

**THE BLOG**

Diversity Made Me Do It

By Marty Kaplan

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One of the wackiest, but most telling, explanations for La Cage Au Foley is the Christian evangelical argument being made by the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins that "pluralism and diversity" is the root cause. It's not much different from Bill O'Reilly's attributing all of America's ills to "secularism," or the Falwell-Robertson-Dobson view that tolerance of abortion, stem cell research, and SpongeBob SquarePants led to 9/11 and Katrina.

Their case is that without a fundamentalist, literalist reading of the Bible, merely human values lead to a hopeless free-for-all. They insist that there's no difference between diversity and anything-goes, that pluralism is a fancy name for radical relativism. You're either with us, they say, or you're with the Satanists.

Applying this principle to what's going on right now on the Hill requires them to do a bit of a pretzel-bend: The reason that the Republican leadership didn't stop Foley was that they were afraid of being labeled "intolerant" by Godless Democrats and their PC enforcers in the media. (Somehow this fear hasn't stopped Republicans from making gay-bashing the centerpiece of campaign after campaign, but never mind.)

You cannot convince Tony Perkins or his amen corner at Fox that secular values - which include pluralism and diversity - can be the basis for a civil society. You cannot persuade them that Americans can be as religious or spiritual as they choose to be, or not, within their private spheres, and still be good citizens of a secular society. The religious right believes that without the Bible, there's no basis for waging wars or fighting terrorists. To them, morality can only flow from an absolutist belief in the Good Book; the notion that the Constitution and the secular political institutions it creates can form the framework for a truly ethical society is, to them, naive and diabolical.

To these culture warriors, the root cause of the House's woes is capitulation to what selected passages in the Bible call evil. See what happens, they're saying, when you cross God's word: evil is tolerated. It's beyond them to understand what's going on now as a failure to enforce not heavenly commandments, but human laws. They think that earthly lawmakers are hopelessly rudderless without divine guidance. In truth, what's ungodly isn't tolerance; it's theocratic fascism, the alliance between the Republican Party and our homegrown mullahs.

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