

rallies designed to bring influence to bear on the decision makers?” (p. 53).

“Possibly an oligarchy might act in this fashion,” a democrat will reply, “but discussion will not be widespread. In a democracy, people endeavor to influence the voters, the ultimate decision makers. In an oligarchy, discussion and debate lack a practical purpose. Why would people waste much energy on public discussion when their efforts may count for naught?”

Graham once more has a response. Why should one believe that persuasion can work only in a democracy? Why are “the good despot and the liberal oligarchs” (p. 55) immune to persuasion? “The democrat . . . would be very unwise to play down the significance of voicing opinions, since this is the only way, between elections, that democracy is to be distinguished from elective dictatorship” (p. 55).

In sum, although Graham does not reject the state, he thinks the usual arguments for it of little merit. The alleged advantages of the state must be weighed against its manifest disadvantages, most notably its tendency to assume undue power. Democracy provides no safeguard against this danger, and in a democratic system individual voters are powerless. Further, democracy subordinates the pursuit of truth to government by the whim of the incompetent and untrained. Free discussion is no doubt a good, but such discussion has no necessary connection with democratic rule. Graham’s courage and insight in challenging prevailing dogma deserve great praise.

Blood for Unity

*Why We Fight:
Moral Clarity and
the War on Terrorism*

WILLIAM J. BENNETT
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197 PGS.

William Bennett has updated the paperback edition of his book with two new chapters, one of which demands that Saddam Hussein and all his works be eradicated. But he has not availed himself of the chance to correct the misleading title of his book. The present title suggests that Mr. Bennett himself is among the fighters, but this is obviously not the case. A more accurate title is *Why Others Should Fight to Fulfill My Vision of the World*.

As Bennett sees matters, the United States must be able to recognize evil for what it is. Once we Americans see evil in the world we must act against it: only we have the power to do so. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan banned music; this was evil and justified us in overthrowing it. I do not exaggerate. Bennett states: “When Kabul was liberated in mid-November [2001] . . . everywhere, everywhere, there was singing and the sound of music. . . . The music was playing, and people were dreaming their dreams again. That is why we fight” (p. 177).

But does not the doctrine of just war limit us in our crusade against evil? Not at all, our author replies. Just war theory teaches us to fight in order to avert future evil. There is the little matter of the criterion of last resort, which requires us to seek a peaceful resolution of a dispute before using force, but this does not faze Bennett. He omits to mention it altogether.

Relativists and other anti-Americans attempt to subvert our judgments of good and evil, but fortunately Bennett, a trained philosopher, is here to help us make discriminating judgments. Here is an example. Saddam Hussein's "monstrous tyranny has been surpassed by only a few other dictators, all of them rightly reviled in the judgment of history. Saddam Hussein invaded Iran, invaded Kuwait, attempted to assassinate a former U.S. president . . . murdered thousands of his own people, and refused to abide by international law" (p. 193). A deplorable list of misdeeds, no doubt; but one would have thought that they do not suffice to make Saddam more than a despot of a quite ordinary sort.

But I must be careful. Critics of Bennett's rather unsubtle judgments risk verbal assault themselves. He deems Stanley Fish a relativist. As such, he holds the same position as the murderer Charles Manson. Bennett quotes a remark by Manson and says: "Stanley Fish himself could hardly have put it better" (p. 69). All Fish said, in the passage that arouses Bennett's ire, is that we cannot detach ourselves from our own judgments of good and evil. Fish maintained "that we should abandon any 'hope of justifying our

response to the attacks in universal terms that would be persuasive to everyone, including our enemies" (p. 66, quoting Fish). I take this to be a rejection of relativism. Fish claims that we should adhere to the moral views we have, not, as a relativist would, that we should regard our own views as but one of many equally valid positions. Fish rejects neutrality, not truth. But, even if I am wrong, is it not strange to think that Fish's view puts him on the same level doctrinally as a notorious killer?

We must, if Bennett is right, strike against evil when we find it. A problem

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arises, if we wish to follow his path. How are we to identify evil, if Bennett has not spoken to the situation we confront? And even if he has, how can we see for ourselves the basis of his judgments, without having to depend on his authority?

This font of kindness stands ready to help. We must not be guided by dispassionate reason: we must rather rely on our feelings of anger. "But why must we accept the premise that anger is itself a suspect quality and always in need of 'management'? To

the contrary, as the ancients recognized, anger is a necessary power of the soul, intimately connected with the passion for justice” (p. 41). I do not doubt that there is a place for righteous anger; but I had not heard that it ought to control foreign policy. But I must not proceed further with this thought, lest I expose myself as a Mansonite.

Not content with what he has already done for us, Bennett helps us to identify the target of our future wrath. It is the Islamic group of nations, if they fail to clean up their act posthaste. Bennett has read Bernard Lewis, so he

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is in a position to tell us that the doctrines professed by Al Qaeda are not a radical aberration from mainstream Islam. “This brings us back to the question of whether the brand of radical Islam represented by Osama bin Laden was indeed an artificial growth that ‘hijacked’ the classical faith. What I have been trying to suggest is that the growth is not artificial, and that the classical faith is not without its deeply problematic aspects, particularly when it comes to relations with non-Muslims” (p. 95). I do not presume to

quarrel with someone as righteously angry as Bennett, particularly so when he has read Bernard Lewis; but I do not recall any Muslim country attacking the United States in recent centuries.

Why is Bennett so anxious to involve America in so extensive a struggle against evil? Any answer must be speculative, but I suspect that he seeks a sense of national unity based on hatred of an enemy. He speaks of the mood in America after September 11 as if it were a religious experience: “In the wake of September 11, the doubts and questions that had only recently plagued Americans about their nation seemed to fade into insignificance. Good was distinguished from evil, truth from falsehood. We were firm, dedicated, united” (p. 10).

In one place, to my surprise, Bennett praises the “open-ended search for the truth” of Peter Abelard (p. 178). Though he rightly ranks the dialectical method of the medieval scholastics as one of the glories of the West, he does not want critical thinking to extend to foreign policy. Here, with D.H. Lawrence, we are to “think with the blood.” Those who question our feelings of national unity, founded on moral indignation, are themselves enemies to be vilified.

It would be easy to laugh at Bennett’s verbal extravagance, but his strident calls for war seem to have borne fruit. He said, several months before the American invasion, that a “decision not to act against Saddam Hussein would go down as one of the most dishonorable acts of appeasement and nonfeasance in history” (p. 196). He need not have worried. ■ MR

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