



Internal enemy: Gays as the domestic al-Qaeda

A REPORT FROM THE FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL'S
VALUES VOTER SUMMIT, SEPTEMBER 22–24, 2006

By Sean Cahill and Cynthia Burack

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Homosexuality is evil and dangerous.....	3
“We call them a faggot.”	4
Race and sexuality contrasted	5
The power of the gays and their allies	5
They say if you oppose homosexuality then you are condoning violence against gays.....	6
Against abortion rights.....	7
Protecting the children	8
Gays don’t really need legal protections.....	8
Legal recognition of homosexuality threatens religious liberty.....	9
Christians are being persecuted.....	9
“Playing church”: Parallels to the situation facing churches in Nazi Germany.....	10
Preachers who raise inconvenient truths are similar to Jesus	10
A sense of being part of a counterculture.....	10
The media as the enemy.....	11
Judicial tyranny	12
“The sneering attitude of many of our elites”	13
Separation of church and State	13
Immigration	14
Begrudging support for re-electing Republican Congress	14
A partisan Republican rally	15
Enthusiastic support for President Bush	15
Demonizing the Clintons	16
Uniting across racial divides.....	17
Islamic fascism and 9/11.....	18
Moral relativism as an infection of our body politic	19
Strong support for fighting the war in Iraq.....	19
Jingoism and neo-McCarthyism	19
Who are “values voters”?	21
Other issues: Embryonic stem cell research, Darfur, global warming, eco-terrorism	21
The absence of Catholic and Latino/a leaders	21
Eschatology	22
Rosh Hashanah.....	22
Other populist rhetoric	22
Absolutely no mention of bisexuals, transgender people.....	23
Despite a bleak prognosis, steady progress against same-sex marriage and abortion	23

INTRODUCTION

According to speaker after speaker at the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit, held September 22–24 in Washington, D.C., America is at war with two evil enemies: Islamic fascism abroad and within our own borders, a pan-left alliance of Democrats, liberals, secular humanists, and the mainstream media. Two key fronts in that domestic war are abortion and homosexuality. "Special protections" for homosexuals, such as recognition of same-sex marriage, threaten religious liberty; across the United States religious liberty is under assault like never before. While "Bible-believing Christians" may experience persecution for standing up to these internal and external foes, they are doing God's work and ultimately have to answer only to Him.

The theme of the Summit was "Faith, Family and Freedom." Speakers warned that all three virtues were under assault, in some instances by al-Qaeda and in others by Rev. Barry Lynn, director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. (Lynn functioned a bit like Goldstein in George Orwell's *1984*; he attended the conference and was repeatedly denounced and ridiculed from the stage, as when Rev. Herb Lusk denounced him as "the enemy" of "bible-believing Christians.") The Summit's thematic linkage of religious faith, "family" issues and patriotism — a fusion of the "pro-life/pro-family" positions of President George W. Bush and the Republican Party — is common in Christian conservative rhetoric. In this case, it tied together a predictable list of positions on the issues of gay rights, abortion rights, racial reconciliation, separation of church and state, and support for Republican political candidates. In addition, the Summit helped consolidate and publicize Christian right positions on global warming, immigration, the genocide in Darfur, and the President's authority over torture of detainees in the "war on terror."

HOMOSEXUALITY IS EVIL AND DANGEROUS

Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney (R), who has opposed the court decision that resulted in same-sex marriage in his state, told conferees that "the culture of America is under attack." Romney contrasted same-sex marriage with "traditional marriage" and claimed that same-sex marriage is unable to co-exist with traditional marriage and instead destroys it.

Those not satisfied with the indirectness of this anti-gay rhetoric got red meat later in the day when Jennifer Giroux of Citizens for Community Values took it up a notch by asserting that "the worst form of child abuse is placing a child in a gay home."

Jennifer Giroux of Citizens for Community Values claimed that "[t]he worst form of child abuse is placing a child in a gay home."

Bishop Wellington Boone, an African-American preacher from Georgia (and the first person of color to speak all day) was the most provocative anti-gay speaker. He started off by noting that he has authored a pamphlet titled "The rape of the

civil rights movement: How sodomites are using civil rights rhetoric to advance their preference for sexual perversion.”

Boone continued, “I’m offended about the so-called gays trying to get on the bandwagon of civil rights. That should be an offense to all black people.” Bishop Boone talked about black people having been “stolen from another country,” the middle passage, centuries of slavery, a century of Jim Crow, the civil rights struggle... “Now you tell me that a gay has a right to get in on some of that? Get out of here!” The crowd erupted in loud cheers.

Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation used rhetoric drawn from the struggles against communism and terrorism to address the threat of same-sex marriage: “If we don’t confront it here [in Massachusetts] it will spread.”

Addressing the experience of other nations with same-sex marriage, Sam Brownback (R-KS) claimed that same-sex marriage causes a decline in heterosexual marriage and increased out-of-wedlock childbearing, crime and negative child outcomes. Brownback is evidently aware of scholars’ criticisms of this argument; he insisted that the connection between same-sex marriage and the other social phenomena are indeed causal and not just the consequences of social trends. Undermining this claim, Professor Robert George emphasized that same-sex marriage is a *consequence* of the erosion of marriage rather than its cause.

On the last day of the conference, James Inhofe (R-OK) argued that opposition to abortion rights and homosexuality should be used as litmus tests for political candidates. He noted that Leviticus states that homosexuality is an “abomination.” Presentations such as Inhofe’s confirmed that though Christian conservative leaders are often careful to avoid such rhetoric in mainstream political forums, references to same-sex sexuality as “evil” and “an abomination” remain common in Christian right settings.

**“...we call them a faggot.
I’m from the ghetto.
Sometimes this stuff slips
out. In the hood we call
them sissified...”
—Bishop Wellington Boone**

“WE CALL THEM A FAGGOT.”

Bishop Boone expressed disappointment that gay activists did not pay more attention to his harsh criticism. Then he deployed rhetoric sure to get their attention:

This matter of gay... I want the gays mad at me. I want to be on their hit list. I’m not afraid of these people. They’re really nasty. I’m driven by God on this. They want to stop us from taking away their perversion. I know that a family is not a man and a man, a woman and a woman. I’m not backing down. I’m standing flat footed, I’m standing strong. They don’t have me on their Web site... People who don’t stand strong on their principles, we call them a faggot. I’m from the ghetto. Sometimes this stuff slips out. In the hood we call them sissified... These people are passionate about protecting their perversion...

Boone concluded by noting the racism often found in the white gay community, claiming that those rioting at the Stonewall Inn in New York in June 1969 were anti-black.

The Summit featured a combination of denunciation and ridicule of gays. Rick Scarborough of Vision America joked that he's spent a lot of time around cowboys but he's never met a gay cowboy. He also used a common throwaway line: "Homosexuality is not gay — there's nothing gay about it."

Mick Huckabee (R-AR) received a generous round of applause when he said that until Moses comes down from Brokeback Mountain with tablets that affirm God's support for same-sex marriage, he wouldn't support it.

RACE AND SEXUALITY CONTRASTED

Maggie Gallagher, speaking on a panel titled "The preservation of traditional marriage," also contrasted sexual orientation with race, insisting that one has to choose between two ideas: "one, that there is no difference between same-sex and opposite-sex couples and anyone who says otherwise is a bigot, or two, there is something special [about] a union between a man and a woman."

Gallagher warned that gay activists seek to make anti-gay bias as socially unacceptable as racism. If they are successful, she warned, religious conservatives would lose basic rights because they would be ostracized in the same way racists are today. They would lose their tax-exempt status and their radio licenses. Just as a public school teacher who is a racist in his or her spare time might be fired for such activities, she warned, teachers who are anti-gay activists outside of school will lose their jobs. "We're looking at a situation where Christians, traditional Jews, Hindus and Muslims are treated like racists for trying to pass on this political view to our children," Gallagher said.

"We're looking at a situation where Christians, traditional Jews, Hindus and Muslims are treated like racists for trying to pass on this political view to our children."

—Maggie Gallagher

Like Bishop Boone's claim that supporting legal equality for gay people means equating homosexuality with race, Gallagher's argument is a straw man. The experience of gay people as a whole is not the same as the experience of black people, Native Americans, Jews, or other groups that have suffered from racism. But one does not have to believe that anti-gay bias is the same as racism to oppose anti-gay bias and to support efforts to ban it in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

THE POWER OF THE GAYS AND THEIR ALLIES

Professor Robert George of Princeton University warned that "the forces arrayed against the conjugal conception of marriage... are powerful in the legal establishment, the media, universities [and] professional associations, and they will strike hard."

Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline and Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO) said they had been targeted in their re-election campaigns by pro-abortion and pro-homosexual groups, respectively, because of their opposition to abortion and homosexuality. Musgrave was introduced as “a marked woman.” Maggie Gallagher warned that “if we lose them [Congresswoman Musgrave and Senator Santorum] there will not be people up on Capitol Hill who will stick their necks out because it will send a message that pro-marriage activity is dangerous.”

Don Wildmon of the American Family Association spoke of his group’s boycott of Ford Motor Company for refusing to “remain neutral in the homosexual culture wars.” Ford advertises on the gay-themed sit com “Will and Grace” and is a corporate sponsor of the Human Rights Campaign and other pro-gay causes. Wildmon faulted Ford for “helping fund them [‘homosexuals’], giving them automobiles, preferred positions, the whole bit.” It is unclear to what Wildmon was referring when he spoke of “giving them automobiles;” perhaps this was a reference to Ford’s advertising targeted at gay consumers or prizes they may have offered for a raffle. It is also not clear what Wildmon meant by saying “homosexuals” got “preferred positions” at Ford.

**“You would be utterly surprised how strong homosexuals are in corporate America. They run, as far as the culture, some of these companies. They have their way, they have free play...”
—Don Wildmon, AFA**

Wildmon portrayed gay people as disproportionately in control of corporate America:

You would be utterly surprised how strong homosexuals are in corporate America. They run, as far as the culture, some of these companies. They have their way, they have free play... If we succeed in making our message with Ford we won’t have to fight many more corporations; if we fail, then we have succeeded in turning over corporate America to the homosexual lobby.

Wildmon claimed that Ford promised to stop funding pro-homosexual activities, then reneged on that promise after meeting with gay activists. As a result, AFA called for a boycott, which Wildmon said is partly responsible for Ford’s current business slump.

THEY SAY IF YOU OPPOSE HOMOSEXUALITY THEN YOU ARE CONDONING VIOLENCE AGAINST GAYS

In a speech denouncing Hollywood, conservative columnist and activist Don Feder said that part of Hollywood’s “religion” was “that all sexual activity is equally good, and homosexual liaisons are equivalent to heterosexual marriage. To question this dogma is to condone violence against gays.” This too is a straw man argument. Clearly many people who speak out against same-sex marriage do not encourage or condone physical violence against gay people.

AGAINST ABORTION RIGHTS

Gary Bauer cast abortion rights as a decadent liability in the struggle against “Islamofascists.” Bauer repeated a slogan conservatives commonly employ against a legal right to abortion: “Every abortion has two victims.” Bauer also pointed out that those who oppose the Christian conservative movement accuse the movement of hating women, but the movement “wants the exploitation of women to stop.” This emphasis on women who have abortions reflects a changing strategy on the part of those who oppose abortion to focus on the well-being of women and the harm that abortion putatively causes adult women and men.

Georgette Forney (NOEL and Silent No More Campaign) used the current Christian conservative anti-abortion strategy of emphasizing “post-abortion syndrome” and the aftereffects of abortion for women who have the procedure. She urged the audience to “reach out to those who are suffering in silence” and talked about the value of personal testimonies about abortion, especially those that use the slogan “I regret my abortion.” She related the variety of marketing tools used by the post-abortion community, including billboards, public service announcements, buttons, help lines, and large gatherings at which testimonials can be delivered publicly. Many anti-abortion ads resemble ex-gay advertisements of the last 10 years; they feature a number of people assembled standing and photographed from above.

Bauer said that in the United States “we destroy several thousand of our own children every day” and that “abortion culture is built on a lie,” the lie being that not all life is precious. Bauer’s comparison between abortion rights and slavery is typical of white Christian conservatives’ attempts to make common cause with African-Americans. The usual equation suggests that nineteenth-century conservatives opposed slavery and implies that Republican ideology since the era of Lincoln has opposed both slavery and subsequent discrimination against African-Americans. By saying that someday Americans will look back and not be able to believe there was ever an abortion culture, Bauer tried to draw a connection to slavery and looked to the future triumph of Christian conservative beliefs about abortion.

Rick Scarborough linked *Roe v. Wade* to stem cell research, concluding that “Adolf Hitler would be proud” of these policies. He also argued that the abortion rights movement and the movement for stem cell research are driven by money, saying that though those who support these policies make moral arguments, their only real interest is in reaping a profit.

Richard Land of the National Association of Evangelicals used the subject of abortion rights to refute the idea that American citizens would do well to vote for candidates who support their economic interests, saying, “I’m going to vote for unborn babies and against my pocketbook every time.” Land had constructed a hypothetical electoral situation in which one candidate is pro-choice and vows to lower taxes and another (whom he called “Dr. Laura”) who is pro-life but will raise taxes by 50 percent.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN

Governor Romney faulted Massachusetts' high court ruling on same-sex marriage because "the court focused on adults' rights; their mistake was they should have focused on the rights of the child... Every child has the right to have a mother and a father."

Rick Scarborough called the teaching of sex education — by which he meant sex education that is not abstinence-only — "the facilitation of fornication."

"Every child has the right to have a mother and a father."

—Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney

Gary Bauer argued that critics accuse the Christian conservative movement of not acting in the best interest of children because the movement opposes forms of sex education in schools other than abstinence-only. Bauer contrasted this perception of the Christian right with the claim that Islamic fundamentalism is "a movement that *does* hate children" because it "sends children to die." For Bauer, the war in Iraq is a war to protect children and Americans are fighting both in Iraq and Afghanistan to protect women and children. In the struggle against "Islamofascists," the only possible counterweight is Judeo-Christian values and civilization — not the kind of decadence that is represented by abortion rights and same-sex marriage.

Ron Luce of Teen Mania Ministries used the familiar trope of terrorism to warn that terrorists are lurking in our living rooms, iPods and computers. In making this claim, he was not speaking of Islamic terrorists or their ideology but instead used terrorism as an analogy to argue that American culture is toxic and terrorizes its teenage victims. As illustration, he used a mannequin to represent a dismembered corpse, its parts labeled with words for cultural threats to children.

Ron Luce of Teen Mania Ministries warned that terrorists are lurking in our living rooms, iPods and computers.

James Dobson asserted that the "war on terror" is a family values issue. In a film broadcast for the audience because he was unable to make it to the Summit, Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) discussed what he identified as the "threats that face our country": "radical Islam" and "radical secular humanism."

GAYS DON'T REALLY NEED LEGAL PROTECTIONS

Dobson and Sears said that the claim that gay people are treated unequally under public policy is a myth. "All they have to do is visit a lawyer," Dobson said. "There's a myth about the oppression of homosexuals," Sears asserted. Yet both Tony Perkins and Peter Sprigg of the Family Research Council denounced "counterfeit marriages," i.e. domestic partnership or civil unions.

LEGAL RECOGNITION OF HOMOSEXUALITY THREATENS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Governor Romney said the legalization of gay marriage in his state “impinges, potentially, religious liberty,” then mentioned that Catholic Charities has chosen to stop its work as an adoption agency because it was forced to place children in the homes of gay couples. However, the legal requirement was due not to the 2003 court ruling on marriage but to the fact that Catholic Charities’ contract with the state to provide a public service violated the state’s 1989 nondiscrimination law. The Catholic Church’s ability to preach against homosexuality, organize against same-sex marriage and teach such views in its schools is not restricted in any way by the pro-gay advances that have occurred in Massachusetts. Similarly, the state’s recognition of divorce has not forced the Catholic Church to allow it; divorce is still prohibited in the Catholic Church in all 50 states.

Alan Sears of the Alliance Defense Fund warned that “the homosexual agenda and religious freedom are on a collision course... the only way they can win is to silence the churches. Pastors are waking up and realizing that their ability to preach the Gospel is on the line.”

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins said, “There’s something I want people on the left to understand: No longer in America when a pastor stands up will a pastor stand alone. We will stand with him.”

A Family Research Council video shown at the Summit promoted its October 15, 2006 “Liberty Sunday” event, to be held in Boston. The video warned that same-sex marriage threatens “our first freedom,” freedom of religion. Perkins warned activists to defeat same-sex marriage “before religious freedom is lost forever.”

Alan Sears of the Alliance Defense Fund warned that “the homosexual agenda and religious freedom are on a collision course... the only way they can win is to silence the churches.”

CHRISTIANS ARE BEING PERSECUTED

Speakers also supported the closely related contention that Christians are being persecuted in America. Alan Sears, for instance, said that “the ACLU and its allies rely on a campaign of fear to silence the church of Jesus Christ.” Focus on the Family President James Dobson cited the Gettysburg Address, in which Abraham Lincoln spoke of “‘government of, by and for the people,’ not ‘of, by and for the people, except for people of faith.’”

Senator George Allen (R-VA) was introduced as a victim of “gotcha journalism” because of his use of a racial slur on the campaign trail and allegations of early use of racial slurs. Taking the podium, Allen responded on behalf of his family that “we feel your prayers.”

Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) closed his speech with a story about how Mother Theresa, while begging door-to-door for her orphanages, had her face

spat upon. She responded by saying that that experience would help her “humility training,” and she continued to ask the person for money “for the children.” The man who had just spit in her face was so impressed with her commitment to the children that he gave her money after all. “People will spit in your face,” Brownback said, “saying, ‘Why are you pushing this?’ See that as humility training, but think of the children.”

“PLAYING CHURCH”: PARALLELS TO THE SITUATION FACING CHURCHES IN NAZI GERMANY

One British immigrant to the United States, Rev. Dr. John Guest of Christ Church at Grove Farm in Pennsylvania, spoke of growing up in wartime London due to the failure of British leaders and German churches to confront the evils of Nazism:

In Germany the church had abdicated its spiritual role and its moral obligation to speak the truth. They capitulated and surrendered — played church... Because of the weakness of Chamberlain [and] the church in Germany, little children like me were being bombed.

Guest urged church leaders to “stand tall and preach the truth” and “take the heat” no matter what the consequences. He urged them not to be like the German church leaders, who were “trying to protect their jobs, trying to protect their families.”

Speakers presented the Christian right as countercultural, even transgressive. It was clear that the young woman who introduced Ann Coulter thought she was exciting in part because she is so provocative.

PREACHERS WHO RAISE INCONVENIENT TRUTHS ARE SIMILAR TO JESUS

Rev. Herb Lusk, senior pastor at Greater Exodus Baptist Church in Philadelphia, said that the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ were killed for what they preached.

A SENSE OF BEING PART OF A COUNTERCULTURE

Throughout the Values Voter Summit, despite the fact that conservative Republicans control all three branches of the federal government, speakers presented the Christian right as counter cultural, even transgressive. It was clear that the young woman who introduced Ann Coulter thought she was exciting in part because she is so provocative. After Coulter spoke, hundreds of conference attendees left before the closing prayer to wait in line, meet the author and perhaps get her to autograph a copy of her latest book, *Godless: The Church of Liberalism*.

Gary Bauer spoke as if embodying Nietzsche’s concept of “ressentiment.”¹ “I know how powerful the pro-abortion

Dobson and Sears said that the claim that gay people are treated unequally under public policy is a myth. “All they have to do is visit a lawyer,” Dobson said.

¹ According to this concept, the weak invent morality to control the strong, even as they are jealous of their power.

movement seems. They've got all the beautiful people on their side, the university professors, the judges... ”

THE MEDIA AS THE ENEMY

According to Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), over the last two years House conservatives have been “buffeted by a withering assault by the media.” Dobson said, “We don’t get covered in the media.” He claimed that after 78 percent of Alabama voters banned same-sex marriage there, “the media suppressed that message because they don’t want people to know that this is a priority” of voters.

Former FRC head and presidential candidate Gary Bauer linked liberals and the media:

You are Ted Kennedy’s and Nancy Pelosi’s and Rosie O’Donnell’s worst nightmare. You are the dreaded “values voters.” The media talk about you like you are from Mars. You are their worst nightmare but America’s best hope.

The media were also portrayed as a threat to the national security of the United States. Bill Bennett noted that there were 100 members of the press covering the conference, and welcomed them. Then he said, “When reporters here print leaked classified information, we should prosecute them.”

Don Wildmon, the folksy head of the American Family Association from Tupelo, Mississippi, portrayed the media as a force for evil, bullying corporate America into adopting pro-gay positions. “I don’t like to do media anyway; I turn down more interviews than I do. Who needs them? There’s freedom of the press if you own the press.”

According to Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation, the one part of the media not under the control of liberal elites — not counting Fox News, the *Washington Times*, and so on — is talk radio. Calling talk radio “the most important weapon we have in our arsenal,” Weyrich warned that “if Democrats take control of Congress they intend to reinstate the fairness doctrine, and that will end talk radio. Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Doctor Laura... will be shut down if that is the case.”

A speaker on the “Hollywood in the Heartland” panel said that “Hollywood is just like the Soviet Union on the eve of collapse.” The phenomenon of Christians standing up to Hollywood was likened to President Reagan standing up to the Soviet Union. References to Reagan throughout the Summit confirmed his heroic status for Christian conservatives without acknowledging many social conservatives’ disappointment in the relative dearth of victories on their issues during Reagan’s terms in office.

JUDICIAL TYRANNY

Many speakers portrayed judges as an anti-democratic elite. This was striking given that the overwhelming majority of judges on the federal bench, including the Supreme Court, were appointed by Republicans. Senator George Allen (R-VA) said,

[O]ur values are under attack... from these unelected, appointed-for-life judges who ignore the will of the people.... It's courts that are attacking the family. I firmly believe that marriage should be between one man and one woman. Virginia is a battleground on this issue [there is an anti-same-sex-marriage question on the ballot]... the reason we have to do this is judges — it's always judges. It's never the legislature, it's never a referendum.

Ann Coulter said that “the twin evils facing America” are “Islamic terrorists and the U.S. Supreme Court.”

In fact, the California legislature passed a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in 2006; Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill, saying, apparently without the slightest sense of irony, that this was an issue that should be decided by the courts.

Judge Charles Pickering began his address by charging that the judiciary has become a political branch of government. He called himself “the first casualty of the Bush judicial nominees” and informed the audience that the reason his nomination to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit was derailed by Congressional Democrats was because of his opposition to abortion rights. In opposing his nomination, Pickering's critics also cited writings and decisions concerning race and civil rights, but at the summit Pickering claimed that these criticisms were a pretext. He said that today's judges alter the Constitution to make political decisions and that this state of affairs makes it necessary to amend the Constitution to prohibit judges from legislating from the bench.

Ann Coulter said that “the twin evils facing America” are “Islamic terrorists and the U.S. Supreme Court.” She ridiculed the notion that the courts had found a fundamental right to abortion and “sodomy” in the Constitution. (In fact, they found a fundamental right to privacy and over time interpreted that to mean that contraception, abortion and consensual homosexual intimacy should be legal.) Coulter said that “Supreme Court decisions based on Roe are getting crazier and crazier. They're starting to read like newsletters from NAMBLA.” Coulter did not explain what the acronym stands for: North American Man-Boy Love Association, an obscure pedophile group. Apparently the crowd was familiar with NAMBLA.

Coulter urged the legislative and executive branches of government to ignore high court rulings they don't agree with.

"THE SNEERING ATTITUDE OF MANY OF OUR ELITES"

"Our opponents may have the high court of culture, they are the majority in Hollywood... but you are the majority," Gary Bauer said. Citing the Declaration of Independence's guarantee of "the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," Bauer said that Chinese students in Tiananmen Square pulled out copies of the declaration and showed them to soldiers of the People's Liberation Army. "American elites may not understand the meaning of these words, but the Chinese students yearning to be free certainly did."

Bill Bennett denounced "the sneering attitude of many of our elites." Here, Bennett reinforced the link advanced by many elite conservatives between political liberals and contemptuous elites.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Gary Bauer described the American republic as representing "ordered liberty under God," and juxtaposed this ideal with the right to do your own thing. He argued that although "American elites" don't understand the concept of ordered liberty, the majority of Americans know that the source of rights is God.

Rick Scarborough's presentation was entitled, "In Defense of Mixing Church and State from Acts 16," and he described his goal as putting forward a Biblical argument in favor of mixing the two. Scarborough premised his argument for mixing church and state on his analysis of Acts 16, a chapter that recounts the imprisonment and release of Paul in the Macedonian city of Phillipi.

Southern Baptist leader Richard Land argued that churches should not be endorsing candidates but rather looking for candidates that endorse "us." However, he also called for Christian conservatives to try to change public policies that prohibit churches from endorsing candidates for public office.

"Our opponents may have the high court of culture, they are the majority in Hollywood... but you are the majority," Gary Bauer said.

Congressman James Inhofe began his presentation by noting that he has endorsed legislation to protect political activity in churches. Inhofe introduced the legislation in September 2006. The press release describing the legislation says, "It is truly astounding that today, in America, religious leaders are banned from any comment on . . . moral issues" and claims that "currently, houses of worship are monitored by the Internal Revenue Service, which reviews the content of sermons and homilies." To the contrary, in the course of a panel discussion earlier in the Summit, James Dobson had advised the audience that the IRS does not investigate or sanction ministers who use the pulpit to discuss moral issues or public policy.

IMMIGRATION

Although most speakers presented abortion and homosexuality as the two most critical domestic issues facing America, two speakers addressed the issue of how to deal with illegal immigration. Congressman Mike Pence (R-IN) called the issue “the most pressing domestic policy crisis in a generation” and “perhaps the most difficult, thorny domestic policy issue of my lifetime.” Pence called for 1) tougher border security with no other legislation regarding undocumented immigrants “for two years,” 2) no “amnesty in any form,” 3) a guest worker program that requires undocumented immigrants to “apply outside the United States first” and “learn our native tongue,” and 4) a crackdown on businesses that hire illegal immigrants.

Colin Hanna provided a theological perspective on the immigration issue. Hanna became famous for defending a Ten Commandments display next to the Chester County, Pennsylvania courthouse, and his Let Freedom Ring organization runs a project called weneedafence.com.

Hanna said that illegal immigration posed a dilemma to Christians because of the potentially conflicting biblical demands to show mercy to strangers and respect for God-ordained governments. Hanna criticized “mercy-only churches” that are too liberal on immigration for overemphasizing mercy, and he faulted “justice-only churches” that overemphasize “extreme legalism” without the balance of some mercy. His preferred path is a middle ground between these two extremes, he said.

Hanna said that illegal immigration posed a dilemma to Christians because of the potentially conflicting biblical demands to show mercy to strangers and respect for God-ordained governments.

It was unclear specifically what policy solution Hanna was advocating. He said illegal immigrants who were truly repentant for breaking immigration laws and “willing to pay the price” should be forgiven. It was not clear what this price would be. However, Hanna made it clear that he was against “amnesty,” which he said was “forgiveness without confession” and “un-Christian.” He also argued against a guest worker program, which he said would create “a permanent underclass” like the descendants of North Africans in France. Hanna’s call “that aliens learn our language” got a standing ovation. But his apparent critique of far-right “deport ‘em” policies was politely but unenthusiastically received by most attendees.

BEGRUDGING SUPPORT FOR RE-ELECTING REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

Several speakers, including Focus on the Family’s James Dobson and Alliance Defense Fund’s Alan Sears, expressed frustration with the Republicans for not rewarding “values voters” for their support in 2004. Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation said that “most Republican senators vote right, but they would prefer these issues not see the light of day.” Still, most speakers urged

attendees to turn out for Republicans in November because “there is no choice because the alternative is terrible,” as Dobson said.

Gary Bauer noted that many Christian conservatives are angry at the Republican Party because of its failure to support Christian candidates such as Katherine Harris in Florida and Kenneth Blackwell in Ohio. Bauer also pointed out that the funding of the Republican Party comes from “money interests” while its votes come from Christian conservatives, and that Christian conservatives have to put pressure on the Party to have their interests met. This is a relatively unusual analysis to emerge in a Christian conservative conference whose goal is largely to mobilize support for the Republican Party and its candidates.

Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation said that “most Republican senators vote right, but they would prefer these issues not see the light of day.”

Rick Scarborough criticized other elements in the Republican coalition besides Christian conservatives. He referred to Republicans who are reluctant to support Christian conservative positions, saying, “We don’t need more of *them*, we need more of *us*.”

Throughout the Summit, members of the audience were urged to do all they could to support vulnerable elected officials such as Santorum and Allen who represent the values and issue positions of Christian conservatives. Paul Weyrich told the audience that Santorum is the most important Senator “that we have at this time” and stated that Santorum’s opponent (Democrat Bob Casey, Jr.) is supported by the Human Rights Campaign — in other words, by “the homosexuals and the lesbians.”

A PARTISAN REPUBLICAN RALLY

Despite these concerns, most speakers insisted that voters turn out this election and vote their values. Southern Baptist leader Richard Land said that although he did not tell people how to vote, it was a sin not to vote. Sean Hannity, while drawing a stark contrast between the belief systems of Democrats and Republicans, said, “If you are a Republican, a normal American, you believe that... you cannot negotiate with evil.”

“If you are a Republican, a normal American, you believe that... you cannot negotiate with evil.”

ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT BUSH

Dobson praised Bush, saying he is “the most pro-life president we have ever had, and on terrorism, he gets it.” He also lauded Bush’s appointment of Justices John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court. Steve Bridges, the comedian and Bush impersonator, was very warmly received by the pro-Bush crowd. Throughout the conference, speaker after speaker denounced Democrats and some allegedly equivocating Republicans but not President Bush. Instead, they rallied around him.

Several speakers — Sean Hannity twice — warned that if Democrats took back the House of Representatives they would launch impeachment proceedings against President Bush.

Bill Bennett made one of the few subtle criticisms of the Bush-Cheney administration. Claiming with regard to recent anti-U.S. and anti-Bush comments at the United Nations by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez that “our response was not to respond,” Bennet said, “This is a different day than when I stood with Jean Kirkpatrick in the Reagan administration... [Then we vowed that] every calumny will be responded to.”

Of the Summit speakers, the one who spoke most directly for President Bush was White House Press Secretary Tony Snow, who began his presentation with “greetings from the President of the United States.” Snow represented Bush as a president who fights evil and professes good and stated that the result of the September 11 attacks was “defiant decency.”

The theme of support for President Bush’s right to define appropriate forms of interrogation in the “war on terror” appeared throughout the Summit. Gary Bauer characterized the Guantanamo detention facility in positive terms and called for Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and other recent Republican critics of the President to be ashamed of themselves for caring more about terrorist enemies than about American troops who are fighting the enemy. Sean Hannity claimed that the United States needs Guantanamo, data mining and other means of acquiring information that have been challenged by critics and that we should not be debating the rights of terrorists while we are engaged in a war against terrorism.

DEMONIZING THE CLINTONS

Several speakers harshly denounced President Bill Clinton and Senator Hillary Clinton. Sean Hannity said that the Democrats “lost their soul” when they allegedly defended President Clinton’s behavior during the 1998 Monica Lewinsky scandal. Mimicking Clinton’s speech mannerisms, Hannity said that once when he was negotiating with Clinton about doing an interview, the President insisted, “He can ask me about anything except Hillary. I only want to talk about the hot chicks.” Hannity finished his speech by vowing, “Hillary must never be the president of the United States,” underscoring how polarizing the 2008 election could be.

Gary Bauer charged Clinton with ignoring the messages sent by “Islamofascist” terrorists during his administration, suggesting Clinton’s responsibility for the attacks of September 11.

UNITING ACROSS RACIAL DIVIDES

Alan Sears said that far from being divisive, opposition to same-sex marriage is “a bridge issue because people from all religious and racial backgrounds come together to present God’s plan for marriage.”

Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) mentioned that Kansas was founded by abolitionists.

There was a fair amount of revisionism regarding the historical role white evangelicals played during the civil rights movement. Reverend Herb Lusk, senior pastor at Greater Exodus Baptist Church and an African-American, said:

We won civil rights not only because blacks preached the Gospel but also because our brothers of other hues [did]... The real church has always been at the front line of righteousness and justice and doing things that are pleasing in the sight of God.

In actuality, many white evangelicals, including Rev. Jerry Falwell, who preached at a Friday morning prayer breakfast, opposed civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s and criticized clergy members who supported civil rights.

Gary Bauer made one of the few references to poverty when he said that after abortion is outlawed in America, “all kids — black, white, rich, poor — will have a seat at the table, will be welcomed into the American family.” Bauer also noted that when terrorists struck on 9/11, “people of all races responded.”

There was a fair amount of revisionism regarding the historical role white evangelicals played during the civil rights movement.

Discussing Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s September appearance at Cooper Union in New York City, Gary Bauer compared Ahmadinejad’s speech with Abraham Lincoln’s February 1860 address. Bauer referenced Lincoln’s famous phrase that the “government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free,” though Lincoln actually used this phrase in the 1858 speech with which he accepted the Republican nomination for the Senate. Conservative Republicans often use President Lincoln’s party membership to encourage listeners to consider the contemporary Republican Party more hospitable to the concerns of people of color.

In terms of talking about political strategy, James Dobson pointed out that nothing brings Americans together more than opposition to same-sex marriage because opposition cuts across demographic lines of race and gender. Dobson says that opposition to same-sex marriage is now the most powerful unifying issue in American politics.

Racial unity against threats both foreign and domestic was a recurring theme.

ISLAMIC FASCISM AND 9/11

Speaker after speaker presented a bleak vision of the threats to America in the world. Over and over they referred to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. One speaker talked about the courage shown that day and how little courage, comparatively, it takes to vote as a “values voter.” Dobson made the link to domestic social concerns explicit, saying, “The war on terror, I really do see that as a family values issue.” Senator Santorum, who spoke on a video shown to the conference,

Senator Rick Santorum, who spoke on a video shown to the conference, said “we face an external enemy,” which he described as “radical Islam... and a less virulent war here at home against the family... radical secular humanism.”

White House Press Secretary Tony Snow echoed this theme:

We have an opportunity for unity around the key institution in our lives: the family. To create a society strong and whole you need to do what you can to defend the family. How do you defend the family? The first thing you do is acknowledge evil and vow to fight it...

After discussing the 9/11 attacks, Snow concluded, “President Bush has made this clear through support for the Federal Marriage Amendment.”

Gary Bauer, former Family Research Council head and 2000 presidential candidate, hailed the heroes of Flight 93, the plane brought down in Pennsylvania after passengers rushed the cockpit and overpowered the terrorists. Bauer said that “those brave Americans who stood for family and faith and freedom” — “family, faith, and freedom” being one of the themes of the Values Voter Summit — prevented the destruction of the Capitol or the White House. At least one of the heroes of Flight 93, Mark Bingham, was a gay man.

Bauer slammed conservative Republican Senators John McCain (R-AZ), John Warner (R-VA) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) for opposing President Bush’s policy on torture of enemy combatants being held at Guantanamo Bay. Describing the prison as benign — claiming that “the only torture is light deprivation” and “working Americans don’t have it as good” — Bauer sneered, “I want to thank Senators McCain and Graham for being so concerned about the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. The world is turned upside down,” he said, by “senators who spend more time worrying about those prisoners than what is happening to us. Well, they too should be ashamed of themselves.”

Ann Coulter also ridiculed concerns about torture, saying that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay were given “chocolate on their pillows.”

Ann Coulter also ridiculed concerns about torture, saying that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay were given “chocolate on their pillows.”

Bauer linked domestic social concerns to 9/11 again when discussing “a second war: a war about values.” Abortion, Bauer said, means that “every day we inflict on ourselves another 9/11.”

Ann Coulter excoriated liberals for being soft on terrorism yet staunch advocates of abortion rights:

If there is another Bush Supreme Court nomination, it will be World War III for liberals. They won't go to war against Islamic terrorism, but they will for abortion... Democrats hate George Bush because he's fighting the war on terrorism... Liberal ideas, from the Supreme Court or in wartime, are life-threatening...

MORAL RELATIVISM AS AN INFECTION OF OUR BODY POLITIC

Bauer linked America's alleged moral decline to perceptions that the United States doesn't have the will to stand up to "Islamic fascism."

This enemy thinks we're decadent, that we're fat, lazy and a civilization in decline. The left wing of American politics is constantly giving a message of defeat, a left wing that appears to hate me and you and George Bush more than al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

"When four Americans are burned and stomped as they were in Fallujah, you take out the city, you take out Fallujah... remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

—William Bennett

Former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett said, "We have let live and thrive in our body politic and in our bloodstream ideas that are wrong, moral relativism, the idea that all lifestyles are equal." Comparing this to the increase in "illegitimacy ['illegitimate' births]," particularly in the black community, Bennett urged activists to focus on culture, as "culture is more important than politics."

STRONG SUPPORT FOR FIGHTING THE WAR IN IRAQ

Many speakers expressed unwavering support for the Bush-Cheney administration's policies in Iraq. Some pushed for more aggressive pursuit of victory there. William Bennett said,

There is too much tentativeness about us now, about the war... When four Americans are burned and stomped, as they were in Fallujah, you take out the city, you take out Fallujah... send a message that barbarism will be extremely expensive. In the end, by decisive action you save lives; remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Bennett also warned against practicing "anxious propitiation" in Iraq, noting that 7,000 soldiers died in one month in the battle of Iwo Jima. Rejecting the 9/11 Commission's finding that Saddam Hussein did not collaborate with al-Qaeda in the September 11 attacks, Bennett asserted a connection between the two. He argued that the United States should not apologize for invading Iraq and, using a sports metaphor to make his point, charged that "the good guys are too much on defense."

JINGOISM AND NEO-MCCARTHYISM

Several speakers said that criticism of Bush in a time of war is tantamount to treason. Television and radio talk show host Sean Hannity faulted Paul Begala, Howard Dean and other Democrats for criticizing Bush after 9/11:

When we're at war, our troops are in harm's way after the worst attack in U.S. history and you're saying President Bush is a liar?... What's so outrageous about this is it's after 9/11. That type of partisanship is destructive when America is at war and these troops are out there battling for us and in harm's way.

Rev. Dr. John Guest, a British immigrant and U.S. citizen, echoed Hannity, saying, "It is treacherous and traitorous to be belittling and destroying and bringing down our president in time of war."

Hannity said he expected attacks from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, but thought recent criticisms of Bush by House and Senate Minority Leaders Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Harry Reid (D-NV) were beyond the pale: "The depth and magnitude and depravity of this rhetoric at a time when Americans ought to be united ought to be unacceptable to the American people."

Comparing the current time with the 1930s, Hannity said those who were soft on terrorism or on the presidents of Iran and Venezuela are "the appeasers of today," echoing recent comments by Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Portraying liberalism as an enemy on par with the terrorists and questioning Democrats' patriotism, Hannity recommended, "You defeat liberalism, then you go fight the terrorists."

Rev. Dr. John Guest, echoed Hannity, saying, "It is treacherous and traitorous to be belittling and destroying and bringing down our president in time of war."

Ann Coulter referred to liberals and Democrats (essentially one and the same in her formulation) as "the treason lobby."

Ann Coulter referred to liberals and Democrats (essentially one and the same in her formulation) as "the treason lobby."

Bill Bennett criticized "the sneering attitude of many of our elites," warning, "We get into laughing at honor, and when we laugh at honor, we shouldn't be surprised to find traitors in our midst."

Perkins admonished that "the opposition the president is receiving is sending a message [that] undermines freedom."

Several speakers attacked France. Sean Hannity complained about the fact that the hotel had given conference speakers Evian water to drink. Ann Coulter remarked that "the Warsaw ghetto held out for almost as long as France" against the Nazis.

Other speakers attacked the United Nations, as when Sean Hannity said, "We do not have to bow down at the altar of the United Nations and Kofi Annan."

Speakers made frequent claims that America is the greatest nation and culture to have ever existed on earth. The unfurling of American history was portrayed as part of a divine plan, and the United States was touted as the greatest civilization ever. “We are not living our story as much as His story,” said Congressman Mike Pence (R-IN).

WHO ARE “VALUES VOTERS”?

Said Tony Perkins, describing those gathered for the Summit: “What it boils down to is Bible-believing Christians.”

OTHER ISSUES: EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH, DARFUR, GLOBAL WARMING, ECO-TERRORISM

White House Press Secretary Tony Snow was the first and only speaker to mention Darfur. Snow praised his boss for being “the only world leader to say, ‘Stop that!’” In fact, besides political violence in and from the Islamic world, few speakers mentioned any other world problems. When global warming was mentioned it was to dismiss it as absurd.

James Inhofe (R-OK) claimed that global warming is a myth started by the United Nations in order to “shut down the machine called America,” a plot by America’s enemies to destroy the U.S. economy and initiate global government. Inhofe linked concerted attempts to mitigate global warming to the worshipping of creation instead of the creator addressed in the book of Romans 1:25. (According to the King James version of the Bible, this passage reads: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”)

Inhofe also reminded the audience that the Bush administration’s FBI has concluded that “the No. 1 domestic terrorism threat is the eco-terrorism, animal-rights movement” even though critics point out that this conclusion discounts the violent anti-abortion movement and the domestic terrorism of right-wing actors such as Timothy McVeigh and Eric Rudolph.

THE ABSENCE OF CATHOLIC AND LATINO/A LEADERS

Among the speakers at the Values Voter Summit, there was a minimal Roman Catholic presence and no Latino presence. Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, gave a brief invocation on Friday morning at the start of the conference. Bill Bennett, who is a prominent Catholic lay person, and Catholic convert Senator Brownback spoke. However, no other Catholic clergy member spoke. In contrast, Richard Land from the Southern Baptist Conference and several other ministers spoke.

There are strong disagreements within the religious right over immigration and Iraq. White evangelicals are generally hostile to any policy toward illegal immigrants that they think smacks of “amnesty;” this includes guest worker programs. Hispanic evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders are generally much more liberal on immigration. While many Latinos in general have expressed conservative views toward homosexuality and abortion, most are supportive of comprehensive immigration reform.

Jewish voters have values too, but any observant Jew would not have been able to attend most of the conference.

And Roman Catholic leaders have been outspoken against the Iraq war and poverty. White evangelicals are largely supportive of the Iraq war and view the solutions to poverty as cultural, not political or economic. More analysis is needed to understand whether the absence of Catholic clergy and Latino leaders is significant and representative of a fundamental split within the Christian right.

ESCHATOLOGY

Rick Scarborough told the audience that “we’re living in the last days” and that “God is looking for a remnant.” Echoing the recent comments of President Bush and many Christian right leaders, Scarborough said that he expects another (or a third, after the first and second awakenings often described in American history) awakening. He stated that if the church wakes up — mixing church and state as Scarborough suggests — the forces of evil will be defeated and Christians will win.

ROSH HASHANAH

The Values Voter Summit was clearly aimed at conservative evangelical Protestants. Still, the fact that it fell on the first day of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) was unfortunate. Jewish voters have values too, but any observant Jew would not have been able to attend most of the conference. Conservative writer Don Feder spoke briefly about Hollywood and then left, citing Rosh Hashanah as the reason. Feder was the sole Jewish speaker.

OTHER POPULIST RHETORIC

Governor Mike Huckabee (R-AR) railed against “K Street corruption and Wall Street greed,” which he contrasted with “mainstream American values.”

ABSOLUTELY NO MENTION OF BISEXUALS, TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

While speakers attacked “homosexuals and lesbians,” “counterfeit marriage,” “gay activists” and “faggots,” no one mentioned bisexuals or transgender people. We noticed this also at the Love Won Out ex-gay conferences organized by Focus on the Family.

DESPITE A BLEAK PROGNOSIS, STEADY PROGRESS AGAINST SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND ABORTION

Despite bleak evaluations of the state of politics in the United States and the world, several speakers spoke of progress on conservative issues. Dobson said strong majorities opposed abortion in most cases and viewed it as morally wrong. Dobson and others touted that fact that, when same-sex marriage has been placed on the ballot (as it will have been in half the states as of November 2006), an average of 71 percent of voters oppose it.

“We’re on the march, so don’t ever get discouraged. We are doing so much better than we ever did before.”
—Paul Weyrich

Paul Weyrich noted that in the 1970s, “you could have fit pro-family activists in a room. When you get discouraged look around. We are so much better off than the pro-family movement was years ago. We’re on the march, so don’t ever get discouraged. We are doing so much better than we ever did before.”



Sean Cahill directs the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Cynthia Burack is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies at Ohio State University.