

Robert Knight



Chivalrous Cultural Warrior

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Robert Knight

*in recognition of being a courageous cultural warrior
and committed Christian apologist.*

- April 1998

Introduction

Robert Knight, Director of Cultural Studies at the Family Research Council, often faces fierce opposition from political foes on the front lines of America's culture wars. His politically incorrect positions on cultural issues have made him a lightning rod for controversy while his cogent and well-articulated defense of his views have decisively won most debates. Abortion, promiscuity, homosexuality, school violence, family values, Christian virtues – these are but a few of the issues Bob addresses in his battle to restore and preserve our families and our culture.

Interview

BW: How does it feel to be on the front line of the culture war?

RK: The front line of the culture war is not quiet – *ever*. I mean, every so often there is a quiet afternoon, but not very often. It's amazing how much is going on out there. I can't do anything else [but be in the battle]. This is it. I feel like Victor Lazlo [in *Casablanca*] – if we stopped fighting the world will *die*. I'd rather be *Bogie*, but I identify with him. Of course, *he* gets the girl in the end so it's not so bad.

BW: What current issue is on your mind at the moment?

RK: Domestic partner benefits. Perot Systems has just announced they're *rescinding* them, which is *good* news. On the *bad* side of the ledger, Nations Bank, which just merged with Bank America, has announced it will *offer* them – and it's the biggest bank in the world. We're trying to get Mobil Corporation to back off from domestic partner benefits.

TV violence is another one. There's a new study that just came out which said it's as violent as ever. More so. Things haven't improved.

The Jesus Seminar on PBS. That was so *offensive*. *Four* hours of programming during *Holy Week* in which they trashed the idea of Jesus' *deity*, courtesy of tax dollars.

My book, *The Age of Consent*, is coming out in about two weeks.

BW: What is the root cause of school shootings?

RK: We have had a "gun culture" in this nation for 250 years – *actually* since our founding – and 11-year-olds were not blowing their schoolmates away. What has *changed* is a feeling that there are *limits* that you cannot transgress because they are *transcendent*. There are rights and wrongs that apply to *everybody*. Schools are no longer teaching this concept and when you kick God out of the schools and tell children that they are their own moral arbiters, then when a young boy is disappointed with life and has access to firearms and has no reason *not* to, may lose it and begin shooting. I believe the *cascade* of violence in the media – particularly on television and in movies – has played a role in desensitizing all of us to violence, and it affects people on the *margins* most of all. I can go watch the *Terminator*, walk out of the theater and not want to blow someone away. But a person who is emotionally unstable and angry could very well take the cue from one of these violent films and take matters into his own hands. I think you will see more and more of these incidents.

These things just didn't happen before. Number one, children had more supervision. Number two, communities were more watchful. Every adult was considered a surrogate parent and would report back to the parents if a child misbehaved. So children had a lot of breaks. Now, with

absentee parents, soulless public schools, and a violence-saturated media, you will see more victimization of children by children and by disturbed adolescents.

BW: What is your reaction to the dismissal of the Paula Jones' case?

RK: I had the same reaction Bill Clinton did. I thought it was an April Fool's joke. When I found out it was not, my second thought was "How did they get to that judge? What did they threaten her with? Is her family safe?" Because the remarks Judge Wright made were so *ludicrous* – that a powerful executive exposing himself to a young woman and then making comments about her job security did *not* constitute sexual harassment – renders the law incomprehensible. Everyone knows that is the *epitome* of what has been enshrined in the law as circumstances for sexual harassment. So, once again, a judge has bailed out Bill Clinton.

BW: What do you think of the Clinton-Starr Wars?

RK: Clinton is a master media manipulator and he faces an opponent who has not one but two hands tied behind his back since Starr cannot reveal details about his investigations in the press. So when he is being battered he cannot really respond in kind. So Clinton appears to be winning the PR battle. But Starr has yet to be heard from with his final volley, that is, his report to Congress. If he has done his job then the litany of abuses should be so great as to spur more serious calls for impeachment.

BW: Do you think Bill Clinton will be impeached?

RK: Clinton's attack dog, the Ragin' Cajun [James Carville] has done what he feels is necessary to preclude impeachment and that is attack the reputations of anyone who might be able to bring those charges. They've gathered information on the divorces and presumably some affairs among Committee members in key positions and are putting a gun to the head of the Republicans who seem remarkably inert when given this weight of evidence that the President may have sold out his country to foreign interests in exchange for campaign funds and has demonstrated a wide-ranging pattern of abuses, and that, at the least, these charges demand further investigation, not curtailment of an investigation.

BW: What do you think of ABC's programming, such as *Ellen*, *Nothing Sacred* and *Prey*?

RK: I don't think I'm familiar with *Prey*.

BW: It's about a new race – a new strand of the human race is evolving into a superhuman race – and we're going to be the vanishing species, the prey of this new species.

RK: So Nietzsche gets his own series finally, the Superman.

I think Disney/ABC has had to step back in the face of widespread public disapproval of *Nothing Sacred* and *Ellen*, given the plummeting ratings of both shows. I think the boycott of the Disney Company is also affecting how they look at projects, because if even a small fraction of the Southern Baptists honored the boycott even marginally – say, giving up one or two Disney products a year – we're talking *hundreds* of millions of dollars. So, I think the Disney boycott has been dismissed by the media as ineffective but I think it's having a great effect.

Liberals *would* love the show [*Nothing Sacred*] – it trashes orthodox Catholic belief and Christian belief in general.

BW: Do you have any thoughts on Princess Diana?

RK: Princess Diana represents an enormous *void* that people have for a deity and the outpouring of near-worship – while gagging many of us – is evidence of this human need for adulation of a higher power. It's *misdirected* but it's still evidence of that.

BW: What does the phrase “21st century” bring to your mind?

RK: Liberals love the phrase “the 21st century” because they believe *progress* is always just around the corner. What it means to me is – I picture it as a high-wire. We're walking along as a society on a high-wire and we're either going to fall off entirely or we'll reach the other side and stabilize our footing. Right now the cultural forces are so divergent and powerful it's hard to see which way we will go. The other factor that may tip the balance is economics. If this boom lasts indefinitely I expect current trends towards greater evil and a form of revival to continue. But if the economy collapses it will be interesting to see if America has the inner resources that it had during the Great Depression, and pulls together as a nation, and copes with disappointment and delayed gratification. Right now I wouldn't bet on it. I believe that an economic collapse would result in social chaos.

BW: What are the primary cultural forces you have in mind?

RK: I think that people have become so enamored of materialism that they would take extreme measures to protect what they regard as their “right to comforts.” Everything from securing supplies of gasoline to getting frozen dinners. I think the systems of law and order could break down, particularly in the inner cities, where we'd see riots. But we'd also see less-than-civilized behavior in suburbia. An *actual* economic collapse would really reveal the American character as it is now, for good or ill.

BW: Does intellectualism devoid of morality lead to tyranny?

RK: Yes. Because it's *soul* is vanity and vanity leads to human excess of all types which leads to the *reaction* of tyranny. An intellect which is not anchored in humility before God will lead to a view of man either as a god *himself* or as nothing more than an *animal* to be *controlled* and manipulated. The *healthy biblical* view of man as made in God's image and of having free will while being subject to transcendent standards of right and wrong would not apply to the *apostate* intellect or the entirely *secularized* intellect. We've seen it happen too often in officially atheist nations, such as the communist regimes.

BW: Earlier you spoke of America as *two nations*: one *religious* and one *secular*. Please explain.

RK: We used to have *gaps* between faiths in which *doctrinal* matters caused great division, essentially among believers in one God. But now, people of *faith* – by that I mean observant Jews, Christians, and Muslims – are realizing that their *doctrinal* differences are not as important as the *weight* of the secular *state* threatening to take away their most basic liberties. People of faith are increasingly finding common ground on which to stake a claim for human dignity, the sanctity of human life and the family-based moral order. At the same time secular forces are enraged that there is even a vestigial resistance to their agenda of unrestricted sexual gratification. They are at war with the family, primarily, and with God, who created the family, and they will not be appeased or dissuaded. They can only be converted or defeated.

BW: Which conspiracy theories are credible and which are poppycock? Why?

RK: The idea of a world government – a globalist organization that threatens national sovereignty – cannot even be called a conspiracy because it doesn't have the *covert* aspect. It's right out there in

the open. The United Nations has been the nerve center for a group of people who believe that the time of national sovereignty is over and that global government is the progressive wave of the future and that nations are getting in the way. They are using multinational corporations as their wedge because they can transfer capital so quickly that governments no longer have sovereignty over much of it. They create a perceived need for a larger government entity. The other force driving this one-world government is environmentalism, since air and water transcend boundaries, the argument is that no single government can deal with environmental deterioration. So a world body is needed. Certainly there are treaties that are useful in curbing excesses of nations and that allow nations to protect their resources, such as fishing treaties (so that one nation doesn't fish out another nation's fishing beds), but overall the drive for global government is probably the most *open* conspiracy, if you can call it that.

As far as poppycock, I think variations on what is a very real development are from what I see lacking in documentable evidence. I haven't really delved into the Masonic allegations. I've read some of the early history but I don't believe the Masons are this all-powerful force that some people think they are. I am suspicious of their doctrines because I'm not sure they can be called Christian and/or that they're necessarily compatible with Christianity, even though some Christians say that there is no problem in that respect.

I'm more interested in the ultimate conspiracy, which is the battle of evil to overcome good, which has been with us since the beginning of time. The Great Conspiracy is that of Satan. Everything else is a variation of it. Satan has a lot of tricks up his sleeve, not the least of which is, as C.S. Lewis said, convincing many people that he doesn't exist, or that evil is not really a force to be reckoned with. I think that the most powerful thing that people can do in terms of conspiracies is to join the Christian Conspiracy against Satan and parachute behind enemy lines, as C.S. Lewis suggested. Every Christian should feel like a commando.

BW: Is there anything special you'd like to tell our readers?

RK: Just that I don't think God is through with America yet, as bad as things have gotten in terms of the social and moral degeneration. There is still more Bible-believing people here than anywhere in the planet. I don't believe prayer goes unanswered. There is a revival underway and, soul by soul, I believe we could take back America and make it a godly place again.

BW: You were part of Stand in the Gap. Any comments?

RK: God honors prayer. He will heal our land if we repent. There's a breath of fresh air blowing across this country. It must be the Holy Spirit.

BW: How do we heal our land?

RK: We need to focus on *redemption* and the *consequences* of behavior. If we tell truth without love it's too harsh. If we tell love without truth it's too mushy. The Lord had it right: *truth with love*.

BW: Tell us about the gay rights movement.

RK: The gay rights movement came out of the Sixties. The twin pillars of the homosexual movement are 1) victimization and 2) ad hominem attacks against their opponents. They will not allow debates to revolve around *behavior* or the *consequences* of behavior. Their strategy is bigotry vs. enlightenment. Science is against them. Science shows that it is not natural. Biology shows that it's not natural. History shows that it's not natural. God says that it's not natural. All major religions say it's not natural. God's natural law is written on every heart and in all cultures. Homosexuality militates so obviously against the natural order so that it's amazing we're even having this debate.

I believe the final goal of the homosexual rights movement is to criminalize the church. This is part of a wider cultural movement to marginalize Christianity. With the recent decision on the Boy Scouts biblical morality can be an actionable cause in court.

BW: What about the *ex-gay* movement?

RK: I consider the *ex-gay* movement a vital element of the revitalization of America itself. ... The *ex-gay* movement is one of the most powerful witnesses to this drift to moral relativism in the Church.

BW: How do you view the *political* spectrum in America today?

RK: Nazism, Fascism and Socialism are totalitarian systems at the far left end of the spectrum; anarchy is at the far right; conservatism is in the middle. Totalitarian (Leftist) regimes seek total control of all facets of life (micro-management) while dictatorships (Rightist) do not.

BW: What is the guiding light in your life?

RK: Jesus Christ, without a *doubt*. I owe Him *everything*. I would be one more liberal-to-moderate *well-meaning* social activist otherwise. Christ raised the standard so *high* He made me realize that I was in *dire* need of a *Messiah*, because, before I accepted Him as my Savior I looked at other people and *compared* myself to them – and *felt* pretty good about myself, and, sometimes *bad* about myself, but, in any case, I was never *seriously* threatened. But when I *realized* that God had a *higher* standard – one that I could *never* meet – I realized that I needed *help* outside myself. Once I *accepted* Christ I got all the help I *needed*, and I *continue* to draw on that.

BW: What is America's greatest cultural problem? Why? What can be done about it?

RK: I believe the breakdown of the family is America's greatest cultural problem. How can we maintain freedom without the family? That's where stabilization arises.

BW: What is at the heart of the breakdown of the family?

RK: The Iron Square is abortion, homosexuality, pornography and feminism. These all serve to sever the ties between sex and *procreation*, making sex a matter of *recreation*. Pornography has made moral eunuchs of many American men.

BW: How does the sexual revolution contribute to family and societal breakdown?

RK: At the heart of the *Leftist* agenda has always been a *sexual* agenda as well, which includes the breakdown of the family. Alfred Kinsey's career was dedicated to justifying his own aberrant behavior. Alfred Kinsey provided justification for the sexual revolution while Hugh Hefner mainstreamed pornography. Americans are *awash* in sexual sins. The gays give them a license to sexually sin. Bill Clinton is apparently getting away with an incredibly sexually salacious sex life.

BW: Why is the church in jeopardy?

RK: The Secular Left wants the State to perform functions traditionally performed by the Church. The State vs. Church is found in Marx and Engels. The secular religion is one of *tolerance*, moral relativism. There is an "ethos of tolerance" which undermines the Church.

BW: What do you consider the "defining moment" of your generation?

RK: Bill Clinton's election. It showed, once and for all, the dangers of sitting out the most important battles of our time. It also showed how far America has drifted from its moral foundations.

BW: People across the political spectrum advocate *universal* principles while ignoring *particular* individuals in a way which contradicts those principles. Please address this dynamic.

RK: Liberals often say that they care about people *deeply* but when it comes down to individual examples they will often run *roughshod* over those people they say they care so much about. But conservatives are often guilty of the same thing. They enunciate *principles* but often do not see the *victims* – people who haven't fit into society in as comfortable a way as they themselves might be. I'm thinking of people who, through no fault of their own, have been born into poverty, have been devastated by family dysfunction, have had severe problems. There's a *callousness* evident in *some* conservatives – particularly in those not *grounded* by a belief in God.

I think *that's* where the dividing line is. The conservatives who understand that God is the author of our freedom and is sovereign of any system understand that people have to be taken care of and that the poor will always be with us – Jesus told us that. There are conservatives who believe the “perfect system” can be found. They are economic determinists who believe in material solution to everything. They make *almost* as severe an error as the Socialists that they say they oppose. The measure of all things is what *happens* after policies are put into place, and if the policies don't reflect God's moral truths then they won't help people in any case.

BW: Do you see a misunderstanding of human nature and a misapprehension for the *humanity* of the *particular* as opposed to the concept of the *universal*?

RK: It all comes down to the same thing. The liberal mind – and I put a lot of fiscal conservatives into that category – believe man is an animal who can be manipulated if the right incentives are provided. We know that man is a fallen creature and that the right incentive ought to be that of serving God. All else flows from that. If that isn't your incentive you can get off on the wrong track very easily. When they enunciate general *principles* but ignore the *individuals* who aren't living up to their *conception* of those principles then you see where their heart really is. Then you see the callousness.

Interview Dates: April 17, 1998; October 30, 1998; March 27, 1999.

Personal Comments

Bob Knight is a chivalrous cultural warrior who courageously speaks the truth in a gentle and compassionate manner. Bob has touched my heart with his kindness and generosity, exercising *practical* Christianity by his *personal* example.

Bob is one of the kindest people I know and kindness has become a very precious commodity to me, a Christian virtue all too lacking in our culture (and even within the church, for that matter). His great *generosity* similarly needs emulation in our self-absorbed culture.

Instant in prayer, Bob is always ready to give an answer for the hope which lies within him and he *practices* his principles by being a compassionate conservative. Bob has internalized the admonition to be wise as servants but harmless as doves by exercising godly wisdom and exhibiting godly love.

Bob's love and grace in action act both as a salve to the soul and a calling to those in need. Boldly speaking the truth, Bob does so in a winsome way. He understands that the best way to defeat your enemy is to win him over to your side. In fact, Bob doesn't consider opponents his “enemies” but rather as

people with differing points of view. His recognition of our common humanity allows him to extend grace to even the most bitter foe.

Robert Knight's bio lists many accomplishments and well-deserved accolades. But for me, I am grateful to call him my beloved brother in Christ.

Bio – <http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=2110&department=CWA&categoryid=>

Robert H. Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America, examines cutting-edge social issues such as government arts funding, family, sex-related topics and the homosexual agenda, television, film, and freedom of religion. Mr. Knight wrote and directed the Family Research Council documentary about Alfred Kinsey, *The Children of Table 34*, as well as a documentary about homosexuality, *Hope & Healing*. A draftsman of the federal [Defense of Marriage Act](#), he has written monographs on same-sex "marriage," television sex and violence, and government sponsorship of the arts and broadcasting. He wrote *The Age of Consent: The Rise of Relativism and the Corruption of Popular Culture* (Spence Publishing, 1998, 2001), a Conservative Book Club Main Selection.

Culture Analyst and Speaker:

Before joining CFI, Mr. Knight directed Cultural Studies at the [Family Research Council](#) for nearly 10 years. Before that, Mr. Knight headed a similar program as Senior Fellow for Cultural Policy Studies at the [Heritage Foundation](#). He has spoken at countless public forums and debated on college campuses.

Expert Witness:

Mr. Knight testified before the U.S. Senate's [Labor and Human Resources Committee](#) and the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Services. He testified before [House](#) committees on the [Family Privacy Protection Act](#) and the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#), and also testified before several state legislatures. He was a media expert witness in Colorado's Amendment Two trial.

Journalist:

Mr. Knight, an accomplished journalist, was news editor and writer for the [Los Angeles Times](#) for seven years before leaving for a Media Fellowship at Stanford University's [Hoover Institution](#). He also worked for [the Fort Lauderdale News/Sun Sentinel](#) as a weekend projects coordinator, with the [Maryland Gazette](#) as assistant editor and the Annapolis [Evening Capital](#) as a reporter; and as a reporter, photographer and editor of the *Maryland Coast Press*. Mr. Knight is presently Senior Editor of CFI's weekly [Culture & Family Report](#).

Freelance Writer:

Mr. Knight has written articles for [The Wall Street Journal](#), [National Review Online](#), [World Net Daily](#), [Insight](#), [WORLD magazine](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), [The Baltimore Sun](#), [The Washington Times](#), [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [The Orange County Register](#) and other publications.

Spokesperson:

Mr. Knight has appeared on the [CBS Evening News](#); [NBC Nightly News](#); ABC's [World News Tonight](#) and [Nightline](#); CNN's [Crossfire](#), [Inside Politics](#), [Talk Back Live](#) and [CNN News](#); [Fox News Channel](#)'s [O'Reilly Factor](#), [The Edge with Paula Zahn](#) and [Hannity & Colmes](#); [Oprah](#); CNBC's [McLaughlin](#), [The Charles Grodin Show](#) and [The Cal Thomas Show](#), [Fox Morning News](#), MSNBC; NBC's [A Closer Look](#); NPR's [Fresh Air](#), [Talk of the Nation](#) and [All Things Considered](#); PBS' [Firing Line](#) and [Nightly Business Report](#); [Focus on the Family](#), [CBS Radio](#), [Cox Television](#), [Hearst Television](#), [Christian Broadcasting](#)

[Network](#), [American Family Radio](#), [USA Radio Network](#), [Beverly LaHaye Today](#), and many other television and radio broadcasts.

Mr. Knight holds master's and bachelor's degrees in political science from [American University](#) in Washington, D.C. He is married with two children and lives in the Washington, D.C. area.

Issues Covered: Family Issues, Television and Film, Government Arts Funding, Sex-related Topics and the Homosexual Agenda, and Religious Freedom.