

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



JIHAD, AMERICAN STYLE by Elwood McQuaid

The saying “Nero fiddled [around] while Rome burned” may over dramatize an historical event; nevertheless, it makes a point that should not be lost on this generation of Christians. A war is on—one aimed at us. And many evangelicals are fiddling while the foundations of our faith are being blown out from under us.

Statistics tell the story for this country. Eighty percent of Americans claim some association with Christianity. In fact, we are told that probably 95 percent celebrate Christmas. And though you may argue about the depth, genuineness, and core beliefs of segments of the “Christian” community, the fact remains that sentiments at the grass roots are decidedly pro-Christian. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said for much of the media, the left-wing political establishment, or the rabidly anti-Christian minorities sounding off in virtually every public forum.

This truth came to mind when the predictable assault was launched during the Easter commemoration of the resurrection. Major networks aired a succession of programs that claimed to debunk the credibility of the foundational, biblical essence of the Christian faith. They relegated the Gospel accounts to the fictional ranting of men bent on inventing a means to capitalize on the hopes of gullible followers in order to promote their own agenda.

Not that we have not come to expect these annual excursions in denial. But as I remember it, years ago the crusade to deny Christ’s physical resurrection was generally led by liberal theologians and preachers. They spun theories of the disciples hallucinating or wishing Christ arose to the point that they believed their own “delusions.” But, for the most part, these

promoters of neo-agnosticism, or functional atheism, were confined to their own circles of devotees and failed to shake the foundations of the faithful.

What has developed in recent years, however, has a different cast to it—one that, by its very nature, is agenda-driven and acerbically malicious beyond what we’ve ever seen. For all practical purposes, it is a jihadist-type war to destroy the Christian faith, with an emphasis on slaying evangelical Christianity in particular and replacing the traditional Judeo-Christian social order with an anything-goes, pagan, secular society.

When the prestigious National Geographic Society this spring hawked its spurious “revelations” challenging historic Christian beliefs, its sensationalized trailer for the *Gospel of Judas* “documentary” claimed that this “biblical text” would “challenge our deepest beliefs” and “could create a crisis of faith.” It did nothing of the sort, of course, but the tone of the promotion and program illustrates how deeply the lines are drawn in this ever-intensifying war between the secular and sacred.

Playing Politics

Awhile ago I watched a TV show where media talking heads were supposed to tackle a question about religious beliefs during an hour-long discussion. The issue was, “Should religion be in (A) the church, (B) the synagogue, or (C) the voting booth?”

The question seemed rather rhetorical; and the answers, tiresomely predictable. Those who lean to the left consistently warn of the imminent danger of evangelicals taking their beliefs into the voting booth.

In an article titled “The Media’s War on the ‘War

on Christians' Conference," columnist Don Feder wrote:

Evangelicals have been described as "a clear and present danger to religious liberty in American" (former Labor Secretary Robert Reich), determined to "Christianize all aspects of American life" (the ADL's Abraham Foxman), "moral retards" and "an ugly, violent lot" (City University of New York Professor Timothy Shortell), possessed of "the same kind of fundamentalist impulse that we see in Saudi Arabia" (Al Gore), and responsible for moving America "each day closer to a theocracy where a narrow and hateful brand of Christian fundamentalism will rule" (a full-page ad in The New York Times, signed by Jane Fonda, Ed Asner and other Hollywood savants).

The strategic word in this litany of vituperation is *theocracy* - the idea that evangelicals have a unified, conspiratorial plan to elect an ultra-fundamentalist, apartheid-type government to rule over every aspect of the lives of hapless Americans caught in their clutches.

The fact that these "intellectuals" publicly make this absurd accusation would be embarrassing were it not for their motives. Certainly, evangelical Christians take their convictions and values into the voting booth. We "render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mt. 22:21). It is what citizens in democratic societies are expected to do. And it would compound the absurdity to assert that liberals, feminists, gays, abortionists, neoconservatives, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents do not do likewise. Free people have both the right and obligation to vote their conscience.

By maligning a single segment of the population and attempting to deny it participation in government is to conspire to create a system controlled by anti-Christian forces. And those forces, unfortunately, are committed to a minority-driven intolerance that brooks no opposition from the vast majority, whom they see as obstacles on the road to their particular vision of a ruleless, secular nirvana.

An even more unsettling manifestation of this crusade involves the forces that are casting evangelicals as subversive, conspiratorial members of lobbies that jeopardize the security of America. Two prominent American international relations and political science professors have

released an inflammatory work, "The Israel Lobby," accusing Israel of so strongly manipulating U.S. policies that America has become a virtual puppet of Israeli interests, to its own detriment. Stephen Walt, academic dean at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and John Mearsheimer, from the University of Chicago, assert, "The combination of unwavering support for Israel and the related effort to spread 'democracy' throughout the region has inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion and jeopardized not only US security but that of much of the rest of the world."

And who are the members of this "Israel Lobby" that pulls the strings and puts the world on the chopping block of Arab and Islamic hatred? They are a "loose coalition of individuals and organizations who actively work to steer US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction." In her *Jerusalem Post* column on the subject, Caroline Glick wrote:

*Members of the Lobby include most US media outlets; Jewish American organizations generally and AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American organizations in particular; pro-Israel evangelical Christians [emphasis ours]. . ."*⁴

Lumping pro-Israel, conservative Christians with conspiracies is reminiscent of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which slanders Jews by doing the same thing. Evangelicals have been compared to the Taliban, Osama bin Laden's terrorist cadre, the Nazis, and on and on it goes. And the fact that these baseless, slanderous accusations are on the rise portends what the future will hold for evangelicals.

Scrapping the 'Majority Rules' Connection

The mind-boggling attacks on Christian commemorations are emblematic signs of the times. Consider the animus of secularists toward Christmas—and the astonishing success of a handful of radical minority groups in intimidating the majority of Americans. Wrote *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer:

School districts in New Jersey and Florida ban Christmas carols. The mayor of Somerville, Mass., apologizes for "mistakenly" referring to the town's "holiday party" as a "Christmas party." The

Broward and Fashion malls in South Florida put up a Hanukah menorah but no nativity scene. The manager of one of the malls explains: Hanukah commemorates a battle and not a religious event, though he hastens to add, "I don't really know a lot about it." He does not. Hanukah commemorates a miracle, and there is no event more "religious" than a miracle. The attempts to de-Christianize Christmas are as absurd as they are relentless. The United States today is the most tolerant and diverse society in history. It celebrates all faiths with an open heart and open-mindedness that, compared to even the most advanced countries in Europe, are unique."

TV commentator Bill O'Reilly was right when he said there is an anti-Christian bias in this country, and it is more on display at Christmas than any other time. It is also well documented that the bias is spilling over into other arenas of American life.

"Other battle zones," wrote Don Feder, "include Ten Commandments monuments, God in the pledge of allegiance, stigmatizing the Boy Scouts, advances in the culture of death, and attempts to impose homosexual marriage by judicial fiat."

To be sure, these symptoms may seem superficial on the surface. But at the core, they reveal the battle taking place for the survival of all that we value.

The Freedom Elixir

An *elixir* is a substance thought capable of prolonging life indefinitely: a cure-all. In present context, the "elixir" is the idea that the freedoms lavished on us in the Western democracies, particularly in America, are inherently bestowed in perpetuity. That is to say, as it has been, so it will ever be; there are no threats of change blowing in the wind. The viewpoint reminds me of the end-times attitude of those so satisfied with their personal status quos that they renounce those who speak of the Lord's coming by saying, *"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation"* (2 Pet. 3:4).

Unquestionably, we are the most materially blessed society in the history of the world. For that reason, it may just be that our unprecedented affluence is creating an indifference to what is happening in the wider world around us.

Why is it so difficult to convince Christians that we

are, in fact, in a terrorist-driven war of jihad that is killing people, mostly Christians, the world over? And why is the horror of the 9/11 attack so rapidly becoming all but forgotten by all too many? And why do we put up with those who tell us we should blame ourselves for so aggrieving Muslim fanatics that they were driven to strike back. That actually, we are the aggressors, not the victims.

A big part of the problem is that we internalize our freedom and prosperity to the extent that we have become insulated from some of the harsh realities of the real world. We have become self-immunized against feeling a personal obligation to actually participate in the conflict. For even if we indulge feelings of passivism toward military combat, we must recognize and respond to the fact that behind every attack leveled against us—social, political, terrorist, or whatever—there is a spiritual battle being waged that is as old as the Fall of Man. Therefore, no true Christian can afford to fiddle while we are engaged in such an immense conflict.

Whether you are a pastor, parishioner, Bible teacher, or student, you must learn what the issues are for yourself, your country, your world, and your brothers and sisters in the faith the world over.

Perhaps some of the last words to a church from the last book in the New Testament are most appropriate: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain" (Rev. 3:2)