The culture of LOVE v. "the culture of LIFE"

Apparently, we're the only creature that can think death, so its an aspect of our unique dignity. And, in the past some days, Terri Schiavo & Jn.Paul II have helped us exercise this aspect of our existence.

About death, our species can think clearly (each tribe having its coherent "culture of death") but not univocally (all humanity agreeing on a doctrine of death): answers on which there's universal agreement are responses to unimportant questions--& death is not one of them.

My Easter (3.27.05) letter in the CAPE COD TIMES combines (as do many of my letters in that venue) corrections for Bible abuse & an attack on false religion (false, i.e., in light of the biblical revelation). Opposing a certain letter-writer (whom I needed not so did not name), I accused him of (1) ignorant Bible-abuse, (2) unkindness, & (3) biolatry (worshiping "life" instead of God).

That writer sees himself as a servant of the culture of love, but--as a victim of Jn.Paul II's "the culture of life"--he's ideologically against (1) capital punishment & (2) removing T.S.'s food-&-water tube.

1 T.S. died in 1990 at age 26, J.P.II in 2005 at age 84. She may have said "No tubes" & she died tubeless; he did say "No tubes" & died with an air-tube (after stomach-tube in hospital). He died of septisemia, she of brain-deoxygenation.

2 Now, is death-determination an unimportant question (in that there's universal agreement on it)? Unfortunately, no. The main division is between heart-deaders (those who says "death" is the condition of an unrevivable heart) & the brain-deaders (those who say "death" is the condition of an unrevivable waveless brain). Advances in medical technology have steadily moved medics & the public from the former to the latter position.

3 The crude traditional way to determine whether you've got a dead pope is a blow on the forehead with a silver hammer. (To my knowledge, the Vatican has not become transparent as to the method used in the case of J.P.II.) The surest method for ascertaining brain-death is by touching the brain under either of the two small flaps of skin (except for which the brain is entirely bone-covered): lift an eyelid & touch an eyeball.

Fifteen years ago, T.S.'s eyeball would not have twitched: she was brain-dead, had been brain-dead for about five minutes of the ten minutes her heart had been stopped (the PVS [persistent vegitative state] begins after about 4½ minutes). (U.Cal.Berkeley Psy.Laboratories, in a psycho-spiritual experiment, deoxygenated my brain for 2½ minutes in 1968.) Parts of the brain can die from deox: eyes are brain-parts: 16 years ago, my left eye died from deox.)

After T.S.'s death, a medic committed medical malpractice by reviving the corpse's heart. Proper procedure (we now know) would have been to lift an eyelid & touch the eyeball. Skipping that, reviving the heart might be called cruel & usual punishment.

(Leading a "Coversation of Consequence" on this yesterday, I was asked about the "miracle" of some patients coming out of years-long comas; & a physician said, in effect, "not after the cortex had turned to liquid" [as in T.S.'s case]. My opinion is that praying for a miracle in T.S.'s case is an instance of adding prayer abuse to corpse abuse.)

Bible doesn't oppose official killing

A March 24 letter – "'Thou shalt not kill' includes executions" – is doubly Bible-ignorant. It calls Pat Buchanan's support for capital punishment (as an expression of "reverence for life") "the height of hypocrisy."

In effect, the letter writer says, Buchanan is saying that "putting people to death reveres life. How absurd!" But the alleged absurdity is the truth proclaimed in Genesis 9:6: The murderer is to be executed precisely for failing to revere human life created in the image of God.

The letter's other unwitting exhibition of Bible ignorance is in its fallacious extension, to capital punishment, of "Thou shalt not kill." The Bible is not against official killing (that is, "execution"); it's against unofficial killing (that is, "murder"). Biblical scholars agree that "Thou shalt not murder" is a better translation. When in doubt, be kind.

The problem is that sometimes human beings are too ignorant to be in doubt, so see no absurdity in being unkind – as this letter is to Pat Buchanan.

The challenge to the death penalty is coming not from the Bible but from the – yes – absurd secularistic inflation of the individual human being into a god, at the moment a goddess named Terri Schiavo.

WILLIS ELLIOTT
Craigville

Elliott △ Thinksheets
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville MA 02632
Phone/Fax 508.775.8008 $10 per year
elliottwl@comcast.net

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4 So much for bio-analysis of the T.S. case. Psycho-analysis? See "necrophilia/phobia." Religio-analysis? Biolatry, the public (tax-money) offerings to this dead goddess so far amounting to $15M; projection based on the corpse's physical condition, $50M. Triage needed--as when Bush, then gov. of TX, signed a bill forbidding the use of tax money to keep brain-dead neonates alive (which was before he went insane with J.P.II's EVANGELIUM VITAE [gospel/culture of life], "erring on the side of life").

5 Today (4.8.05) JPII was buried near Peter's tomb. He was history's second most geopublic figure (Jesus being first), & 4M came (including, from Am., the president & two ex-presidents). He exercised to the full his gifts as linguist, philosopher, & actor ("the pope show" enacted in 125 countries). "The Sense of Pagentry" is the only oration I ever heard Sen.Everett Dirksen give in person: the pope's funeral mass was Rome at the height of its potential for spectacle (Billy Graham at his height having been Rome's only Christian rival). He modeled Christian goodness (in his culture of love); & partly clashing with that, he modeled Stoic rigidity in his ideological "culture of life."

LOVE-DRIVEN GOODNESS

(1) He wrote, to be read in his St.Peter's Sq. funeral mass, this: "It is love which converts the heart and gives peace." (2) Jaroslav Pelikan's "The Great Unifier" (NYT OpEd 4.4.05) is not an exaggeration: he was Mr.Ecumenical, & to JP used the analogy of two lungs: since 1054 (the East/West Christian schism), "Western Christendom has been breathing on one lung ["implying," says JP, "so has Eastern Christendom!"]." (3) On "Charlie Rose" 4.7.05, Avery Cardinal Dulles said that JPII so radiated love that "all felt a personal attachment to...[this] father-figure," "an extradordinarily integrated individual" who "put the Church back on track" to communicate "a message humanity needs....the revelation of God in Jesus Christ,...a message of hope and charity....God has come in Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead, and rules in glory....Life is giving, and serving him." CR asked whether this makes people feel better about themselves, to which AD replied "if they live out of love for others."

"LIFE"-DRIVEN RIGIDITY

(1) As the world's only official absolute monarch, JPII--nimble with words (a linguist) & clever with ideas (a philosopher)—manipulated "life" & "nature" to produce a seamless-garment ideology on the basis of which he could show DIS"respect for life" (the life of other minds, e.g. in rejecting the unanimous finding of a commission he appointed to advise him on artificial conception-control). Otherwise compassionate, he was for "letting nature take its course" (no chemo/physical devices to prevent or end pregnancies or to hasten death in terminal cases of uncontrollable pain) except in certain cases where "nature" needed "life"-support (deformed neonates, comatose patients in permanent vegetative state [e.g., Terri Schiavo]). (2) Reacting against the horrendous inhumanity he'd seen, he produced a "pro-'life'" ideology of "personism" (his PhD thesis-subject) leaning so far in the opposite direction as to "worship and serve the creature" (Ro.1.25) along with the Creator. His legacy? Humanity will be blessed by his compassion & will suffer from his well-meaning insensitivities.

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville MA 02632