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The Religious Right: Toward A Coalition

by Murray N. Rothbard

How is it that I, a pro-choice libertarian, stood up and cheered when the Reverend Falwell announced, after the election, that he might revive the Moral Majority; and was repelled when Cal Thomas, former vice-president of that organization, from his lofty post as one of the neocons' favorite Christian columnists, urged Falwell not to do so? (Nov. 12) Thomas counsels "more compassion and less confrontation," warning that we are in a "post-Christian culture," so that Christian conservatives should confine themselves to such "positive" measures as spending their money on scholarships for kids to attend private schools, and on crisis pregnancy centers to offer adoption services. In other words: to abandon political action, or any confrontation against evil.

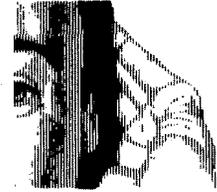
Most libertarians think of Christian conservatives in the same lurid terms as the leftist media, if not more so: that their aim is to impose a Christian theocracy, to outlaw liquor and other means of hedonic enjoyment, and to break down bedroom doors to enforce a Morality Police upon the country. Nothing could be further from the truth: Christian conserva-

tives are trying to fight back against a left-liberal elite that used government to assault and virtually destroy Christian values, principles and culture.

Breaking Down Bedroom Doors?

It is true that nineteenth-century Protestantism, particularly in Yankee territories of the North, was driven by post-millennial evangelical pietism to use the government to stamp out sin, a category that was very widely defined, to include the outlawry of liquor, as well of gambling, dancing, and all forms of Sabbath-breaking. Sodomy was made illegal, but so too was heterosexual immorality, such as fornication and adultery. But old-fashioned post-millennial pietism has been dead as a dodo since the 1920s. While many Christian conservatives favor keeping some or all of the sex laws on

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THE EAR

by Sarah Barton

Congratulations to Jared Taylor for his wonderful book on race, *Paved With Good Intentions* (Carroll & Graf), which managed to break through the Establishment's Velvet Curtain. But boo to "libertarian" attorney and race specialist Clint Bolick, theoretician at the Koch-funded Institute for Justice, who panned the book in the *Wall Street Journal*. Bolick claims that we cannot get rid of the welfare state until every trace of racism has been stamped out, until blacks have full "access" to everything, etc. "Libertarian," or Left-liberal?

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 the books for symbolic reasons, I know of no Christian group that wants to embark on a crusade of enforcing these laws, or of having the police break down bedroom doors. For that matter, there are very few conservative prohibitionist groups either; if and when prohibition comes to America, it will be a left-liberal measure, done to improve our "health" and to cut down accidents on the roads. There are no Christian groups that want to persecute gays, or adulterers.

The battle now is on very different territory. The battle is over "anti-discrimination" laws, to make it illegal to hire, fire, or associate, in accordance with sexual preference or anti-preference. In the case of gays, as in the case of blacks, women, Hispanics, "the handicapped," and countless other victomological groups targeted for "anti-discrimination" measures, new egalitarian "rights" are discovered that are supposed to be enforced by majesty of the law. In the first place, these "rights" are concocted at the expense of the genuine rights of every person over his own property; secondly, all this "rights" talk is irrelevant, since the problem of hiring, firing, associating, etc. is something to be decided on

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by people and institutions themselves, on the basis of what's most convenient for the particular organization. "Rights" have nothing to do with the case. And third, the Constitution has been systematically perverted to abandon strictly limited minimal government on behalf of a crusade by the federal courts to multiply and enforce such phony rights to the hilt.

On the phoniness of rights talk in these matters: suppose I decide to open up a Chinese restaurant. I make a conscious business decision to hire only Chinese waiters who speak both Chinese and English, since I want to attract a largely Chinese clientele. Shouldn't I have the right to use my property to hire only Chinese waiters? The same sort of business decision should be right and remain unchallenged if I should wish to hire only men, only women, only blacks, only whites, only gays, only straights, etc. in making my business decision. But what if my business decision should turn out to be wrong, and I lose a lot of non-Chinese customers? In that case, my business will suffer, and I will either change or go out of business. Once again, it should be my decision, period.

In sum: anti-discrimination laws of any sort are evil, aggress

against the genuine rights of person and property, and are uneconomic since they cripple efficient business decisions.

This brings us to the first controversial move of the Clinton-elect pre-administration: eliminating the ban on gays in the military. The military should be considered like any other business, organization, or service; its decisions should be based on what's best for the military, and "rights" have nothing to do with such decisions. The military's long-standing ban on gays in the military has nothing to do with "rights" or even "homophobia"; rather it is the result of long experience as well as common sense. The military is not like any civilian organization. Not only are its men in combat situations (which it partially shares with civilian outfits like the police) but the military commander has virtual total control over his subordinate's person and life, especially in combat situations. In such situations, open homosexuals could engage in favoritism toward loved ones, and engage in sexual exploitation and abuse of subordinates under their command. Add the discomfort of many in close and intimate situations, and you get destruction of the morale and efficiency of combat units.

The standard answer of gays is interesting for being both abstract and unresponsive to the point. Namely: all sexual *activities* are and should be illegal in the military, much less sexual abuse of subordinates. Make only *actions* illegal say the advocates of gays in the military, and make any *orientation*

licit and legitimate.

One problem with this libertarian-sounding answer is that it confuses what should be illegal *per se* from what should be illegal as a voluntary member of an organization (e.g. the military) which can and should have its own rules of membership, let alone its own hiring and promoting and firing. In criminal law, only actions (such as robbery and murder) should be illegal, and not mental orientation. But who should or should not be a member of the military should depend on military rules, and not simply include anyone who is not a criminal. Thus, frail types who are half-blind are clearly not in a *per se* state of criminality; but surely, the military has the right to bar such people from membership.

Secondly, the standard pro-gay answer ignores the facts of human nature. Surely, libertarians in particular should be alive to the absurdity of making sex illegal and then declaring an end to the matter. The point is that the military understands that, while sex in the military should indeed be outlawed, that this is not going to settle the matter, because human nature often triumphs over the law. Prostitution has been illegal from time immemorial, but it has scarcely disappeared. It is precisely because of its shrewd understanding of human nature that the military wants to keep the ban on gays in the military. The military doesn't naively assume that there *are no* gays in the army or navy now. On the other hand, it has no intention of going on a "witch hunt" to try to ferret

out secret gays. The whole point is that, with gays necessarily in the closet, the problem of favoritism, sexual abuse, etc. is greatly minimized. Allow open gaydom in the military, however, and the problems, and the suffering of morale, will escalate.

The same strictures apply *a fortiori* to women in the military, especially to integrated close-contact and intimate units such as exist in combat. (The old method of segregated female units for typing, jeep-driving, etc. did not pose such problems.) Since

there are far more heterosexual than homosexual males, and since there is no question of a "closet" here, favoritism and abuse will be far more rampant. Once again, illegalizing sex within the military would be even more difficult to enforce. This is especially true in the current climate where "sexual harassment" has been expanded to touching and even ogling. Think of sex-integrated showers and think of Tailhook maximized to the nth degree!

The problem of women in the military has been further aggravated by the sex-norming of physical requirements in the military. Since it proved almost impossible for women to pass the standard tests for strength and speed, these tests have

been dumbed down so that most women can pass them; and this includes such essential combat skills as carrying weapons and throwing grenades!

Finally, libertarians will fall back on their standard argument that while all these strictures do apply to *private* organizations, and that "rights" do not apply to such organizations, egalitarian rights *do* apply to such governmental outfits as the military. But, as I have written in the case of whether someone has "the right" to stink up a

public library just because it is public, this sort of nihilism has to be abandoned. I'm in favor of privatizing everything, but short of that glorious day, existing government services should be operated as efficiently as possible. Surely, the postal service should be privatized, but, pending that happy day, should we advocate allowing postal workers to toss all the mail into the dumpster, in the name of making that service as terrible as possible? Apart from the horrors such a position would impose upon the poor consumers (that's us), there is another grave error to this standard libertarian position (which I confess I once held), that it besmirches and confuses the fair concept of "rights," and

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transmutes it from a strict defense of an individual's person and property, to a confused, egalitarian mishmash. Hence, "anti-discrimination" or even affirmative action "rights" in public services sets the conditions for their admittedly monstrous expansion into the private realm.

The Abortion Question and Radical Decentralization

The abortion issue is a more difficult one. Since the anti-abortion people hold abortion to be murder of a human being, breaking down the bedroom doors to stop murder would not then be an anti-libertarian position. And moreover, it would obviously be in a very different category from police enforcement of laws against sexual activity.

But even here there is considerable room for coalition between pro-choice libertarians and the pro-life religious Right. In the first place, as I have written about libertarian Republican Congressional candidate Henry Butler, his pro-choice position did not spare him the calumny of the pro-abortion crowd, since he opposed taxpayer funding of abortions, not just because we are against all taxpayer funding of medical care, but also because it is peculiarly monstrous to force those who abhor abortion as murder to pay for such murders. Furthermore, pro-choicers can join with pro-lifers in upholding the freedom to choose of taxpayers, and of gynecologists, who are under increasing pressure by pro-abortionists to

commit abortions, or else.

But even apart from the funding issue, there are other arguments for a *rapprochement* with pro-lifers. There is a prudential consideration: a ban on something as murder is not going to be enforceable if only a minority considers it as murder. A national prohibition is simply not going to work, in addition to being politically impossible to get through in the first place. Pro-choice paleolibertarians can tell the pro-lifers: "Look, a national prohibition is hopeless. Stop trying to pass a human life amendment to the Constitution. Instead, for this and many other reasons, we should radically decentralize political and judicial decisions in this country; we must end the despotism of the Supreme Court and the federal judiciary, and return political decisions to state and local levels."

Pro-choice paleos should therefore hope that *Roe v. Wade* is someday overthrown, and abortion questions go back to the state and local levels—the more decentralized the better. Let Oklahoma and Missouri restrict or outlaw abortions, while California and New York retain abortion rights. Hopefully, some day we will have localities within each state making such decisions. Conflict will then be largely defused. Those who want to have, or to practice, abortions can move or travel to California (or Marin County) or New York (or the West Side of Manhattan). The standard rebuttal of the pro-abortionists that "poor women" who haven't got the money to travel would be deprived of abortions of course reverts back to a general

egalitarian redistributionist argument. Aren't the poor "deprived" of vacation travel now? Again, it demonstrates the hidden agenda of the pro-abortionists in favor of socialized medicine and collectivism generally.

A commitment to radical decentralization means that pro-choicers should give up the Freedom of Choice Act, which would impose abortion rights by the federal government upon the entire country. It means that libertarians should cease putting all their judicial eggs in the basket of hoping to get good guys, like Richard Epstein or Alex Kozinski, on the Supreme Court. Far more important is getting rid of federal judicial tyranny altogether, and to decentralize our polity radically—to return to the forgotten Tenth Amendment.

An unfortunate act of President-elect Clinton was to reverse the Bush policy of not funding physicians who counsel abortions. Leftists cleverly distorted this action as an "invasion of the free speech of physicians." But no "freedom of speech" was involved. People should be free to speak, but this does not mean they must be shielded from the consequences of such speech. No person, and hence no physician, has a "right" to receive taxpayer funding. Everyone may have the right to say whatever they like, but not the right to say whatever they like and *still* be funded by the taxpayers. And just as taxpayers should not be forced to fund abortions, neither should they be forced to fund people who counsel abortions.

“Establishing” Religion

Christians have, for decades, suffered an organized assault that has driven expressions of Christianity out of the public school, the public square, and almost out of public life altogether. The rationale has been an absurd twisting and overinflation of the First Amendment prohibition on establishing a religion. Establishing a religion has a specific meaning: paying for ministers and churches out of taxpayer funds. To ban even voluntary prayer from the public schools, or to ban the teaching of religion, is a pettifogging willful misconstruction of the text and of the intent of the framers, in order to replace our former Christian culture with a left-secular one. The banning of creches in front of local town halls demonstrates how far the secularists will go—indeed shows how totalitarian they are in their drive to ban religion from public institutions.

Hence, in the competition of world-views, Christians have had to function with both hands tied behind their back. Since the competition, left-secularist world-view is not called a “religion,” the ouster of the Christian world-view from the schools has left the path clear for left-secularism to conquer the field of ideas unchallenged.

Obviously, no libertarian can favor a genuine establishment of a church. Yet, it must be pointed out that the First Amendment was only supposed to apply to Congress, and not to the several states, and that some states continued to have an established church well past the establishment of

the American Republic. Connecticut, for example, continued the establishment of the Presbyterian Church past 1789, and yet we hear no stories of Connecticut groaning under intolerable despotism. So that if even an established church in one or two states need not be met with hysteria, what are we to think of all the fuss and feathers about a creche, or voluntary prayer or “In God We Trust” on American coins?

Restoring prayer, however, will scarcely at this date solve the grievous public school problem. Public schools are expensive and massive centers for cultural and ideological brainwashing, at which they are unfortunately far more effective than in teaching the 3R’s or in keeping simple order within the schools. Any plan to begin dismantling the public school monstrosity is met with effective opposition by the teachers’ and educators’ unions. Truly radical change is needed to shift education from public to unregulated private schooling, religious and secular, as well as home schooling by parents.

Agenda for the Christian Right

These are just some of the issues that invite an alliance between paleolibertarians and the Christian Right. While the Christian Right contains many wonderful people, it too needs to get its own act together. It must take on two vital and necessary intra-Christian tasks, for which it needs a lot more spirit of confrontation and a lot less “compassion.” In the first place, it must level hammer

blows against the pietist and pervasive Christian Left, the treacly, egalitarian, socialistic “We Shall Overcome” Left. Secondly, it must enter the real world by inveighing against the dispensationalists and their predictions and yearnings for an imminent Armageddon. Not only do their repeated predictions of Armageddon subject them to justifiable ridicule, but concentration on Armageddon fatally weakens their will to participate in political action and confrontation. In addition, their interpretation of the *Book of Revelation* makes the dispensationalists even more fanatical Zionists than Yitzhak Shamir and the *Likudniks*.

In sum, the task of paleolibertarians is to break out of the sectarian libertarian hole, and to forge alliances with cultural and social, as well as politico-economic, “reactionaries.” The end of the Cold War, as well as the rise of “political correctness,” has made totally obsolete the standard libertarian view that libertarians are either half-way between, or “above,” both Right and Left. Once again, as before the late 1950’s, libertarians should consider themselves people of the Right. ■

Ethnic Fury In The Caucasus: Sorting It Out

by M.N.R.

The Caucasus, as usual, is aflame, and we are in danger of