

field, but it subsequently agreed with media representatives to operating principles that give Zelnick “some hope” for better access. In late November, a press contingent joined U.S. marines who established a base near Kandahar in Afghanistan but it operated under very tight restrictions, according to the *Washington Post* (Dec. 7, 2001). Meanwhile, correspondents operating independently in Afghanistan proceeded cautiously after eight journalists were killed by local forces. And the press increasingly questioned the government’s policies, especially on the home front.

In the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Nov.–Dec. 2001), lawyer and civil liberties advocate Floyd Abrams writes, “I am more concerned that we will fail to take terrorism seriously enough than that we will fail to protect our liberties diligently enough.” But as Washington inevitably encroaches on the privacy of citizens, press scrutiny becomes ever more important. “Give no ground on First Amendment issues,” he urges.

There’s also been a certain amount of introspection and self-criticism among jour-

nalists. *New York Times* staff photographer Vincent Laforet warned of media sensationalism in an October 25 note from Pakistan on the *Sports Shooter* Web site (www.manginphotography.com): “Don’t trust anything you see on TV and be [leery] of some of the things you read. . . . We covered a pro-Taliban demonstration last week attended by maybe 5,000 protesters. CNN stated there were 50,000. The BBC estimated 40,000. We’re continually hearing of ‘violent clashes with police’ when the TV stations report on non-violent demonstrations we covered ourselves.”

In *American Journalism Review* (Nov. 2001), former network news correspondent Deborah Potter writes that while the TV networks’ “coverage of the attacks and the recovery efforts was generally laudable, the networks’ efforts to explain the ‘why’ and the ‘what next’ seemed feeble by comparison.” Severe cutbacks in foreign coverage since 1989 have left the networks without enough infrastructure and experienced foreign correspondents to explain the wider world to American TV audiences, she says.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Philosophers vs. Philosophes

“The Idea of Compassion: The British vs. the French Enlightenment” by Gertrude Himmelfarb, in *The Public Interest* (Fall 2001), 1112 16th St., N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

We’re too quick to associate the 18th-century Enlightenment with the French philosophes. There was a British Enlightenment as well, and for Himmelfarb, professor emeritus of history at the Graduate School of the City University of New York and the author, most recently, of *One Nation, Two Cultures* (1999), it was the more admirable of the two.

The third Earl of Shaftesbury was the father of the British Enlightenment. In 1711, he introduced the concepts that would be key to British philosophical and moral discourse for the rest of the century, including “social virtues,” “natural affections,” “moral sense,” “moral sentiments,” “benevolence,” “sympathy,” and “compassion.” That last concept played a far larger part than either self-interest or reason in the British Enlightenment. Indeed, it was the

unique achievement of Enlightenment British-style to transform the religious virtue of compassion into a secular virtue. Unlike the French philosophes, British moral philosophers such as Adam Smith thought reason secondary to social virtues of the sort Shaftesbury proposed, and they invoked not reason but an innate moral sense as the basis for those virtues. Smith went so far as to make the idea of compassion the central principle of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: “How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortune of others and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.”

Himmelfarb argues that the religious revival begun in England in 1738 by John

and Charles Wesley—Methodism—was also part of the Enlightenment. The Methodists socialized religion and inculcated a gospel of good works, as reflected, for example, in their efforts to educate the poor. Already tending to the same worthy ends, both moral philosophy and religion were reinforced by the new political economy of natural liberty. For Adam Smith, “self-interest was a moral principle conducive to the general interest,” and the general interest “was simply the totality of interests of all the members of society, including the working classes.”

In sum, the moral philosophy of compassion, the Wesleyan gospel of good works, and the new political economy were responsible for creating an England of schools, hospitals, almshouses, and charitable societies. The social ethic mixed the secular and the religious, the private and the public, and helped England survive an economic revolution without suffering the political revolutions that roiled the Continent.

The French Enlightenment was fundamentally different. “Where the British idea of compassion,” Himmelfarb observes, “lent itself to a variety of practical meliorative policies to relieve social problems, the French appeal to reason could be satisfied with nothing less than the ‘regeneration’ of man.” The philosophes tended to elevate “the whole of mankind” over the individual, the species over one’s neigh-

bor. They disdained the masses—the rabble—who “could not be educated because they could not be enlightened; and they could not be enlightened because they were incapable of the kind of reason that the *philosophes* took to be the essence of enlightenment.”

Attitudes of the French Enlightenment colored France’s subsequent revolution, and, Himmelfarb notes, the revolutionary Republic of Virtue “celebrated not the virtue of compassion but that of reason—an abstract elevated reason that denigrated the practical reason of ordinary people.”

The philosophes and the revolutionaries believed in an ideal of the perfectibility of man and wanted to remake the human race. The British wanted to make life better for individual human beings. British society, says Himmelfarb, “respected the liberty of human beings to be different, and at the same time the equality of human beings in their essential nature. The philosophes, by contrast, committed to the principle of reason, a reason not accessible to all people, had no rationale for a liberal society, let alone a democratic one.” The spirit of the French Enlightenment lives on in communism and in the social engineering of the welfare state, whereas notions at the heart of the British Enlightenment—compassion, evangelicalism, natural liberty that is both moral and economic—in recent years have helped to redefine the social ethic in America.

A Christian America Still?

“The ‘Secularization’ Question and the United States in the 20th Century” by David A. Hollinger, in *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Mar. 2001), The Divinity School, Duke Univ., P.O. Box 90975, Durham, N.C. 27708-0975.

There are two basic points of view about secularization in the United States, observes Hollinger, a historian at the University of California, Berkeley. According to the first, which is international and comparative, secularization made little headway in 20th-century America. The country remains “the most Christian of the major industrialized nations of the North Atlantic West.” The second point of view is national and singular, and quite different from the first. It takes Christian cultural hege-

mony for the norm and argues that America drifted far from that norm in the course of the 20th century.

Of course, America is more secular than it was a century ago, and yet, Hollinger argues, Christianity continues to be a major force in the culture. (In the presidential campaign of 2000, voters got to choose between two major-party candidates who made their Christianity a part of their appeal.) A too narrow embrace of one or the other point of view can have, in