

Religious right supported Duke

By Father Richard P. McBrien ·
Syndicated columnist

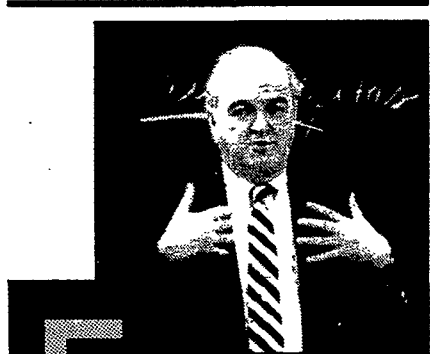
Although David Duke has lost his bid for the governorship of Louisiana, he remains a significant force on the national political scene. Even in defeat he demonstrated that a bonding of racism and resentment has wide voter appeal.

Most of the political commentaries before last month's election in Louisiana focused on the black/white issue. The Democratic candidate, Edwin Edwards, was expected to receive the overwhelming majority of black votes. Having conceded the larger share of white votes to Duke, pundits speculated endlessly about the percentage of white votes Edwards would need to win.

Post-election commentaries continued to focus on black/white voting patterns. Journalists expressed surprise — and a poorly concealed sense of relief — at Edwards' ability to attract as many white votes as he did: some 45 percent.

Most significantly, he won over, by a huge 3-1 margin, the white voters that had voted for Republican Gov. Buddy Roemer in the primary. In combination with the extraordinary turnout of black supporters, the Roemer crossovers proved to be the key to Edwards' landslide victory.

What was generally ignored in



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the post-election analyses (except for a typically astute comment by Cokie Roberts of National Public Radio and ABC television) was the religious aspect of the results.

According to data gathered on election day by Voter Research and Surveys, published in the Nov. 18 issue of *The New York Times*, a large portion of David Duke's white support came from born-again/fundamentalist Protestants: 69 percent to 31 percent, or more than 2-1.

Lest we Catholics indulge in *gaudium primum* (a perverse joy), the statistics show that white Catholics also supported David Duke, al-

though by a smaller margin: 52 percent to 48 percent.

None of my readers has to be reminded about the kind of candidate these white Protestants and white Catholics were supporting. David Duke is the former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan and former activist in the neo-Nazi movement.

These are incontrovertible facts. People know of simply too much film footage and too much written, taped and photographic evidence for even David Duke to have denied his past. So he concocted this story about repentance and conversion, claiming that everybody has been intolerant at one time or another in their lives.

But one of his top aides resigned from the campaign in disgust because he saw through Duke's phony conversion to Christ. As the aide pointed out, Duke attended not church — indeed, he lied when he said he attended the Evangelical Baptist Church; there is no such church in the New Orleans area — and he was never seen with a Bible in hand, much less reading one.

Until 1989, at age 39, David Duke headed his own white supremacist organization, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, and remains active in it still.

To be sure, not everyone who voted for David Duke is a racist bigot. Some voted for him as a protest against the unresponsiveness and

corruption of traditional politicians. Others, in wretched financial straits, supported Duke out of economic desperation.

Overall, however, white Protestants and white Catholics didn't cover themselves with glory in this election.

The voting behavior of white born-again/fundamentalist Protestants was particularly appalling. In the name of Jesus, they supported a racist neo-Nazi.

Unfortunately, the survey didn't isolate their white Catholic counterparts: the ultraconservative and traditionalist Catholics.

Both groups have something in common. They are judgmental and self-righteous in their social attitudes (which is to say that many of them are racists, as Father Andrew Greeley's research has indicated), and they are judgmental and self-righteous in their religious convictions (which is to say that, in their minds, their values and God's always coincide).

The Catholics who voted for Duke are either blissfully unaware of the official teachings of their church on matters of social justice and human rights, or they couldn't care less about them. What they know or care about the teachings of Jesus is another matter entirely.

Whatever the case, pastoral leaders and religious educators have their work cut out for them.

New king will be a descendant of David

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

Claudius, King Herod's most trusted aide, shifted uncomfortably in his seat. It had been several days since the three Magi had left. But the king had not yet stopped his daily tirade over the prophecy concerning the king.

"The prophet said he would be born in Bethlehem, of all places! That dirty, insignificant town will produce a king of the same stature! What did those Magi say about the birthplace?"

"They reported first seeing the great light two years ago," Claudius replied. "And that this star has been moving steadily ever since. But who can predict that it will suddenly stop in its course over Bethlehem?"

"Furthermore, after these Magi have found this supposed new king," Claudius added, "they will return here and you will know precisely."

"But why Bethlehem?" King Herod questioned again. "It is not a great city like Jerusalem. There is no palace or anything else to distinguish it. Bethlehem is merely the domain of common shepherds who must come here to sell their livestock."

Claudius could contain himself

no longer. "Nevertheless, sometimes a king can be a descendent of a simple shepherd."

"And what is meant by that?" King Herod queried.

"Have you forgotten King David, the slayer of Goliath?" Claudius asked. "David is still revered by the Hebrews as their greatest king. He may have built the city of Jerusalem and conquered the Philistines. But David spent his young life as a shepherd in the hills of Bethlehem."

Claudius fully expected this last bit of information to produce another long discourse from the king. But, instead, King Herod seemed encouraged.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "The emperor's census requires that everyone return to his birthplace to register. There will be official records in Bethlehem of King David's lineage. I will seize these records and then I'll know exactly from whom this new king will come!"

Claudius had already gotten up from his seat before King Herod issued the command. "Leave at once for Bethlehem. I'll give you a letter with my official stamp to authorize your seizing the census records for King David's line. When I find out who it is, we'll have the parents arrested!"

It would have been foolishness on

the part of Claudius to attempt reason. Now that King Herod had taken this line of logic, it made no sense to remind him that the great light in the sky was still moving.

Besides, Claudius was anxious to be away from the king's incessant speculations on this threat to his own power by a new ruler. He left the palace at once for Bethlehem.

The little town of shepherds was only five miles south of Jerusalem. And with the great light in the sky to guide his path, Claudius felt strangely drawn toward Bethlehem. The star seemed to have stopped just over the hills surrounding the town.

When Claudius arrived in Bethlehem, he was surprised to see such long lines of people waiting to be enrolled in the official census of the Roman Empire. But with King Herod's letter, there was no need for him to wait.

He saw four booths with census takers. When Claudius presented the letter to the Roman guard, he pointed to the man in the first booth, saying, "He will have the records of King David's line."

Claudius scanned the long roster of David's descendants. There were 28 generations of individuals listed until he came to the present one. Someone had already been re-



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gistered for the census. His name was Joseph. "Wife's name: Mary. Occupation: Carpenter."

"Will you be taking these records back to King Herod in Jerusalem?" the census taker asked Claudius.

"No, there's nothing here of any significance," Claudius said as he returned the file.

"Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ." (Matthew 1:17)

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