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Abstract
    For most of the four days following 9/11, TV viewers around the world were mesmerised by unthinkable images. Television brought home to Americans especially the polarising effects of the post-Cold War world, including the backlash of Islamic fundamentalism and the imminent threat of future terrorist attacks. A formulaic narrative quickly emerged; ordinary police and firefighters took the lead as America's national heroes, while Osama bin Laden and the rest of al-Qaeda and the Taliban rose up as villains. On September 12, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush gave voice to this mythic small-screen storyline as "a monumental struggle of good and evil." This chapter considers the ways in which television portrayed the major events of September 11 and its aftermath. It examines Bush's main televised responses and the ways his administration's faith-based foreign policies were initially framed on TV. Bush's evangelical Christian background is examined, as is his subsequent political vision for waging war on terrorism. Finally, representative telecasts, broader programming patterns, and general viewing trends during the first six months following the attacks are surveyed and summarised, as are the longer-term consequences of framing the global media event of September 11 in terms of good and evil.

Key Words: al-Qaeda, O. bin Laden, G. W. Bush, presidential politics, September 11, Taliban, television news

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1.   Through a Lens, Darkly

Once upon a time, evil was personified. Evil was Mephistopheles or the Devil. Colourfully costumed. Almost flavourful, altogether identifiable, a clarified being from another world. But in the industrial system evil has become systematized. The production of it has become technologized, internationalized, multinationalized, and especially in times of war and high zealotry, officially rhapsodized.

                                                -Lionel Tiger[1]

    Americans are still trying to grasp the full meaning of the terrorist hijackings of September 11, 2001 that left more than 3,000 people from 61 countries dead at the World Trade Center's twin towers in lower Manhattan, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a rural field in Pennsylvania. The initial shock of 9/11 sent stunning reverberations throughout the nation where most citizens simply sat glued to their television sets,

struggling to make sense of the horrific imagery that was beaming back at them. To many, the telecast of September 11 and the first few days following the attacks resembled something akin to a summer disaster movie rather than an actual occurrence unfolding in real time.

Two days after 9/11, Bill Moyers began a series of special 30-minute interviews sponsored by public television, which explored the broader psychological and theological ramifications of what he called an event that had taken on "apocalyptic" significance. Produced in the Manhattan studios of Thirteen/WNET, Moyers first spoke with Andrew Delbanco, a Columbia humanities scholar and author of *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, about "why men do good" (such as New York City's firemen) and "evil" (the terrorists). Delbanco's main assertion was that "our culture is now in crisis because evil remains an inescapable experience for all of us, while we no longer have a symbolic language for describing it." Over the next week, Moyers' wide-ranging discussions also included Harvard and CUNY professor and psychologist Robert Jay Lifton ("What does bin Laden really want?") and Farid Esack, a South African Muslim theologian and academic, who explained to a national audience that "Islam is a religion of peace" but "like any religion is open to manipulation."[2]

Still, the reluctance of most contemporary Americans to even acknowledge the existence of evil - never mind speak at length about it - stood as an uncharacteristically new development in the history of the country, having slowly gained momentum throughout much of the twentieth century with the nation's growing commitments to science and modernity, but acquiring a special urgency with the social and moral upheavals of the 1960s. In *Under God: Religion and American Politics*, Gary Wills points out that "evil as the threatening other has taken many forms" since the founding of the republic. During the early days of the United States, "it was the Whore of the Devil, the Church of Rome. More recently, it has been Communism."[3]

A memorable case in point is President Ronald Reagan's description of the former Soviet Union as an "evil empire," offered during an address before the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, on March 8, 1983. In the years since this famous declaration, however, such unabashed judgments about good and evil have often given way to more ironic expressions of black humour as the preferred way for most Americans to cope with the darker aspects of political life, especially on national television with the ascendancy of shows such as *Saturday Night Live* (1975-) and comics such as David Letterman and Bill Maher. "If the privative conception of evil continues to be lost between liberal irony on the one hand, and fundamentalist demonizing on the other," Delbanco continued, "we shall have no way of confronting the most challenging experiences of our private and public lives."[4]

For his part, newly elected President George W. Bush stood squarely on the conservative side of the country's cultural divide at the moment of the 9/11 attacks. As the *Washington Post*'s Mike Allen put it, "September 11, 2001, was the unquestioned turning point in Bush's presi-

dency, silencing doubts about the disputed 2000 election, giving purpose and clarity to the administration at a time when its policies seemed muddled, and temporarily narrowing the division in the nation whose voters were split 50-50." The immediate worldwide response to the terrorist hijackings was a general outpouring of goodwill towards the United States, as well as a brief period of bipartisan cooperation at home. Candidate Bush had even campaigned as a self-styled "compassionate conservative," promising "to unite and not divide," especially in the wake of the Clinton years which had ratcheted up "the modern age of the acrimoniously divided electorate" to its highest level ever.[5]

Over the next six months, the Bush team succeeded in galvanising a majority of Americans around a "faith-based foreign policy" which was designed to confront "evil" by waging a "just war," recalled Howard Fineman, chief political correspondent and senior editor of *Newsweek*. Bush responded to the 9/11 crisis with a moral firmness and conviction that temporarily assured a shaken nation and set a resolute path for many citizens to follow. "As a born-again Christian, George W. Bush is the most overtly religious president since Jimmy Carter. For him, that includes a very clear, very sturdy, almost joyful certainty about what's right and what's wrong," according to political analyst Brad Knickerbocker. As noted by rhetorical scholar Joshua Gunn, Bush's speeches after September 11 "closely model the Reaganesque purging of an exogenous evil, right down to the justification of global action."[6]

The climactic example of Bush's religiously informed post-9/11 political rhetoric came when he delivered his enthusiastically received State of the Union address to Congress and an international television audience on January 29, 2002. The most remembered phrase from that fifty-minute speech was his naming of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as "an axis of evil," thus demonising those "regimes that sponsor terror" while also linking them closely to the ill-fated German-Italian-Japanese triumvirate of World War II. The effect of the telecast at home was electrifying, as Bush's job approval rating spiked to 89 percent the next day, up from 50 percent on September 10, 2001. The "terrorist attacks [had completely] reshaped Bush's presidency and his standing with [American] voters," reported David Broder and Dan Balz of the *Washington Post*. Television additionally provided his administration as well as the country with a powerful weapon by which to respond swiftly - if largely unreflectively - to the crisis at hand.[7]

As communication scholar Denise Bostdorff has observed, Bush had essentially rallied a stunned nation "in the months immediately following September 11 [by] urg[ing] the younger generations of Americans to uphold the faith of their 'elders,' the World War II generation," by invoking Pearl Harbour and portraying bin Laden as the latest in a long line of totalitarian tyrants. He evoked the memory of the last good and just war that the United States had fought by identifying yet another "axis of evil" to be confronted and defeated. "In a way, saying 'evil is real,'" argued Brad Knickerbocker, "also can be seen as a way of avoiding the 'why do they hate us?' question. It allows one to fault 'evildoers' while U.S. poli-

cies, hubris, and culture have nothing to do with what motivates terrorists. It makes it easier to just say, 'they hate freedom and our way of life.'"[8]

Overall, then, this chapter considers the ways in which television portrayed the major events of September 11 and its aftermath, particularly in respect to the frame of reference provided by the president for understanding this unprecedented national crisis beginning in the first few days after the hijackings and culminating in his 2002 State of the Union address when he identified "an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." Cognitive linguist George Lakoff has referred to metaphors such as "axis of evil" as "conceptual mappings" that people use "to frame moral issues: to interpret them, understand them, and explore their consequences." He believes they "play an absolutely central role in our judgments about what is good behaviour and what is bad, what is the right thing to do and what is wrong."[9]

Moreover, sociologists William Gamson and Andre Modigliani define a media frame as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events." On September 12, 2001, for instance, Bush gave voice to the horrific spectacle of the attacks by calling them "acts of war" and framing the conflict as "a monumental struggle of good and evil." Viewer attention was soon channelled into a familiar narrative pattern featuring heroic public servants and villainous foreign terrorists. This quickly emerging plotline was further enhanced by the shocking repetitive power of seeing the World Trade Center towers burning and finally collapsing time and again.[10]

The collective memory of September 11 is now indistinguishably linked with the way in which this day's happenings were telecast continuously over four straight days to audiences in the hundreds of millions worldwide. According to social theorists Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, "media events [such as 9/11] endow collective memory not only with substance but with a frame: they are mnemonics for organizing personal and historical time." Media critic Todd Gitlin similarly suggested that mediated frames permit journalists to quickly and efficiently package television news for viewer consumption. As communication scholar Robert Entman has observed, audiences make sense of these frames as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information."[11]

In the specific case of September 11, the nation's "political leader can have high confidence that the press will echo [his message], as occurred here with President Bush," concluded a team of communication researchers from the University of Washington. "Indeed, our findings show quite clearly that the press - at least the institutional voices of the press - aligned remarkably with the President's good/evil" pronouncements.[12] Most of all, this chapter hones in on Bush's main televised responses, along with the various ways in which his administration's faith-based foreign policy was initially framed on TV. Bush's evangelical Christian background is examined, as is the direction that his subsequent political vision set for the country in waging its war on terrorism. Finally, representative telecasts, broader programming patterns, and general viewing trends during the first six months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks

are surveyed and summarised, as are the longer-term consequences of framing the global media event of September 11 in terms of good and evil.

2.   The Devil is in the Details

Church and state may be separate, but faith and politics are not.
                                                          -Nancy Gibbs[13]

The first time that a nationwide television audience ever saw Texas Governor George W. Bush give public testimony to his deeply held Christian beliefs was on the evening of Monday, December 13, 1999, when he and five other Republican candidates converged on the Des Moines Civic Center to debate each other in anticipation of the Iowa caucuses, then only six weeks away. The most memorable "sound bite" of the ninety-minute CNN-sponsored contest came when moderator John Bachman turned to candidate Bush and asked him which "political philosopher or thinker do you most identify with and why?" Bush paused a moment and replied, "Jesus Christ - because he changed my heart." When Bachman followed up, "the viewer would like to know more on how he has changed your heart," Bush spontaneously added, "Well, if you don't know it's going to be hard to explain. When you turn your heart and your life over to Christ, when you accept Christ as a saviour, it changes your heart, and changes your life and that's what happened to me."[14]

Television pundits made much of these remarks during the post-debate analysis. Bush's critics saw his comments as a cynical ploy to appeal to Church-going voters in the heartland. Campaign insiders, however, viewed it differently. "I think it was instinctive and genuine," explained Doug Wead, an Assembly of God evangelist and former close aide and advisor to Bush. "The media elite and non-evangelicals see that statement and they think it's calculated. The evangelicals know it's not calculated. They know it didn't help him. So they tend to believe that it's true."[15]

Bush's strong religious convictions have now become a well-known part of his personal profile. Particularly after 9/11, he has frequently made reference to God in his public pronouncements and increasingly framed his outlook in teleological terms. In addressing the National Prayer Breakfast on February 6, 2003, for example, Bush alluded to "things we can count on" and "the ways of Providence." He assured his audience that "events aren't moved by blind change or chance. Behind all of life and all of history, there's a dedication and purpose, set by the hand of a just and faithful God."[16] Prior to September 11, 2001, Bush mainly emphasised God's role in his own personal transformation when he finally decided to give up alcohol in May 1986 and turn his life around. After 9/11, though, the divine plan that he spoke about to the American people took on a kind of civil religious frame of reference, while his own role within this epical drama grew progressively more messianic in nature.

Bush's sense of presidential calling can be traced back to the days when he was Governor of Texas. On January 19, 1999, he and his family, friends, and political supporters attended a sunrise service at the

Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas preceding his second inauguration. The previous November he had been re-elected in a land-slide victory in which he garnered 69 percent of the vote, thus spurring nationwide speculation that he would make a run for the White House in 2000. Senior pastor Mark Craig talked about Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt in his homily that morning. As he concluded, Craig peered right at Bush: "America needs leaders who have the moral courage to do what is right for the right reasons," even though "it's not always easy or convenient for leaders to step forward." Later that afternoon, Bush gath-ered some of his closest political advisors together in the governor's man-sion. Amongst them was Richard Land, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, who recalls that one of "the things he said to us was 'I be-lieve that God wants me to be President.'"[17]

Three months later, Bush recruited Michael Gerson to be his head speechwriter. Gerson "majored in theology at Wheaton College in Illinois, alma mater of evangelist Billy Graham," before establishing his creden-tials on the national political scene as a skilled writer and reporter for *U.S. News & World Report*. Bush was already adopting a rhetorical style simi-lar to other evangelical politicians when Gerson joined his speechwriting team in April 1999. In short order, Gerson drafted Bush's announcement for the presidency, his convention speech, his inaugural address, and most of his "September 11-related speeches." He also "changed [colleague David] Frum's phrase 'axis of hatred' to 'axis of evil,' broadening the notion, making it more sinister, even wicked," reports Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post*. "In spare, Biblical cadence," concurs *Newsweek*'s Howard Fineman, Gerson's speeches "proclaim Bush's central themes of individual compassion and faith-based strength and, since 9/11, an Arma-geddon-like struggle between good and evil."[18]

Bush proclaimed Friday, September 14, 2001, a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, for instance, featuring a televised ceremony at Washington's National Cathedral attended by the First Family, former presidents Clinton, Bush Sr., Carter, and Ford, as well as members of Congress, the Cabinet, and other prominent dignitaries. The Reverend Billy Graham delivered a sermon that spoke about "evil as a mystery" including "the horror, shock, and revulsion" of 9/11. He ended by calling for "a spiritual renewal in America." The president next made a brief emo-tional statement mixing comfort and condolence with a determined call to arms: "Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not have the distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear - to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil."[19]

According to former Bush policy advisor and speechwriter Frum, "the language of good and evil - central to the war on terrorism - came about naturally." In response to several television commentators and edi-torialists who raised the possibility that the U.S. somehow deserved the attacks, Bush consciously adopted "the term 'evildoers' to describe the terrorists," remembered Frum. "He wanted to cut that off right away and make it clear that he saw absolutely no moral equivalence. So he reached right into the Psalms for that word." As historian Jackson Lears explained,

U.S. President George W. Bush addressing the nation and the world hours after the 9/11 attacks.

"To those who worry about the [president's] frequent use of religious language, Bush supporters insist that the rhetoric of Providence is as American as cherry pie."[20]

Beginning on Tuesday morning September 11, 2001 and continuing through Friday evening September 14, viewers around the world watched continuous TV coverage, mesmerised by the unthinkable images they were seeing. Television brought home to Americans especially the polarising effects of the post-Cold War world, including the backlash of Islamic fundamentalism and the catastrophic dangers inherent in terrorist attacks on targets within the United States. Quickly a formulaic narrative emerged; ordinary police and firefighters took the lead as America's unsung national heroes, while Osama bin Laden and the rest of al-Qaeda and the Taliban rose up as villains. Bush's most widely covered public pronouncements during the first few days after September 11 further imbued the television presentation of events with an identifiable Christian resonance. On Sunday September 16, for example, the president told reporters

that "this crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while." By the next day, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer was compelled to qualify Bush's use of "the word 'crusade' with all its connotations of religious war," especially as the State Department attempted "to rally Arab nations to join an international coalition against the perpetrators" of the terrorist attacks.[21]

"Religious invocation [in turn] permeated the earliest breaking" telecasts, recalled video producer and scholar Marusya Bociurkiw, as "New York firefighters (the secular saints of the occasion)" stood "at attention as stretchers were carried out of the rubble." After September 11, "coverage of Bush and his leadership [became] more adulatory," observed investigative reporter Ken Auletta. Most news, public affairs, and even entertainment shows, became much more patriotic in their look, tone, and message. The "loose association between the authority of TV network news and political authority" grew increasingly closer over the next six months, as newscasts across the country sported redesigned "computer-generated logos, brass trumpetry, red-white-and-blue colour schemes, and portentous newsreaders, not to mention [demonstrating regular] deference to official spokespeople, marginalizing dissent, and adopt[ing] official news agendas." Television anchors, commentators, and reporters also took to wearing flag lapel pins "to express their solidarity not merely with the American government but with Americans feeling embattled and anxiety-ridden," recounted media critic Pat Aufderheide.[22]

Bush's early success in framing the victims and perpetrators of September 11 in terms of "innocent civilians" and "cowardly evildoers" also exerted a chilling effect on the more irreverent political talk shows. On the September 17 episode of ABC's *Politically Incorrect* (1994-2002), for example, author Dinesha D'Souza sparked controversy by disagreeing with Bush's use of the word "coward" to describe the 9/11 terrorists. Host Bill Maher reacted quickly with characteristic brashness: "We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the plane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly." As a result, Maher was forced to backtrack for the rest of the week. Sponsors Sears and Federal Express temporarily left the programme because of a sharp surge in viewer complaints over the remark. General Motors and Schering-Plough pulled their ads for good. More strikingly, seventeen ABC affiliates refused to air *Politically Incorrect* any longer.[23] By September 21, a chastened Bill Maher felt compelled to appear on "the stage of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* . . . seeking forgiveness for what might have been a career ending gaffe."[24]

Although *Politically Incorrect* survived through May 2002, and the professional repercussions for Maher never proved fatal, White House reaction was swift and unequivocal. On September 26, press secretary Ari Fleisher called Maher's comment "a terrible thing to say," chiding all Americans "to watch what they say, watch what they do. This is not a time for remarks like that; there never is."[25] For its part, network news was far more inclined to steer clear of controversy and support the Bush administration during the first six months after 9/11, and the president responded

in kind by favouring his most sympathetic TV news advocates such as Brit Hume of Fox. According to Auletta, Bush granted lengthy interviews to ABC's Diane Sawyer, CBS's Scott Pelley, and NBC's Tom Brokaw but refused similar requests from ABC's Peter Jennings and CBS's Dan Rather. Jennings remembered researching a story at the White House and being told by "a senior figure [that 'i]t better be good.'" "I thought [that] was rather naked," recalled the veteran newscaster. "It wasn't a threat, but it didn't sound like a joke," either.[26]

   "It's almost as if the media decided that critical analysis of the events leading to and from 9/11 [was] not only un-American, but potentially anti-American," asserted Australian communication scholar Leila Green, "and consistent with this more consensual approach to newsgathering [was] a ready willingness to see a demonization of 'the enemy': bin Laden, the Taliban, al-Qaeda."[27] Reflective of the psychology of evil, Bush and his administration had fixated on the intrinsic wickedness of Osama bin Laden and his followers and the immorality of their violent behaviour as the root causes of the horror visited on the nation and visible for all to see on TV. In Bush's September 20, 2001 address before a joint session of Congress and a nationwide television audience exceeding 82 million Americans, he identified al-Qaeda "and its leader - a person named Osama bin Laden . . . [as] Islamic extremis[ts who] hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction." Bush's message was crystal clear: "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there . . . Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[28] Evil "explains the existence of perceived incomprehensible actions," concludes political theorist Jonathan Anderson, resulting in an "us v. them" world-view which separates "certain people from the rest of humanity."[29]

   Americans looked increasingly toward safe and comfortable entertainment on television as a brief respite from the nerve-racking urgency of current events, particularly as the war on terrorism heated up with the invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Bush announced to the nation that day that "the United States military has begun strikes against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan."[30] Television audiences received intermittent glimpses of bin Laden through four separate videos telecast worldwide over the next three months. The first two tapes aired initially on the Al Jazeera Arabic-language network and showed a seemingly serene and determined bin Laden calling for Muslims everywhere to join in the struggle against the United States. As a response, the Bush administration released a third video on December 13 after it was "found by the CIA in a house in Jalalabad, Afghanistan." This tape showed "bin Laden boasting about the attacks," and demonstrated the U.S. Government's intention "to win the case against international terrorism in the court of public opinion." A fourth and final video appeared again on Al Jazeera on December 27, showing a haggard though still defiant bin Laden. In retrospect, these four tapes changed few hearts and minds, as attitudes about 9/11 had congealed

months before, "based to a certain extent on [each side's] need to believe one way or another."[31]

Bush's framing of the conflict personalised it from the outset. On September 17, 2001, for instance, he promised to bring Osama bin Laden to "justice" by ad-libbing on camera that "there's an old poster out West, I recall, that says, 'Wanted: Dead or Alive.'"[32] No wonder a vast majority of Americans anticipated seeing bin Laden killed or in custody by the end of major hostilities in Afghanistan. By the time of Bush's first State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, he and the members of his war cabinet were already thinking beyond bin Laden and Afghanistan, however. The good news for his administration was that a nationwide Gallup poll at the time indicated that "two-thirds of Americans sa[id] the U.S. [was] winning the war, and only 6 percent sa[id] it was a mistake to get involved in sending the military to Afghanistan."[33] The bad news for Bush was that a *Christian Science Monitor*/TIPP (TechnoMetrica Institute of Policy and Politics) poll "found 87 percent of Americans saying that if bin Laden and his top aides aren't captured or killed, the U.S. failed in its primary war objective."[34]

Bush was at least partially responsible for both the good and bad poll numbers. Before a television audience of 52 million in the United States alone, Bush utilised his 2002 State of the Union address to prepare the country for further action to "overcome evil with greater good. And we have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace." He also used the address to articulate his administration's loosely evolving "just war" response to 9/11. Having suffered a treacherous attack, the United States "will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere . . . Steadfast in our purpose, we press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory." "Combating evil is the basis for the 'just war' theories of Augustine and Niebuhr," wrote Jonathan Anderson, who also noted that, once the evil has been identified, "any means to destroy it are acceptable, even mandatory."[35]

Following Bush's lead, patriotic expressions of all kinds were readily apparent throughout the television environment in the six months following the September 11 attacks. Many TV stations across the country simply keyed in the image of a tiny American flag at the bottom right-hand corner of their telecasts. The stars-and-stripes also became a familiar background fixture on the CBS hit sitcom, *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996-2005). After six years on prime-time and being forced to switch from NBC to CBS in 1997, *JAG*, a courtroom drama about a close-knit group of lawyers in the U.S. Navy's Judge Advocate General Corps, finally rose to top-20 status during the 2001-02 TV season. Television additionally "made it a [regular] practice of airing long and patriotic half-time shows at [football games] and [playing] the 7th inning rendition of "God Bless America" at baseball games instead of cutting away to commercials." "The most distressing post-Sept 11 trend," in one TV critic's opin-

ion, however, was "the exploitation of patriotism in ads . . . Why is that Jeep driving up the face of the Statue of Liberty? And is Chevy really just trying to 'keep America rolling?'"[36]

The most obvious change in prime-time viewing after 9/11 was the sudden loss of interest in quiz shows, especially the once wildly popular *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* (1999-2002), and the sudden rejection of reality programmes, save *Survivor* (2000-) and a few others. "Reality shows," in particular, were "negatively affected," remembered advertising executive John Rash. After September 11, they "began to look remarkably self-indulgent."[37] In contrast, American audiences started choosing a tried and true diet of TV comfort food. NBC's *Friends* (1994-2004), for example, enjoyed its best ratings ever, ending first in the prime-time Nielsen ratings and third in national syndication behind such perennial favourites as *Wheel of Fortune* (1975-) and *Jeopardy!* (1964-). Other evergreen hits, including *Monday Night Football* (1970-) and *60 Minutes* (1968-), performed as well in 2001-02 as they had in years, as did cable channels specialising in nostalgic entertainment such as American Movie Classics, Nick-at-Night, and TV Land.

On the whole, television news and entertainment programming largely reflected the official view of reality as framed by Bush and his administration during the first six months following September 11. A majority of Americans eagerly looked to the president for leadership and guidance in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and TV in particular reinforced Bush's civil religious outlook, which included his faith as well as his politics. The president regularly called the country to arms during this time period by invoking a higher power, inspiring a media frame that featured the central organising idea of "good overcoming evil" and a story line where the United States was not just waging "America's fight . . . [but] civilization's fight." In the words of Bush as heard on television sets around the world, "Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."[38]

The expressions of unquestioning patriotic support across television news and entertainment programming began to fade somewhat after the six-month commemoration of 9/11, as criticisms of the Bush administration's handling of the war on terrorism slowly grew louder, bolder, and far more frequent. By July 2001, "the rally-'round-the-flag effect dissipated" slightly, leaving Bush's poll numbers at a still noteworthy 70 percent, but clearly dropping.[39] On the news front, CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour admitted on the September 10, 2003 edition of CNBC's *Topic A With Tina Brown* that "certainly television - and perhaps to a certain extent my station - was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did, in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my view, in terms of the kinds of broadcast work we did."[40]

By February 2003, the public too had grown deeply conflicted over the impending Iraqi crisis. According to reporters Patrick Tyler and Janet Elder, a *New York Times*/CBS News poll showed that "three-

quarters of Americans [saw] war as inevitable, and two-thirds approve[d] of war as an option . . . [but] 59 percent of Americans said they believed the president should give the United Nations more time. Sixty-three percent said Washington should not act without the support of its allies, and 56 percent said Mr. Bush should wait for United Nations approval." More startling was that Bush's "overall job approval rating [was then] down to 54 percent from 64 percent just a month [earlier, or at] the lowest level since the summer before the September 11 2001 attacks."[41]

Still, American-led forces invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003, complete with more than 600 embedded reporters relaying jerky real-time video images from the battlefield to an average viewership of seven million on CNN, MSNBC, and the Fox News Channel combined, up from their usual joint total of two million.[42] The "shock and awe" campaign unleashed on Iraq was also a made-for-TV spectacle designed to win audience approval as well as the war on the ground. During the first six months after 9/11, the Bush administration and the American people harmoniously embraced a "just war" scenario together. Television was the pivotal forum on which that tacit agreement between government policy and public support was reached. Now a year and a half later, TV was again the most prominent medium on which to see the "just war" story line - only this time it led inevitably and inexorably to a highly contentious and controversial attack on Iraq.

3.   In the Name of Religion

The national coming together and one-size-fits-all patriotism that America saw in the months that followed 9/11 is now a distant memory. In many ways it has been Bush himself who shattered that comity.

-John Dickerson and Karen
Tumulty[43]

John Rossant, the European editor for *BusinessWeek*, wrote on the one-year anniversary of 9/11 that "already that crystal-clear September morning is fast becoming an historical memory, the way some of us still remember a November day in 1963 when gunning down a young American president seemed to mark the end of one age and the beginning of another. We sense that history will divide into 'before September 11' and 'after.'"[44] In *Covering the Body*, Barbie Zelizer similarly identified the Kennedy assassination as a shared milestone for an earlier generation, reassessing how journalists had utilised that tragic event at the time to promote their own agendas and shape collective memory.[45] Many subsequent politicians, authors, and artists, such as filmmaker Oliver Stone in *JFK* (1991), for instance, have revisited the Kennedy shooting from a wide variety of perspectives. So too is the way in which 9/11 is already being utilised on television - and is likely to continue to be used by all sorts of vested interests in the future.

A case in point is the $10 million made-for-TV docudrama, *DC 9/11: Time of Crisis*, which premiered on Sunday, September 7, 2003, and
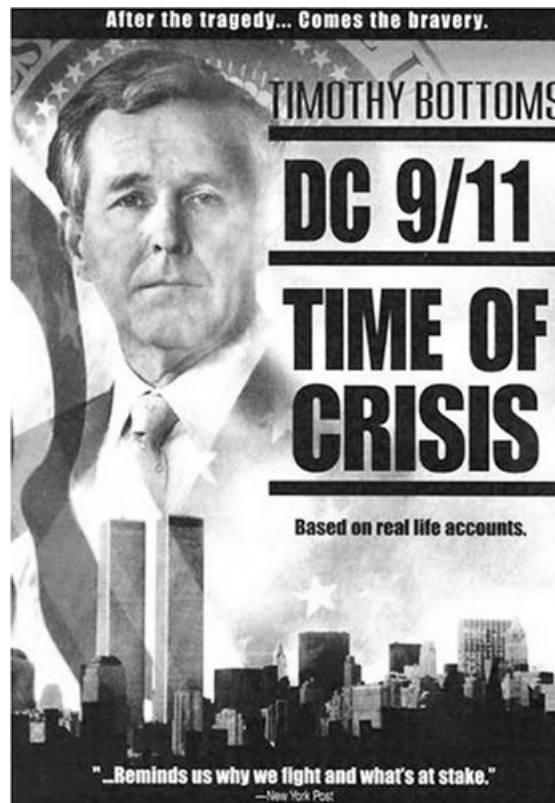
A godlike George W. Bush (Timothy Bottoms) hovers above the Manhattan skyline in this poster for Lionel Chetwynd's made-for-television film DC 9/11: Time of Crisis. *Copyright © 2003 Showtime Networks Inc.*

played in heavy rotation on Showtime throughout the remainder of the month. Produced by journeyman writer-director Lionel Chetwynd, *DC 9/11* recreates the first nine days following the terrorist attacks from the inside perspective of Bush's newly ordained war cabinet. "Chetwynd is among the few outspokenly conservative producers in Hollywood, and one of the few with close ties to the White House," wrote *Washington Post* reporter Paul Farhi. Chetwynd's depiction of President Bush is unabashedly hagiographic in a script he wrote and later ran "past a group of conservative Washington pundits, including Fred Barnes, Charles Krauthammer, and Morton Kondracke."[46]

The climatic scene of *DC 9/11* involves actor Timothy Bottoms portraying George W. Bush as he presumably delivers his prime-time September 20 address to a joint session of Congress. Shots of Bottoms orating before a podium are intercut with emotionally stirring documentary footage of 9/11, culminating in a shot of Bush finishing this very same televised speech on the actual occasion. All told, Chetwynd and his production crew framed events in *DC 9/11* to authenticate and legitimise Bush as America's chief executive. They dramatised his performance as president - fully supported by an able and gifted cabinet of advisors - thus reenacting their shared handling of the unprecedented challenges surrounding September 11, 2001. If only 9/11 had unfolded as simply and heroically as this television depiction.

In *Media Representations of September 11*, sociologists Steven Chermak, Frankie Y. Bailey, and Michelle Brown described how 9/11 "has been narrativized by way of the media into a primary, recognizable discourse, one with a distinct logic - a clear beginning (September 11, 2001), forceful middle (war), and moral end (victory)."[47] Especially during the first six months after 9/11, Americans mostly saw and heard only one side of the story transmitted through their television sets. Problems eventually arose when developments on the ground did not seamlessly correspond with the official version of things as presented by Bush as the principal spokesperson for his administration. Probably the clearest example of this growing disconnect between the Bush team's framing of events and the ensuing media coverage was the president's carefully choreographed May 1, 2003 arrival on the deck of the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln* off the coast of San Diego, California, in an S-3B Viking aircraft to announce the allied victory in the war with Iraq.

On that bright sunny day, Bush - dressed in a green flight suit with a helmet tucked underneath his arm - stood smartly before TV cameras with a giant "Mission Accomplished" banner in the background. Even at the time, the transparency of casting Bush as the lead character in such an obvious made-for-television photo opportunity was criticised. Six months later, however, more direct press attacks surfaced on all of the major news networks because of the continuing violence in Iraq and the failure to find any weapons of mass destruction. The situation was further exacerbated on October 23, when Bush told reporters on camera that the "Mission Accomplished" sign was conceived by the Navy, not the White House. New press secretary Scott McClellan needed to qualify his boss's statement a week later when journalists found out otherwise.[48]

Now years after the terrorist hijackings, the tide has obviously turned in the various ways in which television represents 9/11 and the subsequent war on terrorism. No longer is there unanimity of purpose and opinion between the administration's viewpoint and those who produce or even watch the unfolding events related to the aftermath of 9/11 on their television screens. Bush's clear and simple framing of September 11 in terms of "good overcoming evil" proved one of his greatest assets in forging an early response for a nation in which 40 percent of its citizens shared his deeply held evangelical beliefs.[49] According to ethicist Peter Singer,

Bush employed the word "evil" in reference to 9/11 in 319 speeches through mid-June 2003. Furthermore, Bush used "evil" as a noun 83 percent of the time in those speeches and as an adjective only 17 percent. The significance of his framing of the concept this way suggests that he "is not thinking about evil deeds, or even evil people, nearly as he is thinking about evil as a thing, or a force, something that has an existence apart from the cruel, callous, brutal, and selfish acts of which human beings are capable." Singer concluded that Bush's "readiness to talk about evil in this manner raises the question of what meaning evil can have in a secular, modern world."[50]

Bush's particular viewpoint on evil is part of a longstanding fundamentalist Christian perspective in American culture. His use of the word in respect to September 11 springs from his deep personal faith in both Jesus Christ and the United States of America. "Bush's world-view is extremely rigid, circumscribed by the good-versus-evil religious convictions to which he has adhered since his recovery from alcohol seventeen years ago," explained conservative correspondent and historian, Richard Brookhiser, in 2003. "Bush's faith means that he does not tolerate, or even recognise, ambiguity: there is an all-knowing God who decrees certain behaviours, and leaders must obey." Put another way, "Bush once famously told Senator Joe Biden, 'I don't do nuance,'" recalled *Time*'s senior columnist Joe Klein, "but the struggle against Islamic radicalism is a festival of nuance. It is not quite a war, and it doesn't yield easily to simple notions of good and evil, friend and foe."[51]

Bush's nemesis, Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda followers, likewise reflect the general tendency of demonising their own archenemy of choice - America - as the world's "Great Satan." Ironically, both camps subscribed to a kind of caricatured "just war" scenario that George Lakoff likened to a "classic fairy tale" structure where combat is personified in two diametrically opposed nationalist figures (the "hero [being] moral and courageous"; the "villain amoral and vicious") who fight each other for the purpose of settling moral accounts. In the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, Lakoff observed that the overriding media frame essentially presented a struggle between George H. W. Bush and Saddam Hussein. A similar confrontation can be recognised in the media coverage after 9/11, first pitting George W. Bush against bin Laden, and then shifting over to Bush and Hussein in the run-up to the second Iraqi conflict commencing in March 2003. Such simple melodramatics increasingly undercut the ability of TV programming to adequately encompass and frame the growing complexities of the war on terrorism. As a result, the official "just war" story line based on "good overcoming evil" began to rupture and unravel under the weight of current events leading analysts such as Richard Brookhiser to ask: "Does Bush have the imagination to lead a great war? And even if he does, can he communicate it?"[52]

"Questions about why people do bad things - sometimes unspeakably evil things - in the name of religion" also persisted. Scholar and minister Charles Kimball explored this seeming paradox in *When Religion Becomes Evil*, pinpointing five specific warning signs: an absolutist belief

in one's own faith as the only true path to God; blind obedience to dogma; an apocalyptic vision of the future; using ends to justify the means; and a willingness to wage holy war. All five of these indicators are wholly characteristic of al-Qaeda thinking and actions. America, too, needs to guard against several of these excesses in prosecuting its war on terrorism. "The challenges posed by religious diversity combined with the inescapable fact of global interdependence are now as clear as the September sky over New York that fateful day," proclaimed Kimball, which is why theologians like him and secular humanists like Andrew Delbanco have begun the slow and deliberate process of reformulating a more contemporary understanding of evil in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.[53] Still, much work needs to be done.

What is clear in retrospect, though, is that the old-fashioned fundamentalist view of evil is inadequate in helping Americans make better sense of 9/11 and what exactly can be done about it. The complexities inherent in the attacks and the U.S. response to them do not fit neatly into an "us v. them" story line. Similarly, the long-term effect of Bush's "good overcoming evil" pronouncements - echoed widely and unreflectively on televisions around the world - was more to paper over than clarify the causes of September 11. Evil deeds were committed on 9/11, but they resulted from more than just the personal exploits of Osama bin Laden's surrogates. They also occurred because of broader, more systemic socio-political problems and controversies, such as widespread instability in Afghanistan after the Soviet war ended in 1989, the unresolved and chronic nature of the Middle East conflict between Israel and Palestine, America's steadfast support of Israel and the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, the failure of most domestic economies in the Arab world to adequately provide job opportunities for their young adult male populations, and the profound economic, technological, and cultural changes wrought by globalisation over the last generation.

What globalisation specifically has unleashed is a growing fundamentalist backlash from the guardians of tradition in virtually every region on earth. In a sense, a transnational clash of civilisations is taking place - a so-called "culture war" of global proportions - driven above all else by religious orthodoxy. Moreover, this "culture war" is not only violent in nature but also increasingly suicidal. The terrorist acts committed on September 11 are the most dramatic examples in the West so far of the darker impulses of globalisation. Within this much broader context, then, scholars as well as average citizens are still working out the longer-term meaning of September 11 as an historical turning point. They are also struggling to find a more globally informed sense of evil, which until now has been mostly absent from the televising of 9/11 and its aftermath.

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