



MOTHERS' DAY

I've preached over 40 years of Mothers Day sermons. Things have changed since I started. Mothers used to be: sweet and gentle, plodders who arose before the sun, fixed breakfast, got lunches ready, kids up and prepared for school, Dad off to work, and spent the rest of the day washing, ironing, sewing, shopping, cooking, cleaning, making and repairing clothes, making beds, working in the garden, canning, baking, nursing, and tending to babies. When children came home from school she helped with homework or supervised their chores while preparing supper. When her husband came home, she served supper to him and between 5 and 10 children. After supper, she cleaned dishes and kitchen and then did more ironing, sewing, bathing children and getting them ready for bed. She was always kind, considerate, loving but firm, never complained, totally unselfish. She read the Bible or a Bible story to her children and prayed with them as she tucked them into bed. If kids got sick, she nursed them and cared for them. Doctors were only called in an emergency. She had learned how to do all these things from her mother. No classes in doing it, you watched, listened and did it. (These were mothers of the 30s and 40s.)

Today mother may still arise before the sun, fix breakfast, get her husband off, get the children ready and drop them off at school or daycare on the way to an 8-hour a day job that will take an hour to get to and an hour to get home. She may arrive home by six, having picked up the kids. She is worn out, the kids are hungry and fussy, and so is Dad. It will not take much nagging to persuade all to go out to eat, or if not, she may throw some TV dinners in the microwave. Then it's TV or recreation of some kind. Everyone is too bushed to think about the kids, homework or chores and besides, the school teacher is being paid to teach them. This is not the way it is in every home, but certainly in many. Where are Christian priorities in all this?

Mothers today are not poorer mothers. It's just that it takes more planning and mental effort to do what is important. Your mother worked harder physically than you do, but she was not under the mental and emotional pressure you are. Mothers today spend as much time in activity of some kind as their mothers did. Activities have changed and pressures are greater today. It requires more thought and organization today to get everything done that needs to be. In some respects, it was easier to be a good mother years ago. Then almost everything a mother did was part of mothering. Today, a mother may spend 10 hours doing something that has nothing to do with mothering, and then try to be a wife and mother on the side.

Mothers today deserve and need our love, prayers, sympathy and support. - The Pyle File

We need to pray for all of our mothers, the newest and the oldest. Proverbs 31 presents to us the **Ideal Mother**.

This is a prophecy of a king - taught him by his mother. She warns him about women and wine - vs. 3. Verses 4 and 5 tells the evil

of strong drink. Verse 3a warns about the strange woman - 5:3f; 6:24f; 7:3.

Beginning in verse 10, this king, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, outlines the characteristics of the ideal woman. This chapter can be applied to women of any age, in any era. These general principles can be followed by the grace and power of God. This is the sort of woman every Christian lady should strive to be. Thank God if you have or have had a mother like this. God bless all of our Mothers!

DOES MOTHERHOOD MEAN ANYTHING?

Iran scored a huge publicity coup in the capture and release of 15 British sailors and Royal Marines in recent days. Iran has played this game before, and is likely to play it again. The tactic puts the nation directly into the headlines around the world -- and that is the whole point.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad played the media like a musical instrument, greeting the captives just prior to their release. The Muslim world loved it. Tragically, the most damaging element of Ahmadinejad's media triumph was handed to him by the Royal Navy in the person of Leading Seaman Faye Turney, the only woman among the captives and the mother of a 3-year-old daughter.

Her presence among the captives taken from the British patrol vessel gave Ahmadinejad the opportunity to make this observation:

"You will know that among the detainees there is one lady who is a mother of a child. Why is it that the most difficult work like patrolling at sea should be given to a woman? Why is there no respect for motherhood? Why does the West not value its women?"

Ahmadinejad's questions still reverberate around the Muslim world. Nothing could more effectively demonstrate the immorality of Western values before Muslim eyes than this -- a mother of a little girl sent as a warrior.

As Kathleen Parker remarked in *The Washington Post*:

On any given day, one isn't likely to find common cause with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He's a dangerous, lying, Holocaust-denying, Jew-hating, cutthroat thug -- not to put too fine a point on it.

But he was dead-on when he wondered why a once-great power such as Britain sends mothers of toddlers to fight its battles.

Driven by a fanatical ideology of feminism, the West has turned its back on a re-

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ality as basic as motherhood. We have adopted a new morality that insists -- nature's obstinacy notwithstanding -- that there is no difference between men and women. This produces mothers of babies and toddlers in uniform and in the killing zones.

Kathleen Parker sees what so many others miss:

Just because we may not "feel" humiliated doesn't mean we're not. In the eyes of Iran and other Muslim nations, we're wimps. While the West puts mothers in boats with rough men, Muslim men "rescue" women and drape them in floral hijabs.

We can debate whether they're right until all our boys wear aprons, but it won't change the way we're perceived. The propaganda value Iran gained from its lone female hostage, the mother of a 3-year-old, was incalculable.

It is not fashionable these days to suggest that women don't belong in or near combat -- or that children need their mothers. Yes, they need their fathers, too, but children in their tender years are dependent on their mothers in unique ways.

There's not enough space here to go into all the ways that is true, but children (and good parents) know the difference even if some adults are too dim, brainwashed or ideologically driven to see what's obvious.

Why the West has seen it necessary to diminish motherhood so that women can pretend to be men remains a mystery to sane adults. It should be unnecessary to say that the military is not a proper vehicle for social experimentation but is a machine dedicated to fighting and, if necessary, killing.

But the military, like almost all other institutions in this culture, has indeed been turned into the vehicles for social experimentation Kathleen Parker rightly resists.

After her release, Leading Seaman Turney claimed to have embarrassed Ahmadinejad for the fact that she had not seen her daughter during 13 days of captivity. She apparently failed to recognize that it was she who brought embarrassment upon herself through that comment. How can she complain about being separated from her daughter for days when she willingly separated herself from her daughter for much longer tours at sea?

According to *The Shropshire Star* [Britain], leading Seaman Faye Turney commented about her daughter in an interview conducted just before her capture by Iranian force:

In an interview, hours before she was captured, Mrs. Turney spoke of her feelings for her daughter Molly and her devotion to her job. She said: "She's getting more of a character each day. It's a shame I'm missing that but she's a top girl and will grow up to be a very reliable, independent, strong young woman, which is exactly what I want for her."

Yes, her absence is a shame. And so is the presence of mothers in combat zones, whether in British or American uniforms.

What Iran did in capturing these hostages and playing them as media pawns was evil and reprehensible -- and very effective. The moral weakness of the West was made all the more clear to the watching world, and our ideological fanaticism was open for all to see. - *AlbertMohler.com*, 4/13/07

BARACK OBAMA: SHEEP OR GOAT?

The very popular Christian website Crosswalk.com listed among its top news stories of 2006 the controversial appearance of US Senator Barack Obama in the pulpit of Saddleback Church. He spoke at the invitation of Rick Warren, Saddleback's pastor and author of *The Purpose Driven Life*. At the time, I issued one of the few formal public criticisms of Pastor Warren for yielding "the sacred desk" to Mr. Obama.

In addition to compromising the doctrinal integrity of an Evangelical pulpit, I warned that the event could be misread as both an endorsement of Obama's liberal religiosity and his potential presidential candidacy.

Warren responded with assurances that he and Obama were only allies in the war against HIV/AIDS in Africa, and that he didn't necessarily agree with the Senator on every issue. But later, on national television, Warren told CNN reporter Wolf Blitzer that Obama "has it." He went on to clarify that Obama has what it takes to be a "good president" because he is a man of "good character." Consider the endorsement made. . . .

The Senator from Illinois says he is a Christian, but we're not told exactly what kind. For this reason, I set out to research who and what Barack Obama is, but only as far as his faith is concerned. It was not my intention to explore his economic, social or foreign policies, except where they explicitly intersect with his personal religious philosophy. I'll let the political experts look at those other things. I did look at his legislative record, but again, only as it manifests his religious beliefs. . . .

So, for the good of the whole, I present to you my findings on Barack Obama's religious identity. While it may not tell you exactly what kind of Christian Obama is -- it will tell you what kind of Christian he is not. Barack Obama is definitely not an Evangelical.

BACKGROUND

Barack Hussein Obama was born in 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii, to a Kenyan Muslim father of the same name and an American secular humanist mother named Ann Dunham. While Obama's father was raised in Islamic culture, he had become a functional atheist by the time he reached college. Despite his parents' lack of religion, young Obama received his early education in both Catholic and Muslim schools.

Obama's parents divorced when he was only two years old. Henceforth, the senior Obama was "almost entirely absent" from his son's life. Four years later, Ann Dunham relocated to Indonesia with her son to join her new husband Lolo Soetoro. A daughter, Maya, was born to the couple before their divorce. She returned to Hawaii where she went on to earn her MA in anthropology from the University of Hawaii. In his first book, *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama wrote of his mother. "She was a lonely witness for secular humanism, a soldier for New Deal, Peace Corps, position paper liberalism."

Obama's mother was a huge influence in his life. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey in October 2006, he said, "My mother -- when I think about the values I hold most dear, they come from her." In a speech given at a Moma Rising event in 2006, he said, "Everything that I think is good about me, I got from her."

While Obama's mother was a quintessential secular humanist, he told *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter and Daren Briscoe, "She was a deeply spiritual person, and when I moved to Chicago and worked with church-based community organizations, I kept hearing her values expressed in the church." Dunham died of ovarian cancer at age 53 before her son rose to national prominence. . . .

RELIGIOUS JOURNEY

During his early years in Chicago, Obama says he was a religious "skeptic. . . wary of expedient conversion, having too many quarrels with God to accept a salvation too easily won."

Obama met the Reverend Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. while attempting to recruit Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ for a community organizing drive. The very liberal United Church of Christ denomination notes, "In a sea of conservative black churches, Trinity

stands out in that it has welcomed gay members, done outreach to people living with AIDS and advocated progressive positions on many social issues." Wright is the man to whom Obama has turned to "help him explain how his liberal positions jibe with his faith." Today, after 20 years, Obama still calls Wright his pastor, friend and mentor.

It was under Wright's tutelage that Obama made his public profession of Christian faith. This, in response to a sermon preached by Wright and entitled (like Obama's recent book), "The Audacity of Hope." For Wright and his church, the gospel is fused with the black experience in America. the church's mission statement reads, "Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian...Our roots in the Black religious experience and tradition are deep, lasting, and permanent. We are an African people, and remain 'true to our native land,' the mother continent, the cradle of civilization."

Trinity also has "adopted the Black Value System," 12 "precepts and covenantal statements" that form a sort of Ten Commandments-like code. The System's preamble charges, "These Black Ethics must be taught and exemplified in homes, churches, nurseries and schools, wherever Blacks are gathered." The second value, after "Commitment to God," is "Commitment to the Black Community." The eighth is "Disavowal of the Pursuit of Middleclassness." And the eleventh is "Pledge Allegiance to all Black leadership who espouse and embrace the Black Value System."

This exclusive commitment to a cultural and national identity played a major role in Obama's decision to identify himself with Christianity. He explains that he probably would have remained apart from any faith, "had it not been for the particular attributes of the historically black church, attributes that helped me shed some of my skepticism and embrace the Christian faith."

Still, this embrace came with the condition, "that religious commitment did not require me to suspend critical thinking, disengage from the battle for social justice, or otherwise retreat from the world that I knew and loved -- that I was finally able to walk down the aisle."

This "walk down the aisle" had a distinctly different character from Evangelical conversion. Obama set out his own criteria for what he would and would not accept from the Christian faith. Pastor Wright, Trinity and the Christianity they proclaimed met his criteria. In other words, Obama came to Christ on his own terms, rather than surrendering unconditionally to Jesus' Lordship. This is important for all Christians to know, and particularly for Evangelical Christians whom Obama is actively courting for political purposes. - Rev. Rob Schenck, National Clergy Council, 1/8/07

THE JOHN DOE MANIFESTO

Note: Earlier this month, six publicity-seeking imams filed a federal lawsuit against U.S. Airways and the Metropolitan Airports Commission in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The Muslim clerics were removed from their flight last November and questioned for several hours after their suspicious behavior alarmed both passengers and crew members. *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist Katherine Kersten reported last week that the imams, advised by the grievance-mongers at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, also plan to sue "John Does" -- innocent bystanders who alerted the authorities about their security concerns. Rep. Steve Pearce, R-N.M., has introduced legislation to protect John Does who report suspicious behavior from legal liability. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty; talk show host Michael Reagan; Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, who heads the American Islamic Forum for Democracy; and Minnesota lawyer Gerry Nolting have all stepped forward to offer free representation to the imams' targets.

Dear Muslim Terrorist Plotter/Planner/Funder/Enabler/Apolo-

gist

You do not know me. But I am on the lookout for you. You are my enemy and I am yours.

I am John Doe.

I am traveling on your plane. I am riding on your train. I am at your bus stop. I am on your street. I am in your subway car. I am on your lift.

I am your neighbor. I am your customer. I am your classmate. I am your boss.

I am John Doe.

I will never forget the example of the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93 who refused to sit back on 9/11 and let themselves be murdered in the name of Islam without a fight.

I will never forget the passengers and crew members who tackled al Qaeda shoe-bomber Richard Reid on American Airlines Flight 63 before he had a chance to blow up the plane over the Atlantic Ocean.

I will never forget the alertness of actor James Woods, who notified a stewardess that several Arab men sitting in his first-class cabin on an August 2001 flight were behaving strangely. The men turned out to be 9/11 hijackers on a test run.

I will act when homeland security officials ask me to "report suspicious activity."

I will embrace my local police department's admonition: "If you see something, say something."

I am John Doe.

I will protest your Jew-hating America-bashing "scholars."

I will petition against your hate-mongering mosque leaders.

I will raise my voice against your subjugation of women and religious minorities.

I will challenge your attempts to indoctrinate my children in our schools.

I will combat your violent propaganda on the Internet.

I am John Doe.

I will support law enforcement initiatives to spy on your operatives, cut off your funding and disrupt your murderous conspiracies.

I will oppose all attempts to undermine our borders and immigration laws.

I will resist the imposition of sharia principles and sharia law in my taxi cab, my restaurant, my community pool, the halls of Congress, our national monuments, the radio and television airwaves, and all public spaces.

I will not be censored in the name of tolerance.

I will not be cowed by your Beltway lobbying groups in moderates' clothing. I will not cringe when you shriek about "profiling" or "Islamophobia."

I will put my family's safety above sensitivity. I will put my country above multiculturalism.

I will not submit to your will. I will not be intimidated.

I am John Doe. - Michelle Malkin, *Conservative Chronicle*, 4/4/07

CONGRESSIONAL SUBPOENAS

It's happened. An increasingly unpopular president has been confronted by a congressional subpoena for information about political decisions made at the highest levels of the executive branch.

The president well understands the danger of making one branch of the government privy to the confidential discussions of the other. For to grant Congress the power to compel testimony from his top-ranking aides is to upset the delicate balance between supposedly equal branches of government. How equal can they be if the legisla-

tive branch is given access to the candid, confidential discussions of the executive?

How long will such discussions remain candid if the president's aides -- realize that what they say in confidence may not remain confidential? Do we the people really want to deprive our presidents of such counsel? That's another reason for recognizing executive privilege: to assure that some confidential discussions remain confidential. Without that assurance, any advice a president receives might soon lose its value, for presidential advisers might not dare say what they really think.

Rather than heed the congressional summons, the president explained that, if he did, the constitutional separation of powers "would be shattered, and the president, contrary to the fundamental theories of constitutional government, would become a mere arm of the legislative branch of the government (for) he would feel during his term of office that his every act might be subject to official inquiry and possible distortion for political purposes."

The president who made that point wasn't George W. Bush this week but Harry S. Truman in November of 1953, when the House Committee on Un-American Activities subpoenaed him to testify about what he knew about communists in government and when he knew it.

Mr. Truman knew better than to let that bunch start rummaging through his or his administration's confidential papers and discussions. After all, he'd once been a member of the U.S. Senate himself. And, as such, quite an investigator. If he hadn't defended the independence of the executive branch, his presidency and every successive one would surely have been significantly, maybe fatally, weakened.

Harry Truman was in good company. The doctrine of executive privilege is almost as old as the Constitution itself, and flows naturally from its separation of powers and creation of independent branches of government to check one another, not dominate another.

Executive privilege has been invoked by presidents going back to George Washington in 1796. Among others who've cited it were Presidents Jefferson, Monroe, Jackson, Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, Buchanan, Lincoln, Grant, Hayes, Cleveland, both Roosevelts, Coolidge and Hoover. And, in more recent times, Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton.

Speaking of the latter, the courts certainly have the right to allow subpoenas in order to obtain evidence of a crime -- like Richard Nixon's White House tapes or Bill Clinton's grand jury testimony. Hence the attempt to manufacture a crime out of this president's decision to replace eight federal prosecutors -- all political appointees. Call it trial by media.

If you still think letting Congress force the president's top advisers to testify under oath is a good idea, consider what would happen if the tables were turned, and the executive branch were allowed the same power over the legislative branch. Instead of Democratic congressmen getting to grill aides like Karl Rove and Harriet Miers under oath, suppose Rove & Co. could make Hillary Clinton or Chuck Schumer or Ted Kennedy reveal the details of their confidential political discussions?

The power to subpoena is the power to destroy, as Harry Truman well knew. Here's hoping George W. Bush does. Because if he allows Congress to invade the confidences of his presidency, he will pass on a much weakened executive branch to his successors. On this issue he needs to stand fast.

For now this president seems to be trying to reach some half-way, or maybe quarter-way, compromise with his critics in Congress. He's offered to let them question his top aides off the record, with no transcript recorded or notes taken, and certainly not under oath. But

surely that gesture would not satisfy congressional inquisitors. And it smudges what ought to be a clear line between separate, independent branches of government.

Rather than play such games, this president -- like a long line of his predecessors -- should hold fast to his principles. The integrity of the executive branch of government, along with the separation of powers in a constitutional republic, depends on it. He shouldn't budge.

And if George W. Bush is tempted to, somebody should direct him to Harry Truman's letter of November 13, 1953, to the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Or to one of Alexander Hamilton's Federalist Papers on the need for a strong executive independent of the legislative branch -- not under its thumb. - Paul Greenberg, *townhall.com*, 3/23/07

RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

There's nothing like a celebrity sing-a-long to get the global warming juices boiling. Al Gore, the vice president who became a midway barker, has the greatest show on earth, maybe even the universe. He's offering a day of "Live Earth" concerts during the summer that will include musical artists and "thought leaders" such as Cameron Diaz, Snoop Dog and Enrique Iglesias. Hea-veee, as the kids used to say.

The carnival show will reach more than a million spectators with an additional 2 billion watching on television screens. Kevin Wall, who produced world tours for Madonna, is in charge and says he aims for coverage throughout the world, maybe even the solar system. "Two billion sets of eyeballs," he tells *The Washington Post*, "and we'll hand the mike to Al Gore."

The ex-veep is poised to take home one or maybe two Academy Awards for his documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. This could put him in the league with Obama and Hillary. He says he's not running for president in '08, but that may be because he wants to be president of the Earth, or at least the Whole Earth Catalog. Who wants to spend a winter in New Hampshire talking about the heat somewhere else?

Trendy notions are recycled overnight now, so Diesel, the Italian fashionista, is advertising the newest line as "Global Warming Ready." The designers are playing it for laughs all the way to the bank, but they're deadly serious about the Higher Cause. Models in global-warming-ready togs are photographed against a backdrop of Mount Rushmore with the sea flooding the nostrils of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt. The most colorful characters on Diesel's website, however, are penguins in their natural formalwear and a parrot in his coat of many colors. Diesel understands that among environmentalists, the lower animals trump the human animal every time.

All this could be great fun if it weren't so dangerous. Winston Churchill, after all, once observed that he liked pigs because "a dog looks up to you, a cat looks down on you, but a pig accepts you as an equal." But when politics, fashion and entertainment fuse with scientific "factoids," truth drowns in a flood of misinformation. In his new book, "Eco-Freaks," John Berla, a policy director at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a think tank devoted to environmental policies, catalogs the tragic mistakes imposed on the rest of us by the environmentally correct. After Rachel Carson published "Silent Spring," DDT was banned nearly everywhere. Most of her "evidence" later turned out to be all wrong, but 2 million poor Africans die every year of malaria that DDT was on the way to eradicating. Al Gore, of course, blames global warming.

Asbestos, like DDT, gets a bad rap in the popular media, but nothing else comes close as a shield against heat. The original plans

for the World Trade Center called for the interior steel in both towers to be covered with asbestos-based fireproofing material. Asbestos was eliminated when environmentalists objected. Engineers think the twin towers might be standing today but for the politically correct construction. Asbestos would have at least slowed the spread of the fire and the melting of the metal, giving hundreds of those who perished a chance to escape.

Hurricane Katrina need not have been the tragedy it was. In 1977, the Army Corps of Engineers wanted to build large steel and concrete "sea gates" below sea level to prevent hurricane force winds driving storm surges into Lake Pontchartrain, overflowing into low-lying New Orleans. Such gates have been enormously successful in the Netherlands. But the Environmental Defense Fund, which had been a party to the lawsuit leading to the banning of DDT, persuaded a judge that the sea gates would discourage the mating of a certain fish species. Fishy romance trumped the lives of 3,100 Orleanians. "If we had built the barriers, New Orleans would not be flooded," says Joe Towers, who was counsel for the New Orleans District of the Corps.

John Berlau spreads blame at all levels of state and national government where intimidated politicians glibly hide behind "greening of America" soft-headedness. Not all ecophiles are goofballs, but many show considerably less concern for humans than for the kangaroo rat, the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly, and that little darling the snail darter. Radical environmentalism is often hazardous to your health. That's the inconvenient truth Al Gore ignores. - Suzanne Fields, *townhall.com*, 2/22/07

EVANGELICALISM'S PATHETIC EFFECT

When New Evangelicalism blasted on the scene in the 1950s, it repudiated the separation of Fundamentalism, not only ecclesiastical separation but separation from the world. Claiming that Fundamentalism had maneuvered Bible-believing Christianity into the backwaters of society and had lost its influence because of its separatist stance, it proposed a new plan to influence society by engaging it rather than withdrawing from it. What has been the result?

Rather than the world being influenced powerfully by Evangelicalism, Evangelicalism has been influenced powerfully by the world. This not surprising, since the Word of God warns: "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Cor. 15:33). A recent article in *Christianity Today*, a chief New Evangelical mouthpiece, was entitled "How the Character of Religion in America Has Changed Since the Founding of Christianity Today."

Comparing Christianity in the 1950s with Christianity a half century later, the article, while trying to remain upbeat, is forced to admit that things have changed for the worse in many areas. For example, in 1963 the percentage of those who said the Bible is the Word of God and should be taken literally was 65% (it would doubtless have been much higher in the 1940s), whereas in 2006 the figure is only 28%. In the areas of morality, it is obvious that American society has taken a severe plunge. The levels of divorce, unmarried cohabitation, out-of-wedlock births, venereal disease, abortions, violence, and other signs of unrestrained evil are off the charts compared to the 1940s. Whatever New Evangelicalism has done, it has not influenced society toward righteousness.

The situation was much better when Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism were synonyms and both practiced biblical separation. Iain Murray had it right when he said: "Christians are not to be sheep in wolves' clothing. The Christian faith is rather at its strongest when its antagonism to unbelief is most definite, when its spirit is other-worldly,

and when its whole trust is not 'in the wisdom of men but in the power of God' (I Cor. 2:5)." (*Evangelicalism Divided*, 200, p. 212). "And he not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2).

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good work" (Titus 2:13-14). - David Cloud in *O Timothy*, 12/06

A NATION OF NINCOMPOOPS

I am sick to death of Don Imus, and I'm tired of hearing his disgusting rant against the Rutgers Women's basketball team. I don't care who fathered the daughter of trampy Anna Nicole Smith, nor was I interested in what killed the blowsy blond or where she would be buried.

I don't need to know that the nutty astronaut who drove cross-country to confront her lover's other girlfriend wore diapers to cut down on her pit stops. I can't understand why the sight of police vehicles, chasing speeding cars down interstates holds hypnotic power over millions of television viewers. Nor do I wait breathlessly for word on the latest missing coed who disappeared while on spring break or the hapless wife whose cheating husband dumped her body in San Francisco Bay.

Don't get me wrong. For those people who want to know who's sleeping -- or feuding -- with whom in Hollywood, or have an endless appetite for the macabre or just plain weird, there are plenty of resources available to get their fix, from the relatively respectable *People* magazine to the myriad pulp tabloids at the checkout stand, not to mention shows like "Access Hollywood" or cable channels like E! and Fox Reality.

But why must network news shows and serious newspapers, not to mention cable news stations, cover these insignificant stories ad nauseam? Blame it on the 24-hour "news" cycle. Admit it: There just isn't enough real news to fill 24 hours of programming a day. On some days, there's not even two or three hours' worth.

It used to be that television news followed the lead of the big, prestigious print media. If a story appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*, it led the nightly network broadcast. But cable news changed that. A breaking story could be instantly covered and was old news by the time the paper came out the next morning. So, newspapers increasingly followed television's lead on some stories.

In the past, however, the print media could usually be counted on to provide more depth than a two-minute TV story. Even more importantly, newspapers could discriminate between legitimate news and fluff, relegating the latter to the style and entertainment pages in the back of the paper.

No more. Now, in the rush to attract readers, the silliest stories appear alongside the latest news from the Iraq war or the reversal of a longstanding Supreme Court precedent.

And the vicious cycle got worse as cable news increasingly turned to sensational stories with little substance in the search for more and more viewers. A fire in a warehouse in Duluth? Send in the cameras so millions can watch it burn. A raunchy pop singer forgets her underwear when she goes partying? Flash the pictures every 20 minutes -- making sure her private parts are blurred just enough to satisfy the Federal Communications Commission while still titillating viewers.

We seem to be losing the ability to distinguish what is noteworthy from what is simply notorious. and in the process, we are creating

greater celebrity for people who don't deserve it.

Don Imus is a crank. But his bigoted remarks have made him more famous than anything he's done in the past and will probably attract more listeners when he returns to his ornery morning show than he has ever had. MSNBC and CBS may have cancelled him for now, but he'll be back, and when he returns, ratings will go up. And we can thank the "news" coverage Imus has received when they do.

Is it any wonder that more people can probably identify Sanjaya than their own senator? We are becoming a nation of nincompoops. And in a democracy, that's a worrisome thing.

We live in a dangerous and complicated world in which we're asked to make difficult decisions with too little information. The news media have always played an important role in getting us the facts to inform those choices. But they are quickly abdicating that role in lieu of entertaining us.

It almost makes me hanker for the 15-minute news broadcasts of my youth. At least Chet Huntley and David Brinkley could be counted on to report real news and leave the entertainment to Ed Sullivan and Sid Caesar. - Linda Chavez, *townhall.com*, 4/13/07

IT'S THE CULTURE, STUPID

Anti-Americanism comes in different varieties. Speak to Europeans who dislike the United States, and they point to what they see as the evils of conservative America: a shoot-first, ask-questions-later cowboy in the White House, Bible-toting fundamentalists walking around the corridors of power. Speak to Muslims who are hostile to America, however, and the typical complaint is very different. Many Muslims point to what they view as the horrors of liberal America: homosexual marriage, family breakdown, and a popular culture that is trivial, materialistic, vulgar, and in many cases morally repulsive. So while many secular Europeans abhor "red America," many religious Muslims dislike and fear "blue America."

Both the Europeans and the Muslims, of course, are only seeing one side of America. They are reacting not so much to "America" as to projections of American policy and American culture across the globe. We in the U.S. know that there is a difference between American popular culture and the way that Americans actually live. But foreigners cannot be expected to know this. The America that they see in the movies and on television is often the only America they know.

We have heard a great deal from critics of globalization about how the United States is corrupting the world with its multinational corporations and its trade practices. But world opinion surveys by the Pew Research Center and other groups show that non-Western peoples are generally pleased with American products. In fact, the people of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East want more American companies, more American technology, and more free trade. Their objection is not to McDonalds or Microsoft but to America's cultural values as transmitted through movies, television and music.

Huge majorities of more than 80 percent of people in Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya, Senegal, Egypt, and Turkey say they want to protect their values from foreign assault. The Pew study concludes that there is a "widespread sense" that American values, often presented as the values of modernity itself, "represent a major threat to people's traditional way of life." These sentiments are felt very keenly in the Muslim world. As an Iranian from Neishapour told journalist Afshin Molavi, "People say we want freedom. You know what these foreign-inspired people want? They want the freedom to gamble and drink and bring vice to our Muslim land. This is the kind of freedom they want."

Muslim critics of American culture are quick to concede its fascination and attraction, especially to the young. Some time ago I saw

an interview with a Muslim sheikh on television. The interviewer told the sheikh, "I find it curious and hypocritical that you are so anti-American, considering that two of your sons are living and studying in America." The sheikh replied, "But this is not hypocritical at all. I concede that American culture is appealing. If you put a young man into a hotel room and give him dozens of pornography tapes, he is likely to find those appealing as well. What America appeals to is everything that is low and disgusting in human nature."

There seems to be a growing belief in traditional cultures that America is materially prosperous but culturally decadent. It is technologically sophisticated but morally depraved. As former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto puts it, "Within the Muslim world, there is a reaction against the sexual overtones that come across in American mass culture. America is viewed through this prism as an immoral society." In his book *The Crisis of Islam*, Bernard Lewis rehearses what he calls the "standard litany of American offenses recited in the lands of Islam" and ends with this one: "Yet the most powerful accusation of all is the degeneracy and debauchery of the American way of life."

One reason the Muslims focus their anger on America is that it is American culture -- not Swedish culture or French culture -- that is finding its way into every nook and cranny of Islamic society. . . .

Even the term "Great Satan," so commonly used to denounce America in the Muslim world, is better understood when we recall that in the traditional understanding, shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Satan is not a conqueror; he is a tempter. In one of its best-known verses, the Koran describes Satan as "the insidious one who whispers into the hearts of men." - Dinesh D'Souza, *townhall.com*, 4/10/07 (This is a terrible indictment against our so-called Christian nation that heathen religions are offended by our immorality and dishonesty that is spread around the world by our corrupt media. God is judging us as seen by the destruction of our lives, our families, our churches and our hope for the future. Revival of a return to the God of the Bible and repentance from our sins and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ is all that will save America - N.P.)

RUSSIA IS SUPPLYING ISRAEL'S ENEMIES

That Russia supplies arms and military expertise to Israel's enemies is an interesting fact in light of Bible prophecy. Ezekiel prophesied that when Russia attacks Israel during the Great Tribulation she will be joined by Persia (modern-day Iran), among others (Ezekiel 38:1-5). Russia will be "a guard" to her allies (Ezek. 38:7), meaning she will be the chief military power in the alliance. In light of this it is of more than passing interest that Russia is supplying Iran with military technology, both nuclear and non-nuclear. Earlier this month Russia sold advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Iran. Russia also maintains military listening posts manned by its own officers along the Syrian border with Israel and supplies information on Israeli Defense Forces movements to Israel's enemies ("Russia Tracking IDF Movements," *Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 26, 2007).

Before Ezekiel prophesied of the attack upon Israel from the great power to the north, he prophesied that Israel would be regathered and restored to her land in two stages (Ezekiel 37). She will first come together in a spiritually lifeless state (Ezek. 37:7-14). Since 1948 Israel has been back in her land and has existed again as a nation, but she is spiritually dead and continues to reject her Messiah. Until she repents she will have nothing but heartache and trouble and confusion, and she will be a curse to the world instead of a blessing. - David Cloud, *O Timothy*, 3/07

TIME EXPOSES PILFERING PRIESTS

"Pilfering Priests" is the title of a major article in the February 26 *Time*. The subtitle is "Still recovering from the sexual abuse scandal of five years ago, the Catholic Church is facing another crisis: clergy who steal money from their parishioners."

Various Roman Catholic authorities have said that between 30 to 60 percent of Roman Catholic seminarians and priests are homosexuals. Now *Time* says that "85% of the dioceses in one survey reported embezzlement cases; 11% had scandals of \$500,000 or more."

The February 25 *Time* lists the names of some priests who have misappropriated millions of dollars, diverted congregational collections to "secret slush-fund accounts while living as hedonistically as Renaissance Popes, giving money to girlfriends, boyfriends and taking expensive vacations. . . .

The increasing number of clergy getting caught with their hands in the offertory is once again prompting questions about the Catholic priesthood. Not that clerical enrichment is by any means an exclusively Catholic scourge: it's hard to forget that Protestant TV evangelist Jim Bakker once defrauded his followers of \$158 million. But scholars argue that the financial apparatus at Protestant churches is often 'more transparent and encouraging of lay participation' than it is at Catholic parishes -- where, some pastors still carry 'an Old World attitude that what's in the collection basket is theirs personally to do with as they wish.'

"Priestly arrogance may not be the only factor. Unlike monks, parish priests do not take a vow of poverty; but they promise to be celibate, which many assume blunts greed since they don't have families to support. Ironically, says one South Florida priest, many priests see the sacrifice of sex and family as a source of entitlement -- a reason parishioners should provide extra pin money for Father.' What's more, priests can resent seeing how comparatively well their Episcopal or Jewish counterparts live -- and the fact that Catholics in the U.S. give half the share of their income to their churches that Protestants do, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.

"That's no excuse for pick-pocketing parishioners." - *Christian News*, 2/26/07

CHAPLAIN SHORTAGE SEVERE FOR ARMY

The hardest part of Army Chaplain Lt. Col. Ran Dolinger's job is the long hours, which is partly why the Army Chaplain Corps now has about 520 vacancies, its most severe shortage in history.

"I go everywhere my troops go," said Col. Dolinger, who during his 21 years of service has been sent to Bosnia and Korea and whose most recent deployment to Iraq was from November to December last year.

The 48-year-old who also serves as pastor at the Fort Belvoir chapel and as spokesman for the U.S. Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains in Arlington, Va., calls his line of work "a blessed misery."

"When I see the atrocities of man toward man, it shows me the need for God," he said. - *Washington Times Weekly*, 3/5/07

NORTHERN IRELAND'S IAN PAISLEY

Protestant leader Ian Paisley and Catholic leader Gerry Adams, often fierce enemies met face-to-face for the first time last week and agreed to a power-sharing provincial government. "After a long and difficult time in our province," said Paisley, "I believe that enormous opportunities lie ahead." Adams called the agreement "the beginning of a new era of politics." The governing arrangement is set to begin on May 8. - *WORLD*, 4/7/07

SPEAKER NANCY ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

Nancy Pelosi is playing to her natural constituency. Jimmy Carter, the distinguished peanut farmer, and Bashar al-Assad, the murderous dictator of the terrorist government in Damascus, are thrilled. Nearly everybody else sees a lady too big for her pantyhose.

"I was glad she went," said Mr. Jimmy. (Can it possibly be true that this man was once president of the United States?) "When there is a crisis, the best way to help resolve the crisis is to deal with the people who are instrumental to the problem."

The minister of the Syrian Cabinet was even more thrilled, perhaps because he smokes something weirder than you can find even in San Francisco. "Syria stands for freedom and for peace, and so does Nancy Pelosi."

By the time she got to Saudi Arabia, where a good woman is worth almost as much as a sheep or a goat, her hosts were close to rapture. They let her sit in the speaker's chair at the king's advisory council, where only men were previously allowed. She was particularly pleased that the Saudis didn't stuff her into an abaya, the tentlike black cloak required of Saudi women, and she could wear her pistachio colored pantsuit.

"Nice view from here," she said. One of the sheiks shot her a glance that suggested that he thought his view was nice, too, as if she still looked young enough and muscular enough to do the heavy lifting around the house.

Another sheik, perhaps a sheik aspiring to be a television reporter, looked at her sitting where a Saudi woman would pay with her life for sitting and asked, "How does it feel?" Nancy couldn't resist taking a shot at her own country with the moral equivalence that a San Francisco Democrat sips with his afternoon chablis. "I am very pleased that after 200-plus years in the United States we finally have a woman speaker. It took us a long time."

Someone else asked about her conversation with King Abdullah, and Nancy went all jiggly inside. "Our discussion with his majesty centered around his initiative." She quickly added that she was talking about "the Saudi initiative for peace in the Middle East."

What she was talking about was the king's sneer earlier in the week that the work of the coalition in Iraq is nothing more than "an illegitimate foreign occupation." She certainly hadn't brought that up. She was more sympathetic to the king's suggestion that if Israel will quietly commit suicide peace will break out across Arabia. The king's "blueprint for peace" offers Israel "normal relations" if it withdraws from "all Arab land" lost in 1967 when the Israelis made quick work of the massed Arab armies in only six days, resettles the Palestinian refugees in Israeli territory and creates a Palestinian state. There wouldn't be much left of Israel, which is precisely the point of the royal scheme.

"There's a lot of negotiation that must follow," Nancy Pelosi told her awed Saudi hosts, "but we commended him for his leadership on that subject."

Mrs. Pelosi is no doubt a loyal American, as she understands loyalty, but she neither understands nor appreciates the civics lessons she should have been paying attention to in junior high school. The president, Republican or Democrat, and not Congress, conducts foreign policy.

Not only did she demonstrate gross incompetence in pursuit of destructive ignorance, she made more than a little mischief when she told the Syrian despot that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gave her the message to take to Damascus that "Israel is ready to resume the peace process." So mischievous was this lethal fiction that the prime minister issued a rare "clarification." What he had actually told her, he said,

was that Israel is always interested in peace but Syria "continues to be part of the Axis of Evil and a force that encourages terror in the entire Middle East."

Maybe the lady, tramping in unfamiliar territory, was jet-lagged. Maybe she was having bad hair days. But maybe she figured that anyone who hates George W. Bush as much as she does can't be bad. She recklessly imagined herself a wise man, traveling the Damascus road in search of an epiphany, and revealed herself to be a dizzy dame playing out of her league. - Wesley Pruden, *WTW*, 4/9/07

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AMONG RISKIEST DRUGS

New "landmark" research finds that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than some illegal drugs like marijuana or Ecstasy and should be classified as such in legal systems, according to a new British study.

In research published Friday in *The Lancet* magazine, Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University and colleagues proposed a new framework for the classification of harmful substances, based on the actual risks posed to society. Their ranking listed alcohol and tobacco among the top 10 most dangerous substances.

Nutt and colleagues used three factors to determine the harm associated with any drug: the physical harm to the user, the drug's potential for addiction and the impact on society of drug use. The researchers asked two groups of experts -- psychiatrists specializing in addiction and legal or police officials, with scientific or medical expertise -- to assign scores to 200 different drugs, including heroin, cocaine, Ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD.

Nutt and his colleagues then calculated the drugs' overall rankings. In the end, the experts agreed with each other -- but not with the existing British classification of dangerous substances.

Heroin and cocaine were ranked most dangerous, followed by barbiturates and street methadone. Alcohol was the fifth-most harmful drug and tobacco the ninth most harmful. Cannabis came in 11th, and near the bottom of the list was Ecstasy. . . .

Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. The substances also harm society in other ways, damaging families and occupying police services. . . .

Nutt called for more education so that people were aware of the risks of various drugs. "All drugs are dangerous," he said. "Even the ones people know and love and use every day." - *MSNBC.com*, 3/23/07

LOTTERIES MOST POPULAR GAMBLING

Two-thirds of American adults have bought a ticket in the last year, and 13% participate weekly. The odds, however, are stacked against these players -- 175,711,536 to 1, for example, for the 12-state Mega Millions lottery. "State lotteries return players about 50 cents on the dollar," says the *Times*. "And there are many people who seem to compound their folly by buying hundreds of tickets at a time."

The *Times* notes that "households with regular players spend an average of about 2 percent of their income on the game," and that "the proportion is higher among very low-income households." - *The New York Times* 3/11/07 in *What In The World*, Vol. 42, #8



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