

(Some contrarian commentary on the Democrats' response to Bush's State of the Union address....)

by **Terry Michael**

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Kaine pours Religion Lite, brewed by the consultant wing of the Democratic Party

Why did Democratic consultants choose a two-week governor of Virginia to deliver a response to the State of the Union Address by Karl Rove's spokesman, President Bush?

No surprises here. It took just 15 seconds for Gov. Tim Kaine to begin pouring Religion Lite -- one of the new favorite brews of the consultant wing of the Democratic Party, which apparently believes if you can't beat those GOP Christian conservatives, you might as well join 'em (sort of.)

"I worked as a missionary when I was a young man," Gov. Kaine rushed to tell us, just four sentences into his glib, 'There's a better way,' made-for-TV, mega-church-style sermon, "and I learned to measure my life by the difference I can make in someone else's life."

"Our faith and values," he continued in focus-group-tested sentence seven, "teach us that there's no higher calling than serving others."

After seven or eight (I lost count) more invocations of "there's a better way," the well media-trained Governor, apparently without irony, noted for us that, "It's not about partisanship or political spin. It's about protecting the rights endowed by our Creator (*capitalization mine, but probably his a/so*)....blah..blah..blah."

And then, the big finish. "Tonight we pray, earnestly and humbly, for that healing and for the day when service returns again as the better way to a new national politics. We ask all Americans to join us in that effort because, together, America can do better. Thank you for listening, and God bless the United States of America."

Who, pray tell, was my party trying to reach with that response?

Is Religion Lite going to make evangelicals flock to the party of Thomas Jefferson?

Is the occasionally-churched political center going to feel properly pandered to?

How about us social cultural lefties, who make up a big chunk of the Democratic Party base. Are we going to be turned on, and turned out on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, by another cheesy attempt to inject religion into politics?

There is a better way, Gov. Kaine. Consult Gov. Jefferson. He would tell you to tell Americans the best way to protect religion is to keep it out of politics. No, not ethics, just divisive dogma. We Democrats should have the courage of conviction to campaign on the religious freedom guarantee in the First Amendment. It's politically smart, as well as principled, to talk sense to the American people, and make it clear that we are fighting (in the wrong place, unfortunately) lunatics who demand that we equate religion with the state.

Anyway.... God bless America. God bless us all. And you too, tiny Tim.

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