

# Rickey

rick·ey / noun

a drink made of liquor, usually gin, a half lime and soda water; it is sometimes sweet

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## PERSPECTIVE

### Anything But Straight

by Wayne Besen . Contributing Writer

#### The Bible without the bile

No matter who wins the presidential election, it is quite clear that the big loser in campaign '08 is religion. By far, the most strident political voices have come from renegade reverends that seem a bit hot under the collar. These cantankerous characters (or caricatures) have transformed their houses of worship into a harbor of war ships with loose cannons lobbing invective into an otherwise serene national conversation.

The most cloying of the clergy is Barack Obama's self-promoting preacher, Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright. While he claims to represent the interests of African-Americans, he may be remembered for giving a black eye to the black church, while sabotaging America's first legitimate African-American presidential contender.

Wright has clearly turned the sanctuary into a sanitarium. When I see him jumping around the pulpit and flapping his wings like a chicken, I want to call Colonel Sanders, so Wright's ridiculous routine will finally come home to roost.

I'm half-past fed up with hearing about how we should respect Wright and his ilk because he has an AIDS ministry and helps the poor. The good work that people do in life does not automatically negate the bad. For example, President Bush has helped fund the fight against AIDS in Africa. However, this does not cancel out his disinformation campaign against condoms, which helps increase infections. Likewise, Wright's sickening sermons are so obnoxious and divisive that they overshadow his laudable contributions.

At this point, the best thing this shameless shaman can do is continue stabbing his former parishioner in the back. The further apart they grow, the more difficult it will be for McCain to conflate the positions of Wright and Obama in political ads.

While the eyes of the nation were focused on Wright's sinful spectacle, they largely ignored a stinging denunciation of gay unions by Hillary Clinton's church. The United Methodists voted to uphold church law that says gay relationships are "incompatible with Christian teaching." If there was a vote opposing interracial marriages on scriptural grounds, is there any doubt Clinton would leave her church?



Clinton averted our gaze to her church's bashing of gays by sending Chelsea on a gay pub-crawl in Philadelphia. While her

daughter frolicked with bar patrons pounding shots, her church took pot shots at loving same-sex couples. It would have been refreshing if the possible Democratic standard-bearer had taken a stand against the gay double standard and left her church.

Of course, the "liberal media" has been so consumed with the Democratic demolition derby that they barely noticed radical reverends on the Right. Now that Rev. Jerry Falwell has departed, McCain has latched onto Rev. John Hagee to prove his conservative credentials. Hagee has called the Roman Catholic Church "the great whore of Babylon."

Hagee also believes that God sent Hurricane Katrina to New Orleans to stop a "homosexual parade there on the Monday that Katrina came." This messianic meteorologist/madman appears twice daily on Trinity Broadcasting network, which reaches 75 million homes. As *The New York Times* columnist Frank Rich saliently points out, "any 12-year-old with a laptop could have vetted this preacher in 30 seconds, tops." Unfortunately, McCain's crass political needs trump Hagee's dirty deeds and the worrisome words he imparts to millions of worshippers.

And, of course, we must not forget Rev. Pat Robertson endorsing the multiple marriage machine, Rudy Giuliani, during his ill-fated campaign. "The 700 Club" host once predicted that natural disasters would destroy Orlando if the city flew gay pride flags. He also — along with Falwell — tried to blame 9/11 on gays, abortion practitioners and the American Civil Liberties Union.

The rhetorical inanity combined with the scriptural insanity is nothing short of a theological calamity. I can't imagine the next generation drawing inspiration from this clerical conflagration. Far from appearing as if they stand on hallowed ground, these ministers of mindless, hollow madness are driving civility and common decency into the ground.

Basking in the warm glow of the election spotlight, these pastors must feel quite popular. I'm willing to bet, however, that they will ultimately lose the popular vote, as today's youth eventually walk out in droves and find churches where bile doesn't come with the Bible. ▀



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