

gentleman.”

Lee’s own model of a gentleman was the man for whom Washington College was named. Freeman also chronicled Washington’s life in seven thick volumes that won a Pulitzer in 1958. Because Washington was successful in leading his country in her struggle for independence, this biography lacks the sense of tragedy that one sees in Lee’s life. Nevertheless, it is easy to see Washington in Lee, and, like Lee, we can benefit from a study of Washington’s character.

According to Freeman, early in his life Washington “acquired a positive love of the right and developed the will to do the right.” Washington was reverent, self-controlled, and committed to God, family, and home. Like Lee, Washington was not simply the product of his environment. His character was the result of his own conscious decisions. He willed himself to become the man he wished to be. “What he was, he made himself by will, effort, discipline, ambition and perseverance,” wrote Freeman.

These two biographies provide us with excellent models of gentlemen, men of humility, integrity, honor, and faith. They also give us a good picture of Southern history from the mid-18th century until Lee’s death in 1870. And the story they tell is more compelling than what one finds in most modern histories of the Old South. Many of the histories published today are dull affairs, full of theory and jargon. They are written in the belief that all of our actions are determined by materialist factors over which we have little or no control, or that we are inevitably being swept along the path of Progress. Freeman, however, believed that individuals matter, that their character, their actions, and their ideas have consequences. He shows us how Washington and Lee, while recognizing the role of Providence in their lives, helped to shape their own destinies. They were gentlemen because they chose to be.

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COMMONWEAL

Be Not Afraid

by Mark Shea

In Leviticus, God gives Israel a number of blessings and curses that describe the benefits and consequences of keeping (or failing to keep) the Sinai covenant. One of the “covenant curses” is curiously descriptive of the jittery culture of fear in which we now live:

But if [they] will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments . . . I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth [26:14;36].

A culture of death is a culture of fear, because a culture that loses the holy and freedom-giving fear of God inevitably becomes a culture dominated by the servile fear of man. It becomes afraid of its own shadow—and with good reason, for the shadow of fallen man is very dark indeed at times. Precisely because it is dominated by fear, it is not ruled by truth, or light, or even sanity. In an effort to convince itself that it is not afraid, it turns to bread and circuses to keep up its spirits (Britney Spears Watch!). And as it grows in fear (because bread and circuses do not satisfy the soul), it begins to exaggerate its fear fantasies into “realism,” to conflate violence with justice, and strength with cruelty and cunning. And so it behaves much as Saint Paul describes, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

Fear is the source of all the “What if?” games being played by allegedly serious politicians, pundits, and media types who imagine the main question of the day is “In which remote hy-

pothetical situation would it be OK to torture somebody?”

That is not “moral reasoning,” but fishing for excuses, like the guy with the hot secretary and the rocky marriage who is constantly asking “hypothetical” questions about “How far is too far?” and “What is a valid marriage anyway?” and “What if a nuclear holocaust left me permanently separated from my wife? Wouldn’t I be bound to repopulate the earth with my secretary?”

This analogy is not, of course, to suggest that our present national choice to succumb to the temptation to torture is the same sort of temptation as the temptation to sleep with the hot secretary. Rather, it is to say that *temptation is temptation*. When you are tempted sexually, you tend to base your thinking on your desires, and when you are afraid, you tend to base your thinking on your fears. That is what concupiscence means. It is the darkened intellect, disordered appetites, and weakened will that result from the Fall. As a result, we often do not think clearly, act sensibly, or do the hard thing God demands. And that is why Revelation and grace are necessary.

Paul commands us, as members of Christ, “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). If we are to do that today, we need to start the conversation on how to treat prisoners based not on our worst fears, but on the Just War tradition that has formed Christian thinking for over a millennium. That teaching says both that we have the right to defend ourselves and that prisoners must be treated humanely. To begin our deliberation on our approach to interrogation apart from the fundamental facts of the Christian tradition concerning the dignity of the human person, the purpose (and limits) of government, and the relationship between the two is to ignore Revelation and allow fear to dictate our thinking. Allowing those fears to tell us we are being “realistic” as we fantasize about ticking time bombs but unrealistic as we contemplate the Tradition is “feeding the flesh,” to use Pauline language. After all, “the flesh”

includes not simply sexual lusts, but servile fear as well.

That is why the entire “torture debate” has produced such evil fruit: It is asking the moral-nonsense question “How close can you get to committing a grave and intrinsically immoral act without crossing the line?” (“How far can I go with the hot secretary before it’s adultery?”) The question itself is evidence of a gravely corrupted mind and a sure bet that the results of such moral calculus will be rubbish. The real—and almost always unasked—question is “How do we treat prisoners humanely as the Church commands and still get the intelligence we need?” How do we make sure to obey this very clear teaching of the Christian tradition that asserts the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflict and reminds us that the mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that anything and everything has become licit between the warring parties?

If we aim to treat prisoners humanely, we will never accidentally torture them. It is only when we aim to torture them while trying to pretend that we are not that we have to involve ourselves in all the endless tergiversation and bafflegab that has characterized the supposedly “realistic” chatter of the Rubber Hose Right for the past six years. And most interesting of all, if we aim to treat prisoners humanely, it turns out we are being not Pollyannaish, but entirely practical about intelligence, according to Army Capt. Kyle Teamey, a current military intelligence officer.

When I was in the officer’s basic course, one of the instructors, only half-jokingly, proclaimed, “Beatings and drugs are for fun, not for information.” His point was you can get anyone to say anything you want through torture. Good information came from psychology, interpersonal skills, and long hours with your prisoner. The best interrogators I’ve worked with tended to be very good at reading people and very good at using their understanding of the person and their

culture to get them to talk—no waterboarding required . . .

We should be developing an ideological alternative (or alternatives) to jihad and are instead alienating our allies, enraging the populations from which the terrorists arise, and most importantly, alienating our COG [center of gravity] in the form of the U.S. electorate. A liberal democracy, such as the US, operating in an environment with pervasive media cannot afford to dally in tactics that may provide some short term gains at the expense of long term success.

It is not just the US that has made this error in judgment. The Brits and French did the same in their COIN [counter-insurgency] campaigns in [the] 20th century and suffered for it. We should learn from their mistakes—and ours.

This gets us to the heart of the conflict between Christian Revelation in this matter and the lies (and therefore delusions) of *Realpolitik*.

For what is at the core of all “realistic” consequentialist appeals to do grave evil for the greater good is, ultimately, a refusal to trust that God knows what He is talking about. It is the conviction that the Christian Revelation is not an insight into the very nature of reality but an idealistic daydream that hard thinkers and tough-minded men must sweep away in favor of “practical” solutions. In this analysis, the functional belief of the Machiavellian is “You shall embrace evil, and evil shall make you safe.”

The response of Christian Revelation is that this is, not to put too fine a point on it, a lie from the pit of Hell, as well as a snare and delusion. Christian Revelation claims that Christ intends our happiness and knows better than we do what is actually the best way to realize it. This involves a conception of Christ’s commands as something other than impossible ideals or as cruel, irrational restrictions we have to obey for no reason other than fear. In short, it involves the idea that the

One Who created us did so because He wills our happiness, and that obedience to Him is actually ordered toward life and freedom, not toward our destruction.

Christianity teaches us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Part of this counsel is indeed to trust God and keep your powder dry. But another, and much despised, part involves the seemingly Pollyannaish command of our Lord: “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself.” That is not because Jesus is a cockeyed optimist and a fool but because He knows that cultivation of fear is not the same thing as prudence.

Prudence is the clear-eyed ability to see what is so. The cultivation of fear, in contrast, places us not in the “real world” but in a fantasy world of Bruce Willis movies and endless 24 scenarios. In the real world is God and our duty to our family, community, and work. This is not speculation on my part; this is the teaching of the Gospel. For the world, readiness comes from being afraid, tense, jumping at the rustle of leaves, worried about what horrible thing might happen and laboring to fantasize about what crimes you might commit to stop it. For Saint Paul, readiness comes from peace. That is why he tells the Ephesians to let their feet be shod with “the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). Saint Paul does not command us to rehearse the horrible ways in which we and those we love might suffer (and this was a man who experienced more actual suffering than we ever will). Instead—from jail—he wrote,

Be [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever

er things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you [Philippians 4:6-9].

That—despite the lie that “9/11 Changed Everything!”—has not changed.

Mark Shea's blog is Catholic and Enjoying It!

SPORTS

Umpires

by John Willson

Mike Carey was the first “African-American” to head a crew that refereed a Super Bowl—the one in which the sainted Tom Brady got his butt kicked by the lowly Giants. The term *African-American* offends me, and should offend all patriots, and probably offends Mike Carey, who is an accomplished entrepreneur and inventor, the CEO of a company that has as much to do with Africa as I have to do with being an “English-American.”

Mr. Carey is a good referee. Like most National Football League officials, he is a man who first made a successful life and then transferred good judgment and calm demeanor into a job that few men can do. Referees are judges; they require prudence. In every game we call a sport, there are rules that are broken even more often than in politics or marriages. “Holding” on the offensive line could be called on every play of every football game; so how can Mike Carey draw a line between a competitor and a cheater?

That is the job of referees. *Umpire* was the word most of us grew up with—a derivative of an old English word that described arbiters, men who were given the task of keeping families and tribes from killing each other over matters that could be resolved short of

swordplay or gunfire. The reason men such as Mike Carey get appointed to umpire NFL games is that they have the gravitas to sort out competitors from cheaters in the most violent sport we have invented since Rome stopped killing Christians in public arenas.

Even the most serious umpires have become subject to the supposedly more objective tests of cameras. Ted Williams, who may have had the best eyes of any professional athlete ever, decided early in his career never to question an umpire’s call; otherwise he would have to question every one of their calls. Major League Baseball players have, on the average, 20-12 vision. They are not like the rest of us. Yet we do not subject their umpires to “replay” cameras—not yet, anyway.

Baseball umpires are street guys—or they have been, historically. You will never see Mike Carey nose to nose with Bill Belichick, but you might see Jim McKean throw the gentleman Jim Leyland out of a baseball game. The cultures are different. NBA referees are a joke. Hockey officials are somewhere between boxing referees and figure skaters and subject, like their football counterparts, to camera decisions. In general, we have diminished umpires, probably with good reason.

I grew up in a time when umpires did not enter our lives until about age 14. No Little League, Pop Warner, or junior this or that. We played whatever game was in season in whatever field or barn was available. We played tackle football in a lot that had a concrete sidewalk as one boundary and a ditch as the other, and one end zone was a gravel driveway. The basketball court was the upper part of our barn, about 30 feet wide and just high enough to get the ball over a regulation basket. We never had even a cinder track to run on. Every game was played with boys working things out with other boys. We learned not to cheat, because cheating drew great penalties; we learned to compete, because *not to compete* drew great penalties. When we got to the formal level and had coaches and referees, it would not have occurred to us to cheat or to fail to respect our umpires. We had

worked that out long ago.

Umpires are diminished because the games are diminished. Here is an example. The best referee I have ever known was John Gee. John was six foot nine, and had played with the New York Giants and Pittsburgh Pirates for a year or two. He was a legendary semipro pitcher in western New York, able at the age of 38 or 40 to throw the ball 100 miles per hour, pitching only every other week. I batted against him when I was 15, called into service on our “town team” because injuries reduced us to teenagers. I dug in at the plate. A grizzled old catcher said, “Stay loose, son,” and John threw the first pitch right at my left ear. I wanted to go back to the dug-out and cry.

Well, you respected a man like that. He refereed many of my high-school basketball games, and he was the only official on the court. When he made a call, nobody argued. I don’t remember if he ever made a bad call; it wasn’t an issue. John was a high-school principal, a man of accomplishment and principle, and we were boys who had learned by hard knocks to accept what was given to us. Mike Carey, I suspect, has similar respect.

Black boys play basketball and Hispanic boys play baseball in circumstances not unlike the ones I grew up in. Umpires make little difference to them. They just play. Football requires greater order, because it is the most violent game short of war that boys get to play. So, Mike Carey is necessary.

Unfortunately, we now have too many games on too many levels and with too many sexes playing them. Just as there are too few good teachers and too few good priests and too few good CEOs, there are too few good umpires. As the pool is diminished, the games are diminished. Bad umpires synchronize with bad parents. The line between cheaters and competitors is increasingly blurry. Mike Carey, “African-American” or not, might be a dying breed.

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