



Middle Church: Reclaiming the Moral Values of the Faithful Majority from the Religious Right

Bob Edgar

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The radical religious right has put the wrong issues at the top of the moral agenda for America, says Bob Edgar, the general secretary of the National Council of Churches USA and a former six-term congressman. The moral issues that really matter to America's faithful majority -- to "Middle Church" -- says Edgar, are peace, poverty, and planet Earth. *Middle Church* is a stirring call to progressive people of faith to take back the moral high ground from the right-wing extremists and make America a better -- not a more divided -- country.

The Bible seldom mentions homosexuality, doesn't mention abortion at all, but discusses poverty and peace more than two thousand times. But despite the Bible's emphasis on issues of social justice, the politics of faith have been captured in this country by a radical minority with its narrow and highly divisive agenda emphasizing personal piety above all else. This limited agenda is built around opposition to gay marriage, abortion, and stem-cell research, rather than the timeless and unifying themes of the Bible. In a stunning reversal of the historic role of religion in progressive change, faith has now been co-opted into a force for preemptive war, indifference to the poor, and reckless environmental degradation.

In *Middle Church*, Bob Edgar reclaims faith for the American mainstream. He rebuts the distorted arguments of the far religious right and instead offers progressive solutions grounded in Scripture behind which most Americans can unite. He reminds us that Jesus preached mainly about the poor and that social justice and peace were at the heart of his ministry. Edgar agrees that all Americans have a right to bring the values of their faiths to bear on the policies of our government. But faith, as he shows, should lead to progressive solutions for the defining moral issues of our time: peace, poverty, and planet Earth. *Middle Church* identifies the common ground on which people of faith -- Christians, Jews, and Muslims -- can unite and shows how this faithful majority can put tolerance, social justice, and love at the top of the political agenda in this country once again.

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