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Commentary — From the Margins

A Response to Cal Thomas' "False prophets"

When Cal Thomas suggested that *a cultural war crimes tribunal* be established following the demolition of the Berlin Wall, I was in graduate school at University of Alaska Fairbanks. I was there as a middle-aged writer without a viable trade, without an undergraduate degree, without a wife after a quarter century of marriage, but with three daughters in college and living with me. I was in graduate school so my daughters could live at home while obtaining their degrees. Otherwise, they would have had to leave the State for their schooling.

Alaska's economy has traditionally been the inverse of the Lower 48. Weakened by President Carter's disastrous economic policies, Alaskans experienced President Reagan's economic boom as cultural collapse. For example, during the fall of 1978, I received weekly price increases of about 5% on the two lines of Swedish and one line of Norwegian chainsaws I sold. Everything imported—cars, electronics, fishhooks, even grapes from Chili—had prices regularly adjusted upward because of the weak dollar on currency exchanges. But wages were rapidly falling as Pipeline construction ended, leaving many workers un- or under-employed. So with a glut on the labor market and with the prices of everything imported skyrocketing upward, President Carter used the Antiquities Act to lock up vast portions of the State, thereby limiting both potential for employment and existing employment. Those economic niches where Alaskans traditionally sought refuge during the "bust" portion of the boom-bust cycle were suddenly no longer available. The land was now a National Monument the size of states in the Lower 48. And President Reagan's repair of the economy caused a suddenly strengthened dollar to limit Alaskan exports to Asian markets. Thus, the few refuges where Alaskans had sought economic shelter shriveled like raw wool washed in hot water. The felting was felt in the number of homes FHA repossessed, in the number of businesses that failed, in the political climate that allowed a former governor to borrow a political party and win an election, the party itself dedicated to Alaska seceding from the Union.

The State is still trying to recover from years of economic cannibalism following President Carter's D-2 legislation that left many Alaskans, such as myself, jobless and with few prospects. Generational ways of life were wiped out when President Carter's "regulators" declared war on all forms of resource extraction. Although James Watt as Reagan's Interior Secretary defused the situation by not enforcing Carter's regulations for long enough that the anger abated, the overall picture for Alaska hasn't changed. The State's resources are for wolves and tourists. They remain largely unavailable to working-class Alaskans. And the economic cultures that developed over three-quarters of a century became the enemies of young environmental activists. Their willing allies have been Democratic lawmakers that needed a political toehold in the otherwise Conservative resource states. And never was there a more co-dependent

assemblage of Democratic lawmakers than during President Carter's administration.

I became the enemy of these environmental activists, who look like me and speak like me and have the same ancestry, but who hated their fathers, successful in a world that was inherently unfair. These activists, tutored by an enabling academia, needed an enabling media that would allow them to express their anger at being privileged Caucasians. They didn't have to look far afield to find one—and because the media served as their cultural megaphone, they were heard in Senate and in House and in Appellate Court chambers. So if any *cultural war crimes tribunal* is established, I want to lobby for charges to be brought against ex-President Carter and his entire administration for his abuse of (and their support of his abuse of) the Antiquities Act.

My list of cultural culprits has shrunk some during the past two decades. I've mellowed a little. I'm more willing to forgive Carter's 1978 lie that bulldozers were posed to rip up the last shreds of wilderness if he didn't hastily act to protect *Tundra Roses*, which some in his administration apparently thought were endangered shrubbery. President Carter couldn't help being influenced by a Zeit Geist of environmental protectionism that originated outside of humanity's collective consciousness. He was, truly, a dancing *marionette*, with his spiritual strings being pulled by the ruler of this world. President Carter's desire was to serve God. And he seemed unable to resolve the conflict between his role as President and his Christianity. He has been a far better ex-President than President, for that conflict of being a world leader and of being a Christian has no resolution until humanity's mental topography is forcibly seized by Christ halfway through seven years of tribulation.

Cal Thomas wanted people from academia, the media, government, and the clergy to be forced to confront their mistakes. They were the enablers and apologists who helped sustain communism's grip on a sizable portion of humanity, Thomas's observation. And they are still tenured within the institutions of power today.

I want—in addition to the clergy that teach a theology of lawlessness—the environmental activists who have no god other than an old-growth forest to be tried for their destruction of the cultures brought by Pilgrims, Puritan and Separatist. A nation doesn't atone for the sins of its fathers by slaying grandsons.

Therein lies the difficulty of creating a *cultural war crimes tribunal*—the false prophets of global warming and ozone holes should be burned on stakes made of environmentally safe soy ink and recycled paper. They have been the enablers and apologists for clean waters legislation that doesn't allow a miner to dip a bucket of water from a creek and pour it back in without first constructing a settling pond to remove the glacial silt.

Yes, I am lobbying for the return of the *Thou shalt not* culture that begins with, *Thou shalt not have any other gods before Me*. That means wolves will no longer be deified, and the *Adversary* will no longer be a logger with a chainsaw. The *man of perdition* won't be a Republican, and the *abomination of desolation* won't be the statute of an armed Minuteman. The *mark of the beast* won't be a N.R.A. membership card, and the demonic *prince of the power of the air* won't be Rush Limbaugh.

Today, Thomas would have the “scores of false media prophets” who predicted military disaster in Iraq remembered for their many mistakes. Those

mistakes should permanently discredit these prophets, but as Thomas knows, the collective memory of Americans is so short that this nation should be named Manasseh...who remembers spending two hours in gas lines to buy five gallons on either even or odd days? It was those gas lines, and being unable to buy gas for two and a half months (December 1973 through the middle of February 1974) where I then lived on the Oregon Coast that pushed me North to Alaska. I had to trap to keep the electricity turned on during those two months. Today, I don't know how I will pay next month's light bill.

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