



A personal P.S.

by Rev. R.A. Shackles

Recently, as they do every year, my pension fund sent me a small "Christian Pocket Diary." Checking through it for Lenten dates, I came to February 26 — to read "Mawlid-al-Nabi"! Then, in parentheses, it added "Muhammad's Birthday." What a shock! Why in the world would a Christian calendar "celebrate" Muhammad's birthday?

My first reaction was that I couldn't care less! But then I thought that that is carrying "multidiversity" considerably farther than I care to go. Curious, I leafed through the rest of the booklet, to discover ten other Islamic observances, most of which, as well as being unpronounceable, were given no further explanation.

It occurred to me that perhaps the nutcases now running the Episcopal Church these days must have hired John Spong to compose this "Christian" document. It sounds like something he'd promote. In any event, it ticks me off that Muslim celebrations should be considered a part of a "Christian Pocket Diary." Considering the anti-Christian stance of Muslim countries, I think this "diary" is an insult to all Christians — particularly those being victimized by Muslims all around the world. I am sure Muslims don't include Christian feasts in any Islamic "pocket diaries." Why should we include theirs? It is ridiculous, and as I said, an insult to Christians.

Now it might be argued why don't I say the same at the inclusion of major Jewish observances? I don't because there is a huge difference. There is a direct historical continuity between Jews and Christians, exemplified by the fact that we Christians fully view the Jewish Bible, or Old Testament, as scripture common to both. Our Jewish friends do not accept Christ as the Messiah, but they, and we, are in full agreement that the Old Testament is part of the revealed Word of God. And no Jewish organizations are plotting to attack or defame Christians, nor do we Christians attack or defame Jews.

But to include Muslim observances as part of a Christian calendar strikes me as unacceptable. When Islam acknowledges our festivals in their calendars and rejects any and all hatred of and attacks against us, I'll consider respecting them. But I still would not include their celebrations in a Christian calendar. As I said, this pushes "multidiversity" farther than I am willing to go! And please don't call me a bigot! I'm simply resisting some bigots whose holy book considers killing Christians and Jews a legitimate eradicating of "infidels!" That's my position. What's yours?•

Forgotten wisdom

By Reverend R.A. Shackles

How often forgotten wisdom returns to stir you up! Re-reading a small book long since consigned to an obscure corner of a library shelf, a well-known author surfaced an idea that never really "took off." What he suggested nearly 50 years ago just went nowhere. But times have changed, and in reading his suggestion again this time has stirred up a strong response.

The author was Elton Trueblood in his slim volume, *The Company of the Committed*. This was one of quite a few "good ideas" in the book, which, like so many such things, was easily forgotten (or is it "conveniently ignored?"). Given today's political malaise, in which great disgust with politicians rises to a highly significant level or, in contrasting reality, lowest in history levels of respect for all three branches of government, Congress rated in the low 20 percentiles of public opinion.

The idea Trueblood offered was "we need a Guild of Christian Politicians!" His idea was in effect to identify and bring together a nucleus of elected politicians who, in sincere faith, are ready to commit to governance according to the highest moral and spiritual values of Christ. In this, they would commit to each other to forthrightly focus moral truth and integrity on every act of Congress with a steadfast refusal to support any and all acts that seek deceitful goals and corrupt purposes (e.g. all those "pork barrel earmarks!").

There is no question in today's political malaise they all would risk defeat in any ensuing elections. But even that would serve well by giving obvious witness to how base and immoral American politics has become! Look at the scandalous character assassination leveled at Sarah Palin, largely because she is an openly avowed Evangelical Christian. Look at the hateful rhetoric directed at the Roman Catholic Bishop of Rhode Island when he dared to call a Roman Catholic congressman to live up to *his* claimed Christian commitment!

All in all, the current situation in Congress especially is of such low quality that perhaps Trueblood's idea, proposed 50 years ago, is now "an idea whose time has come" — a Guild of Christian Politicians. It would not be to "convert" everyone to Christianity. Rather, it would be a work of commitment and also be unafraid to call their fellow members of Congress to the same standard of moral and ethical conduct. Perhaps a man like Governor Mike Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister, might be a candidate to chair such a Guild of Christian Politicians. God knows we need it! The real issue for us is do we believe it — enough to become part of the *Company of the Committed*, as Trueblood put it?•

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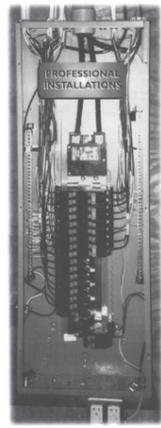
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