

Christian View of the News



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THE LONG WAR

At last the Pentagon has produced a name for the war we are in against jihadist terror.

Within the past century, the West has fought two massive hot wars (World Wars I and II), with intense yet confined flare-ups in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. In the World Wars, Allied forces destroyed imperialist nation-state fascism.

Thereafter, perhaps marked at the outset by Winston Churchill's 1946 "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Mo., the West entered the Cold War against a terror-driven communism empowered internationally by nuclear weapons. It featured an arms race, more flare-ups (in, e.g., the European satellites and "liberation" wars across the planet), as well as gulags, starvation, slavery, torture and Big Brother oppression killing 100 million.

The Soviet form imploded in the late 1980s, leaving here and there such lingering examples as Cuba and China - with tin-pot mimics and malign hangers-on from Burma to Venezuela.

As Lincoln reminded famously at Gettysburg ("we are engaged in a great Civil War"), so now we are engaged in new hostilities without foreseeable end.

To describe the developing conflict, the Pentagon has begun employing the phrase "**The Long War.**"

At least one earlier war - a 15-year struggle in Shakespeare's time between the European Hapsburgs and the diminishing Near Eastern Ottomans - carries the historic appellation today. Yet the Pentagon's choice is apt for a war that began perhaps with the assassination of Robert Kennedy by Sirhan Sirhan, saw the shooting of Pope John Paul II by the recently released Mehmet Ali Agca, featured a multiplicity of hijackings, murders, bombings and suicide attacks - and on 9/11, blossomed into brilliant flower. Not only has the Pentagon given the war a name; the Pentagon also is greatly altering the military to fight it - as can be seen clearly in (1) the latest quadrennial review of the nation's fighting forces and (2) the Bush administration's defense budget for fiscal 2007. . . .

The Pentagon is requesting \$439 billion for fiscal 2007, or almost 7 percent more than the \$411 billion authorized in fiscal 2006. Seems like a lot, and it is - about equal to the combined defense expenditures of the next 16 high-spending countries. Yet it is less than proposed next year for Medicare/Medicaid (\$592 billion) and Social Security (\$581 billion) - and hardly more than a third of the anticipated combined expenditures for both. (Something needs to be done about these. If nothing else, drop the ill-advised and ill-conceived Medicare drug supplement. - N.P.)

In the 1960s, Robert Strausz-Hupe wrote a seminal study of the war against communism: he titled it "Protracted Conflict." That one has ended; we won. Comes now "**The Long War**" against an enemy hateful of nearly everything Western, Christian, and non-Islamist - in-

cluding us. It is an enemy without borders, fanatical, vicious and willing to die.

The Pentagon's strategic goals: homeland defense, combating terrorism abroad, halting the spread of nuclear and biochemical weapons, and positively influencing a Chinese dragon on steroids. The budget will furnish the manpower and technology to carry out those strategies if Americans, as a people, do not falter.

The essential question confronting America and the West is not dollars or technology or manpower. It is will, resolve. We must recognize that we are at war - in **The Long War** - and take the long view, the persistent view, to win it. On persistence, Calvin Coolidge may have uttered the definitive statement:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent cannot: Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius cannot: Unrewarded genius is almost a cliché. Education cannot: The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The phrase "press on" has solved, and always will solve, the problems of the human race.

Press on we must. (**The Long War** may ultimately become the Last War, Armageddon. - N.P.) - Ross McKenzie, *townhall.com*, 3/2/06

THE RECOVERY OF AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

Where shall we turn for instruction on how we ought to worship? There is only one place we can turn, and that is to the Word of God. The norm of our worship must be the Word of God--this Word that He has spoken. As we turn to this Word, we do see a pattern of worship, a pattern that is replicated throughout the fabric of Scripture from beginning to the end. . . . Scripture sets the terms, and in Isaiah 6:1-8 we see a picture of authentic worship. In this well-known "call" passage of Isaiah, the prophet experienced a theophany; a vision of the true and living God. Out of this encounter, Isaiah received his call as a prophet. Isaiah recounts that it was in the year of King Uzziah's death that he saw the Lord sitting on a throne lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

What does it mean that God sat on a throne? Well, clearly it is a symbol of kingship and sovereignty. The throne indicates that the one who sits upon it is both king and judge. It represents both power and righteousness.

But there is more

What's Inside . . .
Supporting our Enemies
Busting the Budget
Straightening out Iraq
No Fault Divorce
Fundamentalism
Is Wal-Mart a Problem?
Dealing with Iran

to this high and exalted Lord who revealed himself to Isaiah. The one whose train filled the temple with His glory is not alone. Isaiah is not alone. There are beings here with him. Verse two tells us that "seraphim stood above him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew."

These seraphim (literally, "burning ones") had six wings, and these six wings convey a great deal of symbolism. "With two he covered his face." That must certainly indicate **humility**. They dared not look at the holiness of God. "And with two he covered his feet." Surely this represents **purity**. "And with two he flew." But these winged creatures are not merely flying. "And one called out to another and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of **His glory**."

We know the words, "Holy, Holy, Holy" as the "trisagion." In the Hebrew language there is no adequate comparative or superlative form, so the pattern of repetition is used in order to make a point. We see this thrice-repeated pattern again in Revelation 4:8-11; "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within, and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." . . .

Roger Scruton, a well-known British philosopher, has suggested that worship is the most important indicator of what persons or groups really believe about God. These are his words: "God is defined in the act of worship far more precisely than he is defined by any theology." What Scruton is saying is, in essence: "If you want to know what a people really believe about God, don't spend time reading their theologians, watch them worship. Listen to what they sing. Listen to what they say. Listen to how they pray. (Watch them as they listen to the proclamation of the Word of their God and how they practice what is preached. - N.P.) Then you will know what they believe about this God whom they worship."

My haunting thought concerning much evangelical worship is that the God of the Bible would never be known by watching us worship. Instead what we see in so many churches is "McWorship" of a "McDeity." But what kind of God is that superficial, that weightless, and that insignificant? Would an observer of our worship have any idea of the God of the Bible from our worship? I wonder at times if this is an accidental development, or if it is an intentional evasion.

George Hunter III suggests that a thriving church must practice "celebrative worship." He offers two reasons: "1) To provide a celebration to which pre-Christians can relate and find meaning. 2) To remove the cringe factor by providing a service our people would love to invite their friends to, rather than a service they would dread inviting their friends to." Here is a fascinating reversal. The purpose of celebrative worship, first, is to provide "a celebration to which pre-Christians can relate." But, second, he suggests removing anything he identifies as "the cringe factor" by providing a service to which our people would love to invite their friends and not one that they would dread to invite their friends to attend. But, as we read the Scripture, it is clear that there is a great deal of the *cringe factor* in there. In fact, if you are going to remove the cringe factor from Scripture, then you are going to end up with a very thin book.

Hebrews 10:31 reveals, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I wonder if there is anything that could even be remotely suggested as a terrifying reality as we present the God we claim to worship in what we do and what we say. Just look at the decline in our hymnody.

Scripture tells us that we should speak "to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19). But how are our

hymns to be measured? We must measure them by their content, by the God they reveal, and here we see a decline in evangelical hymnody. We see a surrender of conviction and accommodation to the culture. We see nothing less than a "dumbing down" of its contents. We have gone from "Holy, Holy, Holy" to "God the Swell Fellow."

In her book, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, Marva Dawn has suggested that so much of contemporary music is an evacuation of Christian conviction. It is not just a matter of taste and style, it is not just the abandonment of meter and form and hymnody and structure--it is the abandonment of content. We must avoid such an abandonment. But we must also be clear that not all that goes under the label of "praise and worship music" is an abandonment of doctrinal truth. Much of it is richly biblical. Much of it is taken directly out of the Psalter and other biblical passages. But the salient question is "By what standard are we to judge worship?" Is it simply the taste or style of the congregation's choosing? So much of what passes for music, for praise, in our congregations comes down to endless repetition of choruses which, as one critic has suggested, comes down to this: "one word, two notes, and three hours." We have all been there. (Singing off the wall - N.P.)

What is the result of this accommodated Christianity? I quote Tozer again: We have simplified until Christianity amounts to this: God is love; Jesus died for you; believe, accept, be jolly, have fun and tell others. And away we go--that is the Christianity of our day. I would not give a plug nickel for the whole business of it. Once in a while God has a poor bleeding sheep that manages to live on that kind of thing and we wonder how.

True worship begins with a vision of the God of the Bible--the true and living God. - AlbertMohler.com, 2/8/06

FUELING OUR ENEMIES' ENGINES

In his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush aptly described America's insatiable appetite for oil as an "addiction." My old Webster's Dictionary defines the word as an "obsessive dependence" and offers as examples: "drugs, alcohol and gambling." Oil isn't mentioned -- but mine is an early 1970's edition -- printed before the 1973 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries oil-embargo, Jimmy Carter, and tax deductions for installing roof-top solar panels. Neither Webster nor Mr. Bush point out that in order to "feed their habit," addicts must pay out mountains of cold hard cash to very unsavory characters who are often as deadly as the addiction itself. That's always been the case with heroin or crack and today it's increasingly true of petroleum.

The cold, hard cash outlay has become astronomical. Last week, the government announced that the U.S. trade deficit widened to a record \$726 billion in 2005 -- more than \$251 billion of that in oil imports. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the cost of petroleum imports climbed 39 percent -- about the same rise we experienced in 2004.

But it's not just a costly product -- demand has surged as well. In 1973, the United States imported 28 percent of its oil. A decade later that figure had jumped to 35 percent, and by 1993 we were bringing in 44 percent. Today, we import more than 58 percent of the oil we use. If demand continues to grow at current rates -- and no significant domestic alternatives are found or developed -- the United States will have to import an estimated 70 percent of its oil by 2025. And that is a national-security nightmare -- for just as drug cartels use "coke cash" to kill, many of the recipients of our petro-dollars have taken aim at the heart of America.

With the exception of Canada and Mexico, nearly all of the "oil

exporters" have either unstable regimes, dictatorships, terror connections or governments that are outright hostile toward the United States. Some, like Venezuela and Iran, could fit in the category: "all of the above." Despite promises of "transparency" in Mid-East financial flows since Sept. 11, there is still no way to track how much oil money is being sent to Hamas, Hizbollah or al-Qaeda. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, awash in U.S. petro-dollars, is now able to fund a "Bolivarian Army" and spread Marxist ideology. The Iranians are employing their windfall "oil-Euros" to build nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. Because we have developed so few alternatives to imported fuel, every time we flip on the lights, put gas in our tanks or touch a thermostat -- we're helping those who hate us.

Last August, when President Bush signed the Energy Policy Act, he said the goal was "strengthening America's electrical infrastructure, reducing the country's dependence on foreign sources of energy, increasing conservation and expanding the use of clean renewable energy." And yet, despite his observation that, "when you're dependent upon natural gas and/or hydrocarbons to fuel your economy and that supply gets disrupted, we need alternative sources of energy," progress has been painfully slow in addressing what should be seen as a vital national-security concern.

Though federal funds have been made available for fuel-cell technology and Ethanol production research and development, little else is happening to reduce our dependence on foreign fuel. Exploration for new domestic sources of oil and gas are still met with lawsuits from radical environmental groups. No new refineries have been built in the United States for three decades. There are still no new orders for U.S. nuclear power plants -- which produce zero harmful emissions -- nor have there been since 1978. The last nuclear plant to go online, Watts Bar I, in Tennessee, was completed in 1997.

France, China, Japan and Russia have no such reservations and continue building nuclear power plants to produce electricity. To our south, Brazil, a nation of 186 million and a land mass slightly less than the United States, already has two nuclear plants producing 4 percent of its energy needs, and a third plant is under construction.

U.S. politicians and media elites preoccupied with Vice President Cheney's hunting skills may have failed to notice the announcement last week that Brazil will soon bring online the capability of producing enough enriched uranium to meet all of their own energy needs -- and to export the material as well. Next-door neighbor Hugo Chavez, sporting his trademark red beret, applauded the announcement, noting that the nuclear fuel capability creates "further independence from the imperialists" -- meaning, of course, the United States. Last month he advocated construction of a pipeline system to carry Venezuelan and Bolivian natural gas -- not to the United States -- but to the rest of the region.

The full measure of our strategic vulnerability isn't just the price at the pump -- sure to go up in the spring. We must invest not only in new technologies to power our vehicles -- but new exploration for, and exploitation of, hydrocarbon fuels as well. Investment needs to be encouraged in economical processes for cleaning coal, our most abundant fossil fuel. And approval for new nuclear power plants is an absolute necessity. All of this needs to be part of a national energy independence policy -- one that not only protects our environment -- but stops us from fueling our enemies' engines. - Oliver North, *th.com*, 2/17/06

RESURRECTING THE LINE-ITEM VETO

When his personal approval ratings were far higher than they are now, President Bush might have succeeded in reducing the size and cost of government. Instead, he chose "compassionate conserva-

tism" as his doctrine and big-government conservatism (which is a contradiction) as his calling.

Now the president, who has not vetoed a single bill in more than five years in office, wants Congress to give him line-item veto power. Lawmakers are unlikely to do so for the same reason a drunk might question the commitment of Alcoholics Anonymous if that organization were handing out free sample of liquor at its sobriety meetings.

"Too many bills passed by Congress include unnecessary spending," said the president in his message to Congress that accompanied his line-item veto request. But that unnecessary spending didn't begin this year. It's been going on for a long time. Even Bill Clinton vetoed 82 spending items, saving \$2 billion over five years before an earlier line-item veto law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The Bush administration says the proposed new bill addresses the objections the court had in the previous measure.

The president might have more credibility on this if he had tried to stop unnecessary spending. Even if Congress had overridden his vetoes, he could still claim it as an issue. He can't now.

According to Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW), "The number of pork-barrel projects in the federal budget has skyrocketed from 1,439 in fiscal 1995 to 13,997 in fiscal 2005, an increase of 873 percent. Among the \$27.3 billion of pork identified in the 2005 Congressional Pig Book were \$6.3 million for wood utilization research and \$2 million to buy back the USS Sequoia Presidential Yacht." If the president did not find this sort of outrageous misspending unnecessary, why should anyone believe he will veto other pork projects, known as earmarks, contained in future legislation?

There are some with more credibility on this issue than President Bush. They include Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), who is chairman of the House Republican Study Committee, and Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas), who chairs the RSC's Budget and Spending Taskforce. They announced on Wednesday their intention to introduce a balanced budget consistent with promises made in the 1994 Contract with America, which helped Republicans gain a House majority for the first time in four decades. (*Congressman Mike Pence is a genuine Christian who knows and loves the Lord, serves his Indiana constituents faithfully, keeps his family with him in Washington to prevent falling to the moral and ethical temptations that destroy so many in D.C. He spends time every day in the Word and prayer, seeking God's will, guidance and protection. He is a lot like President Bush, but more spiritually mature. Pray for those in our government like these who are determined to do right. - N.P.*)

The conservatives' budget would go far beyond anything President Bush intends. They estimate it would save \$350 billion on Medicare, Medicaid and other skyrocketing social programs. Another \$300 billion in savings would come from a complete restructuring of the departments of Education, Commerce and Energy. The ultimate restructuring would be to get rid of all three of them, especially Education and Energy, but since that is unlikely to happen, a restructuring that reduces unnecessary personnel and eliminates waste, fraud and abuse would at least show that Republicans are returning to their ideological roots of smaller government, less spending and lower taxes.

Pence says, "With record deficits and debt, the time has come to level with the American people; we are not living within our means." The time hasn't just come. It has expired. If Republicans don't stop the unnecessary spending now, when they control all three branches of government, how will they contrast themselves from Democrats and appeal to voters to elect Republicans instead of members of the other party?

Proof that there is eternal life is a government program. Once

born, a government program is nearly impossible to kill. That's mostly because politicians are spending our money and not their own. Competing constituencies endlessly argue for increasingly larger shares of the pot when they should be told in many more instances to get their own pot and fill it with the results of their initiative and labor.

There is another problem. Too many people want too much from government and are unwilling to do more for themselves. Politicians from both parties know this. Unless people demand less, they will get more spending and eventually higher taxes, or greater debt to foreign **powers to pay for it all.** - **Cal Thomas**, *ownhall.com*, 3/9/06

REAL CHALLENGE FROM RADICAL ISLAM

What is the true nature of the threat civilization now faces from radical Islam? Foreign policy analyst Tony Corn bravely addresses that question in the current issue of *Policy Review*:

It is first and foremost an insurgency within Islam, which began in earnest in 1979, and for which the West remained at least until 2001, a secondary theater of operations. From 1979 on, the revolution in Iran, the invasion of Afghanistan, the re-Islamization from above in Pakistan, the surge of Saudi activism in the Broader Middle East and the concurrent marginalization of Egypt within the Arab world (following the Camp David accords) combined to give birth to a qualitative and quantitative change of paradigm whereby pan-Arabism -- the main movement in the Middle East since 1945 -- was supplanted by pan-Islamism. Thus: The West is at war with a new totalitarianism for which terrorism is one technique or tactic among many.

His most frightening assessment: *The challenge for the West can hardly be overestimated: Even if only 1 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims were to end up being seduced by the global jihad, the West and moderate Muslim regimes would still have to deal with some 12 million jihadists spread across more than 60 countries. And if only 1 percent of these 12 million were to opt for "martyrdom operations," the West would still have to deal, for a generation at least, with some 120,000 suicide bombers. (They should be identified as "homicide bombers." Their suicide is just collateral damage. - N.P.) - Albert Mohler.com, 2/9/06*

I only occasionally agree with the liberal columnist Tom Friedman, but in this case he may be on to something:

LET CHENEY STRAIGHTEN OUT IRAQ

I have a job for Dick Cheney. No, no, really. This is not another hunting joke. It's serious: Iraq is drifting aimlessly, if not toward civil war then toward a violent political stalemate. If Iraqis can't produce a minimally effective national unity government now, America can look forward to baby-sitting this violent stalemate far into the future.

If we want to avoid that, it's time for some dramatic new thinking and acting. To put it in a nutshell: It is not time for the United States to leave Iraq, but it is time for the United States to start threatening to leave Iraq.

When Iraq was just violent, but the political situation seemed to be stumbling forward, it was possible to believe that a decent outcome could still be achieved. But when Iraq is increasingly violent, with ethnic and religious rivals murdering one another and the politicians squabbling endlessly, there is no reason for optimism.

U.S. forces in Iraq can't be held hostage by the notion that Iraqis may have a civil war if we leave. They are already having a little civil war, and if they are determined to have a big civil war, I prefer that they have it without us. But we need to make one last big push to find

an alternative. . . .

There is no military solution. There is only a political solution, and it will require some big-time diplomacy.

We need to bring together all the newly elected Iraqi leaders for a national reconciliation conference -- outside Baghdad. We should lock them in a room and not let them out until they either produce a national unity government, so Americans will want to stay in Iraq, or fail to produce that government, which would signal that it's time to warm up the bus.

Those choices need to be put to the Iraqis in the most frank, tough-minded way by the most nasty, brutish and short-tempered senior official we've got -- and that is Dick "Darth Vader" Cheney.

Richard Holbrooke masterfully played this role in bringing an end to the Bosnian civil war at the Dayton peace conference, and maybe Cheney could do the same for Iraq, with the help of our very skilled ambassador in Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad. We need an Iraqi Dayton - now. And we need a really bad dude to make it work.

With his low growl, Cheney could tell **the sunnis**: "Look, you guys don't want to compromise, fine. Then we'll just leave you to the tender mercies of the Shiites, who vastly outnumber you."

To the Shiites: "You want to rule Iraq and control the oil without real regard to the Sunnis? Well, you're going to rule over nothing but a boiling pot, unless you compromise."

And **to the Kurds** he could say: Stick with it. If Iraq falls apart, we will make sure you're taken care of. We won't ignore the fact that you've built an impressively decent, democratizing society in your region."

After getting their attention, Cheney could start cracking heads on the key issues:

First, the Shiite alliance has to come up with a new candidate for prime minister, acceptable to all parties.

Second, the constitution has to be revised so the Sunnis do not feel that the Kurds and Shites are breaking off their own chunks of Iraq, along with their oil resources.

Third, the Sunnis need a credible plan for ending their insurgency.

Fourth, the parties have to agree on an inner cabinet, with ministers from each community, which will make all key decisions in coordination with the new prime minister.

Fifth, this inner cabinet has to draw up a plan for governing Iraq from the center -- and not from any one faction.

Cheney could conclude: "These are the minimum requirements for a decent government in Iraq. If Iraqis step up, Americans will want to stick it out. If Iraqis won't step up, Americans will want to step out. The American people are ready to midwife your democracy, but not to baby-sit your civil war."

Cheney, this is your Kodak moment. Iraqis are notoriously difficult and fractious. You've got the time and the mean streak to deal with them. They'll get serious if you're in the room. But just in case, bring along your shotgun. This is a good job for someone with bad aim. - Thomas Friedman, *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, 3/12/06

NEW YORK CALLS FOR NO-FAULT DIVORCE

An official New York State panel is calling for the state to adopt "no-fault" divorce laws similar to those found in many other states. According to *The New York Times*:

By not allowing couples to end their marriages by mutual consent, New York has kept some of the strictest barriers to divorce in the nation. Currently, one party in the divorce must allege cruel and inhuman treatment, adultery, or abandonment -- literal or sexual -- for

a year. That rule has often resulted in costly legal proceedings and bitter custody fights in cases where both sides want a divorce.

The Matrimonial Commission, which was appointed by the state's chief judge in 2004 and has taken testimony around the state, called for a range of changes to bring New York's matrimonial laws more in line with practices around the United States. In addition to allowing no-fault divorces, the panel called for an emphasis on mediation and procedures to move cases more swiftly through the system.

No-fault divorce has been a disaster for millions of couples and families. Note carefully the way the issue is framed within the *Times*. The need for no-fault divorce is explained by pointing to acrimony between divorcing spouses and frustration when "both sides want a divorce."

In the first place, obstacles to divorce were put into place precisely to slow down the process in hopes of saving some marriages from divorce. No-fault divorce just makes divorce available, virtually on demand. And, we must add, on demand even by just one spouse. Millions of men and women have found themselves divorced simply because their spouse decided it would be so -- end of story. That, along with millions of broken homes, is the true legacy of no-fault divorce.

NO-FAULT DIVORCE UNDERMINES SOCIETY

America's experiment with no-fault divorce -- an experiment that could well mean the virtual abolition of marriage as an institution -- has produced a massive toll of cultural destruction and personal pain. Millions of marriages have been terminated, homes have been broken, and lives have been destroyed in the wake of easy divorce.

Jennifer Roback Morse, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, has been tracing the effects of no-fault divorce throughout the culture. In "Why Unilateral Divorce Has No Place in a Free Society," she argues that the nation's high divorce rate is the direct cause or a major contributor to a vast array of social problems. Furthermore, she argues that "divorce is in the background of the same-sex marriage debate because same-sex marriage is the end of the trend that no-fault divorce began." As she makes clear, "The legal innovation of unilateral divorce began to reduce marriage to nothing but a temporary association of individuals. If marriage is merely a free association of individuals, there is no principled reason to exclude same-sex couples, or even larger groupings of sexual partners. The permanence of marriage was one of the key features that distinguished it from an ordinary contract."

Her redefinition of no-fault divorce as "unilateral divorce" is a significant semantic game. The very fact that easy divorce, facilitated by law and virtually uncontested in court, was labeled "no-fault" in the first place was a significant concession to the divorce culture. The revolution in America's divorce laws has produced a situation in which one spouse may demand and cause the breakup of the marriage, even if the other spouse is committed to maintaining the relationship. . . .

She perceptively argues that many Americans want minimal government and absolute moral freedom. As she describes this pattern, many citizens want a society that is fiscally conservative and lifestyle liberal. "It sounds good on paper," she argues, "but in practice it simply is not possible."

All this is part and parcel of the entitlement society -- a cultural assumption that all privileges should be equally accessible to all citizens (even if the government must mandate this access). As Morse conventionally argues, sexual activity is now considered such an entitlement. Marriage has simply been sidelined, "no longer the only so-

cially acceptable outlet for sexual activity or for the rearing of children." Instead, "It is now considered an unacceptable infringement on the modern person's liberty to insist that the necessary context of sexual activity is marriage, with rights and responsibilities, both implicit and explicit. It is equally unacceptable to argue that having children outside of marriage is irresponsible. Women are entitled to have as many children as they choose in any context they choose. In this sense, children have become a kind of consumer good."

In the case of our modern litigious culture, all of this is reduced to matters handled by the courts. Yet the courts are stunningly inefficient and ineffective in compelling adults to behave in ways that will lead to the protection, nurture, discipline, and care of children. . . .

Where this informal and very natural pattern of home life is not preserved, the state must enter the picture. As always, the state enters clumsily and at great cost. Spending just a couple of hours observing a divorce court or custody hearing will be sufficient to prove the point -- government simply cannot replace what the breakup of marriage destroys.

In another important section of her essay, Morse reveals that the **majority of divorces are initiated by women** -- a fact not generally known throughout the culture. The current shape of laws and the ideological bias of feminism points women toward divorce. Morse argues that the sole custody laws, with a preference toward women, "is correlated with an increased probability of women initiating the divorce." This is because the woman "can have the enjoyment of her children, and possibly some financial support from the father, while reducing the difficulty of negotiating with their father over the children's care." As she argues bluntly, women would be far less likely to initiate divorce if they lacked confidence that they would be given the custody of the couple's children. . . .

"Women need to stop seeing marriage as dispensable and men as disposable," she asserts. Likewise, men must be led to see marriage as a life-long commitment of their highest priority.

Rebuilding a culture of marriage is no small task -- especially as the cultural elites promote any number of "alternatives" to civilization's most central institution. Nevertheless, it is a challenge we must accept, starting with our own homes, our own marriages, and our own churches. Christians understand that marriage is the unique arena of God's glory in which the Creator's love for His creatures is shown in the right ordering of the man and the woman and in the establishment of the marriage bond as the locus of sexual expression and the gift of children.

PRODIGAL PARENTS -- REALITY OF DIVORCE

This week, *The Christian Century* features an interview with Elizabeth Marquardt, author of *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. Marquardt's research helps to document the fact that **there is no such thing as the "good divorce,"** as is often claimed by those who support the divorce industry.

Here is an especially poignant section of her interview.

But there are deeper issues. For example, when children of divorce hear that God is like a father or a parent because God's always there for you, they experience a disconnect. For them, parental absence is as common an experience as parental presence.

It's remarkable to talk to the children of divorce about the parable of the prodigal son, in which the father waits for his errant son to come home. They recognize the act of leaving home, but in their experience it was the parent who left, not the child. It was the parent who left the family, or who was always leaving to go to work or out on dates. If anyone was staying home waiting for someone to return, it

was the child waiting for mom and dad to come home. - The above three articles came from the Blog of *AlbertMohler.com*, 2/7,17,24/06

VATICAN'S SYMPATHETIC LOOK AT JUDAS

Some high placed Roman Catholic scholars are taking a new, more sympathetic look at Judas. Monsignor Walter Brandmuller, head of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Science, is leading a campaign "aimed at persuading believers to look kindly at a man reviled for 2,000 year" ("Judas the Misunderstood," *The Times of London*, Jan. 12, 2006). Brandmuller is supported by Vittorio Messori, a prominent Catholic writer close to both Pope Benedict XVI and the late John Paul II. Messori says there is "a Christian tradition" that "held that Judas was forgiven by Jesus and ordered to purify himself with 'spiritual exercises' in the desert." That is the same type of rock solid "Christian tradition" that says Peter sat on a throne and Mary is the Queen of Heaven! Priest Allen Morris, Christian Life and Worship secretary for the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, likes this new idea, saying, "If Christ died for all--is it possible that Judas too was redeemed through the Master he betrayed?" The Bible answer, of course, is that it is not possible. At the Last Supper, Jesus said: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). Judas did not go out into a desert to do spiritual exercises; he sorrowed but he did not repent, and he went out into the night and hung himself. The Bible says that Judas fell by transgression and went to "his own place" (Acts 1:25). Though the Bible does say that Jesus died to make it possible for all men to be saved (I John 2:2), all men are not saved. - David Cloud, *Christian News*, 2/6/06

WARREN: FUNDAMENTALISM GREAT ENEMY

Rick Warren of Purpose Driven Life fame says that Christian fundamentalism will be "one of the big enemies of the 21st century." He lumped Christian fundamentalism in with "Muslim fundamentalism" and "secular fundamentalism" ("The Purpose Driven Pastor," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 8, 2006). Thus the Christian fundamentalist who merely seeks to take God's Word seriously and to live it and to preach it faithfully before his Heavenly Master is as dangerous to this world as a Muslim terrorist or a radical atheist. Warren said that Christian fundamentalism is motivated by fear. One of the many great problems with this statement is that the Bible often speaks of fear in a positive manner. Paul was afraid that the devil would deceive the believers through false gospels, false christs, and false spirits (2 Cor. 11:1-4). We should therefore follow the apostle's example and fear spiritual deception, both for ourselves and for others. The Bible says pastors who sin should be rebuked before all, "that others may fear" (I Tim. 5:20). - David Cloud, *Christian News*, 2/6/06

OUR FUNDAMENTALIST BETTERS

It is no new insight to note that in America the evangelical church is worldly and anemic. We are so earthly minded that we are no heavenly good. The anemia comes from the worldliness. But whence comes the worldliness? Like any other sin, we have options for placing its advent. We could argue that it began with the latest fad to hit the church. Or we could go back to the beginning, to the garden. Both have their advantages. It might be more helpful, however, to see the beginning of this descent at the height of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

Fundamentalism is so named for a fundamental reason. It was a movement that concerned itself with affirming, defending, and main-

taining the fundamentals of the faith. As a movement, it affirmed the authority of the Bible. It affirmed the accounts therein of creation, of miracles, of the virgin birth, of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It affirmed the necessity of conversion through faith in the finished work of Christ. It affirmed, in short, the defining issues of historical evangelicalism. Why, then, isn't the controversy called "the evangelical-modernist" controversy? To get at that answer we must ask another. What is it that distinguishes evangelicals and fundamentalists? Suddenly our problem becomes clear. An evangelical is a fundamentalist that wants the respect of modernists, and sells his soul to get it.

That is to say, the difference between a fundamentalist and an evangelical isn't the content of their respective beliefs, but the way in which those beliefs are held. Fundamentalists, to their credit, clung to the fundamentals like a pit bull on a t-bone. There was nothing attractive or sophisticated about it, but everyone knew you'd never tear the two apart. The evangelical, on the other hand, sought to find, at least culturally, a middle ground. Yes, we believe in the authority of the Bible, but we believe it for nice, professional, academic reasons. Indeed, all that we believe we believe for nice, professional, academic reasons. What separates evangelicals from fundamentalists is that we evangelicals don't breathe fire, and we have fancy degrees hanging in our studies, instead of pictures of Billy Sunday. We evangelicals are they who cut this deal with the modernists, "**We will call you brother, if you will call us scholar.**"

Please don't misunderstand. The point isn't that the right way to believe in the fundamentals is to be stupid. Instead, the point is that the right way to believe in the fundamentals is with a holy indifference to what others think about us. Anything less leads us right where we are. That is, any movement that begins with a fear of those we are seeking to win has already been won by those that are feared. . . .

We still follow that same path today. For fear of offending the lost, we will not tell them they are lost. For fear of looking narrow and close minded, we have made peace not just with the deadly secularism or modernism, but with the doubly deadly folly of post-modernism. There the culture itself reflects our uncertainty, refusing to make affirmations, just like us. In our pride we have embraced a humility that won't stand for anything.

Our Shepherd, however, calls us to a different path. He tells us that having those outside the faith revile us for our faith is something to be sought, not something to be avoided, that those who experience the disdain of the world for His name's sake are blessed. The fundamentalists of the last century were laughed at and scorned. And for that they earned the praise of Jesus. May we find the courage not only to affirm the fundamentals, but may we be given a double portion of the spirit of the fundamentalists. They fought the good fight, while we collaborated. They kept the faith, while we merely kept our positions in our communities. May we learn to fear no man, and to fear God. For such is the beginning of wisdom. - *Dr. R. C. Sproul Jr.*, director of the Highlands Study Center and associate pastor of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church in Bristol, Tennessee. (Thanks to Pastor Jeremy Sweatt at Community Baptist in Holly Springs, GA.)

GAINING FROM WAL-MART

Is Wal-Mart a problem? The Food and Commercial Workers Union has hired Paul Blank, who was political director for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign, to lead a campaign to persuade people not to shop at Wal-Mart until Wal-Mart pays workers more. "The average associate at Wal-Mart makes \$8.23 an hour," Blank told me. "That's not a job that can support a family."

Wal-Mart says its average pay is higher than that, but Wal-Mart

workers do make a lot less money than Wal-Mart's owners.

"They have taken the values, the morals, the ethics, fairness that are the fabric of our society and put them aside and . . . put their profits before their people," said Blank.

That's foolish economics, and not very good morality. He is as wrong as the tycoon Michael Douglas played in the movie "Wall Street," who said: "It's a zero-sum game. Somebody wins. Somebody loses. Money itself isn't lost or made, it's simply transferred."

That's a myth. Businesses create wealth. Take the simplest example: I buy a quart of milk. I hand the storekeeper money, she gives me the milk. We both benefit, because she wanted the money more than the milk, and I wanted the milk more than the money. And when you have millions of successful transactions, you end up very well off -- like the owners of Wal-Mart.

Their becoming rich doesn't mean there's less for the rest of us. Sam Walton's innovations created thousands of new jobs and allowed millions of Americans to save money.

In earlier eras, John D. Rockefeller and Cornelius Vanderbilt were depicted as evil "robber barons."

"You could not find a more inaccurate term for these men than 'robber barons,'" said philosopher David Kelley. "They weren't barons. All of them started penniless. And they weren't robbers, because they didn't take it from anyone else."

Wal-Mart's critics act as if economic competition were a "zero-sum game" -- if one person gets richer, someone else must be getting poorer. If Wal-Mart's owners profit, we lose.

The reality is that Wal-Mart created wealth. It started with just one discount store. Then, Walton invented new ways to streamline the supply chain, so he was able to sell things for less and still make a profit. By keeping prices low, Wal-Mart effectively gives everyone who shops there a raise -- its own employees included.

Not all Wal-Mart workers support families. Some are retired. Others are part-timers, students or people looking for a second income.

"None of them was drafted. None of them was forced to work at Wal-Mart," said Brink Lindsey, a senior scholar at the Cato Institute. "That means that if they're working there, presumably, that was the best job they could get." . . . - John Stossel, *Newsmax*, 2/06

LEARNING FROM WAL-MART

Anyone who's ever filed a tax return or visited the Department of Motor Vehicles understands that government does two things well: spend our money and waste our time. Unfortunately, both traits were on display during the response to Hurricane Katrina.

A House select committee headed by Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., says the government displayed "fecklessness, flailing and organizational paralysis." The committee report lays out 90 flaws in the Katrina response and notes that all levels of government failed.

Oh, plenty of money was going out. Last September, the federal government was spending about \$1 billion per day -- and it generated plenty of waste. The Federal Emergency Management Agency handed thousands of checks (for \$2,000) each to charlatans.

FEMA also wasted money on housing. It spent \$236 million to rent three cruise ships for evacuees. The ships were never more than half full. And don't forget the manufactured homes, some 10,777 of which are rotting away in Arkansas because FEMA ordered more than it needed.

As Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, explained, the waste happened because the government took a "pay first, ask questions later" approach.

The federal government has promised to fix its problems. Michael Chertoff, secretary of Homeland Security, says he'll deliver "a fully integrated and unified" department before the next hurricane season. Fine. But let's remember, not all answers can be found in Washington.

It would be better to look toward **an institution that didn't fail during Katrina: Wal-Mart.**

The world's largest retailer had 171 facilities in the path of the storm. But as Jason Jackson, the company's director of business continuity, told a Senate committee, "We were able to recover and reopen 83 percent of our facilities in the Gulf area within six days."

One key reason for Wal-Mart's success, Jackson said, is "associates who are dedicated to their communities." That local connection helped it deliver goods when government failed. As Investor's Business Daily reported in September, "While local and federal groups suffered communications problems and bickered over who was in charge, Wal-Mart sprang into action."

And while Chertoff admits Katrina caught the government flat-footed, Wal-Mart is always ready. In his book "The World is Flat," New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman wrote, "The minute Wal-Mart's meteorologists tell headquarters a hurricane is bearing down on Florida, its supply chain automatically adjusts to a hurricane mix in the Florida stores." That means plenty of non-perishable food and critical items such as generators appear in stores even before disaster strikes.

Wal-Mart has plenty to teach the government. "When FEMA or another agency places a blanket order of 100 trailers of water, we often question if the person placing the order really knows what 100 trailers of merchandise looks like" Jackson testified. "Usually the answer to this is that the person making the order was given a dollar amount to spend, and they do not comprehend the size of this order or what it means."

Wal-Mart does what government intervention can't: It drives down prices and makes life better -- in New Orleans and, soon, in Chicago.

The company opened a store last month in Evergreen Park (where I was born), after the city council refused to allow it inside the city limits. Some 25,000 people applied for the store's 325 jobs, which suggests Wal-Mart is popular with employees as well as consumers.

After Katrina, even Wal-Mart's critics sang its praises. "It's hard to imagine any government program matching the efficiency of a Wal-Mart," wrote consulting firm Lynch Ryan on its Weblog, adding, "Government has a lot to learn from Wal-Mart."

Unless we change our approach -- bringing in more private, local expertise and less federal bureaucracy -- we'll be reminded of that the next time disaster strikes. - Dr. Edwin Feulner, *th.com*, 6/2/24

THE WORLD FORGED A CONSENSUS ON IRAN

The Feb. 4 resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna reporting Iran to the U.N. Security Council for further action is not just a slap on the wrist, as skeptics of the United Nations might legitimately suspect.

On the contrary, it demonstrates a remarkable consensus among nations few would consider as U.S. allies that Iran's nuclear weapons program poses a clear and present danger to the world at large. . . .

Voting with the United States were not only Russia and China, whose agreement was essential to ratcheting up the press on Iran, but Egypt and Yemen and India. Getting these five to join us and the Europeans was a major accomplishment. It has required extraordinary diplomatic efforts -- from an administration ridiculed by Democrats for its "unilateral" approach to world affairs.

Three individuals and two pieces of information have been key

to this success.

Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice. Just two days before the IAEA board met in Vienna, Miss Rice won agreement from the foreign ministers of Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany to send Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions. For her skill at muscle diplomacy, she deserves our praise.

The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton. Behind closed doors, Mr. Bolton has made it clear the Bush administration will watch and judge the U.N. Security Council performance very closely as it takes on Iran's case.

If the Council cannot rally to punish a regime that has openly called for destroying two U.N. member states (Israel and the United States), the U.N. may not be worth preserving.

The U.S. ambassador to the IAEA, Gregory Schultz. This low-key Bush appointee had dedicated his every waking moment to convince members of the IAEA board of governors of the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran, and is personally responsible for winning support from unlikely corners. He has proved to be the right man at the right time.

Two critical pieces of information also helped convince world leaders that "no reasonable doubt" could remain as to Iran's nuclear intentions.

(1) The walk-in's laptop. Around 18 months ago, an Iranian missile technician walked into a U.S. Embassy. For once, the CIA responded as spy movies would have us believe is the norm: They actually listened to him, instead of rejecting his "stories" as "fabrications" that were "unverifiable."

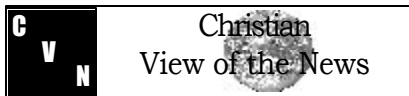
The defector's information was considered credible because it was limited and highly detailed, U.S. officials revealed. Documents on his laptop showed the Iranians were redesigning the re-entry vehicle of the Shahab-3 missile -- the one the Revolutionary Guards parade in Tehran with banners vowing it will "wipe Israel off the map" -- to carry a nuclear payload.

(2) The Khan documents. The head of the IAEA's safeguards division, Ollie Heinonen, told the IAEA board about the second smoking gun during a briefing on Feb. 2. It was a 15-page document the Iranians obtained from the nuclear black market of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan that detailed the process of "casting and machining" highly enriched uranium into "hemispherical forms." That turned the heads of all but the comatose. As Under-secretary of State Robert Joseph said two weeks ago, "We know of no application for such hemispheres other than nuclear weapons."

Mr. Heinonen detailed these and other findings in a remarkable four-page report to the IAEA board. Diplomats in Vienna called it a "bold departure" from earlier IAEA reports because it "explicitly referred twice to nuclear weapons" activity in Iran.

It has taken the world 19 years to wake up to what should have been obvious the minute Iran signed its first consulting contract with A.Q. Khan in 1987. Now the showdown over what to do about it begins.

My advice: Fasten your seat belts, because we're in for a rough ride. And don't think for a minute all the threats out of Tehran are mere bluster. - Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Washington Times Weekly*, 2/13-19/06



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