

Goldwater on Sin

By Walter Lippmann

WASHINGTON

There is a persistent contradiction in Senator Goldwater's talks between what he complains about and what he wishes to do about it, between the problems he poses and the solutions he proposes. This is evident in the field of foreign affairs, defense, fiscal policy, Social Security, and indeed in almost every great concern of a President and of the Federal Government.

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Except for trying to revise his own record, he has in fact turned away from the discussion of the great issues of national policy, and is putting his main emphasis on crime, violence, and immorality.

The central theme of the Goldwater campaign has now become in effect that crime and sin are

evils which can be dealt with successfully by the personal example and virtue of Barry Goldwater and William Miller. We two are, he is trying to tell the voters, morally superior men who, because of what we are and what we say, will drive crime and violence from the city streets and inaugurate a new era of virtue in this corrupted land.

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Stripped down, this is no doubt a remarkable example of self-admiration. But this being an election campaign, the self-righteousness does not matter too much. What does matter is that while these two men take their indomitable stand against crime and vice, they are at the same time silent or scornful about almost every practical measure dealing with crime and vice. They have nothing they want to do about the schools, housing, the police, recreation, health. They want to save us from our troubles by their personal example, by their capacity to exude virtue, and by denouncing sin. They are like the preacher who, said President Calvin Coolidge when he returned from church one Sunday morning, had preached on sin and was against it.

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What is their remedy for all our moral evils? To liberate the individual from the tyranny of government and the constraints

of society, to deny and reject the belief—which is the central conviction of genuine conservatism—that the individual is part of a community of the dead, the living, and of the unborn, to which he is bound, as Edmund Burke said, by “ties which though light as air, are as strong as links of iron.” It is because of the existence of this invisible community that I once ventured to write that “young men die in battle for their country's sake and . . . old men plant trees they will never sit under.”

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There is no more unfounded claim than that Barry Goldwater is a conservative. He denies the fundamental principle of conservatism which is that we belong to a community which is greater, older, and more enduring than ourselves. Senator Goldwater is in fact a radical opponent of conservatism who under the banner of personal freedom would compound that moral disorder, which is the paramount problem of the modern age.

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