

IN THESE TIMES

Reagan vs. Thomas Jefferson

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

This is the first of a two-part series on politics and religion.

IN RETROSPECT, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT speech at last month's Republican convention was not President Reagan's keynote address, but his speech that same morning to an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast. In the August 23 speech, Reagan accused the school prayer opponents of being "intolerant of religion."

Reagan's speech has sparked a furious debate about the relationship of church to state, which has overshadowed the seemingly more pressing concerns of the economy and U.S.-Soviet relations.

On one level, Reagan's speech was a purely political gesture. Reagan has always followed the classic strategy of consolidating his base before moving to the center. In August 1980, speaking before the Religious Roundtable in Dallas, Reagan declared his dissatisfaction with the theory of evolution and his conviction that the Bible contained the answers to "all the complex and horrendous questions confronting us at home and worldwide." A month later he was praising the Chrysler bailout and promising negotiations with the Soviet Union.

In 1984, Reagan has followed the same route. When he and Mondale spoke at B'nai Brith's convention in Washington on September 6, he backed away from the implications of his Dallas speech. Echoing Thomas Jefferson's statement that the First Amendment built "a wall of separation between church and state," Reagan averred that "the unique thing about America is a wall in our Constitution separating church and state."

But Reagan's Dallas speech deserves closer scrutiny. While his 1980 address may have signified either base opportunism or a loose screw, his speech this year contains intimations of a broader philosophy of government.

Reagan and Burke.

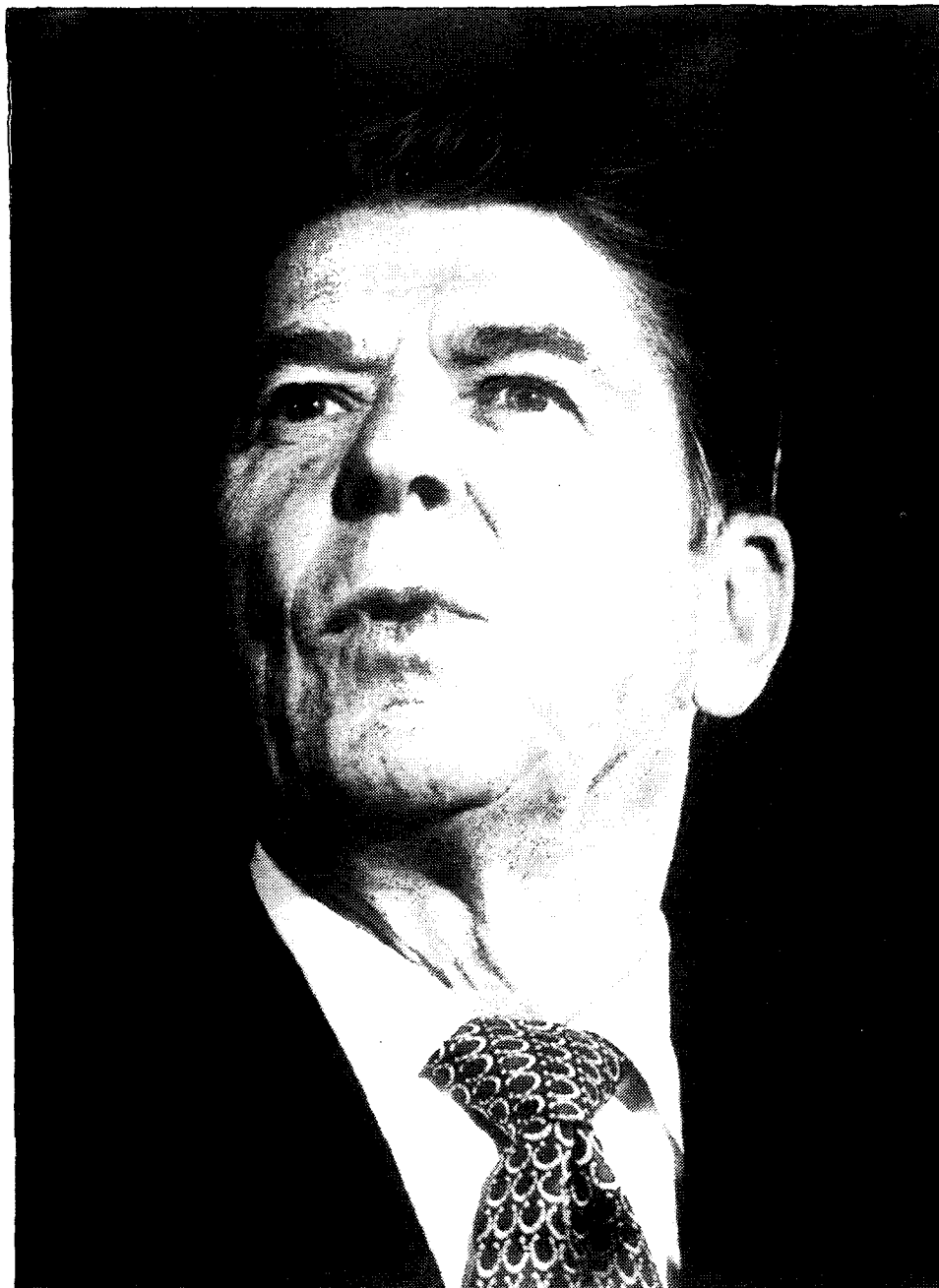
Some of Reagan's speech emphasized the obvious. Few Americans would deny that "faith and religion play a central role in the political life of our nation and always have." One need only look at the final contestants for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Parts of Reagan's speech were also partisan distortion and demagoguery—to be expected at a convention. In suggesting that Supreme Court rulings on school prayer forbade students from studying "together all of the many religions in our country," Reagan conveniently ignored that the texts of those rulings explicitly commended the comparative study of religions.

But the heart of Reagan's Dallas speech was his view or views on the relationship of politics to religion. Two theories vie for supremacy in Reagan's speech, one drawn from British philosopher Edmund Burke and his modern American interpreters and the other drawn from John Calvin and his modern American interpreters.

A word about Burke. Burke was a supporter of the American Revolution, but drew a sharp distinction between it and the French Revolution. He was horrified by the Enlightenment *philosophes'* egalitarianism and elevation of reason to a pre-eminence previously enjoyed by religion and tradition. He saw in the Jacobins' Reign of Terror the confirmation of his views.

Burke was not a theocrat, but he believed that religion, with its emphasis on order, authority and human fallibility, was an important brake upon the rationalist and levelling tendencies of the Enlightenment. He saw religion as a part of



the accumulated wisdom of tradition and custom.

In the U.S., Burke's position was taken by the Federalist opponents of the French Revolution—chief among them, Alexander Hamilton. Reagan's speech in Dallas drew upon the early Burkeans to establish religion's historical place in American politics. Reagan told the fundamentalists:

George Washington referred to religion's profound and unsurpassed place in the heart of our nation quite directly in his Farewell Address of 1796 [supposedly written by Hamilton]. Seven years earlier, France had erected a government that was intended to be purely secular. This new government would be grounded on reason rather than the law of God.... And Washington voiced reservations about the idea that there could be wise policy without a firm moral and religious foundation.

Modern American Burkeans, inspired by Russell Kirk's seminal *The Conservative Mind* (1953), have viewed the Russian Revolution, the rise of European fascism and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal—indeed, modern liberalism itself—as legacies of the French Revolution. Conservatives claim that, like the French Revolution, these developments rested upon the assumption that human beings can use government as a rational instrument of self-perfection.

According to conservatives, the Christian religion undermines this liberal/socialist/communist/fascist view. As Reagan put it in Dallas:

We need religion as a guide; we need it because we are imperfect. And our government needs the church because only those humble enough to admit they are sinners can bring to democracy the tolerance it requires to survive.

Like Burke, Reagan sees religion as a foundation of morality and therefore politics. "Politics and morality are inseparable," Reagan said in Dallas. "And as morality's foundation is religion, religion and politics are necessarily related."

In this sense, Reagan's view is no more theocratic than Burke's was. Reagan believes in the separation of church and state, but it is a separation as understood by Burke's American followers and not by Jefferson or James Madison and their modern followers.

Constitutional debate.

Jefferson and Madison were deists who believed that God's role was merely that of initial creator, partisans of the Enlightenment and supporters of the French Revolution. They advocated the strict demarcation of religion and the state. In Virginia, prior to the American Constitution, they had championed a state constitution forbidding any state aid to religion. There is some indication that Madison regarded the First Amendment, forbidding Congress from making any "law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" as a compromise measure in so far as it merely banned a national religion.

While Burke and his American followers saw religion as a useful preservative of class and order, Madison and Jefferson saw it as the progenitor of holy war. "Torrents of blood have been spilt in the Old World by the vain attempt of the secular arm to extinguish religious discord," Madison wrote in 1785.

Beginning in 1948 with *McCullum v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court affirmed Jefferson and Madison's view of church and state. By combining the First Amendment with the Fourteenth Amendment, which forbade states to deprive citizens of their liberties, the Court ruled that states and school districts would also have to abide by the First Amendment's prohibition on established religion.

In 1949, Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray argued the Burkean case against the Supreme Court's ruling in *McCullum*. Murray maintained that the First Amendment had not been meant

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IN SHORT

Have gun, will swagger

High noon on November 6: a shootout between Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale on the floor of the Capitol rotunda. A definitive, no-nonsense way to determine what seems to be shaping up as a major campaign issue for the male gender: who's the real man? According to new polls summarized by a recent *New York Times* article, young white males are leaning heavily toward the Republicans for perhaps the first time since Ike. In fact, the widest gap between the sexes is in the 18-to-29-year-old group. An age once ripe for social idealism, today's young men are more intrigued by Ronnie's purported power. Says one self-proclaimed young urban professional, "at work the guys stick to Reagan primarily because they see the race as women versus men, with Reagan standing for the values of men."

But not so fast, buddy. Nobody can get away with calling Fritz Mondale a sissy. Rushing to defend Mondale's tarnished image, campaign advisor Robert Strauss set the record straight in the *Times*: "Mondale is a sort of a man's man. He likes to do the things that we associate with male, what do you call it, macho. He's a fisherman. He likes to sit around and have a drink with his shoes off and a cigar in his mouth with his friends. He's a hunter..." But is he really man enough? Another Democratic observer shoots straight from the hip: "Men like Reagan's swagger. They'd like to have that swagger themselves." And even David Garth, a Democratic media consultant, thinks Reagan's tough act is a tough act to follow. After all, says Garth, he "took a bullet in the chest and survived, and all of America saw it. That was a very macho thing." So, back to the shootout: either way, Fritz can't lose, right?

Say it ain't so, Annie

Maybe you've seen the series of eight informative ads put out by the U.S. Committee for Energy Awareness. Usually hogging two pages in the glossier magazines, the series starts out slow and subtle ("The Electrical Age: Rebirth or Retreat") and builds to make a point ("Radiation: Facing Fear with Facts" and "Nuclear Waste Disposal: Scientists Have an Answer"). Though the ads seem to put a premium on reasoned objectivity, the Safe Energy Communication Council (SECC) says it's all style and no substance. So they commissioned a scientist from one of their member organizations—James MacKenzie from the Union of Concerned Scientists—to add some facts to the picture. In his 21-page critique, MacKenzie concludes that "reading and accepting the ads' message at face value would create a serious misunderstanding of national energy issues and the problems affecting nuclear power." Another CEA presentation that's got the SECC up in arms: the infamous "Annie" ads intending to portray solar energy supporters as dreamy-eyed fools. With "Annie's theme" in the background ("The sun will come out tomorrow, so you've got to hang onto tomorrow") the narrator informs us that solar energy won't be practical until "some day in the future," so let's quit hesitating about nuclear power.

Who are these CEA people, anyway? Though they sound public-minded and government-like, they're actually a private group of electric utilities, construction companies and equipment manufacturers. And the money for their \$25 million ad blitz may not have all come from their own pockets. The SECC has uncovered that ratepayers in Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina are being charged for the ads. For a copy of the MacKenzie critique or an "Annie" Response Packet, write SECC, 1609 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Yale decides this week

A final showdown is expected this week in the 16-month-old battle between the Yale University and its 1,800-member clerical and technical workers union over a first contract. By a 10-to-one margin, Local 34 of the Federation of University Employees has voted to walk out September 26 unless a settlement is reached or Yale's administration agrees to submit the remaining issues—including key economic provisions—to binding arbitration. The University's 1,000 blue-collar workers vowed to honor their colleagues' picket lines, meaning a strike could effectively cripple Yale. Local 34 narrowly won the right to represent Yale's 2,650 "pink collar" workers—80 percent of them female—in May 1983. By last March, dozens of negotiating sessions had failed to produce a first contract. Negotiators averted a threatened strike by coming up with a three-year partial contract that provided for continued bargaining on wages and benefits and allowed Local 34 the right to strike.

Well-heeled in Texas

Democratic voter registration may not have the Republicans running scared (see story on page 8), but it has caught a few stumbling off the path of democratic participation. According to the *Texas Observer*, Dianna Denman, the vice chair of the Texas Republican Party, spoke disapprovingly of voter registration drives aimed at the Hispanic vote. She contrasted these efforts with the Republicans, who are registering the "right kind of people who are going out and going to work and support the future of America." The drives of groups like the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project will only put people "under the heel of the boot" of the Democratic Party.

—Beth Maschinot



Amtrak uses discipline to discriminate

WASHINGTON—The horror stories flew thick and fast September 13 here when the House Subcommittee on Government Operations and Transportation heard sworn testimony on labor abuses by Amtrak, the federally-subsidized passenger railroad.

More than 150 Amtrak workers gasped, grumbled and sometimes couldn't help but applaud as the hearing, chaired by Rep. Cardiss Collins (D-IL), confirmed for the public record what the Amtrak grapevine has been saying for almost two years: the company's disciplinary appeals process was rigged, enabling some managers to use heavy-handed discipline to cover up their own mistakes, to intimidate union leaders and outspoken workers and to discriminate against blacks, women and older workers. A subtheme of the hearing was that women cannot be trusted to hang tough in a cover-up; the most damaging testimony came from three Chicago women managers who informed on their male supervisors.

Throughout the five-hour hearing, testimony of flagrant abuse kept surfacing. There was the Chicago yard manager who bragged about how many Machinists' union representatives he had broken, the Philadelphia station supervisor who struck a red cap for allegedly reading a newspaper, and the Midwest regional

manager of labor relations who made racist and anti-union statements and who would automatically deny the disciplinary appeal of any worker who filed an equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint.

Other workers also mentioned the racism of some Amtrak managers: the black Seattle porter who was fired (based on a hearing he was not permitted to attend) for allegedly wearing the wrong color socks and unshined shoes, and the black quality assurance inspector who was "reevaluated" and rumored to have a drinking problem after he refused to treat workers high-handedly. There were also workers—both black and white—routinely charged with rule violations when they received injuries on the job.

Topping it all off was the Midwest regional director who met with his Chicago hearing officer before a case and denounced a worker, saying, "I want you to get that s.o.b. and make it stick or else it's your ass. Do you get my drift?"

Testifying as workers and unionists were Chicago machinist Raymond Northern, Seattle porter Terry Walker, Philadelphia red cap Alan Randall, Machinists' district chairman Paul Stoj, police association president Michael Aurisano and Chicago machinist Jim Pitts. The three Chicago women were train manager Kathy Netzing, labor relations supervisor Jodie Walton and EEO representative Kelly Zanders.

Michael Young, general chairman of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, was the ranking unionist to testify. After detail-

ing how a "state of siege mentality" had corrupted Amtrak's labor relations, Young proposed new contract language to deter abuses, including an unjust treatment rule so workers can charge bosses with harassment and creation of a labor advisory committee that would speak directly to the company's board of directors.

Joining Collins in pointed questioning was Rep. Sidney Yates (D-IL), Rep. Major Owens (D-NY), Rep. Raymond McGrath (R-NY) and Rep. Gerald Kleczka (D-WI). Rep. Charles Hayes (D-IL) sat in to denounce Amtrak as "a new plantation on the rails," a not-so-thinly-veiled reference to Graham Claytor, former head of the Southern Railroad and now president of Amtrak.

Claytor, in an aggressive performance to close the day, blamed the workers' stories on "mistakes of judgment" by "overzealous" managers who misinterpreted his orders. "A supervisor who has to act tough to show who's boss is not qualified to be boss," declared Claytor. He promised to "retrain" all Amtrak managers and defended his decision not to fire any of the conspirators.

Given Claytor's stubborn stance, it is unclear whether any corporate heads will roll at Amtrak. It may be January before the subcommittee votes on its findings. In the meantime, hundreds of workers who have complained of unjust discipline do not know if their cases will be reopened, and those who testified against their bosses or who have publicized the scandal fear new reprisals when the storm—and the elections—are past.

—Phil Milton

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander

