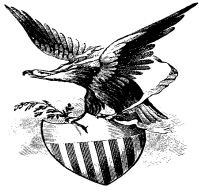


# Light Brings Salt

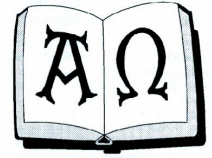
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## Iron Range Bible Church

*Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God*



### Facing the Central Questions of Our Time

By Donald Rumsfeld

*(Note: Remarks as prepared for delivery by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the American Legion National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah August 30, 2006.)*

Tom [American Legion Commander Tom Bock], I understand that your son is flying a Chinook in Iraq -- following in his dad's proud tradition of military service. Our country is deeply grateful to him -- and to all of you who have children or relatives serving in our nation's military.

They are in our thoughts and prayers. Please tell them we appreciate all they do for our country.

I thank each of you for the love and support you provide for our troops every day.

No one is more proud of those young people than their Commander-in-Chief. I know that President Bush is looking forward to being with you on Thursday.

We are truly fortunate to have a leader of resolve at a time of war. Through all the challenges, he remains the same man who stood atop the rubble of lower Manhattan, with a bullhorn, vowing to fight back; the leader who told a grieving nation that we will never forget what was lost; and the determined President who works every day to fulfill his vow to bring the enemy to justice or to bring justice to the enemy.

Our nation is so fortunate to have the American Legion standing up for all those who are serving our country in this time of testing.

About a year ago, I participated in the dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. And when I looked out into the audience, I could see a great many American Legion caps. It was a reminder of the millions who sacrificed for our country, so many of whom did not come home.

And it was also a reminder of all that American Legionnaires do to for our servicemen and women. Indeed, through nearly nine decades of service, the American Legion continues to find new ways and to undertake new initiatives to embody their motto: "For God and Country."

The Department of Defense is proud to be a partner with you in the "Heroes to Hometowns" program, which is helping severely wounded veterans with job searches, their homes, and other activities to aid the transition to civilian life. Your partnership with the "The America Supports You" campaign helps communities, organizations, and individuals across this nation express their appreciation to our troops, and to their families.

And, on a personal note, I commend the American Legion for its sponsorship of the Boy Scouts. I know there are some places where Boy Scouts are a subject of scorn.

Well, I was a proud Cub Scout, then a Boy Scout; then an Explorer Scout; an Eagle Scout; and, in 1975, a Distinguished Eagle Scout. The Scouts represent some of the best qualities in our great country -- and they certainly deserve our support!

The American Legion has achieved a great deal for our country since its founding in the months following World War I, when those folks came

together in a hotel in Europe to find a way to help some of their fellow veterans who would be coming home soon.

Indeed, that year -- 1919 -- turned out to be one of those pivotal junctures in modern history -- with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of the League of Nations -- a treaty and an organization intended to make future wars unnecessary and obsolete.

Indeed, 1919 was the beginning of a period where, over time, a very different set of views would come to dominate discourse and thinking in the west.

Over the next decades, a sentiment took root that contended that if only the growing threats that had begun to emerge in Europe and Asia could be appeased, then the carnage and destruction of then-recent memory of World War I might be avoided. It was a time when a certain amount of cynicism and moral confusion set in among the western democracies. When those who warned about a coming crisis -- the rise of fascism and Nazism -- were ridiculed and ignored.

Indeed, in the decades before World War II, a great many argued that the fascist threat was exaggerated -- or that it was someone else's problem. Some nations tried to negotiate a separate peace -- even as the enemy made its deadly ambitions crystal clear.

It was, as Churchill observed, a bit like feeding a crocodile, hoping it would eat you last.

There was a strange innocence in views of the world. Someone recently recalled one U.S. Senator's reaction in September 1939, upon hearing that Hitler had invaded Poland to start World War II. He exclaimed:

*"Lord, if only I could have talked with Hitler, all this might have been avoided."*

Think of that!

I recount this history because once again we face the same kind of challenges in efforts to confront the rising threat of a new type of fascism.

Today, another enemy -- a different kind of enemy -- has also made clear its intentions -- in places like New York, Washington, D.C., Bali, London,

Madrid, and Moscow. But it is apparent that many have still not learned history's lessons.

We need to face the following questions:

\* With the growing lethality and availability of weapons, can we truly afford to believe that somehow vicious extremists can be appeased?

\* Can we really continue to think that free countries can negotiate a separate peace with terrorists?

\* Can we truly afford the luxury of pretending that the threats today are simply "law enforcement" problems, rather than fundamentally different threats, requiring fundamentally different approaches?

\* And can we truly afford to return to the destructive view that America -- not the enemy -- is the real source of the world's trouble?

These are central questions of our time. And we must face them.

We hear everyday of new plans, new efforts, to murder Americans and other free people. Indeed, the plot recently discovered that would have killed hundreds -- possibly thousands -- of innocent men, women, and children on planes coming from Britain to the United States should have demonstrated to all that the enemy is serious, lethal, and relentless.

But this is still -- in 2006 -- not well recognized or fully understood. It seems that in some quarters there is more of a focus on dividing our country, than acting with unity against the gathering threats.

We find ourselves in a strange time:

\* When a database search of America's leading newspapers turns up 10 times as many mentions of one of the soldiers at Abu Ghraib who was punished for misconduct, than mentions of Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith, the first recipient of the Medal of Honor in the Global War on Terror;

\* When a senior editor at Newsweek disparagingly refers to the brave volunteers in our Armed Forces as a "mercenary army";

\* When the former head of CNN accuses the American military of deliberately targeting

journalists and the former CNN Baghdad bureau chief admits he concealed reports of Saddam Hussein's crimes when he was in power so CNN could stay in Iraq; and

\* It is a time when Amnesty International disgracefully refers to the military facility at Guantanamo Bay, which holds terrorists who have vowed to kill Americans and which is arguably the best run and most scrutinized detention facility in the history of warfare, as "the gulag of our times."

Those who know the truth need to speak out against these kinds of myths, and lies, and distortions being told about our troops and our country.

The struggle we are in is too important -- the consequences too severe -- to have the luxury of returning to the old mentality of "Blame America First."

One of the most important things the Legion has done is not only to serve, and assist, and advocate as you've done so superbly for much of the past century -- but also to educate and speak the truth about our country and our military.

Not so long ago, an exhibit on the Enola Gay at the Smithsonian during the 1990s seemed to try to rewrite the history of World War II by portraying the United States as an aggressor. Fortunately, the American Legion was there to lead the effort to set the record straight.

This watchdog role is even more important today in a war that is to a great extent fought in the media on a global stage -- to not allow the lies and the myths be repeated without question or challenge -- so that at least the second and third draft of history will be more accurate than the quick first allegations.

You know from experience that in every war there have been mistakes and setbacks and casualties. War is, as Clemenceau said, a "series of catastrophes that results in victory."

And in every army, there are occasionally bad actors -- the ones who dominate the headlines today -- who don't live up to the standards of their oath and of our country.

But you also know that they are a small percentage of the hundreds of thousands of honorable men and women in all theaters in this struggle who are serving with humanity and decency in the face of constant provocation.

And that is important in this "long war," where any kind of moral and intellectual confusion about who and what is right or wrong can severely weaken the ability of free societies to persevere.

Our enemy knows this well. They frequently invoke the names of Beirut and Somalia -- places they see as examples of American retreat and weakness. And as we have seen most recently -- indeed, this month -- in Lebanon, they design attacks and manipulate the media to try to demoralize public opinion. They doctor photographs of casualties, use civilians as human shields and then provoke an outcry when civilians are accidentally killed in their midst.

The good news is that most of the American people, though understandably influenced by what they read and see in the media, have inner gyroscopes and good centers of gravity.

And I am confident that over time they will evaluate and reflect on what is happening in this struggle and come to wise conclusions.

In Iraq, a country that was brutalized and traumatized by a cruel and dangerous dictatorship is now undertaking the slow, difficult, and uncertain steps to secure a new future, under a representative government -- one that is at peace with its neighbors, rather than a threat to their own people, their neighbors, and to the world.

As the nature of the threat and the conflict in Iraq has changed over these past three years, so have the tactics and deployments. But while military tactics have changed and adapted to the realities on the ground, the strategy has not -- which is to empower the Iraqi people to defend, govern, and rebuild their own country.

The extremists themselves have called Iraq the "epicenter" in the War on Terror. They mean it. And our troops know how important completing the mission is.

A Soldier who recently volunteered for a second tour in Iraq, likely captured the feelings of many of his peers. In an e-mail to friends he wrote:

*"I ask that you never take advantage of the liberties guaranteed by the shedding of free blood, never take for granted the freedoms granted by our Constitution. For those liberties would be merely ink on paper were it not for the sacrifice of generations of Americans who heard the call of duty and responded heart, mind and soul with 'Yes, I will.'"*

Someday that young man may be a member of the American Legion, attending a convention such as this. I hope he will be. And one day, a future speaker may reflect back on this time of historic choice -- remembering the questions raised as to our country's courage, dedication, and willingness to continue this fight until we have prevailed.

I believe the question is not whether we can win. It is whether we have the will to persevere.

I believe that Americans do have that steel. And that we have learned the lessons of history, the folly of turning a blind eye to danger, and of ignoring our responsibilities. These are lessons you know well -- lessons that your heroism has taught to generations of Americans.

May God bless each of you. May God bless the men and women in uniform and their families. And may God continue to bless our wonderful country.