



Godly Republic: A Centrist Blueprint for America's Faith-Based Future. By John J. DiIulio, Jr. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. 329 pp. \$24.95.

The title and subtitle of John DiIulio's lively book do a fine job of capturing the project: to provide a centrist plan for the next steps to be taken *if* we wish to realize the godly republic our nation's Founders set out to establish. Centrism often turns out to be salt without savor, and thus ripe to be thrown out. There is, though, no lack of bite to what DiIulio serves up. DiIulio's moderation should not deceive; the

man has a plan that not everyone will like. The book comes studded with a stunning twenty-three endorsements by distinguished folks from all quarters. Cumulatively they make the point: this is centrism to be reckoned with.

The book's sub-subtitle reveals the method: "A Former White House Official Explodes Ten Polarizing Myths about Religion and Government in America Today." For the ten myths, the reader will have to crack open DiIulio's book, but the reader of this review is

entitled to know the five "truths" with which DiIulio opposes said myths. Truth One: "The framers of the U.S. Constitution founded a new government that they hoped would guide America's rise, not as either a secular state or a Christian nation, but as a godly republic marked by religious pluralism" (24). Truth Two: "The U.S. Supreme Court insists that government must give religious expression and organizations the same basic protections that it offers to nonreligious expression and organizations, and that government must also strive to be neutral when dealing with different religions" (55). Truth Three: "Most Americans are religious believers who respect other citizens without regard to religion and whose consensus on church-state issues national leaders have generally heeded by enacting bipartisan laws and faith-friendly programs" (82). Truth Four: "Empirical Research proves that many different types of faith-based programs are highly effective at mobilizing volunteers, that most help people in need without regard to religion, that a majority would welcome government support to expand social services, and that three 'faith factors' figure in social well-being" (153). Truth Five: "Political divides are natural in a healthy and representative democracy, but religion in a republic can and should do more to moderate than to metastasize such differences. Faith-based leaders and organizations can help government to solve persistent social problems and spread civic trust. That future is ours to choose."

Toward the end of the book, DiIulio offers a list of principles to guide future action. The first three of them are: "Take prisoners;" "Do unto others;" and "Think Catholic." The C is capitalized in the original. The salt is not without savor.

DiIulio's professional background and training in public administration assure that the nitty-gritty, practical parts of the book are among the most rewarding, though not the most scintillating. DiIulio knows that the devil lurks in the details, and he is therefore willing to do the hard work of chasing down the particulars of how faith-based programs and the rest should work going forward. When, however, he opens the book with a reading of the Founding that established "neutrality" as the constitutional norm governing governmental choice between religion and non-religion, one can ask whether DiIulio has perhaps overlooked more than detail. As John Witte, Jr., has written: "religion is special and is accorded special protection in the Constitution."

PATRICK MCKINLEY BRENNAN
Villanova University School of Law