

HOW BIBLICAL IS THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT?

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On Sunday night, March 20, 2005 (Palm Sunday in Western Christianity), the majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives strode purposefully to the podium to call the question on Senate Bill 686. With emotion in his voice, congressman Tom DeLay (R-Texas) declared, “A young woman in Florida is being dehydrated and starved to death ... If we do not act, she will die of thirst ... Terri Schiavo has survived her Passion weekend, and she has not been forsaken. No more words, Mr. Speaker. She is waiting. The Members are here. The hour has come. Mr. Speaker, call the vote.”¹

The moment is well known. Many have questioned the constitutionality of DeLay’s actions and speculated about his motives. But of all the many distractions of that surreal and theatrical late-night Congressional session, what arrested me most as I watched on C-Span was the method and impact of his biblical interpretation. DeLay had, whether intentionally or not, selected three fragments from two different gospels (Mark and John), which, in their original contexts, present quite distinct portrayals of the death of Jesus and its meaning. What did he think he was doing by invoking these three distinct texts, and in this context? What happened when he combined them as he did, and for what purpose?

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus goes to his death utterly alone. The disciples have all fled (14:50). As he hangs in agony on the cross, he cries out, in the words of Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:33). The text has perennially raised a burning question for its readers: are the words to be taken at face value, as an expression of Jesus' deep despair in drinking "the cup" he asked in Gethsemane to pass by him—i.e., his crucifixion—or should it be God's will, or is there some other ironic or hidden meaning to the "cry of dereliction?"

In John's Gospel, by explicit contrast, Jesus eschews directly any Gethsemane cry from the heart: "What should I say? Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I came to this hour!" (12:27). John's Jesus arrives utterly impassive and completely in charge to the moment of his death, which is his glorification. He calls out "I thirst," not to fill a bodily need, but to fulfill scripture. Afterward he pronounces, "It has been fulfilled," and of his own accord hands over his spirit. As the narrator puts it in 13:1, "He knew that his hour had come."

Taking seriously the full context of the biblical texts in question, how are we to understand the analogies created by DeLay on the floor of the House? What might they indicate about the use of the Bible by the Christian Right, to and for whom he clearly was speaking? If Schiavo, in imitation of Jesus, says—or others say for her—"I thirst," this is tantamount to saying, "It is completed, and time for me to die," surely not DeLay's intention. But if she is to be spared her abandonment, as DeLay claims, then the Congress of the United States has done for her what God the Father refused or was unable to do for Jesus in Mark. If, on the other hand, in the Johannine sense, "the hour has come," then the culmination of the divine plan for the death of Jesus is close at hand. Presuming that

DeLay did not really mean these inversions to his stated purpose, what did he want his hearers to make of these references to biblical passion narratives on Palm Sunday night?

The answer at first glance seems obvious, but I think it worth still further analysis. DeLay's goal was not to make exegetical or theological sense. It was to declare affiliation with a certain brand of American Christianity. Interestingly, his use of the Bible defies the usual understanding of the Christian Right as "biblically literalist" or "fundamentalist," for these were patently allegorical or typological readings (a woman in Florida under court order to remove a feeding tube equals Jesus the Jew in Judea under execution order of the Roman procurator). Moreover, he was not just engaging in "proof-texting" of any sort, as we can see by the clustering of these references to the passion narratives of Jesus, correlated by him to the "passion weekend" of both his hearers and the object of his speech, Schiavo. Indeed, his use of the term "passion" shows a distinct connection with Catholic, rather than Protestant sensibilities (perhaps by way of Mel Gibson, whose film by that title baptized the term for pan-conservative Christian use). Obviously, this astute politician did not think the moment called for tight exegetical reasoning or even theological consistency. His purpose was to draw the lines very clearly. His main point was to engage in irreparable character assassination of those who opposed the measure he was promoting, whether Christians, Jews, Muslims, non-believers, or agnostics. The typology was not so much about Schiavo being Jesus as it was about Democrats and the few Republican opponents of Senate Bill 686 really being Christ-killers.²

How Biblical is the Christian Right?

Conventional wisdom—on the right and on the left—in a rare show of agreement, believes that the Christian Right is the political face of a movement that is quintessentially biblical. The Christian Right equals Christians who are biblical literalists or fundamentalists who wish to reshape American culture and political life in the biblical image.³ Whatever else the Christian Right is, surely it is steeped in the Bible, and in a particular, literalistic reading of the Bible. Thus, Austin Cline, on *atheism.about.com* writes: “In effect, then, nothing has really changed [since the 1920s]. The complaints are basically the same. The rhetoric is basically the same. The proposed solution is basically the same: the Bible, the Bible, and more of the Bible. Little has changed in all of this because the fundamentalists have changed so little themselves.”⁴

But is this actually true?

I come to this question as a literary historian of ancient Christianity—the first four centuries—not of modern American Christianity (to paraphrase the prophet Amos, “I am neither Martin Marty nor the daughter of Martin Marty”). Hence, I am more at home in discussions about Paul and his letters, or about his apocalypticism, or that of Montanist prophetic visionaries in Asia Minor and North Africa, than American dispensationalists, pre- and post-millennialists (pre-trib/post-trib), and reconstructionists. The figures I spend more of my time with are named Origen, Eustathius, Gregory and Chrysostom, not Falwell, Colson, and Dobson; the sites they occupied were Alexandria, Cappadocia, and Antioch, not Lynchburg and Colorado Springs (let alone the vast territorial domains of radio waves and cyberspace!).

I have been focusing in my writing for the last ten years or so on challenging and complexifying our old confident scholarly paradigm that rigidly divided ancient Christian interpreters into two camps: Antiochene literalists, who look for the “plain sense,” and Alexandrine allegorists, who view the text as a complex system of symbols to be decoded by those who are spiritually adept. Instead, in such good company as Frances Young and Elizabeth Clark, and I have sought to show that all the ancient interpreters use a range of reading strategies (far more than two!) depending upon the text, their context, their audience, their aim, etc.

Sometimes they appeal to the exact words of the text, with etymological or other explanations. Sometimes they appeal to another verse in the immediate context as essential to its meaning; in other instances, they pull on a text from somewhere else in the Bible to do so. Sometimes they appeal to the historical event behind the text; at other times, as with the parables, they recognize that the event never happened (no need to search for the historical Good Samaritan), but for the inherent moral of the parable. Sometimes they stress the saintly author (Jeremiah, Paul); at other times, that God or the Holy Spirit is completely responsible for the words in the text. Sometimes they use a text paradigmatically, such as seeing the Song of Songs as a parable of human marriage; at other times allegorically, of the soul’s seductive dance and ultimate union with God. Sometimes they argue that the “Old Testament” shows exactly the same meaning as the “New Testament” text they wish to explain; at other times, they argue that there has been a progression in understanding from partial truth in the Old to complete truth in the New. And, above all, what is even more striking than method in any given exegetical exchange

is the *selection of biblical passages* and interaction among them that creates fresh contexts of meaning.

As Elizabeth Clark has beautifully shown in her book, *Reading Renunciation*, much depends on pre-determined ends: exegetes who wish to defend celibacy find a way to deal with “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28) just as those who do not, find a way to circumvent Paul’s “it is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor. 7:1). *No ancient interpreter is always and consistently literalist or always allegorical*. They may have habits and proclivities, and may be better at some methods than others (have *you* ever tried to write a good allegory?), or are more interested in some questions than others, but none is monolithic in method. Yet they all knew the texts backwards and forwards, and wrestled vigorously with the text as much or more than they did with one another. Chrysostom champions the need for *akribeia*, “finely tuned precision,” in biblical interpretation, to match the divine *akribeia* of its composition. There is no clearer example of how the two approaches cannot be neatly split into two divergent groups than the greatest early Christian biblical scholar, Origen of Alexandria, who was both a profoundly imaginative allegorist and a rigoristic textual critic interested in the exact wording of his biblical text.

So why have early church historians for so long handed on the axiom that there were two camps in early Christian interpretation—the allegorists and the literalists? A chief reason is that scholars have re-presented the rhetorical accusations made by the earliest interpreters themselves as though they should be taken on face value (even as they have also been mapped onto contemporary grids of interpretation cast in these same terms). My recent research (especially into a debate between Origen and Eustathius about

whether the woman of Endor really did raise Samuel from the dead or not) has helped me to see how often the aim of early Christian biblical interpretation is polemical.⁵ The Bible is being interpreted to defend someone's version of the truth, either against Jews, or "pagans," or (in many, many cases) against fellow Christians. Biblical interpretation, in other words, was not just a neutral quest for the meaning of the text, but always an attempt to bring the text to the work at hand (catechetical, apologetic, pastoral, and theological). Early Christian biblical interpretation, from the get-go, was an *agonistic endeavor* (building arguments through appeals to some texts, read in certain ways, against others who read either the same texts differently and/or different texts).

And this way of reading a text always with an eye on an opponent was rooted in their very educational background. These early interpreters, all of whom were literate elites in a culture in which about 10 percent of people were actively literate, used the same tools they were taught in their rhetorical education (which involved exercises preparing one to argue legal cases of various types) for how to make a text fit the purpose that the present case required. If the exact wording of the text seems to fit the need, argue that it is right "to regard nothing except what is written," since if the author had wanted to say something else, he would have said so!⁶ Other commonplaces included *the all-important "slippery slope" appeal*: if we do not read this text literally [i.e., the way I insist we read it] then the authority of the whole, and of the whole system of law, will be eroded.⁷ Those who read figuratively, however (strict allegory is only one such form) argue that readers who are more "in the know" learn *how to go beyond the letter to the spirit* of what the author said. They base this on the appeal that we do not want judges simply to read the law back to us, but to interpret it wisely, for the authors did not spell

out everything in the text because they presumed there would be smart judges would could do that (any child can just read the text back).⁸ Another commonplace Cicero recommends for one arguing for a figurative interpretation of the law is to maintain (with some choice examples) that if we only read literally everyday life and communication would come to a standstill!⁹

Yes—this debate about letter and spirit unites biblical and constitutional interpretation, and the interconnections of the two go back a very long way. What is perhaps especially significant is that in our own context, while the term “literalist” remains in circulation (as both a term of self- and other-description), *it does not have a single exact counterpart*—not allegorical, not figurative, not contextual, not even historical-critical. Indeed, the historical-critical reading (what we might think of as closer to the “plain sense”) is seen as dangerous because it may undermine biblical authority—hence it is often relegated to the Babylon of the secular humanists. I would like to contend that this uneven polarity, with one term assumed (literal) and the other undetermined (nonliteralists?!), has been a bane for those who read the Bible in other ways, and a boon for the self-proclaimed literalists, who by strategic characterizations can claim the Bible for themselves, and depict their enemies in a range of garbs and hence give apparent cohesion to their own unlikely coalition on the time-honored principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The Christian Right’s Public Face

The “Christian Right” of today includes such organizations and leaders as the Moral Majority Coalition (Jerry Falwell), Faith and Family (Richard Land), Focus on the Family (James Dobson), Family Research Council (Tony Perkins), American Values

(Gary Bauer), and Christian Coalition of America (Roberta Combs). Falwell's own web site provides the "Moral Majority Timeline" that traces its own history back to 1973.¹⁰ With an increasing incursion of the Christian Right in the public arena in the past few decades, the Moral Majority is now joined by a host of other politically active conservative Christian movements. How do they use the Bible? To answer this research question, I have chosen to investigate their public face—on the Internet. The rest of this paper will record the results of my travel out of my usual chronological period and into these sites.

First off, all these "Christian Right" self-identified movements have active Web presences with very similar purposes, formats and layouts. The home pages tend to favor red, white and blue banners, with the American flag often in prominent position. Sometimes pictures of "nuclear families" inside hazy haloes move around the central panel. The upper left hand is usually reserved for a donation screen, but then the rest of the left hand menu almost invariably lists the links to such topics as Abortion, Guns, School Prayer, Homosexuality, Persecution, etc. *The Bible is usually not one of them.* It is deliberately submerged; one need not be a poststructuralist to recognize a sub-text, a hypo-text of the hyper-text.¹¹

Where is the Bible?

Even when the Bible is invoked on these web sites, only very infrequently is a concept of inerrancy alluded to, and even then rarely using that term. I do not think I ever have seen the word "fundamentalist" in cruising these web sites for the last year or so. The word and commitment are submerged. Rarely do we even see "literalist." On average it takes two or three and sometimes more links even to find a page that mentions the

Bible or a biblical verse. Instead, the first noticeable thing about the Christian Right is that, even if they continue to read the King James Bible (or perhaps the NIV or NLT [this is hard to tell, because they rarely say]), they have been actively engaged in translation projects of another sort. Instead of Biblical inerrancy, or biblical authority, one finds a new, user-friendly and unifying lexicon: “family values,” “traditional values,” “family-friendly,” “Judeo-Christian heritage,” and a newfangled product called “the Christian world-view.” The latter is a remarkable inversion of modern social science, now turned into an apologetic term rather than a *Weltanschauung* like the early sociologists (this kind of parroting of academic forms is quite rampant on the Christian Right). “The Christian world-view,” which is being promoted by a whole range of home-schooling and other cottage industries, is a code-phrase for “Christianity in our likeness.” Here from a link on the Dobson web site: “What is a biblical worldview? A biblical worldview is based on the infallible Word of God. When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do. That means, for instance, you take seriously the mandate in Romans 13 to honor the governing authorities by researching the candidates and issues, making voting a priority.” Why is Romans 13 rather than the Beatitudes to be the center of the Christian solar system? As I shall argue below, along with a polemical intent similar to what we see in ancient commentators, *what most characterizes the Christian Right’s biblical interpretation is no single method, but rather its selection of passages and topics.*

Through such terms as “family values” or “Christian world-view,” similar to what has been described as “side-door ministries”—evangelism through getting people into the church for social activities and social services rather than through the main entrance into

the sanctuary on Sunday mornings—these web sites attract “likeminded folk” who think of themselves as family oriented and traditional. One reason for the lack of explicit mention of which Bible translation they use, obviously, is that they do not wish to divide their potential audience, either among Protestant denominations or between Protestants and Catholics. “Biblical authority” may be affirmed in vague generalizations even in the absence of agreement on what the Bible even is. A terrific illustration of this approach is the successful marketing of two discrete, official, coffee-table books of Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of Christ*, which set images from the film on the left page, and corresponding biblical passages on the right. What was rarely noticed, because they were marketed to two parallel clienteles, was that one edition used the “New Living Translation” translation (a Protestant paraphrase), while the other used the “Douay-Rheims” (a Tridentine Roman Catholic translation made from the Vulgate in 1582 as a definitive response to the Reformers’ insistence on doing an end-run around the Vulgate and back to the original Greek and Hebrew).¹² The actual words of the Bible are not nearly as important as affirming the authority of the Bible in the most general of terms, in the face of a presumed opposition. The creation of a unified readership depends as much or more on the construction of that opposition as a common enemy than it does on total agreement within. The web sites carefully calibrate these twin concerns, forming an assumed “us” (who are “pro-family” and “pro-biblical values”) who, despite differences among themselves, are sure they want no part of “them.”

One clear example of the cyberspace Bible-as-sub-text hermeneutic can be seen on the *family.org* web site run by James Dobson (an American citizen who both sides will agree played an enormous role in the Supreme Court nomination and confirmation

process, and merited an infamous thank-you note from Justice Samuel Alito). From the “Citizen Link” tab (www.family.org/cforum/) one finds a range of topical headings (rather apples and olives) under “Focus on Social Issues”: Abstinence Policy, Life, Constitution and Government, The Courts, The Media, Education, Gambling, Homosexuality and Gender, Marriage and Family, Origins, Persecution, Pornography and Worldview and Culture. Only two of these categories have a sub-heading “Biblical View.” Can you guess which? Actually, I was surprised, but they are Abstinence Policy and Gambling.

When one follows the link to the latter (“The Biblical View on Gambling”) we find only one actual passage cited: Matt. 10:16: “Jesus says ‘Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.’” This may indeed be taken to refer to a single blackjack dealer, most of our state governments, or the whole “gambling industry” (as the statement later on the page puts it), but I think we can agree that in either case it is hardly a literal reading of Jesus’ commission to the disciples to walk the roads of Galilee preaching and healing. In an unusual concession the author says frankly “Gambling is not addressed directly in the Bible,” but follows that up with the last word on his own authority: “nor is it exempt from God's instruction.” Yet the web page itself is *anonymous*, and the authority for its interpretation (gambling is not Biblical) depends entirely on the link to Dobson’s web site. So, despite the fact that there is no verse in the Bible about gambling, somehow (how?) God’s instruction about it can be known.

Under Abstinence Policy the reader is directed to two versions of a document with the impressive title, “The Colorado Statement on Biblical Sexual Morality.” One

version is marked “full,” and the other “abridged.” What is “abridged” in the second case is every single biblical citation from the full version, in which they are clustered in parentheses after most sentences. The message is clear: you can get the “Biblical Sexual Morality” without being bothered with the “biblical interpretation” that lies behind it (or being introduced to the selectivity of passages on which it is based). This statement, too, is unsigned. If you dig around a bit, you can find that it comes from “The Council on Biblical Sexual Ethics.” Digging even further (click, click) we find that this “Council” is actually a group of scholars commissioned and presumably paid by Focus on the Family, described as “a team of [nine] diverse Bible scholars, all of whom are deeply concerned about God’s call for a sexually pure Church, and all of whom are well qualified to address biblical doctrine on the issue.” The list of scholars indicates only two with any advanced training in biblical scholarship, and only one professor of New Testament studies.¹³ Many of the nine are listed as members of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (the “diversity” that is heralded would be hard to defend, as would the claims of preeminence of this scholarly panel).

This kind of farmed out authorization to one’s own appointed panel of “experts” points to a curious inconsistency about the Focus on the Family web site: Dobson’s vacillation about whether he is himself qualified as a biblical interpreter. One “Q and A” link asks “Does Dr. Dobson answer theological questions?” The answer comes back: “Dr. Dobson is often asked to respond in detail to biblical or theological inquiries, however, he has had no formal training as a pastor or theologian and freely acknowledges his limitations in these areas. Over the years, Dr. Dobson has made a deliberate decision to direct the attention of our ministry away from in-depth biblical interpretation and

theology, choosing instead to concentrate our efforts on our primary purpose—introducing individuals to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and thereby strengthening the family” (here links are provided to Billy Graham and Dallas Theological Seminary’s Chuck Swindoll). Yet on another link, Dobson is asked: “You have said that your philosophy of discipline (and of family advice in general) was drawn from the Scriptures. On what specific verses do you base your views?” The answer comes back that since “God is the Creator of children, He must certainly know how our kids out to be raised,” followed by citations from 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Eph. 6:1-3; 6:4 [interestingly, cited separately]; Col. 3:20-21; and Heb. 12:5-11. Since only the last passage even uses the word “discipline” (as the set-up question has it), Dobson moves from God’s *wisdom* (“These Scriptures and related verses contain more wisdom than all the child-development textbooks ever written”) to “summarizing the primary *theme* he has extracted from all the related biblical passages” (from literal “word” to constellated “theme”: “shape the will without breaking the spirit”). But when we turn to a case in point: “Should a child be spanked with a hand or some other neutral object?” Dobson answers by appeal to personal anecdotes: the “small switch” his mother used on him, and his own story about the boy of some friends who was just “asking for it” and got an “overdue spanking” in a parking lot, which he had (obviously, for Dobson) been begging for and expecting as his rightful due from his parents (who did not disappoint).

Southern Baptist Convention minister Richard Land presents no such ambivalence about his role as interpreter of the Bible. His “For Faith and Family” web site presents the reader with a link to something called the “Ethics Scripture Index,” defined as “a listing of Scriptures that relate to various ethical issues,” from “Abortion,

Adoption, Bioethics, Homemaking/Domestication, to War, Wives, Women.”¹⁴ For a student of biblical interpretation, this is a simply fascinating document, both in form and in effect. It is both like and unlike the ancient “testimonia” lists, such as we find at Qumran (4 QTestim), which contain a chain of excerpted quotes about the nature and identity of the true prophet, for instance. But, tellingly, this list is inconsistent in form. Let me explain. First off, there is no explanation of what topics or which passages are chosen or why, and in the vast majority of cases all one sees is a citation, not the text itself (that also has the nice effect of not confusing people who read their Bible in a different translation, and hence might find rather different wording which might call into question the aptness of its place there). And this method presumes that the whole column speaks with one voice about the issue, which means that there is already a pre-determined decision about the “biblical view” on the given issue. No hermeneutical rule of thumb or guidance is given on such issues as the relationship between the Old and New Testament in Christian law or regulation, nor about how different biblical genres relate to divine teaching and biblical truth (law, narrative, parable, and proverb are all treated the same). But one gets some glimpses of the interpretive work behind this list (and the rhetorical effect it is designed to have) because sometimes a paraphrase or explanation is appended to one or more items in each categorical list.

If we take these as indicative of some higher level of interest, investment or possible debate on the topic, it is quite interesting that under “Hunger,” for instance, only fifteen citations are given, but no comments (obviously not an important issue). Astoundingly, Luke’s second beatitude (“Blessed are those who hunger now” [Luke 6:21]) did not even make the list. By contrast, “Gambling” receives double the

references “Hunger” has (thirty—Land does not have the same problem as the Dobson site in acknowledging that the Bible does not mention gambling), as well as some interpretive comments (my favorite: next to 1 Cor. 16:1-3, Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians on putting money aside each week for the saints in Jerusalem are glossed, “can’t give to a collection if your money is gambled away”!). The category that had by far the most listings was “Money”: 123 citations, but not a single interpretive comment.

The contemporary significance of these strategically-placed comments seems clear when one looks at the category “War” (there is none for “Peace”). Of sixty-six citations, fully fourteen were singled out for comment:

Gen. 14:13-16 Abram rescues Lot through warfare
 Deut. 2:5, 9, 19, 32-35 God’s sovereignty in war
 Josh. 6-12 aggressive in God’s plan for victory
 1 Sam. 15:1-3 total annihilation of enemy
 2 Sam. 5:17-25 preventative, consulted God beforehand
 Luke 6:27-36 [sic; possibly 7:2-10] Jesus did not command the centurion to abandon his job now that he was a Christian

While it is easy to think of this as a literalistic proof-texting, it is not just that, but a highly creative rearrangement of selective pieces of the biblical record to justify a previously reached conclusion (in this case, apparently, the invasion of Iraq). Sometimes Land does include passages that might complicate the picture, but his own interpretive comments draw attention away from them. For example, we read “Rom. 12:2 our ways are separate from the world’s ways,” but would hardly realize that under the listing Rom. 12:17-21 lies a text that contains both the actual word peace (Rom. 12:2 does not) and a command related to it: “if it is possible by your agency, live in peace with all people” (Rom. 12:18). It bears noting, in relation to my larger thesis, that it is Christian peace-makers of various stripes—not the Christian Right—who are the literalists when it comes to the latter verse.

A similar set of moves may be found in Jerry Falwell's sermon column ("Listen, America") of January 31, 2004, which is entitled, "God is pro-war."¹⁵ Falwell lines up Eccles. 3:8 ("a time of war, and a time of peace"), Exodus 15, Judges, 1 Chron. 14:15, and Prov. 20:18 and 21:15 ("It is a joy to the just to do judgment") against what he characterizes as the errancy of "many present-day pacifists who hold Jesus as their example for unvarying peace. But they ignore the full revelation concerning Jesus pictured in the book of Revelation 19, where He is depicted bearing a 'sharp sword' and smiting nations, ruling them with 'a rod of iron.'" Those who might respond by appeal to the sixth commandment are easily rebuffed by Falwell: it does not say "thou shalt not kill" but "actually, no; it says: 'Thou shalt not commit murder.'" Falwell does not feel the need to document this point with reference to the Hebrew verb *ratzach* in Exod. 20:13 nor even to any particular translation (the venerable KJV so loved by many conservative Christians reads "kill," but the more recent NIV and NLT read "murder"). It is just so because Reverend Falwell says it is so.

Recently, in an OpEd page piece in *The New York Times*, Charles Marsh, an evangelical professor at the University of Virginia, critiqued evangelical sermons in the buildup to the war, noting that "as if working from a slate of evangelical talking points" they stood behind President Bush and also focused on the role of the war in Iraq for "exciting new prospects for proselytizing Muslims." Marsh called on them to repent "our Faustian bargain for access and power [that] has undermined the credibility of our moral and evangelistic witness in the world. The Hebrew prophets might call us to repentance, but repentance is a tough demand for a people utterly convinced of their righteousness."¹⁶

Strict biblical literalists are thought to be inflexible to any suggestion of historical or cultural relativity. That is, if God said it in the Bible, then it is valid for all time, without limit. That is the argument usually given about homosexuality, for instance, in the face of those who argue that the very understanding of human sexual orientation has changed greatly in the last fifty years or so. Yet surprisingly, returning to Land's "Ethics Scripture Index," he actually allows just such a principle in his scriptural passages under "Birth Control," where he lists "Genesis 1:28—'be fruitful and multiply'" and adds an interpretive parenthesis "(made sense at this time in history)," which is repeated again at the second instance of the command in Gen. 9:1, 7: "(made sense at this time in history-Noah)." Obviously, Land has determined that birth control is not against God's purposes (unless repopulating after a flood [perhaps someone should tell Planned Parenthood in New Orleans?]); apparent counterevidence is defused by appeal to the time at which the command was given. Tellingly, this is the only place in the entire list that "made sense at this time in history" is found (why not, for instance, under Homemaking/Domestication?). To defend his view that birth control is not against God's will, this category reflects yet another divergence from the rest, in that it is only here that a "null-witness" is invoked: at the bottom of the column we find "Not found in Leviticus 20:10-21 under a list of sexual abuses." Hence because birth control is missing in Lev. 20:10-21, it is acceptable.

This interpretive move is noteworthy, also, because this same "null-witness" argument has been used by other Christians against Christian Right interpretations of biblical witness against homosexuality—that is, that if homosexuality was such a major concern of God's, why does Jesus never address it in the Gospels (as is well known, the

apparent injunctions against it are in Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible and in Pauline texts in the New Testament [Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10])? One author, Joe Dallas (whose piece is linked to Dobson's site), in the face of this argument (one he characterizes as "a favorite at gay parades"), counters: "The idea of a subject being unimportant just because it was not mentioned by Jesus is foreign to the gospel writers themselves. At no point did Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John say their books should be elevated above the Torah or, for that matter, any writings yet to come. In other words, the gospels— and the teachings they contain— are not more important than the rest of the Bible. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The same Spirit inspiring the authors of the gospels also inspired the men who wrote the rest of the Bible."¹⁷ Rather shockingly for a supposedly literalist interpreter, Mr. Dallas would rather minimize the power of the *ipsissima verba Jesu* than give ground to any argument that suggests either a reconsideration of homosexuality in Christian ethics or even a reexamination of its relative importance in the gospel message.

What most surprises about Land's Faith and Family web site is how little overt biblical interpretation is actually going on. Even on a link defending the Southern Baptist Convention's "biblical submission" doctrine (of wife to husband), he cites the Bible in two different translations (1 Cor. 13:4-8a *New Living Bible*; Rom. 12:2 *Today's English Bible*, apparently choosing the translation that best makes his point ["the standards of this world"]; he does not feel the need even to justify this switch of Bibles in mid-stream). The list and related articles replace Bible study with biblical talking points.

Sometimes the Bible can disappear entirely. For instance, Falwell, in his response to the "Evangelical Climate Initiative" released several weeks ago (eighty-plus

evangelicals giving a “biblically driven pledge” to work against global warming) says it is a “bad idea,” but offers not a single biblical text or treatment in rebuttal. Instead, the minister’s arguments turn not on biblical warrants, but on a charge against what he terms “junk science being passed off as fact.”¹⁸

On the third click into Roberta Combs’ *Coalition of America* web site, under “Our Vision,” we have another type of biblical interpretation.¹⁹ Once again, it is in various respects not exactly an act of literal biblical interpretation. Here an open Bible serves as an icon (it is impossible to read it because of the misty photo, but the finger tabs on the outside of pages and dual columns of text tell us what it must be [unless it is the dictionary!]), and a biblical epigram adorns the web page: “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. – II Corinthians 5:17b” sits at the top of the column. When one reads down, however, it is clear that Combs is not seeing this as the hymnic exultation by Paul of the effect of the Christ-event on the cosmos, but she has applied this saying allegorically to the work of her own organization. “CCA,” she exults, “is experiencing nothing short of a true revival.” She then tells how this has come about: after being named president (late 2001), she “directed that her national staff include a new slogan in Christian Coalition publications and correspondence”: “Faith with Action,” which she off-handedly says of course “refers to the Apostle James’ famous discourse in the second chapter of the Book that bears his name.” Although biblical sloganeering is hardly uncommon on these web sites, rarely is it put in such an overt, self-confessed way—the Bible is being raided for advertising (and it does not disappoint!). What occasions further surprise is the lack of even attempted biblical precision—neither telling what verse or verses, or what the exact biblical words are [in

fact, “action,” does not appear in the King James or NIV translations of James].²⁰ So a paraphrase takes the place of the biblical text.

Later in the same column, Combs’ loose shorthand manner of sprinkling the Bible becomes further apparent as she says that “The familiar passage from the fourth *book* of Esther has become a defining factor in how I approach leadership at CCA.” There is of course only one biblical book of Esther, to the fourth chapter of which she is apparently referring. Though she does not feel the need to identify further this slogan, I think it must be verse one of chapter four, which reads: “An innocent nation is being destroyed.” Genocide of Judaeans under the Persian King Artaxerxes is for Combs an allegory or analogue for the situation in modern America. But who exactly is Artaxerxes and who Mordecai *et al.* remains intentionally ambiguous (though the context says that “intense battles rage on life issues, religious freedom matters, inter-religious concerns, dangerous foreign relations that have spiritual overtones, and hundreds of other subjects that vitally affect every Christian family and nation”). Nor is it clear whether Combs is worried about attaching meaning *only* to modern America and hence denying the historical Esther and Mordecai in their day facing extinction by a wicked king (as the tale recounts). In any case, hers is an incomplete typology, for Combs’ biblical interpretation leaves the name of the perpetrators of the destruction of the innocent nation blank. Apparently for her intended audience the identity of Artaxerxes 2006 is all too readily known (but not literally to be pinned down, for presumably she means those responsible for injury to unborn fetuses and the rest of the pious who may “go down with the ship”).

Literalism as Political Tactic

Biblical literalism alone cannot account for this choice of texts—James and Esther—nor for Falwell and other Christian Right leaders’ proclivity for 2 Chr. 7:14, the passage that defined the Christian Right’s response to 9/11. When did 2 Chronicles (or Esther or James) edge its way to the center of Protestant biblicism? Surely we need more refined tools of analysis of such biblical interpretation than the label “literal.”

But the Christian Right does not have that problem. Having claimed for themselves the mantle of biblical fidelity even without publicly attaching a “literalist” hermeneutic to the coalition web sites, they can lump everyone who disagrees under labels they would never choose for themselves. Let’s take a quick look at a few of these lexicons at work. Dobson’s Focus on the Family lists its Guiding Principles as being based on “what we believe to be the recommendations of the Creator Himself,” as found in “the wisdom of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian ethic, *rather than from the humanistic notions of today’s theorists.*” Upon closer reflection, one sees here a principle of narrow selectivity: all of biblical wisdom is boiled down to “three basic institutions” that God is said to have founded: the church, the family, and the government. Arrayed on the other side are proponents of the vague, but surely sinister, “today’s theories.”²¹ The dualism can be seen in the open letter from Gary Bauer on his web site, which begins with his witnessing the plane crash into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. “Washington was under siege,” he writes. After a confident statement that “I believe America will be victorious in the war against terrorism,” Bauer immediately redefines that war in the next paragraph: “However, if there is going to be lasting change in our country, we are going to have to work to end the persistent attacks on faith, love of

country and family that go on day after day in too many ‘sophisticated’ circles from the media to the academia. We have to rearm militarily and also have to rearm our hearts and souls ... My friends, this is a serious time for America and it is time we begin to address serious issues. The fact is, the people who have voted to gut the defense of our nation year after year are the same people who support abortion on demand. The people who have voted to dismantle and hamstring our intelligence agencies are the same people who routinely support special rights for homosexuals.”²² Land also depicts the Southern Baptist Convention’s detractors as “The ever vigilant defenders of the subjective, secular Church of Sociology and Political Correctness which so dominates our culture at present.”²³ The moral majority coalitions are held up by their own counter-construction of a coalition of anti-Christians. To understand how this works, we must slightly revise our opening question.

How is the Christian Right Biblical?

Thus far we have examined the modes of biblical interpretation found in the web-face of the Christian Right. My thesis is that what makes the Christian Right biblical is not a literalistic hermeneutic so much as a mode of argumentation by reference to a deliberately selective set of biblical passages, annexed to the predetermined cause through a variety of exegetical moves, which are usually unexplained because they depend upon prior agreement of the ends of interpretation. And I have shown examples where there is a lot less biblical study going on than one might expect. The Christian Right represents biblical interpretation in a conjunction of two selective circles: of what are the key issues in the political realm and what are the central passages in the biblical record. It represents an odd alignment of each. The canonical delineation is striking—a

focus on the Old Testament, with special prominence given to Judges and 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as to Genesis and Leviticus; and in the New Testament, to selected moralizing passages of the Pauline letters and Revelation. It is easy to see then what is missing: the prophets of Israel and the teachings of Jesus (the Gospels). Along with them go concern with social/political issues such as economic inequality, peace-making, love and forgiveness, and critique of religious hypocrisy (just to choose a few!).

The key to this selectivity is the wholesale adoption by the Christian Right of one strand of biblical thinking, apocalyptic. And apocalyptic is indisputably *in the Bible*, though it is not everywhere in the Bible, or necessarily quintessentially *biblical*. Apocalyptic literature and mind-sets occur in the later works of the Hebrew Bible, most clearly first in Daniel, which dates ca. 164 BCE. It is also reflected in the letters of Paul (see especially 1 Thess. 4-5 and 1 Cor. 15) and in parts of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 13 and parallels). As a mindset, apocalypticism is marked by a prevailing dualism which is expressed in a set of stacked, inter-changeable polarities: anthropological (the condemned versus the chosen), theological (Satan versus God), chronological (this evil age versus the age to come), cosmological (earth versus heaven; darkness versus light), moral (the evil versus the good), epistemological (the blind versus those who truly see), soteriological (the lost versus the saved). Because of their predilection for vivid imagery and symbols, apocalyptic texts such as Revelation, as forms of prophesy, are endlessly *reusable* in each new day. And the apocalypticism requires enemies to prop up the dualistic worldview, and these enemies, as objects of an inevitable divine punishment just around the corner, are never to be compromised with. The goal is to avoid contamination from them. Chronicles is not an apocalyptic book (it is prophetic historiography), but one verse in it

has been given a distinctly apocalyptic reading among the Christian Right, especially since 9/11: “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Apocalyptic literature, as biblical scholar Tina Pippin has cogently put it, engenders endless sequels.²⁴ The Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins *Left Behind* series is the most well-known, but the genre is not limited to blockbuster novels. Consider the New Year’s column of Chuck Colson, entitled, “A New Year’s Dream: Nightmare or Prophecy?” (January 3, 2006):

Something very strange happened to me this past week. I was seated in my library chair, mulling over current events, trying to make a few New Year’s predictions, which is the custom for commentators. I was concentrating hard, when suddenly, I saw before my eyes a headline from the New York Times. It read, “Congress Votes to End War; Troops Ordered to Abandon Iraq.”

The view changed. Just as in Vietnam three decades ago, I saw Americans clinging to helicopters, trying to get themselves out of Baghdad along with friendly Shiite Muslims. There was massive confusion, bombs going off in the background.

And then, I saw pictures out of Afghanistan. Al Qaeda had toppled the new Afghan government. Marines and soldiers again were hurriedly boarding choppers. It can’t be real, I thought—but it was.

The next thing I saw was a picture of Palestine, where most of the al Qaeda terrorists had now gone. The Israeli government was in disarray, reeling under a series of huge bomb blasts in Jerusalem. Country after country was falling to the Islamic fascists: Saudi Arabia. Turkey. Egypt. For the most part, the terrorists simply refused to ship oil, and what they did ship was priced at over \$150 a barrel. It was a worldwide crisis. Europe quickly signed a nonaggression pact with al Qaeda in exchange for oil.

Then came the most devastating picture of all: panic in the streets of Washington, D.C. as a dirty bomb exploded not a quarter of a mile from the Capitol. Huge sections of the city were cordoned off, uninhabitable. Even people with the best protective equipment suffered serious radiation burns. Projections were that the area would be off-limits for years. Then came the bombing of the Holland Tunnel, connecting New York and New Jersey, then the collapse of the pillars of the Golden Gate Bridge. The government threatened retaliation, of course—but there was no one to retaliate against. The Islamo-fascists were spread throughout the world, and it was impossible to strike against all the countries that

were harboring them or being run by them. Osama bin Laden himself appeared on Al Jazeera, boasting that he had known all along that the Americans wouldn't fight.

By now, most American television was not operating. But I could still get one channel. Talking heads were arguing frantically over how this could have happened. One man's voice stood out when he said, "It was all so foreseeable. Once you rule religion a private matter, and declare all religions alike, no one in this country could understand the dimensions of a great religious struggle. No one understood the clash of civilizations or the evil of Islamo-fascism. We didn't even have the language to describe religious beliefs anymore. Destruction was inevitable."

And that's when I woke up in a cold sweat.

It was 5:00 a.m. I went immediately to the front door. Good—the newspaper was there. I flipped it open. There was nothing in the headlines, except the confirmation fight over Alito and more quibbling over Iraq—all the usual banter that goes on endlessly in the press. But as I walked into the house, my knees were still shaking.

It was only a dream. We're okay, I told myself.

Or are we?²⁵

What is perhaps most telling in this piece is that Colson's own authority as a deuter-Daniel is ironically both claimed and effaced in the headline ("Nightmare or Prophecy?"). Secondly, the real "enemy" here is not "the Islamo-fascists." It is those "Americans [who] wouldn't fight," who are equivalent with those who "rule religion a private matter, and declare all religions alike," whose perfidy results in a state in which "no one in this country could understand the dimensions of a great religious struggle. No one understood the clash of civilizations or the evil of Islamo-fascism." The dualism is trained on the enemy within as much or more than the enemy without and the weapon is biblical precedent, reheated and poured like molten lead from the ramparts of Colson's imagination.

Seen in this light, the most significant event in biblical interpretation among the Christian Right in the last few decades has not been discoveries at the Dead Sea, or development of computerized technologies for renewed philological study of ancient Greek and Hebrew terms, or new methodologies in exegetical techniques; rather, it was

the realignment of global politics after the demise of the Soviet Union. It was then that the communist sympathizers at home in America had to be enlarged to all liberals (with the still-bitter legacy of the 1960s paving the way) to fill the entire curriculum of adversarial roles as sketched above. September 11th was a possible pivotal point, for the attack on American soil created a potential opportunity for shifting the enemy role to radical Islam, but on the whole that has not happened, apparently because the Christian Right (for all its disdain for political correctness) has accepted at least publicly the need for inter-religious tolerance. Still, Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, Undersecretary of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld, did appear in uniform in a church in Oregon to express the sentiment that the 9/11 attacks happened “because we’re a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo-Christian. ... And the enemy is a guy named Satan.”²⁶ And he was not fired for it, which raises the question whether the Christian Right has two different faces, two different discourses—one on the Internet, and one at home, behind closed doors. At any rate, if one compares the treatment of “political Islam” with that given to the ACLU on Dobson’s web site, we can see clearly that only the former is given anything like an olive branch, though it is to “love Muslims by preaching Christ to them.”²⁷ We also see strategic, public, Christocentric ecumenism vis à vis Judaism because of the Christian Right’s Zionist agenda and support for the state of Israel (that is, until the parousia when Israel will succumb to a definitive holocaust). Given these states of affairs, it has proven far more expedient for the Christian Right to focus on the enemy within, the domestic enemy that, it says, is responsible for the culture of liberalism that has rendered America liable to attack (whether by Satan or by God as punishment is unclear). Here the logical glue is provided by texts like 2 Chron. 7:14, read

in an apocalyptic light: “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”²⁸ Here again we have not a literal reading, but an allegorical reading of replacement: the “people” Israel are recast as Americans, the “land” of Judah recast as America, and the idolatry with Baal replaced with abortion, feminism, and homosexuality.

By self-definition, the “Christian Right” is a movement that seeks to remake the political order in America in the biblical image. It seems fair to ask both those who honor it and those who repudiate it to examine, with a critical eye, whether or not it is really a biblically literalist movement. Here I would like to return for a moment to the alignment with legal training of which I spoke in relation to ancient exegetes. Just as Origen, Chrysostom and others had been trained in the rhetorical schools of their day, so also the “Christian Right” seeks a judiciary that will interpret the Constitution in its “original form”—read the text, not interpret it.²⁹ Sometimes this is put in crisp shorthand as “judicial restraint” (presumably not “going beyond the text”). As we saw at the outset of this talk, this rhetorical move (a courtroom trick—the claim that “I just read the text, but other people interpret it or change it”) is older than Cicero.

This leads me to a final illustration from a recent issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. The article profiled the debate team from Falwell’s Liberty University (which sports a new hockey rink donated by Beverly and Tim LaHaye). The team is a national contender, trained, as are all debate teams, to argue either side of any question that might be assigned them in competition. They were preparing for the national championship in Evanston at Northwestern University. Their coach, Brett O’Donnell, has also been hired

by the Bush 2004 campaign and other Republican candidates to assist them in their rhetorical preparation for gaining office. O'Donnell explains that he would only work for candidates who "share his values": "I don't want to be just a hired gun. I have an agenda. I'm an ideologue."³⁰ And Liberty debaters themselves must "be professing Christians" (54). Falwell, Chancellor of Liberty University, who personally funds the team to the tune of half a million dollars per year, describes the mission of this advance guard of the next generation of the Christian Right:

Our football team can't change the culture ... Our debate program can, by producing advocates who know how to argue for Judeo-Christian ethics, and the American Constitution. We have 32 kids on our team this year, and they'll all be lawyers or leaders of some sort. Our goal is to create an army of people who know how to make our case (54).

What do we learn from the "champions for Christ" that is relevant to our topic of biblical interpretation by the Christian Right? These kids are trained in an only artificial performance of participation in the fuller culture's debates, even as they remain ideologically fixed. An index of this is that it was only "by special dispensation [of the Chancellor, that] Liberty's debate practice rooms became the only place on campus where students *were free* to argue in favor of *Roe v. Wade*" (55). Second, the mechanics of the training are evocative: "debaters carry their ammunition, files of every possible argument and rebuttal, in 14-gallon plastic tubs" (56). The Bible is a bit small, but when placed page by page, and filed accordingly (as Land's index does), it presents a choo-choo train of ammunition for ideologically pre-determined ends. Lastly, in debate competition, as on web sites, arguments swirl by with a speed that defies comprehension: "Quick speaking hardly captures the velocity of collegiate debate. Varsity debaters talk at 350 to 400 words a minute—about the speed of a fast auctioneer. Only experienced judges—most of whom are coaches from neutral schools—can actually follow the

argument. For this reason, debate isn't a spectator sport" (56). Is biblical interpretation among the Christian Right?

Biblical? Yes and no. Biblical in the sense of seeking biblical support for an agenda? Yes. Biblical in the sense of reading the whole Bible? No. Biblical in the sense of reading the Bible literally? No, not consistently. Biblical in reading parts for the whole, and in using the Bible as a source of weapons to define themselves against their enemies? Yes. Wrestling with the possible plural meanings and complex legacies of Bible itself? Not in public, at any rate.

¹ *Congressional Record, House*, March 20, 2005, p. H1725, col. 2.

² This is a rhetorical strategy DeLay has also had occasion to use in regard to himself as a "crucified martyr." In the months since his sermonic peroration in the House he has lived into that job description even more. Jerry Falwell, Tony Perkins, and James Dobson (among others) have supported the former Majority Leader and decried "the dogs [who] ... yap at his heels" as part of a "seek-and-destroy politics."

³ I would like to emphasize the limits of this definition, and hence the focus of this paper; I am not speaking about evangelical Christians *en masse* (there is overlap here but not simple identification), but of this specific political movement and its biblical interpretation.

⁴ <http://atheism.about.com/>

⁵ M.M. Mitchell, "Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory," *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005) 414-45.

⁶ First quotation from Cicero *De inventione* 2.43.125; the latter is a paraphrase of 2.2.43.120: "It will help greatly to show how he would have written if he had wished the opponent's interpretation to be carried out or adopted."

⁷ Cicero *De inv.* 2.44.128: "many disagreeable things would result if it is established as a principle that it is acceptable to depart from the written word" (H. Caplan's Loeb Classical Library translation, adapted). Further, see 2.45.132: "the judges will have no rule to follow if they depart from the letter of the law."

⁸ "the author of the law himself, if he should rise from the dead, would approve this act ... the reason why the author of the law provided for judges from a certain class and of a certain age was that there might be a judicial body able not only to read his law, *which any child could do*, but to comprehend it with the mind and interpret his intentions; again, that if the law-maker had been giving his law to ignorant men and barbarous judges, he would have written everything out in precise detail; but as he knew the quality of the men who were to judge the cases, he did not add what he saw was perfectly plain. For he did not think of you as clerks to read his law aloud in court, but as interpreters of his wishes" (Cicero *De inv.* 2.47.139).

⁹ "Then it may be argued that nothing at all could be done either with laws or with any instrument in writing, or even about our every day conversation and the orders issued in our own homes, if every one wished to consider only the literal meaning of the words and not to follow the intentions of the speaker" (Cicero *De inv.* 2.47.140).

¹⁰ www.moralmajority.us

¹¹ The language here is that of Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1982), which I have learned through its appropriation by Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹² See M. M. Mitchell, "Aramaica Veritas and the Occluded Orientalism of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*," *Criterion* 43 (2004) 20-25, 38.

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- ¹³ Prof. Craig Blomberg at Denver Seminary. The Council's website is www.pureintimacy.org.
- ¹⁴ www.faithandfamily.com.
- ¹⁵ www.worldnetdaily.com.
- ¹⁶ 20 January 2006, A19.
- ¹⁷ www.family.org/cforum/fosi/homosexuality/theology/a0037767.cfm, dated August 31, 2005.
- ¹⁸ "Climate Initiative is a Bad Idea," *Falwell Confidential*, 10 February 2006 (www.falwell.com). The dualistic logic requires the ostracism of these fellow evangelicals. Hence it should not be not surprising that it is now being claimed that pro-abortion money, via the Hewlett Foundation, was behind them (<http://www.baptistpress.com/bpnews.asp?ID=22753>).
- ¹⁹ At the website with the modest url: www.cc.org, one finds a bold double banner: "Christian Coalition of America: America's Leading Grassroots Organization Defending Our Godly Heritage."
- ²⁰ It does in the Twentieth Century New Testament (1904) and the New English Bible (1970).
- ²¹ <http://www.family.org/welcome/aboutof/a0000078.cfm>.
- ²² The letter appeared on www.ouramericanvalues.org, but is apparently no longer available there as of this writing.
- ²³ www.erc.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID314166%7CCCHID599216%7CCIID1551834,00.html (the title is "on questioning biblical submission").
- ²⁴ *Apocalyptic Bodies* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999) 1-12.
- ²⁵ www.townhall.com/opinion/columns/chuckcolson
- ²⁶ I quote here from a news story that appeared on 17 October 2003 (www.cnn.com/2003/US/10/16/rumsfeld.boykin.ap/).
- ²⁷ www.family.org/cforum/fosi/islam/essays/a0028249.cfm ("September 11 and the Mandate of the Church," 8 October 2003, listed as "Anonymous").
- ²⁸ The key role this passage has played for the Christian Right, both before and after September 11, was insightfully analyzed by Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), esp. 36-46.
- ²⁹ So Land, in an interview after Alito's confirmation, approving President Bush's pledge to appoint: "only ... strict constructionist, original intent jurists who would pledge themselves to interpret the Constitution and not seek to act as the country's unelected legislators" (www.christianexaminer.com/Articles/Articles%20Feb06/Art_Feb06_19.html).
- ³⁰ Zev Chafets, "Ministers of Debate," *New York Times Magazine*, 19 March 2006, 52-57.