

Juicy quotes

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [May 10, 2000](#) issue

Some years ago a writer in the *Washington Post* made a snide comment about evangelicals of the southern persuasion, saying that they were dim-witted ignoramuses. I should know the statement by heart since it's been quoted often enough by bright-witted evangelicals as evidence of media bias. That I can't quote it offhand must mean that I am either a nonevangelical nonsoutherner or that I don't have media elites in my target range. (I could also store in my memory hard-drive a treasury of right-wing and snotty critiques of mainstream Protestants and liberal Catholics. But that's a topic for another day.)

In the grand manner of a semi-dim-witted midwesterner, I want to propose an end to such furies of overcitation. This I propose in a grand and certain-to-be-unacknowledged gesture of friendliness toward the author of this month's too juicy, too convenient quotation. Not since a Southern Baptist Convention president informed us that God did not hear the prayers of Jews—a statement he later backed away from—has anyone given more ammunition to the deriders of the Religious Right. The statement is by Marvin Olasky, editor of the *World*, inventor of “compassionate conservatism” and an adviser to a presidential candidate. He was quoted in the left-leaning *Nation*. Olasky had made the mistake of letting his words appear in an interview in a magazine he must have assumed no political opponents would note, the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*:

God does not forbid women to be leaders in society . . . but when that occurs it's usually because of the abdication of men . . . there's a certain shame attached to it. I would vote for a woman for the presidency, in some situations, but again, there's a certain shame attached. Why don't you have a man who's able to step forward. . . . It's harder when there are women who are CEO's of companies and so forth. Still it comes down to the question of 'Do we trust God and do we believe that he has wisdom that we don't have?'

There it is—the kind of talk that held back women’s suffrage and women’s rights in general. That sees shame in the fact that women have been prime ministers or premiers or presidents in Israel, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other unenlightened non-Christian regimes.

Let’s retire this quote now. Of course, I say this while exposing Olasky’s lines one more time, to enter them into the record and to suggest that we still have a long way to go to overcome injustice toward women.

“The Lord hath delivered” Olasky into the hands of uncompassionate moderate and liberal foes. It would be nice if someone would rescue him from the prominence this quotation gives him. But it would be a shame, a sign of mistrust in God, if we saw or let a woman do it.