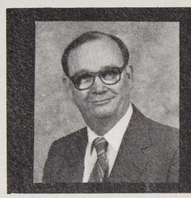

Shall we have respectablity at the loss of responsibility?

Donald E. Wildmon
Executive Director
National Federation for Decency

Back when I had the privilege of serving a local church as pastor, I would preach the same sermon two or three times over a period of months or years. The reason? Some things need to be said more than once, just as some things should never be said the first time.

I would hate to count the times I have said in this column, and in appearances all over this great country, that we are in the midst of a spiritual war. But that is precisely the situation.

At stake in this spiritual war is the very foundation, not only of our country, but of the whole of Western civilization. The progress we have made, the freedoms we have enjoyed these past two centuries, have come primarily because our society was founded on the Christian view of man. There is an intentional, powerful effort currently being made to change the base of that foundation, to rid it of Christian influence, and to replace that base with a secular, materialist, humanistic view of man.

Three hundred years from now, when historians write about the current era in which we live, they will refer to this spiritual war as being the most important struggle the organized Church has faced since Constantine. I am sure of that. What I am not sure of is how they will report the outcome.

The organized Church has spent far too much time and placed far too much importance on buildings and budgets and far too little time informing and leading its people in facing this spiritual war. Too much of our activity, on the local church level and on the denominational level, has been inward. "He who finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it." That is as true for the organized Church as it is for individuals.

Let me paraphrase some other words of Jesus: "What shall it profit a church if it builds the largest and finest buildings, fills them with people, and raises great sums of money, while its members lose their souls?"

I am not saying that buildings and budgets aren't important, because they are. But I am saying that there is something far more important.

The increase in crime, breakdown of families, and increases in divorce, abortion, pornography, etc., are not simply separate areas of concern. They are all interrelated, symptoms of the spiritual war being waged.

At the very heart of the Christian gospel is a cross—the symbol of suffering and sacrifice, of hurt and pain and humiliation and rejection. I want no part of a Christian message which does not call me to involvement, requires of me no sacrifice, takes from me no comfort, requires of me less than the best I have to give.

The duty of a Christian is to be faithful, not popular or successful.

I hope, for our Lord's sake and the sake of those who come after us, that those of us who bear the name of Christ will not shirk our responsibility for the sake of respectability.

If Christ will use this repentant sinner as a soldier on His side in this spiritual war, I will count it the highest honor I could receive.

Don

Police official says violence accepted

Drugs, more teenagers, regional economic woes, an American appetite for violence—all the usual suspects are found in the lineup of explanations offered for a resurgence of crime. A new FBI report says serious crime rose eight percent in the first half of 1986, after a five percent rise in 1985.

The heavy flow of narcotics may be a chief cause, especially in the South, where crime rose 13 percent. Police research director Gary Higgins told *U.S. News & World Report*, "We're seeing a frenzy of cocaine use."

Jerald Vaughn of the International Association of Chiefs of Police has another theory which, sad as it may seem, may be closer to the truth. Mr. Vaughn says, "Violence has become an accepted way of life in America—we seem to thrive on it."

County changes policy on religious restraints

Despite criticism that the county would be forced to open its facilities to any "radical and kooky" group, the Henrico County, Virginia board of supervisors passed a new policy that did away with restrictions on the use of public facilities by religious and political groups.

Richmond Church of the Redeemer, pastored by Michael Mosteller, filed suit against Henrico County after the church sought and was denied permission to hold an Easter sunrise service in one of the county's parks. County officials based their action on a policy that expressly banned the use of county facilities for political activities or religious services.

In their written complaint filed in U.S. district court, Rutherford Institute attorneys argued that the restrictions violated the church's First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and religion, as well as the right to equal protection of the law by discriminating against selected types of speech.

Two days later the board amended its policy by lifting the ban on religious and political activities in public **parks**—a move the church's lawyers considered too narrow to forestall the lawsuit. U.S. District Judge Richard Williams also criticized the policy change as "band-aid legislation."

The subsequent settlement, which ensures equal treatment of all groups seeking access to county facilities, was punctuated with harsh criticism by some of the supervisors. John Waldrop, Jr. complained, "The outcome of all this hullabaloo is that we have to open up our county facilities to every radical and kooky group around."

Rutherford Institute attorney James Knicely countered that those and other remarks by supervisors were merely "a smoke screen to cover up their own blatantly unconstitutional conduct."

Knicely said, "It is not up to the board to determine if religious people or anyone else is 'kooky.' Religious groups have an absolute right to exercise their free speech rights on the same basis as everyone else. The new policy opens up public facilities to all citizens on the same basis, and that's what the law requires."

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PAW shows little tolerance toward Christian beliefs

By Charley Reese
The Orlando Sentinel

The People for the American Way, founded by television producer Norman Lear, is a liberal version of McCarthyism.

It practices guilt by association, lumping together law-abiding groups with which it disagrees with illegal, extremist organizations. It implies, of course, in the fine tradition of the past, that those who disagree with Lear and his crowd are—what else, un-American.

The outfit has a particular vendetta against the Rev. Pat Robertson, the Christian broadcast executive who's thinking about running for president.

If Robertson runs, I won't support him, but if he does run, then he should be judged and criticized on the basis of his political beliefs, not because of his religious beliefs.

People for the American Way has ridiculed Robertson for praying away hurricanes, speaking in tongues and healing. If that is acceptable in public debate, then we can assume that it's okay to ridicule Jews for not eating pork or for wearing hats in the synagogue; Catholics, for believing that they must have priests as intercessors; Moslems, for bowing toward Mecca; and Buddhist monks for shaving their heads.

Sad to say, a great many people who call themselves liberals these days seem to have a rather narrow view of tolerance and freedom.

Decent people in a country that values religious freedom can only view with disgust and anger anyone's attempts to hold up another person's religious beliefs to public ridicule.

Some Christians do believe in miraculous healing, in speaking in tongues when possessed by the Holy Spirit, and in the personal intercession of God in people's affairs. If you don't believe in those things, that's your business, but under our Constitution, people who do believe in them have a right to do so and are entitled not to be held in public contempt for doing so.

People for the American Way is typical of a kind of bigotry that masquerades as tolerance. Tolerance means accepting people as they are. It is not tolerant, for example, for a Jew to demand that Christians not act like Christians or for Christians to demand that Jews not act like Jews as a condition for

Continued on page 20

Your Opinion Counts seeks attitudes on 'Journal'

Churches fall short teaching on humanism

This month's Your Opinion Counts is a survey concerning the *NFD Journal*. Readers are urged to complete and return the form below. The information gathered from the responses will be invaluable to NFD in planning for the *Journal's* future.

According to YOC respondents, churches fall far short in teaching their members about humanism. The October YOC question asked readers to mark one of two responses: (1) Yes, churches have done an adequate job in educating their members about humanism; or (2) No, churches have not done an adequate job.

Ninety-nine percent of the respondents said the church is not doing an adequate job in that area. The differential between lay respondents (99 percent marked "No") and clergy respondents (98 percent marked "No") is insignificant. Comments follow.

Rev. Owen C. Singleton, Dorena, MO: "History will tell you when men celebrate self and reject God, civilizations fall. This self-worship crumbles the family unit, and as the family crumbles so does civilization."

Patricia M. Mazanec, Lynchburg, VA: "I had never heard of humanism and all the garbage that is in the public schools until our daughter brought home Judy Blume books.

Mrs. Dorothy E. Robbins, Redding, CA: "For approximately 150 years our educational system has been dominated by humanist thinking... Since we as pastors as well as teachers and parents were educated in this system we cannot recognize this unbiblical methodology.

Grace Harman, Layton, NJ: "Churches have not done enough to educate about humanism. It took me a lot of time and reading to understand what it is and why "secular humanism" is a threat to God and freedom here...and all around the world."

Belinda Grams, San Antonio, TX: "...throughout my 25 years of life, in and out of various churches, I have never even heard the word 'humanism' breathed. I don't think, quite frankly, that many pastors are even aware of what it is. ...and then I read in your magazine that there has even been a *manifesto* around since the 1930s. Why haven't I heard before?"

Mrs. Norma Brown, Biloxi, MS: "As products of a humanist infiltrated educational system, many church leaders are undiscerning and refuse to believe that: 1) Humanism is a religion; 2) Humanism in our public school system undermines the moral foundation of our country."

Your Opinion Counts: Journal Survey

Duplicate form as needed

I am: ( )Lay person ( )Clergy I am: ( )Female ( )Male

My copy of the *NFD Journal* is read by _____ people.

My church affiliation/denomination is _____.

Journal features (Place a check mark in the most appropriate column for each item.)

I read these *Journal* features	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
Don Wildmon's Column				
Your Opinion Counts				
News of Interest				
Movie Previews				
Letters from Readers				
TV Program Reviews				
Classified ads				
Special Features (such as this month's feature on abortion)				

I believe the *Journal's* most important features (from the list above) are, in priority order:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Enclose suggestions for changes or improvements on separate sheet.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ *State/Zip* _____

Return to Your Opinion Counts, P. O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803