

2003 Peter Rudy Wallace Public Service Lecture

“Not by Bread Alone: Religion and International Affairs”

By

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I am honored by the designation of this lecture as the Peter Rudy Wallace Public Service Lecture of 2003. Over the past several years while teaching here at Eckerd College, I have attended four of the five previous Peter Rudy Wallace lectures given by public servants of true distinction and integrity. I am humbled by my inclusion in their company, by the presence of the Wallace family, and by the challenge to inspire young people to consider public service as a career in times such as these.

If carrying this burden of a "name" lecture in a series in which those who have come before me have met the challenge so successfully were not enough, I have been asked to speak about politics and religion on the eve of war in the Middle East.

Because I have danced backwards in high heels as fast as I could my entire professional life to arrive where only male colleagues have stood before, I am used to that extra little degree of difficulty demanded of women as Ginger Rogers once said. So I embarked upon this challenge the only way possible, with total assurance that the guy who brought me to this dance, Duncan Ferguson, had faith and confidence enough for both of us.

Perhaps as we gather here, the states of the world are making their calculations on whether to engage in military action to disarm Iraq based on rationalist methods and a utilitarian calculation of survival, power and interest. Perhaps underlying all their motivation is a grubby global squabble over resources. The international relations discipline offers us ample theory to advance all those arguments. Tonight

however, I would like to reflect on the possibility that what engages us now is a collision of values. And that in 2003, we still hear the admonition offered in Deuteronomy 8:3 "...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." ¹

The Rev. Charles A. Jones III, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in St. Petersburg and a college trustee introduced us to the power of faith in the context of American culture by speaking about religious beliefs and convictions of America's chief executives. His lecture, "So Help Me God: Religion and the American Presidency" was the first in the Center For Spiritual Life Series this year.

Chuck's survey of American presidents demonstrated that while it is important to recognize that religious faith does influence the language and politics of American chief executives, it would be a mistake to homogenize American religious tradition or infer a direct policy outcome.

As Pulitzer Prize winning historian, Walter McDougal has written, ours is a democracy of many religious and secular faiths and it has constantly been war with itself over matters of right and wrong, prudence and folly.² Nonetheless, most Americans historically have seen our nation in the terms of Deuteronomy 28:

...the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come unto you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.³

With respect to foreign relations, American history is ripe with the narrative of the United States as the Promised Land and evidence that on more than a few occasions, she also has been a crusader state.

Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, for example, had religious beliefs compatible with widely shared American assumption that the United States is an exceptional nation with a unique role in the world. Their foreign policies could hardly have been more divergent however.

Carter wanted to lead the world by moral example and was the first president to institutionalize human rights considerations in American foreign policy. Reagan, on the other hand favored direct intervention abroad to spread virtuous American ways. Both were well within American tradition and exemplify the contesting visions forever embattled over the soul of American foreign policy.

In his January State of the Union address, President Bush, reflecting his own Christian faith and appealing to America's comfort with religious language and ideas, rallied the nation to prepare for possible war. He said:

"We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not claim to know all the ways of providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history. May he guide us now, and may God continue to bless the United States of America." ⁴

For some Americans in this, the 21st century, such language used by our president is disturbing. It seems to suggest to them that, for President Bush, the United States of America is in "right relationship to

the sacred cosmos and will be protected against the nightmare threats of chaos" if only the president's policy choices are implemented.⁵

Dissent from his potential decision to wage war on Iraq is itself often couched in language reminiscent of an earlier age. University of Chicago theologian Martin Marty exhorts Americans to "confront the administration in the spirit of Oliver Cromwell: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken." ⁶

The possibility that the president may be mistaken occurs to many Americans. They see the Atlantic Alliance deeply split, Turkey unwilling to host US forces, and the United Nations Security Council opposed,. In this context one might reasonably question whether U.S. military action in Iraq will advance American security. The people's anxiety is expressed in polls, even when a substantial majority continues to support the President. For these anxious Americans coming down on the side of – or in opposition to -- presidential judgment that the risks of not acting to disarm Saddam Hussein of his WMD outweigh the risks of acting now is a painfully close call.

For other Americans, who express their absolute opposition to the American Iraq policy in strident moral terms, coming to judgment is not difficult at all. Of the Christian voices raised in protest, few have been more categorical than the National Council of Churches of Christ. Their general secretary, former six-term Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania and a United Methodist minister, Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar took out a full page ad in the New York Times last fall to plea "President Bush: Jesus Changed Your Heart. Now Let Him Change Your Mind."⁷

Like many in the anti-war movement, Edgar states his opposition to war in absolutes. He writes, "preemptive war is immoral and illegal. It is theologically illegitimate and profoundly violates our Christian beliefs and religious principles. As disciples of the Prince of Peace, we know that war is completely antithetical to Jesus' teachings."⁸

The word of God heard by liberal Christians is found in Matthew *"And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."*⁹ For these Christians, it is the teachings of Christ in the Beatitudes that follow that call them to action: *"Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."*¹⁰ For these American Christians, it is the poor, the sick, the marginalized and above all the children who need our love and attention. They see Iraq in terms of the 50% of the population who are children. Their view of a possible war was captured well by John Chane, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, in a sermon delivered on March 2.

Where is the compassion of Christ living in each of us, where is our "Shakenah" when we as a country contemplate spending billions upon billions of dollars on a questionable military incursion into Iraq, when those dollars could be spent relieving the suffering of God's children in this country and throughout the world. As a nation we are squandering our resources of stewardship, resources that could creatively reverse the real "axis of evil" in the world, "poverty, disease and illiteracy."¹¹

Other American Christians hear different sermons. Richard Land, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Religious Liberty and Ethics Commission and the denomination's official spokesman on Iraq says: "For many on the religious left, their theology has blinded them to the reality of evil like Saddam Hussein."¹²

The view that "peace isn't possible in evil's face" is shared by other Americans from different faith traditions. Elie Wiesel, writing yesterday in the Los Angeles Times, insists that "we have a moral obligation to intervene where evil is in control. Today, that place is Iraq."¹³

Others, for example many in the Christian premillennial tradition, see the hand of God behind the confluence of today's events. The Book of Revelation chapter 9 verse 11 -- yes, 9:11 -- refers to the destructive power of one who resides over the realm of the bottomless pit. In revelation 9:15, the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates, will be released, ready for the hour, the day, the month and the year to kill a third of mankind.¹⁴

With all this unequivocal certainty expressed by people who interpret the word of God and assert their views as God's own, there are Americans who might like to hear again the voice of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. In 1952 Niebuhr wrote:

All men are naturally inclined to obscure the morally ambiguous element in their political cause by investing it with religious sanctity. This is why religion is more frequently a source of confusion than of light in the political realm. The tendency to equate our political with our Christian convictions causes politics to generate idolatry. ¹⁵

Niebuhr, writing this in 1952, was unlikely to have imagined how much more confusion such language sows when it is heard in real time around the world by political communities with different cultures, religions and political norms.

The religiosity of language being used now by Americans in debate is noticed by European observers of the American scene. "Just how different America can be was evident from the placards at the most recent anti-war demonstration," Gary Younge *The Guardian* correspondent in New York wrote. "Compared with similar British marches, it was more religious — 'God loves people against the war', 'Peace is Jewish.'" ¹⁶

As Europeans listen in on the speeches President Bush makes to inspire and motivate Americans for war, they fear a religious vision of world affairs has taken hold in the White House. In a February 26 debate in the British Parliament, George Galloway, a Labor Party backbencher from Scotland revealed the animosity of many Europeans by declaring that "that born-again, right-wing, Bible-belting, fundamentalist Republican Administration in the United States want [s] war."¹⁷

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer has repeatedly responded to such assertions by insisting: "The decisions that the president makes about war and peace and about whether or not force needs to be used in Iraq are based on the president's judgments as a secular leader about what is necessary to protect this country. The president is a deeply religious man. But these are decisions that the president will make based on intelligence reports, based on information that he is aware of on how to protect our country from potential attack." ¹⁸

Still, President Bush's statement in his address to the Joint Session of Congress and the American people following the devastating attack on 9/11 that America will judge others as being either "with us or with the terrorists" does suggest a Manichean worldview in which policy disagreement is treated as betrayal.¹⁹ It also recalls for American Fundamentalist Christians, Matthew 12:30 in which Jesus says, "he who is not with me is against me."²⁰

Religious language is at home in American culture. But, its use in reference to America's role in the world "confronts the secular and rationalist vision of international relations held by the Europeans," this according to Javier Solano, the European Union's High Representative in Foreign Affairs.²¹ Religiosity in the American political realm is particularly disturbing to Europeans today because this value laden language accompanies a more assertive post 9/11 American nationalism. And, nationalism is precisely what most Europeans congratulate themselves on having buried in an elaborate web of regional rules and regulations culminating in the European Union.

Although Europeans may hold to a rationalist and secular world, it would be a mistake to imagine that there are no Kantian crusaders among them. Europeans are not immune to the temptations of evangelizing their hard won truths.

William Anthony Hay of the Foreign Policy Research Institute analyzed this fundamental European and American difference in political culture by writing about Europe:

Proponents of what might be called strict multilateralism view international organizations as ends in themselves, partly because those bodies and the approach they epitomize provide a means for overcoming the legacy of nationalism. Multilateralism defined as a principle rather than a tool also imposes constraints on sovereignty that its proponents welcome. Without the will or capability to act, however, multilateralism creates a policy vacuum. Its focus on means begs the question of what should be done and whether to do it. ²²

While there are Americans who would favor a much stronger multilateral approach to foreign policy, "it is impossible to imagine any American President regarding the United Nations as sovereign and the resolutions of the Security Council as the sole basis for legitimate international action." So says British academic and author Paul Hirst who adds, "No US president since the victorious allies created the UN has ever believed this. All have guarded US sovereignty and freedom of action. "²³

Robert Kagan, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writing in *Policy Review* last summer and now in a book entitled Of Paradise and Power shares the view that European and American values as well as interests are diverging. "On the all-important question of power -- the efficacy of power, the morality of power, the desirability of power -- they have parted ways."²⁴ Kagan writes:

Europe...is moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation. It is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative

prosperity, the realization of Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace." Meanwhile, the United States remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international rules and laws are unreliable and where true security and the promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might. This is why, on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: They agree on little and understand one another less and less.²⁵

For Kagan, Europe's Kantian dream depends on the United States using power according to the old Hobbesian rules. He writes, "In return for manning the walls of Europe's post modern order, the United States naturally seeks a certain freedom of action to deal with the strategic dangers that it alone has the means and sometimes the will to address."²⁶

To deny the United States that freedom of action by veto in the UN Security Council -- as France insists it will do -- is understood even by French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin [speaking privately to members of the French National Assembly majority] to be "firing a bullet in the back of the Americans."²⁷ Within Europe, statesmen fear the French bullet has already ricochet. "Friedbert Pflueger, the Christian Democrat foreign policy spokesman in the German Bundestag, said a veto would be part of a process splitting Europe apart and making it irrelevant. "Chirac and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder", Pflueger said, "could already count three victims: NATO, the UN, and a common European foreign policy."²⁸

The differing foreign policy positions on Iraq of the three major EU powers – Great Britain, France and Germany -- demonstrate that even in its unity, Europe is divided. And, while European statesmen do not reach for scripture to convey the depth of their convictions, they occasionally do reach for Shakespeare as Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, the former Danish foreign minister did last week. "He likened Chirac to King Lear, saying that the loss of its European primacy left France, 'in the face of diminishing influence, alone with its impotent rage.'"²⁹

The vision of European unity – so many fear now shattered -- has beckoned Turkey for more than forty years.

A democracy, member of NATO and an aspirant for inclusion in the European Union, Turkey, too, offers evidence of the struggle of values in international relations today. Long an ally of the United States, Turkey's new ruling Justice and Development Party -- with roots in political Islam -- delivered a stunning defeat to the United States seeking permission to stage military assault on Iraq from Turkish soil.

Most of us have eyes ill trained to read Turkish political culture. In trying to understand the meaning of the Turkish parliamentary vote, questions with deep implications for the future arise: Does the vote signal a Turkey identifying with the Kantian dream of Europe or does the vote signal a resurgence of Islamic identity among the Turkish people. And if, it is the latter, what is the nature of the modern struggle within Islam at the intersection of faith and politics?

Such a question deserves more attention than I can give it this evening. Surely, it is essential to begin by recognizing that there are

great differences within Islam. To look at the current and varied foreign policies of Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq is to understand that while they may share a sacred canopy, they differ in their interpretation of the implications for their respective foreign policies. Turkey— secular for most of the past century, democratic and allied with the United States through NATO – will not permit its soil to be used for assault on Iraq. But it reserves the right to move its own military forces into Iraq to protect its interests with regard to the Kurds.

Pakistan, whose co-operation with the United States in the war on terrorism in and along the border with Afghanistan has been absolutely essential to any progress, has announced its intent to abstain in the now delayed UN Security Council vote on Iraq. [as of March 11, 2003] A nuclear power itself, Pakistan is already in upheaval over President Musharraf's critical decision to join the coalition in the war against terrorism.

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, quietly co-operates with the United States in the question of Iraq at the same time that it exports to the United States and the world its own fundamentalist version of Islam called Wahabism. The implications of this Saudi foreign policy initiative even in Tampa Bay were documented in a front page story in the St. Petersburg Times yesterday.³⁰

Finally we arrive at Iraq, a secular state, which is lead by a tyrant who calls himself variously: "Saddam Hussein, the Anointed One, Glorious Leader, Direct Descendant of the Prophet, President of Iraq, Chairman of its Revolutionary Command Council, Field Marshal of its Armies,

Doctor of its Laws, and Great Uncle to all its Peoples."³¹ His continued existence with both the capacity and the intent to use his arsenal of biological and chemical weapons to advance his interests is evidence to those who see that a Hobbsian world does indeed exist. Surely, he is not living by bread alone. Over the last 12 years, his unwillingness to disarm as instructed by the United Nations has cost Iraq and its people over 150 billion dollars in oil revenue and brought us to this dangerous point in international relations.

I end this evening, where I began reflecting on the possibility that what challenges us now is a collision of values. The states of the world are making their calculations tonight on whether to engage in military action to disarm Iraq. They may well think about survival, power, oil and other interests. But, there will always be the intangible something.

What then are we to do? Perhaps we should conclude by listening to the words of the Prophet Micah, "He has shown you, oh man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"³²

Thank you very much.

Endnotes

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- ¹ Deuteronomy 8.
- ² Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997) p.4.
- ³ Deuteronomy 28.
- ⁴ Presidential State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/> downloaded 3/8/03.
- ⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday 1967) p. 27.
- ⁶ Newsweek March 10, 2003 <http://www.msnbc.com/news/879509.asp> downloaded 3/7/03.
- ⁷ New York Times September 25, 2002.
- ⁸ "Sowing the Seeds of Peace" January 3, 2003, NCC News Service
<http://www.nccusa.org/news/02news104a.html> downloaded 3/6/03.
- ⁹ Matthew 4:3 and 4:4.
- ¹⁰ Matthew 5.
- ¹¹ Sermon Delivered on March 2, 2003 by Bishop John Chane, St. Columba
<http://www.columba.org/Worship/Sermons/030302bishop.html> downloaded 3/7/03.
- ¹² ABC News,
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Politics/religion_antiwar030216.html downloaded 3/7/03.
- ¹³ Los Angeles Times, March 11, 2003 as carried by ACFR NewsGroup No. 253, Wednesday, March 12, 2003.
- ¹⁴ Revelation 9:11-9:15.
- ¹⁵ (*Christianity and Crisis, July 21, 1952, in Love and Justice, p. 59.*
<http://www.serve.com/thibodep/cr/niebuhr.htm>) downloaded 3/8/03.
- ¹⁶ ABC News
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Politics/religion_antiwar030216.html
downloaded 3/11/03.
- ¹⁷ New Zealand Herald March 8, 2003
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3199657&thesection=news&thesubsection=world> downloaded 3/8/03.
- ¹⁸ White House <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030206-13.html> downloaded 3/11/03.
- ¹⁹ Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, Sept. 20, 2001, White House <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.0>. downloaded 3/11/03.
- ²⁰ Matthew 12:30.
- ²¹ William Pfaff International Herald Tribune February 4, 2003 downloaded 2/4/03
- ²² *Is There Still a West? Watch on the West A Newsletter of FPRI's Center for the Study of America and the West* Volume 3, Number 8 September 2002
<http://www.fpri.org/ww/0308.200209.hay.istherestillawest.html> downloaded 3/11/03.
- ²³ Paul Hirst writing in Open Democracy on February 19, 2003.
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/debate.jsp?debateId=88&id=8> downloaded 3/8/03.
- ²⁴ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York, Alfred A Knopf 2003) p.3.
- ²⁵ Ibid p. 3
- ²⁶ Ibid p. 76

²⁷ "In private, French talk differently about a veto" IHT March 6, 2003 downloaded 3/6/03

²⁸ "News: Analysis: Chirac's casual 'no'" by John Vinocur in the IHT March 12, 2003 <http://www.iht.com/articles/89421.htm> downloaded 3/12/03.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Saudi form of Islam wars with moderates" By Mary Jacoby and Graham Brin, St. Petersburg Times published March 11, 2003 p. A1

³¹ "Tales of the Tyrant" by Mark Bowden in the Atlantic Monthly May 2002.

³² Micah 6:8.