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On Paganism

As an Orthodox monk, I imagine Alain de Benoist ("Monotheism vs. Polytheism," April 1996) performing his daily orisons before an icon by Gauguin, chanting selections from Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* as his Psalter, and reading passages from Rousseau as the appointed lessons. He does remind us that pagans include the great philosophers of ancient Greece, etc., but the underlying message seems to be, "Mais, how *merveilleux* it was when we all lived in the jungle paradise before those horrible *monothéistes intolérants* ruined the noble savage's innocent joy!"

M. de Benoist can only reach his conclusion that monotheism is by nature intolerant, while polytheism is not, if he reduces, as do most modern writers, *religion* merely to questions of cult and belief in a supernatural Being or beings. Polytheists are indeed often quite tolerant in questions of cult, as in India and Japan. But if one operates on a plenary definition of religion as one's total way of life based on an individual's or a group's highest values, then we find that all religions (i.e., cultures and ways of life that are actually lived) are quite intolerant of that which in their worldview is not tolerable. Such intolerance includes, of course, that of French secularists, whose highest values seem to be language, food, and sex (in that order), and who correspondingly are not noted for their generous tolerance of mispronounced French, poorly prepared repasts, or unattractive women (or in the case of female French *secularistes*, men)!

—Br. Isaac Melton
St. Michael's Skete
Cañones, NM

On State-Sponsored Prayer

Rabbi Jacob Neusner is correct when he writes in "Letter From Inner Israel: State-Sponsored Prayer" (April 1996): "Constitutional issues aside, there are strong theological arguments against legislating prayer for young people." "We speak each in our own, unique way; we honor

the piety and prayer of others; but we do not participate and *cannot* participate in these prayers, unless we apostatize."

Ever since *Christian News* began in 1962, some of our well-meaning Fundamentalist friends have taken issue with us for not supporting the various efforts which come up from time to time to get prayer and Bible-reading into government schools. In 1981, Senator Jesse Helms, a leading advocate of "voluntary" prayers in public schools, was asked during a Senate debate if the "I hail Mary" would be an acceptable prayer for children to recite in a government school. He said that even as a Baptist he would not have any objection if such a prayer were used in government schools and that he would feel the same way if he were a Jew.

The Christian maintains that Christianity is the only true and saving faith and that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except by me." All Christians confess the Athanasian Creed, one of the great ecumenical creeds of Christendom. It begins: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic (i.e., universal, Christian) faith. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity."

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is one major conservative church body which has taken issue with Fundamentalists who champion prayer and Bible reading in government schools. Already in 1925, Dr. Walter Maier, Old Testament professor of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, a Harvard Ph.D., and founder of the International Lutheran Hour, wrote: "The widespread effort to introduce the Bible into public schools, as well meant as it may be, is un-American because it is against American principles to force a Jewish child to read the New Testament and because it is contrary to our constitution to confuse the duties of the church with the privileges of the state. The whole arrangement which throws the church into politics makes Jesus more of a policeman than a Savior, and seeks to have His church wield the policeman's club, besides preaching His Gospel. It constitutes a

real menace to our national life; for, if successfully carried through, the policy will bring a reversion to the spirit and custom of the days of the Puritans.”

When I attended public schools in the Bronx, New York, almost all of my classmates were Jews. Any prayers would have been led by a Jewish teacher and a service at graduation time by a rabbi. Christian children in government schools should not be urged to pray with non-Christians, and non-Christian children should not be urged to pray with Christians in such a school. Christians who are determined to have their children pray in school, can send them to a parochial school if at all possible. Actually, any child can silently pray anytime he wants to in any school.

—Herman Otten
Editor, Christian News
New Haven, MO

On Christianity and the State

Philip Jenkins' tactful and balanced review ("Unbaptized America, May 1996) of Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore's *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness* gives credit to the authors' attention to detail but fails to take note of their tendentious tendency to mislead their readers about the "Christian foundations" of our American republic. They are right, of course, in pointing to the fact that the Constitution does not embody religious values and in asserting that the values reflected in the Declaration of Independence, while consistent with Christianity, do not say more than Deists or Freemasons would.

The idea that the Constitution was written at the high point of secularism and of the conceit that man had "come of age" and could dispense with religious tutelage makes sense. The authors think that if the Constitution had been drafted several decades later, it would have been more explicitly Christian; this is an interesting and probably valid suggestion.

What is overlooked, however, is the fact that the U.S. Constitution not only does not contain Christian values, but it does not contain values at all. As the late Harriet Pilpel pointed out in her pro-abortion arguments, the document does not contain a right to life. It basically establishes a methodology permitting the

citizens to order society and the state according to the principles they cherish, but it does not contain principles. But it is important to note that although the Constitution did not embody religious values, the American people did. As long as the consensus was largely Christian, the Constitution served as a methodology for the people to order society in a way consistent with Christianity. Once the consensus, or at least the policy- and opinion-making elite, is no longer Christian-oriented, the Constitution permits the Christian values to be discarded and to be replaced with whatever the majority of the moment wants.

It ought to be acknowledged that the United States have never been formally or structurally Christian, but it also ought to be recognized that our people, our ethical principles, and our way of life were once far more Christian than they are today. There really is something missing in our national life, something that once was there.

—Harold O.J. Brown
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Deerfield, IL

Messrs. Kramnick and Moore in their book *Unbaptized America* (or perhaps it was the reviewer Philip Jenkins) need to address many issues if they want to reconcile completely the argument regarding church and state. First, nowhere in the Constitution do the words "separation of church and state" appear. There is a vast difference between the First Amendment prohibition of the establishment of religion and the "separation of church and state." When one considers that Congress on several occasions in the early years of our nation appropriated money to support Catholic and Protestant missions on Indian reservations, and the money was accepted and used by several Presidents, including Jefferson, one recognizes the dimensions of the difference. (Note: This is the same Jefferson who originated the phrase "separation of church and state" and also the same Jefferson who vetoed appropriations to build roads through Kentucky on the grounds of constitutionality.)

Second, the First Amendment was meant to apply to the federal government only. (The Tenth Amendment now largely ignored was very important to the Founders.) Under no circumstances would these early signers of the Constitution have condoned federal

courts telling states and local governments how to react (one way or the other) to religion.

Third, the authors themselves recognized that the Founders of our nation did not intend a hostility to God. They did not, however, address the belief of many Americans today that our government is hostile to God. It is hard to argue otherwise.

In short, the Constitution is in no way Godless (as the authors claim), nor was it intended to be. The Constitution was intended to prohibit the federal government from establishing a church sponsored by the government and supported by taxes as was the case in most European countries. That is all the Constitution says. That is all it meant. Historical scholarship does not refute (but supports) the above statement.

—Paul Gottfried
Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, PA

On Paleoconservatism

I have followed the Samuel Francis saga ("The Rise and Fall of a Paleoconservative at the *Washington Times*," Part I & II, April and May 1996) with keen personal interest. I am an enthusiastic reader of *Chronicles* and other traditionalist writing. As a young paleoconservative who has worked on political campaigns and recently jumped to journalism, I have become accustomed to establishmentarians warning me about my ways. Most often, neoconservative high priests advise that I am simply too young and idealistic to understand how things really work. I should shun radical ideas if I want to avoid trouble and get anywhere in this town, I am told. Unfortunately, uncensored history, cultural tradition, religious dedication, and wholesome public policy tenants are considered subversive rather than necessary. In this system, realism is derided as racism, the majority are blatantly subjected to the minority, and decency is construed as vulgarity. All in all, I suppose I am idealistic because I understand that while paleoconservative beliefs beget persecution, tyranny begets rebellion.

—Brett M. Decker
Washington, D.C.

ROBERT HUSSEIN, a Kuwaiti citizen, may be wishing for another Iraqi occupation. After converting to Christianity, Hussein was put on trial for apostasy in an Islamic court, which quickly found him guilty. Although Kuwait's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, it imposes no penalty on a Muslim who kills a man found guilty of apostasy. While Hussein still has the ostensible right to practice his religion openly, he fears for his life and has gone into hiding in Kuwait. It is not in the interests of the New World Order to investigate cases like this too closely, for Hussein's case and many others suggest that in liberated Kuwait some creeds are more equal than others.

Hussein has found a champion in the Rutherford Institute, which has publicized his story and asked both Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Amir Shaikh Jabar Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to do something to save him. "I fear for my life and the lives of more than 1,000 other Christians in Kuwait," Hussein told the Rutherford Institute, an international legal organization that seeks to protect religious freedom. Hussein finds little comfort in promises from Kuwait's embassy in America that his life is safe, since Kuwait's constitution declares open season on apostates.

It may be small comfort to Hussein and other Christians in Kuwait, but the new Kuwaiti regime has been just as zealous in persecuting other religious minorities as in punishing Christians. According to a Human Rights Watch report published earlier this year, the Kuwaiti government has repeatedly used Iraqi threats and provocations (i.e., brief incursions by Iraqi troops across the border) as an excuse to mistreat minorities seen as holding "pro-Iraq" sentiments. The large Palestinian and Bedoon (stateless Arab) populations in Kuwait are still seen as having been supportive of the Iraqi occupiers, despite the large numbers of men and women in both communities who fought in the resistance. As a result, their freedoms are severely constricted. Particularly hard hit are the Bedoons, who have been shut out of their traditional occupations in the police and military, barred from sending their children to state-run schools, and confined to a few dismal slums.

At other times, the Bedoons' punishment takes a more palpable form. In 1995 the police rounded up hundreds of "undesirable" Bedoons and placed them without charge in the Talha Deportation Prison. The Bedoons then had the choice of leaving Kuwait or remaining in the overcrowded jail, which was originally built as a schoolhouse. In protest, the Talha inmates went on a hunger strike, which finally resulted in some efforts to improve their conditions. A majority of the Bedoons in Kuwait have lived there for their entire lives, but harassment and intimidation have driven roughly half of their community of 300,000 from the country.

Kuwait's Palestinian community has also shrunk from about 400,000 to 33,000, thanks to official policies which include employment discrimination, a fine imposed on Palestinians for every day they remain in the country, as well as more direct methods of intimidation. Middle East Watch (in *A Victory Turned Sour: Human Rights in Kuwait Since Liberation*) has tried to bring attention to cases such as that of Kalil Bahour, a Palestinian who directed the Umm al-Haiman Secondary School in Kuwait. Arrested by the police without warning or explanation, Bahour disappeared from sight. His wife later heard from the police that he was ill and had been taken to al-Addan Hospital. Upon reaching the hospital, Bahour's relatives found that he had died ten days before from what must have been a very bizarre illness—he showed signs of having been tortured with a sharp weapon, and his nose and ears were cut off. Yet his death certificate said that he had succumbed to a heart attack and kidney failure.

Don't expect the White House to denounce Kuwait's mistreatment of its religious minorities. In Kuwait, it is not Afrikaaners oppressing blacks but Muslims persecuting Christians and others who have failed to achieve official status as victims.

—Michael Washburn

JOHN C. SALVI III has been convicted of killing employees at two abortion clinics and sentenced to two consecutive life terms by Judge Barbara Dortch-Okara. The judge refused to let Salvi

read a statement about his religious beliefs—or delusions, as his attorney pleaded—and the jury rejected the insanity plea. Yet it really ought to be conceded that if Mr. Salvi believes that the child in the womb is a human being, whose life ought to be protected, if necessary even by violent assaults on those who would "terminate" it, then our society ought to agree that he is indeed mentally unbalanced. As long as our society, with the President at its head, agrees that the unborn child is not human, at least not until it is more than three-quarters out of the womb, must it not regard those who believe otherwise as delusional?

The judge was evidently hostile to the defendant, which is understandable in a representative of a judicial system which has staked its entire honor and integrity on the fiction that the unborn child is not a human being. The prosecutor, John Kivlan, asking for the maximum sentence, stated, "We feel that the premeditation and cruelty in this case was extraordinary." Indeed, but did Dr. Haskell not premeditate the "procedure" he pioneered and advocated? And is it not cruel to kill a not-quite-born human being by sucking out its brain, a procedure that would be criminal cruelty if performed on an animal? A society that rests easily with abortion on demand will find it increasingly difficult to engage in credible moral discourse on other forms of violence and killing, whether it be "physician assisted" at the bedside or performed with a pistol at close range.

The reading of the verdict and sentencing was accompanied by many emotional scenes. Mrs. Ruth Ann Nichols, the mother of one of the murdered women, had said to Mr. Salvi on the witness stand, "I hope you have sheer misery the rest of your life." Her anguish is certainly understandable, as is that of Mrs. Ann Marie Salvi, John Salvi's mother. Mr. Salvi's crime has brought death to two people, misery to many, and a harsh judgment on himself. Biblically speaking, Mr. Salvi may be said to have deserved a death sentence, but then the same might well be said of those who commit infanticide. As the *New Republic* editorialized in July 1976, late abortion is hardly to be distinguished from infanticide, "nevertheless, we are for it," as the social cost of requiring women to