

October 2004

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## Election 2004: Back to the Future?

*The President's [abstinence based] HIV/AIDS policy is a cave-in to the right wing. It defies common sense and reason. It's a completely craven posture about how the world works and how life works.*

--Sen. John Kerry (*The Advocate*, Sept 16)

Last week I was invited to address visiting foreign press members from a dozen Asian and Pacific Rim countries on the role that evangelical Christians play in presidential politics. The meeting was arranged by the U.S. Department of State and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. In July, I had a similar opportunity with European journalists.

Following some 15 minutes of introductory remarks, I invited questions, not suspecting our session would run well into the lunch break—about an hour and forty minutes in all. The Lord was gracious, granting favor with both the journalists and the State Department official who nodded frequently, even when “God” was mentioned. Afterward, he presented his card, suggesting anytime I want access to the foreign press, call.

There seemed to be heightened interest in President Bush—the Christian. Should he be so open about his religion? How does his religion affect his decision-making—and should it? How does Bush justify the war in Iraq in light of Christian teachings? WANG Chong from China wanted to know if the world is witnessing a great clash of civilizations, and is it a clash between Islam and Christianity?

Another journalist, I think it was QUI Zhenhau, a television news broadcaster from Hong Kong, wanted to go back to my opening remarks about America’s European roots. He wondered why, if “Christian America” was initially populated by “Christian Europe,” is there so little evidence of Christian thought in Europe today.

The question brought to mind my earlier exchange with the European journalists, and their very different “story” interests. While the Asian scribes were curious to know how Christianity works in politics, my Euro friends basically called into question the purpose and even the propriety of mixing Christian ethics with politics and government. Hmm...

I recall giving the Europeans a brief picture of 20<sup>th</sup> Century American politics, explaining the differences, or “perceived” differences between Democrats and Republicans. Discussing well-worn labels like “blue collar v. big business,” etc., I pointed out that in recent times, the parties have become more sharply divided over moral and religious issues than anything else. Using same-sex “marriage” as an example, I predicted that the Senate vote to protect marriage would split most certainly along party lines (as it did several days later). Oh, what looks of incredulity at the notion that sodomy is a moral or religious issue! The reporter from the Netherlands, a country known foremost for its tolerance, was especially taken aback as I recall. She left the room to make a call—so she said.

It would have been interesting to share with her that it was in part, Dutch TOLERANCE that persuaded our early founders, the Pilgrims, to come to America in the first place. Forced to leave England because of religious tyranny, the Pilgrims settled for a time in Leyden, Holland, a place where their “covenant” ways were—well—tolerated.

However, they soon realized that almost everything in Holland was tolerated. Their children were being worn down, and many were drawn away through sinful indulgences.

Ultimately, the Pilgrims decided to leave for America, preferring the risky trip across the turbulent North Atlantic and a probable death by starvation in the wilderness or massacre at the hand of savages to losing their children to sin. They simply could not accommodate a culture that embraced everything temporal and nothing eternal.

Back in the future, Rev. Larry Tomczak, Senior Pastor at Christ the King Church of Atlanta, recently returned from a missions trip to Amsterdam. Very alarmed at what he witnessed, he warns America that where sin is tolerated (given a foothold), it is eventually promoted.

**Drugs**, for instance, says Tomczak, are legal in Holland—and promoted. “Hashish” can be ordered to go with a raspberry latté. **Same-sex “marriage”** is legal and promoted, even though studies find marriage in decline where such practice is permitted.

**Euthanasia** is legal and promoted in Holland. Says Chuck Colson, “...Groningen University Hospital in the Netherlands now officially allows doctors to euthanize children under twelve, ‘if doctors believe their suffering is intolerable or if they have an incurable illness.’ That includes non-fatal illnesses and disabilities. Whether or not the child can consent is irrelevant,” says Colson, “what child under twelve would have a clear idea of what he or she was consenting to?”<sup>1</sup>

**Sex-change operations** (“gender reassignments”) are also legal, promoted, and even subsidized by the government. For recreation, **sex shows**, **pornography** and **prostitution** are legal and promoted. More than 27,000 “registered” ladies sit in windows like display items at a department store, says Pastor Tomczak. And parents could have reason to worry when their adolescent children are late from school now that the **age of consent** in Holland has been lowered to twelve.

Noah Webster’s original 1828 Dictionary defines tolerance as the “Allowance of religious opinions and modes of worship in a state, when contrary to or different from those of the established church or belief...” Today, the term has been retro defined to mean “to put up with, bear, forbear...” Pastor Tomczak says this changes the meaning from respect for other’s religious beliefs to respect for other’s conduct, ruling out absolute standards of morality.

Speaking to the Church at Ephesus, Jesus said; *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...*(Rev 2:5). It would be well to remember America’s former approach to government and politics. Pennsylvania’s first legislative act (April 25, 1682) proclaimed:

“Whereas the glory of Almighty God and the good of mankind is the reason and the end of government, and, therefore government itself is a venerable ordinance of God...[there shall be established] laws as shall best preserve true Christian and civil liberty, in opposition to all unchristian, licentious, and unjust practice, whereby God may have his due, and Caesar his due, and the people their due, from tyranny and oppression.”

William Penn, founder of The Quaker State, added; “If thou wouldst rule well, thou must rule for God, and to do that thou must be ruled by [H]im...Those who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants.”

Sound advice in 1682.....sound advice in 2004.

*Rick Forcier*

Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Crosswalk – BreakPoint: *From a Slippery Slope to an Avalanche*, 10/5/2004, <http://www.breakpoint.org>