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Feminism and Feminism

We get these letters saying that we should not refer to "radical feminism" since all feminism is radical. Not quite. We refer such readers to "The Feminist Revelation" (December 1991), where we noted Christina Sommers' useful distinction between "liberal feminism" and "gender feminism." Liberal feminism is straightforward. It insists that women have a right to fair treatment and equal opportunity in trying to realize their aspirations. Gender feminism, on the other hand, claims that our entire social and cultural order is skewed by the "hegemony" of a patriarchal sex/gender system that is designed to oppress and exploit women. Gender feminism claims to be and is radical in its attempt to overthrow that putative system by consciousness raising and revolutionary action.

Admittedly, liberal feminism, too, is not unproblematic. What constitutes "fair treatment," for example, is not self-evident, and there is no firm consensus on how differences between the sexes impinge upon the definition of "equal opportunity." But liberal feminism assumes that these are matters for ongoing deliberation and, very importantly, that men and women can and must deliberate these questions together. Not so with gender feminism or radical feminism. There the dogma is that only women can address "the woman question" and, furthermore, only those women who have arrived at the necessary level of revolutionary consciousness. In the radical feminist catechism of "will to power," those women who choose, for instance, marriage and motherhood as their path toward realizing their aspirations are less than authentically women. They are what we might call *Unterweiber* who are possessed of a slave mentality that makes them collaborators with their male masters in opposing the struggle for feminist justice.

Among the chief ideological gauleiters of radical feminism is Catharine A. MacKinnon, who teaches law at the University of Michigan. MacKinnon was much in the news during the Clarence Thomas hearings, finding respectful listeners in the media for her charming argument that, in the case of sexual harassment and other offenses against women, justice requires that we suspend the rule that people (meaning male people) are innocent until proven guilty. In deciding whether Anita Hill was telling the truth, said

MacKinnon, we must, in view of the distortions of our phallocentric system, assume that the more implausible her testimony the more we must give it credence. MacKinnon & Co. are no respecters of logic, logic itself being the product of the oppressive linearity of the hegemonic male system.

Prof. MacKinnon was more recently garnering attention for her part in what she declared to be a great feminist triumph. It seems the Canadian Supreme Court has decided that it is constitutionally all right to outlaw pornography that is harmful to women. Not all pornography, mind you, but pornography that is deemed to demean women. Now we are inclined to cheer the outlawing of pornography for almost any reason. It has always seemed to us absurd that in this country the free speech provision of the First Amendment, intended to protect political speech, is invoked to protect the booming commerce in obscenity. In addition, those more expert than we in these matters claim that the pleasures to be derived from pornography are enhanced by the furtiveness that results from its being on the shady side of the law.

MacKinnon, who helped write the brief for the Canadian court, wants it understood that her concern has nothing to do with morality. The great thing about the Canadian decision, she says, is that it is based upon justice for women rather than morality. "This makes Canada the first place in the world that says what is obscene is what harms women, not what offends our values. . . . In the United States the obscenity laws are all about not liking to see naked bodies, or homosexual activity, in public. Our laws don't consider the harm to women. But in Canada it will now be materials that subordinate, degrade, or dehumanize women that are obscene."

This intriguing line of thought, as it were, is reflected in the decision of the Canadian Supreme Court. The decision declares that it does not matter that women consent to participate in the production of materials that are viewed as degrading women. Such women are being degraded whether they know it or not. "Consent cannot save materials that otherwise contain degrading or dehumanizing scenes. Sometimes the very appearance of consent makes the depicted acts even more degrading or dehumanizing." This claim is closely related to the radical feminist assertion that "consensual rape" is the most brutal form of rape because not only has a woman's body been violated but her mind has been violated in a way that leads her to think that her intercourse with a man is actually voluntary and therefore not rape at all. As becomes evident, an understanding of gender feminism does not come easily to those who lack the requisite suppleness of brain. Many such people, especially married women, will probably never understand that every day millions of *Unterweiber* are under the sad delusion that they are making love with their husbands when, in fact, they are being raped.

In discussing pornography the Canadian court declares, "This type of material would apparently fail the community standards test not because it offends against morals, but because it is perceived by public opinion to be harmful to society, particularly to women." The public opinion is not the opinion of just any old public but of the elite public constituted by the commissars of gender feminism. Note that the court, also, wants it understood that it is not dealing in morality. The constitution forbid that the law should "impose a moral judgment" on anybody! In reality, of course, the court's ruling is unmistakably a moral judgment. The commandment is: Thou shalt not demean women.

The commandment, which is hardly new, strikes us as entirely laudable. It is a rule related to the rights and wrongs of human conduct, which is to say it is a moral rule. Why, then, do Prof. MacKinnon and the Canadian Supreme Court want to insist that the decision has nothing to do with morality? One explanation is that, in Canada as in the United States, there is this strange notion that law and politics must be "secular," and moral judgments have this awkward habit of getting entangled with religious teaching. Therefore lawyers and courts disguise substantive moral judgments as purely procedural and value-free principles. But in this case there is another reason why the court decision is presented as a legal principle divorced from moral judgment.

Moral judgments are debatable. They are subject to, indeed they require, arguments backed by reasons. It follows that anybody who has an argument pertinent to the moral judgment that is to be embodied in law must be admitted to the debate. That may seem reasonable enough, but its very reasonableness is, according to the ideology of gender feminism, a male construct that must be deconstructed. Law is ruled not by reason but by the will to power. Only those who are certified victims have the right to participate in changing the legal power structure that oppresses them. In addition, only victims, meaning those who understand the nature of their oppression, can certify victims. To be sure, the *Unterweiber* are victims but, since they do not understand the ways in which they are victimized, they are passive rather than participatory victims. Worse, they are in collusion, albeit unconsciously, with their victimizers.

Liberal feminism is compatible with an understanding of democratic politics as the deliberation of the inescapably moral question, How ought we to order our life together? Gender feminism is relentless civil war against the democratic polity itself. Liberal feminism is advanced by rational argument. Gender feminism, rejecting rationality as an instrument of the male hegemony, is driven by the will to power. Liberal feminism is inclusive of the diverse aspirations of all women. Gender feminism is defined by radicalized gnostic elites who exclude the *Unterweiber* who, it is claimed, do not understand the nature of their oppression. These are among the reasons why, despite the misgivings of some readers, we will continue to distinguish between feminisms.

Shame, Shame, Shame

Shame is "in"-and in a very big way. Robert Karen takes up almost half an issue of *The Atlantic* discussing the dozens and dozens of books proclaiming that shame and-contra Freud-not guilt is the root of human miseries. Popular artists of the emotions have created a bull market in shame therapy, John Bradshaw and his affecting patter about the "inner child" being an outstanding example. (See our earlier comment on Bradshaw, "Singing the Song of Myself," March 1991.) Twelve-step groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and its many imitators, are dealing, we are told, with "secondary shame," the shame of being ashamed that one is an addict of one sort or another. As Karen makes clear, psychiatrists, who have a shrinking share of the human unhappiness market, tend to be dismissive of these popular shame therapies, insisting that professionally certified psychotherapy is required to dig to the bottom of the matter.

Mr. Karen's survey of the new fashionability of shame is not without interest. As in most discussions of this sort, however, he constantly walks the verge of psychobabble, and frequently steps over. Elaborate category distinctions and clinical jargon add little to the observation that most people, in various ways and in various degrees in various situations, feel unworthy, inferior, awkward, unattractive, clumsy, out of place, embarrassed, undeserving, inadequate, unqualified, and generally not up to what they think they ought to be. Finally, after forty pages of his tour of contemporary psychological thought, in the very last paragraph, Mr. Karen gets to this:

"In religious communities [another] category of shame sometimes develops, a sort of *universal shame* that is felt to be inherent in the human condition. In medieval Christendom the belief that all people were sinners, that all were unworthy, used this sense of universal defect to bind the community, to maintain a spiritual focus, and, perhaps incidentally, to drain off some shame that might otherwise have become individual and narcissistic. From our distant perspective in a diametrically different world, we can easily imagine how comforting it might have been to know that one was not alone in one's flaws and vulnerabilities, to feel assured of one's place despite everything, to be confident that all were equal in God's eyes."

From his "distant perspective in a diametrically different world," Mr. Karen is in fact looking at contemporary America. Perhaps the author is not so alienated from the society of which he is part as he suggests. Perhaps he writes as he does because he assumes that the readership of *The Atlantic* is so alienated. In any event, the irrefutable social fact is that the overwhelming majority of Americans say they are Christians and most go to church more or less regularly. And there, more or less regularly, the preaching and prayer centers in sin and grace, our shame (inseparable from guilt) and God's mercy. The message is not so much that we are all "equal" in God's eyes as that, through Christ, we are all loved, accepted, forgiven, and of eternal worth.

Survey research from the Middle Ages is, admittedly, a bit sketchy, but some scholars have suggested that it is more than probable that the 1.7 billion Christians in the world today have a better grasp of Christian doctrine and are more actively engaged in Christian worship than was the case in "medieval Christendom." Whether or not that is the case, the understanding of shame and its remedy that Mr. Karen sticks on to the end of his article as an item of antiquarian interest is, in fact, the dominant and pervasive understanding in the society that he, with so many others, views from a distance. Mr. Karen is in no way singular in this respect. It is a shameful characteristic of the intellectual classes of our time.

The "Clauses" In Collision

As we have argued in these pages and elsewhere, there is but one religion clause in the First Amendment. Most of our legal problems with church-state questions over the last half century are the result of the pernicious notion that there are two clauses-a no-establishment clause and a free exercise clause-that must somehow be "balanced." The first provision of the First Amendment is, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The stipulation of the one clause is that "Congress shall make no law." The rest of the statement consists of participial modifiers indicating what kind of law Congress shall not make. It is a point of grammar with large ramifications. The entire purpose of the religion clause is to protect the free exercise of religion. No establishment of religion is required precisely for such free exercise of religion.

The ramifications of the observation that there is but one religion clause are spelled out in an admirable scholarly article in the *Michigan Law Review*. In "Structural Free Exercise," Mary Ann Glendon and Raul Yanes note that the Supreme Court took an ominous turn with the *Everson* decision of 1947. Using the language of two clauses, the Court, Glendon and Yanes write, adopted an approach "in which the concept of establishment was broadened, treated as separate from, and actually placed on a collision course with the value it was meant to serve-the free exercise of religion." They continue: "Once the Court embarked without discussion on that path, it was almost impossible for it to avoid construing free exercise narrowly to prevent, so far as possible, accommodations for religious belief and action that might appear, under a broad concept of establishment, to constitute impermissible assistance to religion. The end result was an inversion of the First Amendment's religion language. A single coherent provision that on its face seemed to protect freedom of religion by forbidding Congress to establish religion or otherwise burden free exercise became two 'clauses' with free exercise regularly subordinated to a broad notion of nonestablishment. As time went on, forbidden governmental support of religion became the cardinal value served by the Court's decisions, and the free exercise of religion took a back seat. Language that had been placed at the beginning of the Bill of Rights to protect religion from government had been turned around to protect government from religion. This subjugation of religious freedom to separationism continued even as the Warren court moved more broadly to increase the scope of freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights."

Glendon and Yanes are cautiously hopeful that the current Court may clarify the awful muddle of religion clause jurisprudence. However, as Glendon has written in these pages (see "Religion & the Court: A New Beginning?" March 1992), the signs are very mixed. The *Smith* decision of 1991-popularly known as the peyote case-seemed almost to obliterate the constitutional status of free exercise. As readers know, this journal has been the forum for very lively debates about what might be done to remedy that decision. The pros and cons of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act aside, a thorough reform of religion clause law depends upon a return to what Glendon and Yates aptly term "structural free exercise" in which the elementary fact is again recognized that the First Amendment is intended to protect, not restrict, the free exercise of religion.

The Necessary Opposition

This writer recalls with pleasure a leisurely afternoon spent in conversation with Julius K. Nyerere in the very elegant mansion built for the former British governor in Dar es Salaam. It was 1971 and Nyerere was then president of Tanzania. A devout Catholic, Nyerere is a man of self-effacing manner and persuasive powers. He was, and is, in many ways the spiritual leader of Tanzania, and not only of Tanzania. Jimmy Carter called him "the conscience of Africa," and many in the West have agreed. He had succeeded in turning his country toward a course that was described as authentic African socialism.

That afternoon he held forth at length on the West's unwillingness to see that socialism could also be entirely democratic. We are, he said, obsessed with "the Westminster model" of democracy, in which it is assumed that there must be several parties and a loyal opposition to keep the government in check. Africans, by contrast, are "naturally socialist," he explained, understanding the nation to be a family. "In a family," he said, "free discussion happens naturally. You don't have to designate or pay somebody to say No. Everybody is free to say No whenever they wish." On that most charming and civilized afternoon, this fetching argument seemed almost plausible.

The one-party state created by Nyerere was in fact a dictatorship, albeit a dictatorship of benign intent. And it was also in consequence a good deal more benign than most socialisms. But, predictably, within fairly short order Tanzania went from a position of relative prosperity to being an international basket case. At least until the early 1980s, international lending agencies were prepared to stretch the rules in Tanzania's favor, largely because of the "moral stature" of its teacher-president. But at last the piper had to be paid, and even the most fervent proponents of Nyerere's mix of charism and ideology recognized that deepening economic miseries could not be tolerated forever.

This February, Nyerere told a special congress of the governing Revolutionary Party, "Changes have become imperative, and inevitably we must admit our previous mistakes and build afresh." The time for socialism had passed, and he approved of the country's being opened to free markets, as well as the creation of opposition parties. The political and economic reality factor that has so quickly established itself around the world is belatedly recognized even in Dar es Salaam. To be sure, while affirming the need for markets, capital investment from abroad, and a multiparty polity, Nyerere solemnly warned his people against the danger of electing "capitalists."

The changes in Tanzania are no doubt to be welcomed, and yet there is this dreary line pressed by those who acknowledge that Communism (for which they frequently had some kind words) is dead, that socialism is thrown into grave question, and that market economies are the way out of poverty, but who nonetheless persist in treating capitalism as a dirty word. Perhaps it is too much to expect people to embrace a term that their political religion required them to vilify all their lives. In any event, the greater lesson to be drawn from the Tanzanian experience is that even the most benign of philospher kings cannot be trusted with power that is beyond the reach of institutionalized checks and balances. The Westminster model and the American model do not exhaust the possibilities of democratic governance, but there can be no democracy without a polity structured on the premise of the pervasiveness of original sin. The "idealism" of the conscience of Africa, as of other putative "constituencies of conscience," is morally culpable for forgetting that elementary fact of life-a fact of life that Julius Nyerere, at least, should have known from his catechism.

Peddling Realities

As important as it is to accent the pervasiveness and strength of religion in American culture, it is also important to critique the fatuities and distortions evident in popular religion. Both must be done simultaneously. To say that America is, all in all, a God-fearing nation whose public life is skewed by ungodly elites is to capture a part of the truth. To say that ours is a pagan or sub-pagan society with a thin veneer of religiosity is to capture another important part of the truth. It is more than an indulgence in irony to observe that America is, at the same time, the most religious and the most secular society in the world. Both the celebrants and detractors of American religion are in perpetual danger of believing their part of the truth to be the whole of the matter. Uncritical celebration is a pathology of religion that should not be celebrated, while uncompromising criticism can reflect a religious vitality that is to be celebrated.

Walter Truett Anderson undoubtedly qualifies as a critic. His book, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be* (HarperCollins), is about more than religion, but what it says on that score deserves attention:

"Most of us now are not so much believers as possessors of beliefs. Conversion comes easy and often. The seeker after religious faith tries on not one religion, but any number of them. . . . And a dazzling tool kit of contemporary methods . . . is employed to get people to drop this belief, pick up that one, adjust the fit of another. We all become consumers of reality (although, as in other forms of consumption, not with equal buying power), and greater numbers of us also become creators and merchandisers of reality. As the faith in old absolutes wanes, the season opens on the construction of new realities for those who do not care to be seen in the standard models. In earlier times, the invention of cultural forms was shrouded in mystery; now it becomes, for better or for worse, democratized. Individuals feel free to create new identities for themselves, and entrepreneurs of reality dabble gaily in the creation of new history, new science, new religion, new politics."

From A Prelate In The Church Of Choice

The liberal Catholic magazine *Commonweal* has in recent years been disturbingly prone to sustained spells of common sense. It was therefore strangely reassuring when it recently did a long puff piece in the form of an interview with Anna Quindlen, the *New York Times* columnist whom it is quite impossible to parody. The piece is titled "Quindlen: From the 60s to the 90s," although somewhat more apt would be "In the 90s from the 60s." The interview is conducted by Ms. Quindlen, with a priest intern at *Commonweal* asking her questions, and they are definitely her questions. As is the way with puffery, there were puffballs such as this:

CW: "Do you think there is Catholic bashing in the press?" **Quindlen:** "No." **CW:** "What do you see is happening?" **Quindlen:** "If the cardinal of New York is the sort of self-effacing, low-profile type that Cardinal Terrence Cooke was, you don't find that much written in the press about the Catholic church. If he's the kind of guy that Cardinal O'Connor is-I mean, the idea that Cardinal O'Connor could take to the pulpit and say some of the things that he says and not think there's going to be public reportage of those things is preposterous."

In other words, if Cardinal O'Connor publicly expresses views with which Ms. Quindlen disagrees, he should expect to get bashed. The very pro-choice Ms. Quindlen complains that the church hierarchy has closed its eyes to "the grey area" in the abortion debate. On the status of the fetus, she opines, "Isn't it possible that this is neither nonlife nor life?" Very nuanced, as they say. She simply knows that there is a "church of the hierarchy" and a "church of the people," and it seems that she is high in the hierarchy of the latter.

CW: "A recent issue of *Spy* magazine called you an avatar of common sense and Cardinal O'Connor a fake avatar of common sense. Is it just their whimsy or do you think that's how you're perceived?" **Quindlen:** "I think that's how I am perceived." **CW:** "That's a danger today that the hierarchy is not seen as authoritative in a wider sense. And you're seen as authoritative." **Quindlen:** "What do you make of that?" **CW:** "Well, people probably find that you resonate with their lives more than the hierarchy does." **Quindlen:** "Right."

Or right on, as they used to say. This is written on Friday, a day when charity threatens to get the better of us, and we thought it possible that the editors of *Commonweal*, knowing that it is not possible to parody Anna Quindlen, decided to let her do it to herself. But this very day the subsequent issue of *Commonweal* arrives, and it makes clear that such charity should be kept in check.

To his credit, associate editor Paul Baumann strongly and persuasively dissents from the puffing of Anna Quindlen. Her views, he writes, "seem an idiosyncratic Catholicism, to say the least." Quindlen's "church of choice" and her enthusiasm for shedding the "superstitions" of the past pose major problems for Baumann. "Doubtless we have shed the piety of the past, but whether that is an emanicipation or whether we have merely exchanged custom for the empty iconoclasm of popular culture is the nagging question. Religious sensibilities inhere in specific social contexts. That's another way of saying you can't have a Catholic faith without a Catholic culture. If you invest authenticity and ultimate authority in the values of secularism, you get secularism, not an enlightened Catholicism. . . . Given the kind of qualms Quindlen has about old Catholic forms and rituals, how can she accommodate the extravagant symbolism that locates God in a particular piece of bread and cup of wine? Why keep that old-and most 'obligatory'-form when discarding the rest?" Baumann concludes: "An unfashionable belief in the efficacy of symbolic action remains Roman Catholicism's distinctive-and most lovable-feature. As *Lumen Gentium* [Vatican II's constitution on the Church] succinctly states, the church is 'the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery.' Quindlen seems embarrassed by such claims to truth or authority, and takes refuge in a 'personal' relationship with Jesus while enthroning the superiority of good works over symbolic actions."

The presence of this Baumann fellow among the editors, even in dissent, may help explain the spasms of common sense we mentioned at the start.

Goodbye To The University

British historian and journalist Paul Johnson has been giving some thought to the state of universities. Writing in *The Spectator* (London) he offers a few cautiously nuanced conclusions: "Universities are the most overrated institutions of our age. Of all the calamities which have befallen the 20th century, apart from the two world wars, the expansion of higher education in the 1950s and 1960s was the most enduring. It is a myth that universities are nurseries of reason. They are hothouses for every kind of extremism, irrationality, intolerance, and prejudice, where intellectual and social snobbery is almost purposefully instilled and where dons attempt to pass on to their students their own sins of pride. The wonder is that so many people emerge from these dens still employable, though a significant minority, as we have learned to our cost, go forth well equipped for a lifetime of public mischief-making.

"I remember . . . when the new University of the Midlands was designated to contribute to the invigoration of our car industry; instead it provided the kiss of death, by churning out Trot shop-stewards a good deal more destructive than their supposedly uneducated working-class predecessors. It is no accident that Ontario, Canada's richest province, is now being wrecked by a socialist government led by a fanatical 1960s' Rhodes Scholar. The new form of totalitarianism, Political Correctness, is entirely a university invention, and the virulent outbreak of black anti-Semitism, which has Brooklyn in violent uproar, was bred on campus in the fraudulent 'Afro-American Studies' departments. At the very moment when these evils-and others-are spreading rapidly to Britain, a Conservative government plans to expose yet more of our children to them, at public expense."

With a college education at a "quality" school in America now costing in excess of $100,000, our colleague Midge Decter suggests that we will soon reach the point at which numerous young people and their parents will ask, Why? Her further thought is that, if five or six major corporations would announce that they are no longer going to require a college degree, that they are going to train their own people, and that they will make provision for workers to learn Shakespeare and other good things in night school (which is more than they are learning in university now), the current system of higher education would collapse almost overnight. It is an intriguing idea, although we worry about some of our best friends who might suddenly be out of work. On the other hand, fine scholars that they are, they could probably attract students who would pay for their teaching. Which is how, come to think of it, universities got started in the first place.

Orthodox Healings

A headline in the Ecumenical Press Service caught our eye- "Eastern Orthodox Leaders to Meet: Peace, Love, Hope on Agenda." Now that's what we call getting back to basics. Actually, it is a very important meeting called by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos in Istanbul, and it was attended by all autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox churches. The presence of all fourteen jurisdictions is unprecedented.

Peace, love, and hope are very much needed as some Orthodox churches in Central and Eastern Europe are highly agitated about what they deem to be missionary incursions on their turf by Roman Catholics and by evangelical and pentecostal Protestants. There are also a good many ecumenical bruises as a consequence of Orthodox leaders boycotting John Paul II's synod of European bishops that met at the end of last year. But mainly the Orthodox must attend to healing within their own most fissiparous ranks. For instance, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, which was during the Communist years exiled in the United States, has now returned to Russia to establish rival dioceses to those of the Moscow Patriarchate, arguing that the Russian church leaders were irretrievably compromised by their subservience to the Communist regime.

Similarly, in Greece and elsewhere, there are long-standing divisions between the "Old Calendarists" (or "Calendrists") and the majority of Orthodox who adopted the Gregorian calendar in the 1920s. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Old Calendarists have themselves split into three or four rival groups. In addition, there is sharp disagreement among Orthodox leaders about how or if they should maintain ties to the World Council of Churches (WCC). While the WCC is charged with having played footsy with the Communist oppressors, many Orthodox leaders understandably feel that they are in no moral position to press the charge too hard. These and myriad other problems considered, the headline might better have read, "Peace, Love, Hope *Is* Agenda."

Havel's Wisdom, And A Caveat

The modern era, according to Vaclav Havel, the President of Czechoslovakia, was marked by the proud assumption that man is "the pinnacle of everything that exists," and therefore all things could be brought under the control of human knowledge and technique. With the end of Communism, he suggests, the modern era came to its definitive end. "Communism was the perverse extreme of this trend. It was an attempt, on the basis of a few propositions masquerading as the only scientific truth, to organize all of life according to a single model, and to subject it to central planning and control regardless of whether or not that was what life wanted."

Like almost all of those who were involved in these great events in Central and Eastern Europe, and unlike almost all Western commentators on those events, Havel insists that Communism was brought down by a revolution of the spirit (and maybe the Spirit). "Communism was not defeated by military force, but by life, by the human spirit, by conscience, by the resistance of Being and man to manipulation. It was defeated by a revolt of color, authenticity, history in all its variety and human individuality against imprisonment within a uniform ideology." The lesson to be learned is that human beings are not statistics or ciphers, that the world cannot be made better but will only inevitably be made worse by "universal systemic solutions" that ignore the particularities of life.

"Soul, individual spirituality, first-hand personal insight into things; the courage to be himself and go the way his conscience points, humility in the face of the mysterious order of Being, confidence in its natural direction, and, above all, trust in his own subjectivity as his principal link with the subjectivity of the world-these are the qualities that politicians of the future should cultivate." Havel's compelling insights are marred only by the implausible suggestion that, in our search for a better approach to personal and social life, "politicians should lead the way." Havel is an unusual figure, a poet president in the tradition of philosopher kings. But also in his case, we do well to cultivate a rigorous skepticism toward political mystagogy.

One of the great delusions of the modern era was the politicizing of the spiritual and the spiritualizing of the political, a delusion that had tragic consequences not least in the evil empire now happily past. Havel's language is that also of John Paul II. The latter invokes "the subjectivity of society," however, in order to set sharp limits upon the pretensions of the state and of the political as such (see his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*). While Havel freely acknowledges the indispensable role of Christianity in the "velvet revolution" that overthrew Communism in Czechoslovakia, he has been publicly reticent about whether he is a Christian. Like many who have a profound spiritual vision but no communal tradition by which that vision is sustained and expressed, Havel is inclined to make politics his church. Others make a church of art or science. It is perfectly understandable that those who have no church tend to create one out of whatever insights and passions they do possess. It is also exceedingly dangerous, and, as the modern era teaches us, never so dangerous as when politics is turned into a church and politicians into high priests of the human yearning for a life more in accord with "the mysterious order of Being."

While We're At It

Appearing in the University of Chicago's *The Journal of Religion* is an instructive article by Edward T. Oakes, S.J., "Apologetics and the Pathos of Narrative Theology." (See Professor Oakes' essay on Wittgenstein elsewhere in this issue.) Narrative theology has been very big in recent years. Very big. And it is very attractive, offering ways of sustaining communal traditions against the corrosions of modernity. The problem, says Father Oakes, is that narrative theology tends to be preoccupied with the question of "meaning" at the expense of the question of "truth." Individuals and communities may find cultural-linguistic-religious traditions ever so meaningful, but that is not very helpful if they happen not to be true. Apologetics is, inescapably, about truth. Oakes concludes: "It is, I believe, the pathos of much of narrative theology that it too easily tries to finesse these issues by a retreat into a mere act of recital, meant for the sustenance and benefit of the believing community, rather than going outward and facing the hard issues of preaching to a world that can raise objections to the Christian message almost at every point. But underneath those ready objections of the nonbeliever is another pathos too, as [David] Tracy has seen: the deeper fear that the Christian message may simply seem too good to be true. Perhaps indeed the pathos of narrative theology reflects that larger point. For insofar as it represents a retreat to the stories of isolated communities, it seems to share in that same fear, conceding by its inaction, if not in its words, that the wider world has actually not been redeemed after all. If in fact these two fears are linked-and how can believers not share in the doubts and fears of their contemporaries?-we might have there the beginnings of a real dialogue, for as narrative theology continues to recount to itself the stories of God's deliverance of his people, it will come to realize how far-reaching those acts of deliverance are."

Admittedly, there is almost nothing that can go wrong with the world that has not gone wrong with New York City. Nonetheless, some of us persist in believing that there is truth in the story that over the gates of the heavenly city there is this sign, "From the Wonderful People Who Brought You New York City: The New Jerusalem!" For those who did not like New York City in this life, there will be an alternative destination. Whether or not there is anything to that story, uncultured despisers of New York should know that Gallup has applied his national criteria to our town and discovered that, by all the usual measures of religiousness, New Yorkers are about as religious as the rest of the country. Except for Manhattan. Forty-one percent of Manhattanites say that religion is "very important" in their lives. The Bronx (yes, the Bronx of "Fort Apache" fame) rates highest, with 66 percent saying that religion is very important in their lives. No atheists in foxholes, it seems. (That compares with 55 percent nationally who say religion is very important.) According to a massive survey done by the City University of New York, 43 percent of New Yorkers are Roman Catholic, 16 percent are Jewish, and the rest are sundry Protestants, with very small minorities of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, and 6 percent saying they have no religious affiliation. Only 1 percent claims to be Eastern Orthodox, which strikes us as too small. Also, the Catholic figure is considerably higher than in the statistics kept by the Archdiocese and the Diocese of Brooklyn. We have no idea what all this means, but we thought some readers might be interested in data on the religious situation that prevails in this boot camp for the New Jerusalem.

"Isn't that the journal you used to edit?" asks a puzzled reader who received a magazine called *This World: A*

Journal of Religion and Public Life. It seems a very long time ago, but the answer is yes. In 1989 we had a rather raucous parting of the ways with an Illinois-based institute and we then established the entirely independent Institute on Religion and Public Life which, inter alia, publishes FIRST THINGS. The Illinois group claimed title to the quarterly, *This World*, which ceased publication until its reappearance, under new sponsorship, as an annual a few months ago. The accompanying announcement says, "The appearance of this issue marks the resumption of publication of one of America's premiere magazines of religious, political, and social commentary." We are immodest enough to think that that is an accurate description of what *This World* used to be. There are twenty-four names listed as being editorially connected with the reappearance. We have never heard of most of them, but were interested to note the presence of Andrew Greeley. If that is Father Andrew M. Greeley the sociological fabulist, his many fans might be surprised to see him in the company of paleoconservatives slogging through the fever swamps of the distant right. In any event, we wish this new venture well. Religion and public life needs all the attention it can get. And there is no reason why next year's issue might not contain material of greater interest than this one. We do hope, however, that nobody will confuse what now represents itself as *This World* with the *This World* that used to be. The disinterment of the name notwithstanding, what used to be *This World* is now FIRST THINGS.

"Credo in un mondo . . ." Sound like the beginning of a religious creed? It is. "Swatch" watches is repeating this full-page ad in the *New York Times*. The creed is written in many different languages: "I believe in a world where we don't just dream about the future but make it happen." With Marx, Swatch proclaims that the time has come not just to understand the world but to change it. The advertisements are in support of "Earth Summit '92," to be held this summer in Rio de Janeiro. They are further evidence of the post-Communist rechanneling of the utopian impulse into environmentalism. And the nice thing about the object of this credal devotion is that it/he/she can be appeased by putting out a mere $72.50 for an environmentally correct Swatch watch. In the context of another religion, that's called cheap grace.

Among the most infamous of Nazi war criminals was Dr. Josef Mengele. At Auschwitz he was known as the "Angel of Death" for his lethal "scientific" experiments on prisoners. After the war, the Angel of Death escaped to Argentina where authorities have now opened the files on Nazis who found refuge there. It turns out that Mengele made his living in Argentine as an abortionist. It figures.

He is often called the dean of evangelical theology, and with good reason. In 1947, Carl F. H. Henry rocked the conservative Protestant world with his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. He called upon fundamentalists (soon to be called neo-evangelicals and, later, simply evangelicals) to abandon their defensive and fearful posture in order to engage the world, including its political and social dimensions, by a clear and informed Christian assertiveness. In 1955 he became founding editor of *Christianity Today*, which was under his leadership a magazine of considerable intellectual substance. Recently Henry, now almost eighty, addressed the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. His subject was religious freedom and why that is likely to be among the most pressing questions for the churches and for the world in the decades ahead. Here is some of what he said: "Evangelical Christianity, while retaining evangelistic momentum, is nonetheless yielding religious-cultural initiative to American Catholicism, especially in influential political, educational, and media sectors. The consequences of such evangelical retirement are two-fold. On the one hand there is increasing talk of Catholic-Evangelical co-belligerency in America to confront the rising tide of naturalism, and to do so only or largely on the basis of such broad covering motifs as natural law, common good, and distributive justice. On the other hand, the papal characterizations of evangelical gains in Latin America as deplorable sectarian inroads can only dampen prospects for suitable Catholic-Evangelical cooperation. Meanwhile more and more observers of the new situation in Eastern Europe are apprehensive over possible ecclesiastical strife between the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant ecumenist, evangelical, and other groups. Were such contention to occur, it would seriously challenge the thesis that religious liberty is the best guarantee of a stable society."

"The problem with evangelicals," a prominent evangelical leader tells us, "is that whenever they attain positions of power and respectability they are so impressed by where they arrived that they forget why they were going there in the first place." The generalization is no doubt overly broad, for we know evangelicals influentially positioned in the academy, in government, and in the professions who seem to remember quite well the vocational vision that impelled them to such positions. And yet, there is undeniable truth in our friend's generalization. It was brought to mind by a review of C. Everett Koop's memoirs in *Christianity Today*. Our readers will recall Dr. Bernard Nathanson's pointed critique of the former Surgeon General's *apologia* (April). The *CT* reviewer, by way of contrast, thought it a mark of greatness that Koop could, for example, establish such an "affable" working relationship with such as Senator Ted Kennedy. The reviewer continues: "At first it seems contradictory that Koop, a man of such strong will and stubborn integrity, should be a master of negotiation and compromise. Upon further inspection, however, it becomes clear that it was the strength of Koop's convictions, founded in love, that enabled him to work so well with people whose convictions differed from his own. Perhaps that is the most important lesson we can take from this remarkable life story." Never mind that, as Nathanson notes, while in office Koop undermined the pro-life movement at critical points, courted the homosexualist lobby, and contributed to a good deal of the misleading hype about AIDS. As they say within the Washington beltway, he "grew" while in office. While we would in no way question Dr. Koop's commitment as a Christian, the fact that he got along so well with those of opposing convictions is by no means "the most important lesson" to be learned by evangelicals who want to make a difference.

The Catholic Church and the Politics of Abortion: A View from the States (Westview) is a timely contribution to better understanding abortion politics after the 1989 *Webster* decision that returned segments of the abortion decision to the states. Although the editors, Timothy A. Byrnes and Mary C. Segers, along with most of the contributors tend to be pro-choice and critical of the Catholic Church's role in abortion politics, the tone of this informative book is generally dispassionate. In the last decade, commentators have frequently pitted John Cardinal O'Connor of New York against Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago, suggesting that the latter was "softer" on abortion, including it among a host of moral and political imperatives in "the seamless garment." Whatever may have been the case in the past, editor Byrnes contends that there is today no doubt about the solidarity of the American bishops when it comes to the priority of the abortion question. "I want to stress that I have no doubt this agreement is a longstanding one. I am not arguing that the bishops' consensus on abortion or on the binding nature of the church's teaching on that subject was created by the court's decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, Inc.* What I am arguing is that the court's decision has created a political context in which that consensus has become clearer to Catholic citizens, Catholic politicians, and anyone else who is interested in the bishops' participation in the political process. Bernardin's consistent ethic, or seamless garment, has always included unwavering opposition to abortion. But in the past, that seamless garment was used as a kind of protective cloak by Catholic politicians who tried to compensate for their support of abortion rights by stressing their commitment to church teaching on other life issues. *Webster* has stripped this cloak away by confronting these politicians with concrete political choice concerning abortion and by highlighting a firm and public consensus among the Catholic hierarchy that 'no Catholic can responsibly take a 'pro-choice' stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taking of innocent human life.' "

We are asked about best places to buy books. Don't overlook Christian Book Distributors (CBD), P.O. Box 6000, Peabody, MA 01961. In the fields of both classics and contemporary, they offer real bargains. Their catalog is free.

In the capitals of twenty-eight states, Catholic bishops have established lobbying offices. The people who publish *Initiatives* are not complaining about that, but they are unhappy when these lobbyists purport to represent all the Catholics of a given state. That happened in Illinois when the Catholic lobby supported a health care "surrogate decision" act that was opposed by many pro-life forces. "By what authority does [the bishop's lobbyist] claim that he represents the views of three million Illinois Catholics? *Initiatives* can find no warrant in law (civil, canon, divine, or natural) that would entitle a bishop to speak for other Catholic citizens before a legislative body. This is not a minor matter. If a bishop or his representative purports to state the opinion of Catholic citizens on an important legislative issue-with or without their permission-is not the role of the Catholic citizen to become active in politics depreciated?" A good question, that. (*Initiatives* is published by the National Center for the Laity, 1 East Superior St., Chicago IL 60611.)

While a heartening number of American Jewish thinkers are reevaluating the necessary role of religion in our public life, the "orthodox" line among the non-Orthodox is still very much in place. Robert K. Lifton, president of the American Jewish Congress, is one among many who set themselves against the reevaluation represented by, for instance, the symposium, "Judaism and American Public Life" (March 1991), now greatly expanded into a new book edited by Rabbi David G. Dalin, *American Jews and the Separationist Faith: The New Debate on Religion in Public Life* (to be published in October by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, $19.95 cloth). Writing in *Congress Monthly,* Lifton exhorts Jews to be as vigorous in supporting strict separationism between church and state as they are in supporting Israel. In fact, he says the first task is more important. "I deem this safeguarding of our free institutions as American Jewry's prime political directive. . . . At the heart of the American system of rights is the First Amendment prohibiting the establishment of religion. . . . There are those in our country today who would seek to destroy the barriers separating church and state. . . . The American Jewish community must commit all of its resources, financial and political, to combat those who would change or undermine the historic American system." The American Jewish Congress, with the formidable legal energy of Leo Pfeffer, was for decades successful in advancing the proposition that the separation of church and state requires the separation of religion from public life. In the courts, among the general public, and not least among American Jews, that proposition is now being discredited. There is scant chance that American Jewry "will commit all of its resources" or even a substantial part thereof to coming to the rescue of a failed doctrine. At the same time, outbursts such as Lifton's are a salutary reminder that the doctrine will not go gentle into that good night.

A sign espied a while back at a pro-choice demonstration against a pro-life demonstration. The woman was about thirty. The sign was: "I would die to defend my Mom's right to an abortion." It warrants a moment's reflection.

A lead editorial in the *Boston Globe* is titled "Buchanan's Venom" and goes on, and on, about how Patrick Buchanan is joined with David Duke in poisoning our political culture.

Beside it is a big cartoon depicting millions of starving children presided over by a smiling Pope John Paul II who holds a cross draped with a banner bearing the legend "Procreation." In the editorial view of the *Boston Globe*, it seems, there is bad venom and good venom.

Sources: On Canadian Supreme Court and Catharine MacKinnon, *New York Times*, February 28, 1992. Robert Karen on shame in *The Atlantic*, February 1992. Glendon and Yanes on the religion clauses of the First Amendment, *Michigan Law Review*, December 1991. Report on Tanzania, *New York Times*, February 19, 1992. Anna Quindlen interview in *Commonweal*, February 14, 1992; Paul Baumann analysis of Quindlen remarks in *Commonweal*, February 28, 1992. On Orthodox churches, Ecumencial Press Service, February 21-29, 1992. Vaclav Havel quoted in *New York Times*, March 1, 1992. Edward Oakes on narrative and truth in *Journal of Religion* 72, no. 1 (January 1992). Data on religion in New York City reported in *Newsday*, December 24, 1991. On Josef Mengele, *New York Times*, February 11, 1992. Review of Koop autobiography, *Christianity Today*, March 9, 1992. On lobbying by Catholic bishops, *Initiatives*, February 1992. Robert K. Lifton on Jews and strict separationism, *Congress Monthly*, January 1992. Woman endorsing her mother's right to an abortion, *New York Times*, September 30, 1991. *Boston Globe* editorial on "venom," March 6, 1992.

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