

“Colonel Johnson, Meet Allah Akbar”

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KIT KAT ESSAY

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In the aftershocks of the 911 attack as we watched horrified, as the twin towers – the lighthouses of America’s new Beacon Hill – were struck down, I thought it might be interesting to try a short essay on our forefathers’ experiences and views of religious fanaticism and what they did to both curb its violence while at the same time protecting religious beliefs in all its forms.

I. Introduction

Shortly after the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, petitions, called memorials, were submitted to Congress from all over the country asking the Congress to enact legislation that would prohibit Post Office personnel from transporting the mail on “the Sabbath”. It was argued that by requiring government postal workers to work on Sunday the government was interfering with the religious beliefs of postal employees who were “good Christians”. These memorials are rich in their content.

What’s all the fuss about the Sunday Mails? The Postmaster General since the beginning of the nation had been charged with the job of improving Postal Roads and transporting and delivering the mails as expeditiously as possible. Mail Roads and stages were funded by the national government and by the late 1820’s had criss-crossed the new nation East of the Mississippi.

Depending on where you lived it took from three to fourteen days to receive your mail. The Postmaster had very successfully been reducing this time period. As information of commodity pricing changes were received in New York or Boston or Philadelphia, monied interests would hire private express stages to outrun the mails to deliver such commercial information to their "agents" in the innermost regions of the South and West who would use such "insider" information to enter into unconscionable contracts with farmers or tradesmen not aware of the price changes. Such speculative arbitraging caused deep resentments between the West and South and their monied Eastern brethren. The West and South felt at a disadvantage in that their access to information was delayed several days. Election results and family news came too slow. By transporting mail on Sunday, the Postmaster had shortened by one to four days the delivery time to the Western and Southern states. The Sunday stagecoaches carried passengers which generated revenue three times over the actual cost of running these stages, thereby helping finance the postal services' operation. The post offices which received mail on the Sunday stages were to be open only one hour on Sunday and the time of such openings was to be set so as not to come into conflict with any of the religious service times of the community's local churches. No postal employee who conscientiously objected to work on the Sabbath because of his religious beliefs was required to work.

Another factor in the Sunday Mails - there were deep political divisions between the "East" and the "frontiersmen" of states such as Kentucky and Tennessee and points West and South. These frontiersmen were thought of as

“uncouth” and irreligious by more “cultured” society in the East. It so happened that on the Western frontier – the political base of the Jefferson Jacksonians, -- there were few, if any, formally trained orthodox clergy. They were unruly frontiersmen, as opposed to disciplined Sunday worshippers. They drank, they spat, they had common-law marriages. They were the anathema of the formal religions of their East Coast brethren. These were Colonel Johnson’s, President Jackson’s, and Thomas Jefferson’s constituents.

Religious life in the different regions was very different. The established churches of the Eastern seaboard were horrified by the unschooled, itinerant preachers who brought on ecstatic, emotionally charged visions and fainting spells as they roamed the West and South. This was not Christianity, this was chaos. In the innermost regions of the country, churches were few and far between and the frontier necessities of life frequently required work on Sundays. To these citizens on the frontier, the postal stage was their great friend and joy.

## II. Colonel Johnson

Let’s return to the memorials presented to Congress. Congress had directed such petitions to the Committee on the Post Office and Postal Roads. The Chairman of the Senate Post Office Committee was Senator Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky. Colonel Johnson had been born in 1781 in my hometown of Beargrass, Kentucky. (You might know this city today by its current name – Louisville.) Kentucky was then part of Virginia. Beargrass was located in Jefferson County named after the then revolutionary governor of Virginia. As a young man Colonel Johnson helped to form a division of the Kentucky militiamen

and was elected in his early 20's to the Kentucky legislature. During the War of 1812, during the Battle of the Thames which occurred as the British began to retreat with their Indian allies from Detroit into Canada, the great Indian Chieftain Tecumseh was killed in battle by Colonel Johnson. During that battle Colonel suffered several wounds which left him partially disabled the rest of his life. He never married though he had two children with one of his slaves. After the War of 1812, Col. Johnson, now a war hero, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (1807 through 1819; and 1829 through 1837) and then to the U.S. Senate (1819 through 1829) where we find him in 1829 as a Jackson Democrat. There he was the people's champion seeking to end of the practice of imprisoning debtors. In the election of 1836, Colonel Johnson was elected as Martin VanBuren's Vice President. I note that in that election there was no majority of electoral votes for any of the Vice Presidential candidates and for the only time in American history, the election of the Vice President was decided by the United States Senate, as provided for by the U.S. Constitution.

### The Memorials

Let me now quote from a few of the "Memorials" submitted to the Congress in regards to the Sunday Mails.

#### (A) Christian Nation

First, from a Petition from the citizens of Newark, New Jersey:

That your memorialists conscientiously believe that the people of these United States, in their national capacity and character, constitute a Christian nation. If a Christian nation, then our Government is a Christian Government a Government formed and established by Christians, and therefore bound by the word of God not at liberty to contravene His laws nor to act irrespectively of the

obligations we owe to Him. \*\*\* The practice of thus violating one of the express commands of God having the sanction of the constituted authorities of the Government assumes a national character, and may be justly called a national sin – the awful consequences of which are so often detailed in the sacred volume. That the labor here complained of is a profanation of the Lord's day, none, it is believed, will deny . . .

The idea is that though the Constitution forbade the Congress from passing any laws that "established" religious tests or one religion over another or that in any way limited the "free exercise" of religious thought or belief, yet the memorialists believed that our legislatures were nonetheless bound by the word of God such that they were not at liberty to pass any laws that contradicted God's laws. God's word must always and necessarily trump anything in the Constitution to the contrary. A Representative's first and highest moral duty was to follow and represent God's word. This appeal was akin to the concept of the European monarchs that because it was God who chose a King, that a King's duty was first to God. In our new nation Monarchical concepts apparently still had a following. But our new Constitution and Declaration of Independence had lighted a new, "enlightened" vision. Though Old World ways had been unalterably rejected, the new light was not always bright.

In 1838 while Colonel Johnson was Vice President, a book was published in New York entitled, "An Inquiry Into the Moral and Religious Character of the American Government", which book was designed to combat the separation of religion and politics. Political irreligion was traced to that great atheist, Thomas Jefferson who in 1807 as President refused to declare a day of humiliation and prayer. This was followed by Andrew Jackson's refusal as President in 1832 to

declare a fast day. The historian George Bancroft in reporting on this period, stated, "Democracy was said to be a branch of atheism." This "Inquiry" asked, are Christian institutions to be administered by un-Christian agents? The administrators of the civil government must expect to meet Christian tests. It was noted that it was easier to govern people who yielded to a common sense of religious obligation. This was the Whig – the conservatives of the day, view -- separation of church and state was a great evil. To them it was "pompous to argue that all men are born free and equal." The idea of equal rights was infidel, not Christian. God in his divine wisdom appointed some men kings and some men paupers. Before the Revolution, this theory was known as "absolutism" – the King was divinely chosen by God and could do no wrong. We all know what our forefathers thought of that concept.

So much, I guess, for the Declaration of Independence. Undoubtedly, to the great dismay of many such Christians, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution had stated that "We the People" were sovereign.

(B) State's Rights.

Going back to the Memorials, a petition from Colonel Johnson's own state of Kentucky stated:

A question of policy, and one affecting deeply the sovereignty of the State Governments, is involved in this request. The State Governments may, if their Constitutions allow, establish religion, and enforce its duties. . . . in almost all, if not every State code, the Sabbath is recognized and penalties inflicted on its breach; and civil process, if executed on that day, or judicial acts then done, are void; and even in the Constitution itself in the State of Vermont, the Sabbath is expressly named and preserved inviolate.

\* \* \*

Can Congress, by one or two sentences in regulating her Post Office Department, virtually repeal and annul all these State laws? If they come into collision which is to yield? If the State officer, in execution of a State law, stops the mail, which is forbidden by that law to travel on State soil, will the discretion vested by act of Congress and the Postmaster General, to direct mails to travel at all hours, protect the traveler, annul the State law and paralyze the power of the prosecuting officer? How such collisions of power between the National and State Governments ought to be decided, your Memorialists do not pretend to determine.

Many of you may not instantly recall that when the Bill of Rights was adopted, it only barred Congress and the National Government from establishing religious tests. The States were not so constrained and many state laws establishing religious tests had continued into the 1820's and 30's. Religious qualifications upon one's right to hold office and vote were imposed. One could not testify in certain courts if they failed to profess belief in the word of the Christian God. There were state laws banning "excessive walking" on the Sabbath. There were state laws providing taxes for the support of the church. There were state laws that required every home to have a Bible.

So the petitions to stop the Sunday Mails represented a confrontation between State sovereignty versus that of the National Government. The Bill of Rights' guarantys of freedom of religious conscience were in direct conflict with the States' long practice, dating back to the Colonies of establishing religious tests and qualifications to limit a citizen's civil rights. Good Christian values, then, became directly associated with State rights because Christians had a privileged status and protection under State laws that they did not have under the U.S. Constitution. This historical link is still apparent in the debates of our age.

When in 1779 John Adams drafted the Massachusetts Constitution which became the model for all state constitutions, he drafted a clause guaranteeing religious freedom. This was rejected. Forty years later in 1820 at age 85 he was again asked to come before the Massachusetts convention that was revising its State Constitution and again tried to insert a clause guaranteeing religious freedom. The clause guaranteeing religious freedom was again voted down.

Those of you who have visited Monticello and read Jefferson's epitaph undoubtedly noted his reference to his authorship of the Virginia Statute on Religious freedom. Did you know that when he proposed this in the late 1770's the Virginia legislature defeated it soundly, clinging to its established Anglican church? It took almost ten years, until 1785, before it was adopted in Virginia with James Madison leading the charge.

#### (C) Expediency

Another point of the Memorialists. They contested the Postmasters' view that transporting the mails on Sunday was a necessary expedient. They stated:

To put a stop to this practice is not to impose restraint on the rights of any, but rather to remove a restraint which is grievance to many: it is to give liberty to all to enjoy their rests and privileges of that sacred day; and to terminate a practice, the example of which your Memorialists humbly conceived to be injurious to the morals of the people. Indeed it will hardly be contended, by anyone, that there is an *absolute necessity* for this labor; the question seems to rest altogether on the *expediency* of the measure. And shall mere human expediency make void the law of God? God forbid!

Their point - Prosperity comes from God. If citizens observed God's laws - including His command of the Sabbath be kept holy - then they and their nation will prosper. If citizens disobey God's laws then they and their nation will be



punished with God's judgment. The Postmaster's attempt to perform his important governmental job of timely and cost-effectively delivering the mails for the benefit of his fellow citizens, had to yield and submit to God's view.

(D) Exclusions of Christians from Public Office

Further, the Memorialists felt that the Sunday Mails meant that Christians were being discriminated against and excluded from public office.

(From the citizens of Boston, Massachusetts) Is a conscientious attachment to religious observance a disqualification for office? \* \* \* When the laws of the United States require the mail to be transported and the post offices to be open on the Christian Sabbath, do not those laws, in their spirit and power, exclude from any share in the department of public service every conscientious believer in the sanctity of that day? Is it not, in effect, sane to every man, religiously believing himself bound to keep holy the Sabbath, that he shall not enjoy the privileges common to American citizens, unless he will abandon his religious opinions, or do violence to his conscience? And is not this, then, a law "*prohibiting*" or at least *greatly interfering with the free exercise of religion*? Must not a Christian Postmaster either abandon his *religion* or his *office*? And is this religious liberty? \* \* \* This would be a system of religious proscription, instead of religious liberty

In their view, a "neutral" government decision gives special privileges and rights to the heathen and is therefore not neutral because its effect would be to bar "good Christians" from public service.

(E) Religion and Moral Necessity for Free Government – Chaos and Crime

Indeed, the whole of social order would necessarily degenerate into crime and chaos if God's laws were not honored. Listen to what the Memorialists feared:

Finally, your Memorialists are under the solemn conviction that the preservation of all our free institutions in their purity and integrity, if

not in their very existence, is deeply involved in this subject. No maxim in politics is better established than that virtue and good morals are the only basis on which free government can permanently rest; . . . morality cannot be preserved without religion; and to this it may, with truth as unquestionably, be added, without a Sabbath day, a day of sacred rest, a religion cannot be maintained in an extensive community. . . . so thoroughly are we persuaded that the religion, morals, and liberties of our country are indissolubly linked together, and that the whole are so intimately connected with the due observance in this country of what we call the Christian Sabbath, . . . and, in the absence of these, we would consider that all sense of moral obligation, and of course all hold on the consciences of men, would speedily vanish; and that vice and disorder, in every form and degree, would come in like a flood, sweeping from their very foundations all our free institutions, and leaving in their place, if anything were left, an odious tyranny, worse than a state of nature itself.

\* \* \*

Your Memorialists can look upon a disregard of the Sabbath in no other light than as the first step on the road to crime; . . . The records of the criminal courts of all nations will show disregard of the Sabbath and its sacred duties has been the commencement of a departure from those principles which are the best protection against crime. Moral delinquency in any country increases in a ratio with the profanation of the Sabbath.

\* \* \*

... we are deeply impressed with the conviction that civil government and social order, especially where the sovereign power is in the people, can be permanently established only upon the basis of religious principle.

\* \* \*

No legislator should be ignorant that those members of the community who utterly disregard the Sabbath are soon brought to make it a day of dissipation and riot; and those who have thus desecrated the day for any considerable time are prepared for the grossest vices and the most disgraceful crimes. Who does not know that the perpetration of fraud, theft, arson, burglary, robbery and murder has become frequent in most parts of the United States? Who does not know that these crimes are perpetrated, almost exclusively, by persons who have long been in the habit of violating the Sabbath? In one of our State prisons containing five or six hundred convicts, particular inquiry was made on this subject. The history of one convict was the history of all. They had never observed the Sabbath or had ceased to observe it before they committed the crimes for which they were suffering the vengeance of the law. That system of government, then, which tends to

increase the number of Sabbath breakers, tends to fill our State prisons with felons and our streets with the cry of violence and to stain our land with blood.

So would social order collapse if government did not step in and give its support to and set its force behind religion? This is perhaps the key to understanding Jefferson and Adams and their founding father brethren.

John Adams felt that mankind was in constant peril of adopting the opinion that human nature and conscience were not meant to be free (let me repeat that). To allow Government in any way put its force behind any religious views or creeds was to shackle man's conscience. It would deny each man his most basic liberties and freedom. John Adams noted that the political nature of religious parties was that they were easy to arouse and that once inflamed they were uniform in their political bias. Jefferson obviously agreed. But Adams, like the Memorialists, also believed religion gave order, purpose and dignity to common mans' life. He and Washington and Jefferson all believed that religion and education were necessary to the morals and virtue of the people and that without such virtue a free government would not long stand. Adams understood that the rigors and stern discipline of his Puritan forebears had preserved them in a hostile environment.

But it was Adams' party – the Federalists – that claimed the moral high ground in the election of 1800 and attacked Jefferson and his Party as godless atheists. Religion entered politics at the dawn of the new Constitution. If by our Constitution, we no longer formally required religious tests in order to hold office,

yet couldn't we still insist on a defacto religious litmus test as part of our political judgments in making decisions as to the men we were electing?

## II. Colonel Johnson's Sunday Mail Report, January 18, 1929

In response to these Memorials, Colonel Johnson's Report to the U.S. Senate became one of the great State documents of our country dealing with separation of church and state. It was called simply "The Report on the Sunday Mails." In dealing with the Memorials, which had been assigned to his Committee for study and response he wrote what was in every way a respectful, restrained, and thoughtful dissertation on the role of the national legislature on religious matters.

The Report starts by noting that the usages of nations from time in memorial has been to allow a period of respite from the ordinary work duties of life. One day in seven has been commonly used for this purpose. That since the beginning of the nation "in conformity with the great majority of citizens of this country, the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday, has been set apart to that object." The National Legislature had itself following this principle, "so far as to admit a suspension of public business on that day, except in cases of absolute necessity, or of a great public utility. . . . if kept within its legitimate sphere of action, no injury can result from its observance." He stated that, "it should be, however, kept in mind that the proper object of government is to protect all citizens in the enjoyment of their religious as well civil rights, and not to determine for any whether they shall esteem one day above another, or esteem all days alike wholly."

(A) Christian Nation – Response

As to the idea that this was a Christian nation, Colonel Johnson's Report states:

It is not the legitimate province of the Legislature to determine what religion is true, or what is false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution. \*\*\* The transfer of the mails on the first day of the week, it is believed, does not interfere with the rights of conscience. The petitions for its discontinuance appear to be activated from a religious zeal, which may be commendable if confined to its proper sphere; they assume a position better suited to an ecclesiastical than a civil institution. (Me – the congregationalist independence from a higher church authority – democracy.) They appear, in many instances, to lay it down as an axiom, that the practice is a violation of the law of God. Should Congress in their legislative capacity, adopt the sentiment, it would establish the principle that the legislature is a proper tribunal to determine what are the laws of God. It would involve a legislative decision in a religious controversy, and on a point in which good citizens may honestly differ in opinion, without disturbing the peace of society, or endangering its liberties. If this principle is once introduced, it will become impossible to define its bounds. Among all religious persecutions with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered but for the violation of what government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the constitution has wisely withheld from our government the power of defining the divine law. It is reserved to each citizen; and while he respects the equal rights of others, he cannot be held amenable to any human tribunal for his conclusion. Let the national legislature once perform an act which involves the decision of a religious controversy, and it will have passed its legitimate bounds. The precedent will then be established, and the foundation laid for that usurpation of the divine prerogative in this country, which has been the desolating scourge to the fairest portions of the Old World. \*\*\* It is the settled conviction of the Committee that the only method of avoiding these consequences, with their attendant train of evils, is to adhere strictly to the spirit of the Constitution, which regards the General Government in no other light than that of a civil institution, wholly destitute of religious authority. \*\*\* Extensive religious combinations to effect a political object, in the opinion of the Committee, would lay the foundation for dangerous innovations upon the spirit of the Constitution, and upon the religious rights of the citizens. If admitted, it may be justly apprehended that the future measures of

government will be strongly marked, if not eventually controlled, by the same influence, all religious despotism commences by combination and influence, and when the influence begins to operate upon the political institutions of the country, the civil powers soon bends under it; and the catastrophe of other nations furnishes an awful warning of the consequences.

Even in the Committee's minority report which supported legislation that would stop the Sunday Mails, it was forcefully noted that:

Restraints imposed on the consciences of individuals by human laws, sanctioned by severe penalties, have always failed to produce reformation. They have generally, if not always, made men worse instead of better. Under such exercise of power, Christianity degenerates into an instrument of oppression, and loses all its beauty and moral excellence. It flourishes most unaided by the secular arm.

This very eloquently reconfirmed that the sovereigns of this nation's government were, "We the People", not a Christian or any other god. While men in their religion, in the exercise of their good conscience, can defer to God's requirements, as they saw them, yet the proper role of government and its representatives was to defer to its citizens.

In perhaps one of the greatest statements in American letters and our public documents concerning the role of a "Legislator" on religious issues, Colonel Johnson states:

In our individual character we all entertain opinion, and pursue a corresponding practice, upon the subject of religion. However diversified these may be, we all harmonize as citizens, while each is willing that the other shall enjoy the same liberty he claims for himself. But in our representative character, our individual character is lost. The individual acts for himself; the representative for his constituents. He has chosen to represent their *political* and not their *religious* views, to guard the rights of man, not to restrict the rights of conscience. Despots may regard their subjects as their property, and usurp the Divine prerogative of prescribing their religious faith; but the history of the world furnishes the melancholy

demonstration that disposition of one man to coerce the religious homage of another springs from an unchastened ambition rather than a sincere devotion to any religion. \*\*\* Religious zeal enlists the strongest prejudices of the human mind, and when misdirected, excites the worst passions of our nature, under the delusive pretext of doing God service. Nothing so infuriates the heart to deeds of rapine and blood; nothing is so incessant in its toils, so persevering in its determinations, so appalling in the course, or so dangerous in its consequences. The equality of rights, secured by the Constitution, made bid defiance to mere political tyrants; but the robe of sanctity too often glitters to deceive.

( Develop both corrupted / raw power)

### Expediency-Response

Colonel Johnson's Report then developed the importance of the postal system to the nation:

The various departments of government require, frequently in peace, always in war, the speediest intercourse with the remotest parts of the country; and one important object of the mail establishment is, to furnish the greatest and most economical facilities for such intercourse. \*\*\* The commercial, manufacturing and cultural interests of our country are so intimately connected as to require a constant and the most expeditious correspondence betwixt all our seaports, and between them and the most interior settlements.

. . . The government is as necessary on Sunday as on any other day of the week ... The Spirit of Evil does not rest on that day. It is the Government ever active in its functions, which enables us all, even the petitioners, to worship in our churches in peace. Our Government furnishes very few blessings like our mails. They bear from the center of our republic to its distant extremes the acts of our Legislative body, the decisions of the Judiciary, and the Orders of the Executive. Their speed is often essential to the defense of the county, the suppression of crime, and the dearest interest of the people. \*\*\* Is the conveyance of these a violation of the Sabbath? The advance of the human race in intelligence, in virtue, and religion itself, depends, in part, upon the speed with which a knowledge of the past is disseminated.

### Special Rights-Response

Colonel Johnson pointed out that the national government was not in any way excluding Christians from serving in government. He noted:

The petitioners do not complain of any infringement upon their own rights, they enjoy all that Christians ought to ask at the hand of any government – protection from all molestation in the exercise of their religious sentiments.

### Moral Chaos-Response

And as to the claims that the failure to formally establish the Sabbath would lead to certain moral chaos he noted:

Let the professors of Christianity recommend their religion by deeds of benevolence, by Christian meekness, by lives of temperance and holiness. \*\*\* Government will find its legitimate object in protecting them. It will not oppose them, and they will not need its aid. Their moral influence will then do more to advance the true interest of religion, than any measures which they may call on Congress to enact.

This point is at the heart of the radical new ideas of freedom of conscience which our revolution brought for the first time on the world's stage. The idea that the most basic of liberties was the right of the individual to be protected in his right to have his own religious and other beliefs, so long as they did not pose a threat to the public health and safety. Much like our free market system, truth would emerge from the free exchange of ideas because of its power. True religion would emerge from the competition for the minds and hearts of people, because the ultimate power of truth while it could be delayed, cannot be stopped.



## The 1830 Report

The issue of the Sunday Mails came up again in 1830. By that time Colonel Johnson had rejoined the House of Representatives. And he was again asked to write the House Post Office Committee's Report on this subject. In reading the Report of 1830 the tone of the religious supporters, seemed more impassioned and heated and more strident, probably because they had lost round one. Not surprisingly the tone of this second Report, seemed to me to be less restrained.

In this second Report, Colonel Johnson indicated that the Committee believed that there was no just ground for the petitioners complaint that Sunday Mails be stopped,

. . . Unless it be conceded that they (the Petitioners) have a controlling power over the consciences of others. If Congress shall, by the authority of law, sanction the measure recommended, it would constitute a legislative decision of a religious controversy in which even Christians themselves are at issue. However suited such a decision may be to an ecclesiastical council, it is incompatible with a Republican Legislature, which is purely for political, and not religious purposes.

He went on:

From the earliest period of time, religious teachers have obtained great ascendancy over of the minds of the people; and in every nation, ancient or modern, whether Pagan, Mahometan, or Christian, have succeeded in the incorporation of their religious tenets with the political institutions of their country. The Persian idols, the Grecian oracles, the Roman auguries, and the modern priesthood of Europe has all, in their turn, been the subject of popular adulation, and the agents of political deception. If the measure recommended should be adopted, it would be difficult for human sagacity to foresee how rapid would be the succession, or how numerous would be the train of measures might follow, involving the dearest rights of all – the rights of conscience. \*\*\* The Constitution regards the conscience of the Jew as sacred as that of

the Christian, and gives no more authority to adopt a measure effecting the conscience of a solitary individual than that of a whole community. The representative who would violate this principle would loose his delegated character, and forfeit the confidence of his constituents, \*\*\*

With the exception of the United States, the whole human race, consisting, it is supposed of 800 millions of rational beings, is in religious bondage; and, in reviewing the scenes of persecution which history everywhere presents, unless the Committee could believe the cries of the burning victim and the flames by which he is consumed, bear to Heaven a grateful incense, the conclusion is inevitable that the line cannot be too strongly drawn between church and state \*\*\* It was with a kiss that Judas betrayed his Divine master; and we should all be admonished – no matter what our faith may be – that the rights of conscience cannot be so successfully assailed as under the pretext of holiness. The Christian religion made its way into the world in opposition to all human Governments. Banishments, torture, and death were inflicted in vain to stop its progress. But many of its professions, as soon closed with political power, lost the meek spirit which their creed inculcated, and began to inflict on other religions, and on dissenting sects of their own religion, persecutions more aggravated than those which their own apostles had endured. The ten persecutions of Pagan emperors were exceeded in atrocity by the massacres and murders perpetrated by Christian hands . . . every religious sect, however meek in its origin, commenced the work of persecution as soon as it acquired political power.

### STATE'S RIGHTS

And as to State's rights, this Report suggested:

But, were it expedient to put an end to the transmission of letters and newspapers on Sunday because it violates the law of God, have not the Petitioners been wrong in their efforts? If the arm of Government be necessary to compel men to respect and obey the laws of God do not the State Governments possess infinitely more power in this respect? Let the Petitioners turn to *them* and see if they can induce the passage of laws to respect the observance of the Sabbath? For it be sinful for the mail to carry letters on Sunday it must be equally sinful for individuals to write, carry, receive, or read them. It would seem to require that these acts should be made penal to complete the system. Traveling on business or recreation, except to and from church; all printing, carrying, receiving, and reading of newspapers; all conversation and social

intercourse, except upon religious subjects, must necessarily be punished to suppress the evil. Would not it also follow, as an inevitable consequence, that every man, women and child should be compelled to attend meeting? And, as only one sect in the opinion of some, can be deemed orthodox, must it not be determined by law which *that* is, and compel all to hear those teachers, and contribute to their support? If minor punishments would not restrain the Jew, or the Sabbatarian, or the Infidel, who believes Saturday to be the Sabbath, or disbelieves the whole, would not the same system required that we should resort to imprisonment, banishment, the rack and the faggot, to force men to violate their own conscience, or compel them to listen to doctrines which they abhor? When the State Government shall have yielded to these measures, it will be time enough for Congress to see that the rattling of the mail coaches should no longer break the silence of this despotism. \*\*\* When man undertakes to be God's avenger, he becomes a demon. Driven by the frenzy of a religious zeal, he loses every gentle feeling, forgets the most sacred precepts of his creed, and becomes ferocious and unrelenting. ( Let me repeat this last statement )

### ALLAH AKBAR

With that last statement still ringing, let's turn to the minarets where every day the great cry Allah Akbar – God is Great – is proclaimed. From the perch of these Islamic towers, we are told that we are the infidels. We are a secular and immoral nation which rejects God. Our capitalism is corrupt with greed.

In 1963 in Berlin, John Kennedy stoked a million Germans into a frenzy with his great Cold War speech which started with a statement that in the ancient world the proudest boast was, "Civis Romanus Sum" – I am a citizen of Rome. Today to the Islamic fundamentalist we are the new Rome. They hate our "pagan" culture. They hate our policies in the MidEast, they hate our guns and arms whose barrels look them straight in the eye.

I ask this, is what we see in the fanaticism of the Islamic world – the raw hatred preached by their Imans and in their religious madrasas - much different from the fanaticism of the English religious wars from Henry VIII to Cromwell? I submit we are today looking into the face of the very religious intolerance, bigotries, and despotisms that caused our forefathers to flee. Perhaps their beheadings and stonings and suicide bombings bring us as close in our day to the burnings at the stake, to the inquisitions and pogroms that our forefathers had experienced and fled from. I would suggest that the Islamic religion is no more medieval than Christian or Jewish religion. All when established as a partner with the civil government look very much the same.

How do we deal with this new fanaticism? Our forefathers understood that the joining of religion and state corrupts both. This was the axiom of history. When joined as partner with the civil government, religious leaders – Imans not excluded – will focus on acquiring more raw political power and wealth for their personal ends. Political leaders too will coerce and manipulate the religious leaders to bolster their political legitimacy, to stifle and suppress all opposition and dissent. The joining of church and state, by its very nature, sets in motion a raw struggle for authority and power.

So when we are today confronted by Islamic religious fanaticism, we should understand that while the rhetoric may appear religious – because religious rhetoric stirs deep, unquestioning loyalties in its followers – we are dealing with a raw grab for political influence and military power. We should react in the same way and protect our interests as when confronted by any

nation making a raw grab for political or military influence. Though we should never underestimate the atrocities possible when motivated in the name of God, we should not get confused by the religious rhetoric. Rather, we should keep our eyes focused on the Islamic nations' real power objectives – whether merely economic (oil) or empire building – (subjugating and taking territory of weaker neighbors militarily.)

In protecting our interests, we might also tap into the wisdom of our forefathers and adopt policies which encourage and nurture those within the Islamic nations who want to separate their governments from their religious institutions. Turkey is an example. Their political charter establishes their government as secular.

I would suggest that we focus on encouraging fundamental changes to their political structures – Kingdoms, dictatorships, and Theocracies, - - Here is the real problem. It is these structures that are medieval. It is the anti-democratic structures that suppress what Jefferson termed the “inalienable rights of man.”

During the Cold War we could easily create high emotion at home by alleging that our foes were “Godless” communists. Today the Islamic fundamentalists employ the same disparaging religious cry – we are the infidels, we are the great Satan of the world. What goes around comes around.

I ask, have we become the pagan Godless nation we so abjured? Are the Imams right? Is the joke on us? Our electorate today seems equally divided on this issue? Kind of like the Sunday Mails all over again.