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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On the Spirit of Sam Francis On Inquisitorial Intolerance

For the first time, for nearly an hour, the sting of the death of Dr. Samuel Francis subsided. The ointment was in your October number—the “Letter From Charleston: The Flamingo Kid” (*Correspondence*) by Mr. Jack Trotter. That essay alone is worth more than the cost of the entire issue.

I realize that it should not take nearly an hour to read two-and-a-half pages. Even old clover kickers, such as myself, are capable of better. The plain truth is that, even on the third reading, I was laughing and wiping my eyes as frequently as I had during the initial reading.

More writing by Mr. Trotter, please. He adroitly covers the political career of the quick-witted and clever Rep. John Graham Altman III in a few fast-paced pages with a sampling of H.L. Mencken to expose the buffoonery of no end.

Among Mr. Trotter's gems—“a man who battered his wife was too busy hiding from the kinfolk to worry about the law.” Hear! Hear! Besides, it kept the prison population in economic check, as there was no need—as in the case of my local and rural county—of over 1,500 protection orders and a new county jail costing over \$30 million.

As I read, I wondered if Mr. Trotter would bring in Representative Altman's position on Junior King and the Battle Flag debacle. It was all there, plus secession!

When all was read and done, this bantive gamecock of the north was prepared to send some after-tax fiat paper currency to Charleston—specifically, to 77 Folly Road—to help keep “the politically correct and the sanctimonious” in check. Besides, those flamigos need their food and finery.

Thank you, Representative Altman and Mr. Trotter.

—Steve J. Medve
Canton, NY

Christopher Check, in his recount of a visit to Edinburgh (“An Instinctive Jacobite,” *The Best Revenge*, October), describes his glee at learning that the grave of John Knox is lost under a parking lot as well as his urge to urinate on the approximate site. The passage indicates that his glee and the urge are attributable to his Catholicism.

Are we to take this boorish, intolerant—in the inquisitorial sense—attitude to be prevalent among members of the Catholic Church *vis-à-vis* their fellow Christians? Or is it just a rather low-class joke that I am missing? If so, please let me know, and I might find something to do with that Polish fellow's grave in Rome.

—Eric Rachut
Moody, TX

Mr. Check Replies:

I apologize to Mr. Rachut for coarse humor, doubtless better suited to the squad bay than to a distinguished magazine.

My debt to the memory of John Knox is another matter. When the heretic learned of the cold-blooded murder of the queen of Scot's Catholic secretary, he described the act as “most just and worthy of all praise.” He heaped similar lauds on the murderers of Cardinal Beaton. He waged war on Tradition, on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and on the Blessed Sacrament. He had his own version of the three-strikes rule: A priest caught celebrating Mass for the third time should be put to death. Knox aroused the mob that he called the “people of God” and the “brethren” to acts of murder, vandalism, sacrilege, and treason. He browbeat the young Mary, reducing her to tears, and publicly and frequently referred to her as “Jezebel.” If Calvin and Luther disagreed

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with Knox's teachings and tactics, what is there for me to tolerate?

It hardly matters that there is no marker on his grave. Scotland endures his legacy. Only in the past three decades have there been public Christmas trees in Edinburgh, and a once-magnificent medieval Church on Edinburgh's High Street stands violently stripped of all its sacred beauty and mystery.

I do, in all Christian friendship, invite Mr. Rachut to join us in Rome in January. I'll show him the late pope's grave, and I'll encourage him to exercise the same restraint that I did.

On Communing With Saints

I must take strong issue with Michael McMahon's "The Communion of Saints" (*Views*, September), which cast aspersions on the biographies of Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Cecelia, and Saint Barbara. Such sentiments are best reserved to the Soviet-era *Krokidil*. Devotion to these saints has less to do with the unlikely nature of their biographies and more to do with their proved effectiveness. It is easier for the Masonic-orient-

ed to rid the world of belief in God than of belief in the intercession of these saints whose effectiveness is legendary.

The Franj on crusade had years of hardship that led them to gravitate toward the saints they found most effective; Saint Barbara, Saint Margaret of Antioch, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria were constant favorites in the medieval version of the scientific method of trial and error. Whole regions devoted to the Fourteen Holy Helpers in German-speaking and Polish-speaking Central Europe were untouched by the Black Death of the 1370's and 1380's.

May I suggest a litany to the Fourteen Holy Helpers after a Daily Rosary for 40 days before one determines which saints are "apocryphal"?

—Richard N. Nicoletti
Bordentown, NJ

Mr. McMahon Replies:

I find it difficult to engage with Mr. Nicoletti's arguments because they do not appear to spring from a reasonable understanding of mine, and they are confusingly expressed. His accusation that I "cast aspersions on

the biographies of Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Cecelia, and Saint Barbara" is so obviously wide of the mark that I am left wondering what he can mean, particularly as, two sentences later, he himself casts an aspersion on these very "biographies" that is absolute, dismissing them in passing as "unlikely." My piece unambiguously celebrated not only the real lives of the saints but the poetic truths embodied in their legends—even those of the saints that we now know never existed.

Mr. Nicoletti's assertion that a saint with a reputation for intercessory effectiveness cannot be apocryphal is easier to understand, but he does not advance it convincingly, and he does his case no service by using the word *legendary* in its informal sense. In hagiography, *legendary* does not mean "famously self-evident"; it means "pertaining to legend"—and legends are not necessarily historically true. The saints he lists were indeed favored by the crusaders—but the Crusades ended in disarray and failure. This is no more evidence that any of those saints were apocryphal than that they were real. Some areas with a devotion to the Fourteen Holy Helpers escaped the Plague. What of those areas or individuals with similar devotions that did not?

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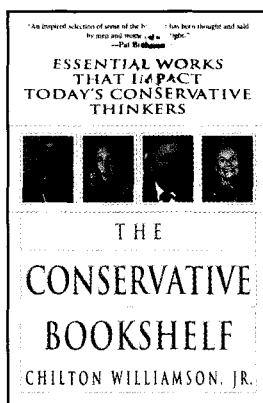
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Dick Cheney's Uncertain Future

Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald called a press conference on October 28 to announce a five-count indictment against I. Lewis Libby, chief of staff and principal national security advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney. Fitzgerald indicted Libby on one count of obstruction of justice, two counts of perjury, and two counts of false statements. The charges were made against Libby for his alleged cover-up of his role in blowing the cover of "Valerie Wilson," a covert CIA operative. The other main target of Fitzgerald's investigation, Bush political advisor Karl Rove, dodged the bullet of an indictment after he made a fourth (and final) trip to the grand jury and after Rove's attorney engaged in lengthy, last-minute discussions with Fitzgerald's office, according to sources close to the investigation. While Rove was not indicted, the special counsel made clear that his investigation was "not over" and that Rove was still a target. Shortly after his initial statement, Fitzgerald also announced that he intended to call Vice President Cheney at Libby's trial, signaling that the Vice President himself might be a target of Fitzgerald's investigation.

What happens next? It is difficult to speculate how far the investigation will go and who else may be indicted as Fitzgerald looks into the improper use of national-security information by administration officials. One immediate fallout of the indictment is that the alliance of mutual convenience between Karl Rove, the President's chief political advisor, and Vice President Dick Cheney, the "king" of foreign policy in the Bush Administration, may well be over. One commentator asked, after Rove managed a last-minute escape from "political execution," "Did Rove rat on Scooter?" The speculation is that "Rove fingered Libby to save his own skin," as Joshua Frank put it.

Cheney was a latecomer to the Bush presidential team. Karl Rove, on the other hand, had dreamed of a Bush presidency even before George W. Bush's first race for governor of Texas in 1994. More than any other individual, Karl Rove is responsible for George W. Bush's election as governor of Texas and president of the United States. People tend to forget that

Cheney was selected by the Bush team to identify and recommend a running mate in 2000 and that he, in effect, recommended himself.

During the selection process, there was a lot of speculation by Texas political insiders that Karl Rove was not pleased with the naming of Cheney as Bush's running mate. Those same sources believed that Rove would have preferred someone like John Danforth, a former senator from Missouri who was a Bush family friend from way back. Instead, Cheney's selection meant that a bureaucratic insider, who had been President Ford's chief of staff and President George H.W. Bush's secretary of defense, would now be vice president of the United States.

While Danforth likely would have assumed the secondary role that most vice presidents fill, the selection of Dick Cheney immediately changed the dynamics of the office. From day one, Vice President Cheney became the most powerful figure to hold that position in my lifetime—particularly in the critical arena of foreign policy.

For all practical purposes, Cheney and Rove divided power in an administration in which the President would be minimally engaged in setting the policy agenda. Vice President Cheney had the preeminent role in the foreign-policy decisionmaking process. The Vice President became the *de facto* president of foreign policy, with Lewis Libby as his right-hand man. The Vice President also exercised authority over certain domestic issues, such as energy policy. Meanwhile, Karl Rove ran the White House political operation and had a significant say over the President's domestic agenda.

A lot of people do not realize that, while Karl Rove and Vice President Cheney wield enormous power in their own spheres of influence within the Bush administration, they are not long-time political allies. Nor do they necessarily share the same worldview.

That division of authority within the Bush White House worked until the war in Iraq began to go badly and the investigation into the outing of Valerie Plame heated up. Both Cheney and Rove had supported the war, albeit for very differ-

ent reasons. But the Plame investigation was principally about the improper use of classified national-security information by administration officials. Those same officials may have had a motive to manipulate intelligence in order to justify the war in Iraq, a position they had promoted long before September 11, 2001. All of this was going on within Cheney's sphere of influence, not Rove's.

So, it would not be surprising if Rove is cooperating with Patrick Fitzgerald's office in an investigation that may ultimately bring down the Vice President.

Cheney's advice has not served the President well. A majority of Americans have turned against the war in Iraq. Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired Marine Corps officer and foreign chief of staff to former secretary of state Colin Powell, recently charged that the "Cheney cabal hijacked foreign policy" in the Bush administration and has made a mess of things in the Middle East.

Gen. Brent Scowcroft, national-security advisor to George H.W. Bush, made a scathing attack on Cheney in a recent *New Yorker* article over what Scowcroft calls the administration's "radical intervention" in the Middle East, orchestrated by the Vice President. Neoconservative architects of the war such as Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith have already jumped ship. Now, Libby is gone. Will the Vice President be next?

Karl Rove has an excellent political antenna. He has to know that the neocon-directed foreign policy in the Middle East has turned into a political liability for his boss. Will Karl seek to persuade the President that Dick Cheney's supremacy over the foreign-policy decisionmaking process should end?

The place to watch for a possible shift in direction for the Bush administration is at the National Security Council staff level. If Stephen Hadley were to leave (and an individual more independent of Cheney were to take his place as national-security advisor), this might indicate a shift in power away from Cheney. Meanwhile, the Vice President has to worry that the special counsel has him in his sights and that Karl Rove may not be helpful to him at this particular moment.