

December 2006

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## A Bit More Salt if You Please

*Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*

--John Adams, October 11, 1798

Last week the so-called bipartisan "Iraq Study Group" issued its recommendations for the eventual withdrawal of American forces from the Middle East. Due to a perceived public backlash against the President's war policies based on the results of the November General Elections, Mr. Bush has been forced—at least publicly—to assure the "Group" that its proposals will be carefully considered.

Strikingly similar to the failed European appeasement policies of the late 1930s, the Study Group has called for some kind of diplomatic accord with two leading terrorist states—Iran and Syria. James Baker and Lee Hamilton, spokesmen for the "Group," are persuaded that both terrorist states could be key to future stability in Iraq and the region. Leaders of both countries, however, have made clear their intentions to deal ever so harshly with "Christian America," eliminate Jews from the face of the earth, and repatriate fellow Muslims to their rightful possession in Palestine and other places of their choosing.

Once upon a time, England's Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier of France traveled to Munich (in 1938) to negotiate with Adolf Hitler (and Benito Mussolini)—aware that the "Fuehrer" was already rounding up Jews and other undesirables for the final solution.

They had a splendid time. The four signed the *Munich Agreement* incorporating certain national boundary adjustments to accommodate the "repatriating" of all German-speaking people. In the deal, Germany was supposed to get a fifth of Czechoslovakia's land, 800,000 Czechs, over 3 million persons of German decent, and most of the country's industries. Chamberlain proudly claimed the negotiations had brought "peace for our time."

By the time the international commission had redrawn the frontiers, much more Czech land passed into German hands. Soon Germany took control of all of Czechoslovakia. In less than a year, Germany invaded Poland, and World War II was under way.

Unfortunately, important lessons of history can be lost in a single generation. A majority of twenty-somethings for instance, cannot name the major combatants in World War II, do not recognize the terms Allied Forces or Axis Powers and are unable to identify the decade that America entered the war. In that previous generations considered an uninformed populace antithetical to the American experiment, political and religious leaders should be concerned.

A new survey released by *The Barna Group*<sup>1</sup> suggests that Americans are not listening to political leaders and are largely unaware of religious leaders. But they are aware of and listening to entertainers. The name Mel Gibson, for instance, is immediately recognized by 96% of Americans, followed by Rosie O'Donnell (95%) and Denzel Washington (93%). Denzel tops a list of 16 public figures in entertainment, politics and religion with a high favorability rating of 42-to-1. Singer Faith Hill places second on the list with a 14-to-one favorable-unfavorable ratio. "For actors and artists," comments George Barna who directed

the study, “awareness facilitates potential sales. For ministers, awareness fosters influence on lives. A favorable image provides access to people’s minds and hearts more readily.”

Regrettably, religious leaders are at the low end of the public awareness spectrum. The least known of the 16 public figures are T. D. Jakes (32%), Rick Warren (28%), and Tim LaHaye (27%). Jakes pastors a megachurch and is considered by some to be the most influential black pastor in the nation. Warren (lowest in favorability ratings at 2:1) is unknown to three out of four adults despite his runaway best seller *The Purpose Driven Life*. It’s reportedly the biggest selling non-fiction book in U.S. history (except for the Bible). Same for Tim LaHaye who has logged more than 40 years of public ministry and co-authored *Left Behind*, the best-selling fiction series of all-time.

Child psychologist James Dobson is another religious figure whom six in ten adults say they do not know. Although he has sold tens-of-millions of books and produces a daily program that airs on more than 1,000 radio stations, reaching the largest audience of any religious figure, nearly half of (non evangelical) born-again Christians say they have never heard of him. “People pay attention to what they deem important,” says Barna, and currently, Christians appear to be “more attuned to matters of culture and entertainment than to matters of faith.”

Evidence that the Church might be disengaging from civic discourse nationally is demonstrated by the fact that nine million fewer evangelicals turned out to vote last month than in the 2004 General Elections—potentially enough additional “salt” to have altered the results of most political contests in the country.

A lessening Christian influence in public policy is anathema to the ideals embraced by the founders. The core purpose of one of America’s four significant founding documents—*The Northwest Ordinance*—was to insure that children were taught morality informed by religion. Territories applying for statehood were required to establish schools to diffuse such knowledge among the populace. If the people were taught to read, they could read the Bible for themselves. If they read the Bible, they would understand God’s principles for self-government and they would not permit bad laws and would not elect bad men to public office. Some may be squeamish about consulting the Word when formulating public policy, but our forbearers were certainly not.

Experience warns us that our citizens are not being taught the “former things.” Not in school, not in the media, not even in the home. If we know little or care less about people like Adolf Hitler or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, can we discern between reason and rubbish when it comes to recommendations put forth by a Study Group?

In preparation for a new year filled with lots of unknowns, we are convinced that *Educating and Activating Christians for Social, Political, and Spiritual Action* should remain the primary focus of the Christian Coalition. We believe it is essential for the Church, like the sons of Issachar, to understand the times and know what to do concerning America.

But above all, it is our desire to be a blessing; to serve pastors and local congregations in any way that will help Christians grow in their relationship with Christ; that all we say and do, including how we vote, will reflect our faith in God and a deep understanding of His Word.

Wishing you a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a prosperous New Year.

*Rick Forcier*

Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> The Barna Group, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org), October 2006