

Who are the "Enemies of Civilization?"

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09.11.01: Responses and Responsibilities

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****** DRAFT ******

My remarks will be brief, but I hope that they will contribute something of value to the great many issues which are being raised in these panels and will no doubt be discussed in the days and weeks after.

The issue that I want to address involves the political rhetoric which has emerged since the events of 9.11.01. Specifically, I have been interested in the rhetoric captured in the phrase "war on civilization". We too easily assume we know who is defending civilization and who is at war against it. What I want to suggest is that the very persons who are presently touted as the defenders of civilization are in fact its most dangerous enemies. There is indeed a war against civilization and the West has always seen itself as the defender of civilization. One need only think of the Roman emperor M. Aurelius, spending the entire time he ruled Rome on the frontiers of the empire, defending Rome against the barbarians by day, and writing the great work of Stoic philosophy at night. (If you do not recognize his name, he was most recently depicted in the film *Gladiator* as the wise old Emperor killed by his son after yet another "last" battle to vanquish the Germanic Barbarians.)

There was a war against civilization then, and there remains one today, but the modern war against civilization is not a war against Empire, but against the very embodiment of civilization: the City itself.

Previous to 9.11.01, the only city which symbolized America was an imaginary one: Ronald Reagan's "Shining City on a Hill". Now the events of 9.11.01 have produced the incorporation of NYC into America. Rather than being the New Babylon, NYC is proclaimed the embodiment of America, and Americans have been quick to declare that "we are all New Yorkers now". But New York has not changed, nor has the rest of America. What has changed is that a city which embraces the totality of human variety and represents all that cosmopolitanism offers, has become a symbol of a narrow-minded nationalism. That we are now embraced by America will no doubt prove to be fleeting. The Real America will return to the shining city of its imagination, and the reality of Modern warfare will be visited upon the cosmopolitan city (remember Beirut? Sarajevo? Belgrade? Grozny?).

This war is one being waged from both within and across the frontier between city and country. The city is under siege because it is the embodiment of the bourgeois universals of cosmopolitanism and enlightenment.

When we speak of civilization, we are speaking the language of enlightenment. In its most fundamental sense, Enlightenment requires that one live according to its motto "Dare to Know". It is important to remember that the founders of Enlightenment were careful to note that we are not yet enlightened, only that

we live in a age of enlightenment....i.e., an age where it is possible to dare to have the courage to reason for ourselves. Enlightenment is secular and materialist. From the beginning it has always stood against the oppressive dogma of religion and the dominating authority of the clergy.

Now we see here the fundamental contradiction in our response to 9.11.01. The present administration has chosen to defend civilization through the promotion of its antithesis: religion. Does not the President routinely invoke the rhetoric of a Christian Holy War or Crusade. He said on September 14th "This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while" What is the difference between ridding the world of evildoers and ridding it of infidels and atheists? What is the difference between crusade and jihad? Both are invoked when religion seeks to subvert civilization. Consider the text of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson

What Mr. Falwell said on Thursday on "The 700 Club," while chatting with the program's host, Mr. Robertson, was this: "What we saw on Tuesday, as terrible as it is, could be minuscule if, in fact, God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve." Mr. Robertson responded, "Jerry, that's my feeling. I think we've just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven't even begun to see what they can do to the major population."

A few moments later Mr. Falwell said, "The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the A.C.L.U., People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'"

To which Mr. Robertson said, "Well, I totally concur, and the problem is we have adopted that agenda at the highest levels of our government."

Mr. Robertson also issued a press release on Thursday saying that in a country rampant with greed, Internet pornography and lack of prayer,
"God almighty is lifting his protection from us."

I would ask, is this really so far from saying that Allah has blessed those who carried out the attacks. It is, as Ronald Reagan once said, that "One person's 'freedom fighter' is another persons' gorilla"

In its opposition to Enlightenment, religion makes all of us slaves. Where it does allow talk of freedom, it is merely the freedom to be a slave without a master. The repression and resentment that form the origin of

religion also form the antithesis of enlightenment. Religion always seeks to defend civilization by destroying it.

Of course, enlightenment also has its own apparatus of power that organizes repression and resentment, but it is fundamentally different. Enlightenment seeks the domination of Reason over Nature and faith, but it does not seek to nullify life in favor of a hereafter. This is key to understanding the opposition between the world view of civilization and that of Bin Laden, and Sharon: Religion seeks to always place something above Nature, and always seeks to denigrate life in favor of a hereafter where you can be rewarded for whatever unconscionable acts you might perpetrate under the banner of faith and devotion.

Perhaps all we can say is that Religion must make itself appear enlightened at the very moment it most threatens enlightenment. On October 5, at the same moment that he was sending tanks into Hebron, Sharon said that he was doing nothing more than the work of "enlightened civilization".

The Roman philosopher/poet Lucretius said that the origin of our willing obedience to authority lies in the terror that religion itself instills in us. But he never imagined that religion would come to mouth the words of enlightenment. He would have thought it madness to witness W's call for a defense of civilization on the one hand, and for a "crusade" to "rid the world of evil doers," on the other. Civilization has its terrors, too, but the foundation of religion is the terrorism and denigration of life born of resentment and repression.

Religion always seeks to defend civilization by destroying it. But to defend civilization is to live a civilized life, which means that one must not betray civilization with the barbarities of retribution, revenge, and resentment. David Byrne says that "the war is in every body now". It is us to you to decide who the war is against and which side you are on.

Never, even for a brief period, have we lived without terror. During the Cold War, everyone knew that 15 minutes was all it took for a missile to reach Moscow and Washington. During the Cold War, we lived under a peace guaranteed by the terror of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). The terror of nuclear annihilation has proven obsolete. Now we are to be terrorized by terrorism, i.e., by terror itself.

The historian Michael Wood remarked that "throughout history, the priest and the executioner have walked hand in hand". We have no better example of this than the events of 9.11.01 and after.

Sigmund Freud 19xx. *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

Immanuel Kant. 18Xx 19xx. "What is Enlightenment?"

Alexandre Kojève. 19xx. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit.*

Lucretius. 19 . *De rerum natura.*

Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals.*

Karl Marx. 19 . *The Holy Family*

Karl Marx 19 . *The Grundrisse*

New York Times articles on Falwell/Robertson

War on civilization but civilization not in the sense that they mean it. War on the City...it is not what America stands for (nor does it stand for America), but it stands for what the ideal of the City (funny how we often refer to NYC as "The City"). In a sense, the City stands for the things that America stands for, but that America is not real in the world.

W. making it religious, into a crusade, is not defending civilization (which is by definition secular) Falwell and Robertson on the "Lord's Shield" Obviously in more ways than one, we know now better than before that modern war is waged against the city itself (remember Beirut? Sarajevo? Grozny? Yes, this means that the attack on the pentagon, while linked, is inherently different than that on the WTC), it is one being waged from both within and across the frontier between city and country

Cosmopolitanism and Enlightenment

The classic formulation of Enlightenment requires only that we dare to know. When we speak of civilization, we are speaking in the language of Enlightenment. But it was never proper to say of our selves that "we are enlightened". We can only say that we live in an age of enlightenment, i.e., an age where it is possible to dare to have the courage to reason for ourselves.

Religion makes all of us slaves who can aspire to be nothing more than Slaves without Masters. The repression and resentment that lie at the origin of religion form the antithesis of enlightenment, not that Enlightenment does not order its own apparatus of power around repression and resentment, but it seeks the dominion of Reason over faith, especially Christian faith, because faith is opposed to life (one could argue that Enlightenment attempts to *dominate* life in its domination of Nature, but it does not *nullify* life in favor of a hereafter.) Knowledge falls from the tree of life, and not from the heavens.

When the classical Materialists were at work, they rightly located the beginnings of all social domination in religion. The Roman philosopher/poet Lucretius said that the origin of our obedience to authority is to be found in the religious denigration of life, but he did not see how religion might come to mouth the words of enlightenment. So we get the oddity of W. calling for the defense of civilization on the one hand, and for a crusade to rid the world of evil doers, on the other. Religion must make itself appear enlightened at the very moment it most threatens enlightenment. On October 5, at the same moment he ordered tanks into Hebron, Sharon said that he was doing the work of "enlightened civilization."

Daring to know is by definition antithetical to religious dogma, as the fall, the moment when we suppose that we became human, is the moment when it became possible to think and know for ourselves.

To think and to know also imposed a view of what it meant to live an ethical life, what it meant, in other worlds, to live as a civilized person, as a political animal, or to more literally quote Aristotle, as a "City-Dweller".

the way to defend civilization is to live a civilized life, which means that one must not betray civilization with the barbarities of retribution, revenge, and resentment.

Kant. 18Xx 19xx. "What is Enlightenment?"

Alexandre Kojève. 19xx. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit.*

Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals.*

Marx. 19 . *The Holy Family*

New York Times articles on Falwell/Robertson

The Rev. Jerry Falwell said yesterday that the American Civil Liberties Union, with abortion providers, gay rights proponents and federal courts that had banned school prayer and legalized abortion, had so weakened the United States spiritually that the nation was left exposed to Tuesday's terrorist attacks.

Mr. Falwell, a Baptist minister who is chancellor of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., said that "the A.C.L.U.'s got to take a lot of blame for this," according to a partial transcript of remarks he made on "The 700 Club," Pat Robertson's religious program. In the transcript, distributed by the liberal organization People for the American Way, Mr. Falwell described the A.C.L.U. as "throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools." Referring to the attacks, he said he would point a figurative finger at those "who have tried to secularize America" and say, "You helped this happen."

According to the transcript, Mr. Robertson said, "I totally concur."

Asked about his remarks in an interview last night, Mr. Falwell said he was making a theological statement about how various groups had so offended God that the attacks could occur. He said he did not intend to shift blame from the terrorists. "I sincerely believe that the collective efforts of many secularists during the past generation, resulting in the expulsion from our schools and from the public square, has left us vulnerable," he said.

He said he did not believe God "had anything to do with the tragedy," but that God had permitted it. "He lifted the curtain of protection," Mr. Falwell said, "and I believe that if America does not repent and return to a genuine faith and dependence on him, we may expect more tragedies, unfortunately."

The New York Times

September 14, 2001, Friday, Late Edition - Final

Section A; Page 18; Column 5; National Desk

AFTER THE ATTACKS: FINDING FAULT;

U.S. 'Secular' Groups Set Tone For Terror Attacks, Falwell Says

By GUSTAV NIEBUHR

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September 15, 2001, Saturday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 15; Column 5; National Desk

AFTER THE ATTACKS: FINDING FAULT;

Falwell's Finger-Pointing Inappropriate, Bush Says

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

Did God allow the terrorist attacks?

The Rev. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson set off a minor explosion of their own when they asserted on television on Thursday that an angry God had allowed the terrorists to succeed in their deadly mission because the United States had become a nation of abortion, homosexuality, secular schools and courts, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Liberal groups and commentators denounced their remarks yesterday, as did President Bush, who has long enjoyed the political support of the two evangelists.

"The president believes that terrorists are responsible for these acts," said a White House spokesman, Ken Lisaius. "He does not share those views, and believes that those remarks are inappropriate."

Yet Mr. Falwell's and Mr. Robertson's remarks were based in theology familiar to and accepted by many conservative evangelical Christians, who believe the Bible teaches that God withdraws protection from nations that violate his will.

Several conservative theologians and evangelists said in interviews yesterday that they agreed with the basic notion but rejected the idea that mere humans can ever know which particular sins lead to which particular tragedies.

The Rev. R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a friend of Mr. Falwell's, said, "There is no doubt that America has accommodated itself to so many sins that we should always fear God's judgment and expect that in due time that judgment will come. But we ought to be very careful about pointing to any circumstance or any specific tragedy and say that this thing has happened because this is God's direct punishment."

Mr. Falwell, chancellor of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., and senior pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church there, was in Washington yesterday in a service at the National Cathedral at Mr. Bush's invitation, a spokesman for Mr. Falwell said.

Mr. Falwell released a statement yesterday on the controversy, saying, "Despite the impression some may have from news reports today, I hold no one other than the terrorists and the people and nations who have enabled and harbored them responsible for Tuesday's attacks on this nation."

"I sincerely regret that comments I made during a long theological discussion on a Christian television program yesterday were taken out of their context and reported and that my thoughts -- reduced to sound bites -- have detracted from the spirit of this day of mourning."

Mr. Robertson yesterday defended Mr. Falwell. "In no way has any guest on my program suggested that anyone other than the Middle East terrorists were responsible for the tragic events that took place on Tuesday," he said in a written statement.

What Mr. Falwell said on Thursday on "The 700 Club," while chatting with the program's host, Mr. Robertson, was this:

"What we saw on Tuesday, as terrible as it is, could be minuscule if, in fact, God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve."

Mr. Robertson responded, "Jerry, that's my feeling. I think we've just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven't even begun to see what they can do to the major population."

A few moments later Mr. Falwell said, "The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the A. C. L. U., People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'"

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The New York Times

September 18, 2001, Tuesday, Late Edition - Final

Section B; Page 4; Column 5; National Desk

A NATION CHALLENGED: PLACING BLAME;

Falwell Apologizes for Saying An Angry God Allowed Attacks

BYLINE: By GUSTAV NIEBUHR

On Friday, a White House spokesman said that President Bush did not share the views Mr.

Falwell expressed and believed them to be "inappropriate."

Mr. Falwell said he had been told to expect such a statement in a phone call on Friday morning from a Bush aide. He would identify the aide only as "the president's friend."

"He told me that the White House statement would be that the president thought they were inappropriate and the president did not concur with them," Mr. Falwell said. But he said repeatedly that no one pressured him to apologize.

Remarks by the President Upon Arrival

The South Lawn

[View the President's Remarks](#)

[Listen to the President's Remarks](#)

3:23 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Today, millions of Americans mourned and prayed, and tomorrow we go back to work. Today, people from all walks of life gave thanks for the heroes; they mourn the dead; they ask for God's good graces on the families who mourn, and tomorrow the good people of America go back to their shops, their fields, American factories, and go back to work.

Our nation was horrified, but it's not going to be terrorized. We're a great nation. We're a nation of resolve. We're a nation that can't be cowed by evil-doers. I've got great faith in the American people. If the American people had seen what I had seen in New York City, you'd have great faith, too. You'd have faith in the hard work of the rescuers; you'd have great faith because of the desire for people to do what's right for America; you'd have great faith because of the compassion and love that our fellow Americans are showing each other in times of need.

I also have faith in our military. And we have got a job to do - just like the farmers and ranchers and business owners and factory workers have a job to do. My administration has a job to do, and we're going to do it. We will rid the world of the evil-doers. We will call together freedom loving people to fight terrorism.

And on on this day of - on the Lord's Day, I say to my fellow Americans, thank you for your prayers, thank you for your compassion, thank you for your love for one another. And tomorrow when you get back to work, work hard like you always have. But we've been

warned. We've been warned there are evil people in this world. We've been warned so vividly - and we'll be alert. Your government is alert. The governors and mayors are alert that evil folks still lurk out there.

As I said yesterday, people have declared war on America, and they have made a terrible mistake, because this is a fabulous country. Our economy will come back. We'll still be the best farmers and ranchers in the world. We're still the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world. On this day of faith, I've never had more faith in America than I have right now.

Q Mr. President, are you worried this crisis might send us into a recession?

THE PRESIDENT: David, I understand that there are some businesses that hurt as a result of this crisis. Obviously, New York City hurts. Congress acted quickly. We worked together, the White House and the Congress, to pass a significant supplemental. A lot of that money was dedicated to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, as it should be. People will be amazed at how quickly we rebuild New York; how quickly people come together to really wipe away the rubble and show the world that we're still the strongest nation in the world.

But I have great faith in the resiliency of the economy. And no question about it, this incident affected our economy, but the markets open tomorrow, people go back to work and we'll show the world.

Q Mr. President, do you believe Osama bin Ladder's denial that he had anything to do with this?

THE PRESIDENT: No question he is the prime suspect. No question about that.

Q Mr. President, can you describe your conversation with the President of Pakistan and the specific comments he made to you? And, in addition to that, do you see other - you've asked Saudi Arabia to help out, other countries?

THE PRESIDENT: John, I will - obviously, I made a call to the leader of Pakistan. We had a very good, open conversation. And there is no question that he wants to cooperate with the United States. I'm not at liberty to detail specifically what we have asked him to do. In the course of this conduct of this war against terrorism, I'll be asked a lot, and members of my administration will be asked a lot of questions about our strategies and tactics. And in order to protect the lives of people that will be involved in different operations, I'm not at liberty to talk about it and I won't talk about it.

But I can tell you that the response from Pakistan; Prime Minister

Vajpayee today, of India, Saudi Arabia, has been very positive and very straightforward. They know what my intentions are. They know my intentions are to find those who did this, find those who encouraged them, find them who house them, find those who comfort them, and bring them to justice.

I made that very clear. There is no doubt in anybody's mind with whom I've had a conversation about the intent of the United States. I gave them ample opportunity to say they were uncomfortable with our goal. And the leaders you've asked about have said they were comfortable. They said, we understand, Mr. President, and we're with you.

Q Mr. President, the Attorney General is going to ask for enhanced law enforcement authority to surveil and - things to disrupt terrorism that might be planned here in the United States. What will that mean for the rights of Americans? What will that mean -

THE PRESIDENT: Terry, I ask you to talk to the Attorney General about that subject. He'll be prepared to talk about it publicly at some point in time. But what he is doing is, he's reflecting what I said earlier in my statement, that we're facing a new kind of enemy, somebody so barbaric that they would fly airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. And, therefore, we have to be on alert in America. We're a nation of law, a nation of civil rights. We're also a nation under attack. And the Attorney General will address that in a way that I think the American people will understand.

We need to go back to work tomorrow and we will. But we need to be alert to the fact that these evil-doers still exist. We haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long period of time. No one could have conceivably imagined suicide bombers burrowing into our society and then emerging all in the same day to fly their aircraft - fly U.S. aircraft into buildings full of innocent people - and show no remorse. This is a new kind of -- a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.

But I can assure the American people I am determined, I'm not going to be distracted, I will keep my focus to make sure that not only are these brought to justice, but anybody who's been associated will be brought to justice. Those who harbor terrorists will be brought to justice. It is time for us to win the first war of the 21st century decisively, so that our children and our grandchildren can live peacefully into the 21st century.

Q Mr. President, you've declared we're at war and asked those who wear the uniform to get ready. Should the American public also

be ready for the possibility of casualties in this war?

THE PRESIDENT: Patsy, the American people should know that my administration is determined to find, to get them running and to hunt them down, those who did this to America. Now, I want to remind the American people that the prime suspect's organization is in a lot of countries - it's a widespread organization based upon one thing: terrorizing. They can't stand freedom; they hate what America stands for. So this will be a long campaign, a determined campaign - a campaign that will use the resources of the United States to win.

They have roused a mighty giant. And make no mistake about it: we're determined. Oh, there will be times when people don't have this incident on their minds, I understand that. There will be times down the road where citizens will be concerned about other matters, and I completely understand that. But this administration, along with those friends of ours who are willing to stand with us all the way through will do what it takes to rout terrorism out of the world.

Q Mr. President, in your conversation with Pakistan's leader, was there any request or demand you made of him that he failed to satisfy?

THE PRESIDENT: The leader of Pakistan has been very cooperative. He has agreed with our requests to aid our nation to hunt down, to find, to smoke out of their holes the terrorist organization that is the prime suspect. And I am pleased with his response. We will continue to work with Pakistan and India. We will work with Russia. We will work with the nations that one would have thought a couple of years ago would have been impossible to work with - to bring people to justice. But more than that, to win the war against terrorist activity.

The American people are used to a conflict where there was a beachhead or a desert to cross or known military targets. That may occur. But right now we're facing people who hit and run. They hide in caves. We'll get them out.

The other day I said, not only will we find those who have affected America, or who might affect America in the future, we'll also deal with those who harbor them.

Q Mr. President, would you confirm what the Vice President said this morning, that at one point during this crisis you gave an order to shoot down any civilian airliner that approached the Capitol? Was that a difficult decision to make?

THE PRESIDENT: I gave our military the orders necessary to protect Americans, do whatever it would take to protect Americans. And of course that's difficult. Never did anybody's thought process about how

to protect America did we ever think that the evil-doers would fly not one, but four commercial aircraft into precious U.S. targets - never. And so, obviously, when I was told what was taking place, when I was informed that an unidentified aircraft was headed to the heart of the capital, I was concerned. I wasn't concerned about my decision; I was more concerned about the lives of innocent Americans. I had realized there on the ground in Florida we were under attack. But never did I dream we would have been under attack this way.

That's why I say to the American people we've never seen this kind of evil before. But the evil-doers have never seen the American people in action before, either - and they're about to find out.

Thank you all very much.

END 3:36 P.M. EDT

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