live symphony and opera broadcasts have been largely eliminated. At home today we play records. Classical and pop radio stations play records. And often ballet companies and theatrical productions play records in place of hiring musicians.*

It's not just ballet companies using canned music. Many churches routinely use soundtracks and recorded music. I know of one church that has a "hymn machine" that provides an instrumental accompaniment at the touch of a button. How long will it be before the machine does the singing as well?

The culture of recorded music has had at least two effects on many churches. First, organized church music programs are in decline in many congregations, since actual instruments and musical skills are considered unnecessary. Just order a recording and put it in the machine. Second, the acoustical experience of recorded music has altered the expectations held by many in the congregation. This generation expects musical perfection, acoustical quality, and overwhelming volume in every musical experience. After all, they are accustomed to being an audience of one -- with the iPod piped into the ears or the car stereo pumping out the music of choice. They expect the same experience of music wherever they are, the church included.

An even greater problem is the effect of all this on congregational singing. Church members, especially the young (and especially young males), have so little experience singing or participating in the production of music in any form that they know only how to listen, not to sing. In one sense, churches that buy into the culture of canned music are setting themselves up for silence in the future. Who will be left to sing? - AlbertMohler.com, 12/2/05

*(I am glad to say that Bible Baptist Church has several rows of mostly young people playing musical instruments in our services, plus an organ and two pianos. The music is wonderful to hear and sing, and glorifies the Lord. - N.P.)*

## FUNDAMENTALISM VS. EVANGELICALISM

Mike Harding (2/2 *FrontLine*-adapted) has an incisive review of David Wells' *No Place for Truth*. Wells does not identify with Fundamentalists, but he admires their spirit to remain a counterculture. "The great sin in Fundamentalism," says Wells, "is to compromise; the great sin in Evangelicalism is to be narrow." Naive voices calling for a "kinder, gentler" Fundamentalism will not carry the day in the hour of battle. Lacking is the militancy necessary to promote truth, expose error, and separate from those promoting error. "We must militantly oppose the New Evangelicalism defined as a conciliatory movement antagonistic to historic, Biblical Fundamentalism accommodating to Neo-Orthodoxy, opposed to Biblical separation, and cooperative with compromise movements such as ecumenical Evangelicalism, sensual Christian music, Evangelical feminism, Charismatic theology, Christian psychology, and Willow Creek/Saddleback pragmatism. . ." - *Calvary Contender*, 10-11/05

## CLOSE CALL ON 'HATE CRIMES' LAWS

For pro-family groups that try to keep tabs on what homosexual activists are up to, it was a close call.

In what was called a "historic vote" in September, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill containing a provision which added "sexual orientation" to federal hate crimes laws.

While the Senate has voted in favor of a federal hate crimes statute for sexual orientation on a number of occasions, it was the first time the House had done so.

The vote took pro-family groups completely by surprise, since

they were unaware that a hate crimes bill was even being considered by House members. That's because the hate crimes provision was offered as an amendment to the Children's Safety Act - a measure that was aimed at protecting kids from sex offenders.

"No one could possibly be opposed to a bill protecting children, so naturally supporters of the homosexual agenda in Congress stuffed the hate crimes amendment into the Children's Safety Act," said AFA Chairman Don Wildmon. "This was cynical power politics at its worst."

The measure - with the hate crimes amendment - passed in the House 223 to 199, with 30 Republicans, 192 Democrats and 1 Independent voting in favor.

Fortunately, the bill wound up in a House-Senate conference committee to work out differences in the two versions of the measure, and pro-family groups were able to ramp up the pressure. The bill died in committee.

But the close call alerted pro-family groups to a nasty little secret: Pressure is growing on members of Congress to add sexual orientation to federal hate crimes laws. "If people don't get involved and contact their representatives in Washington," Wildmon said, "we're all going to wake up and find that a new - and potentially dangerous - hate crimes statute is in effect."

Wildmon said such a hate crimes law would eventually come into conflict with the freedom of Christian ministers to preach the truth about homosexuality.

"People should not be fooled. Expanding federal hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation is not only an unnecessary expansion of federal authority, it will one day be used to suppress the Gos-

pel," he said. "The homosexual movement is pushing for a showdown with the church in this country.

"The Senate will probably deal with this issue next year. We need to let our senators know where we stand and where we expect them to stand on this crucial issue." - *AFA Journal*, 1/06

## CATHOLIC CHURCH QUESTIONS THE BIBLE

"The Catholic bishops of England, Wales and Scotland are warning their five million worshippers, as well as any others drawn to the study of scripture, and they should not expect 'total accuracy' from the Bible. In their book, *The Gift of Scripture*, they state that no one should expect to find scientific and historic accuracy. Apparently, these leaders of Romanism take aim at the Books of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The first 11 chapters of Genesis, in which two different and at times conflicting stories of creation are told, are among those that this country's Catholic bishops insist cannot be "historical." At most, they say, they may contain "historical traces." These Romanists also take issue with the prophecies of the last Book of the Bible. Specifically, "they refute the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation, the last book of the Christian Bible, in which the writer describes the work of the risen Jesus, the death of the Beast and the wedding feast of Christ the Lamb."

As one atheist critic put it, "Having been obliged at last to make these concessions, I wonder how much longer it will take for the virgin birth, the divinity of Christ and the resurrection also to be conceded as symbolic." - *FrontLine*, 11-12/05



Christian  
View of the News

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