9/11 And The Sport of God
by Bill Moyers

This article is adapted from Bill Moyer's address this week at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where Judith and Bill Moyers received the seminary's highest award, the Union Medal, for their contributions to faith and reason in America.

At the Central Baptist Church in Marshall, Texas, where I was baptized in the faith, we believed in a free church in a free state. I still do.

My spiritual forbears did not take kindly to living under theocrats who embraced religious liberty for themselves but denied it to others. "Forced worship stinks in God's nostrils," thundered the dissenter Roger Williams as he was banished from Massachusetts for denying Puritan authority over his conscience. Baptists there were a "pitiful negligible minority" but they were agitators for freedom and therefore denounced as "incendiaries of the commonwealth" for holding to their belief in that great democracy of faith - the priesthood of all believers. For refusing to pay tribute to the state religion they were fined, flogged, and exiled. In 1651 the Baptist Obadiah Holmes was given 30 stripes with a three-corded whip after he violated the law and took forbidden communion with another Baptist in Lynn, Massachusetts. His friends offered to pay his fine for his release but he refused. They offered him strong drink to anesthetize the pain of the flogging. Again he refused. It is the love of liberty, he said, "that must free the soul."

Such revolutionary ideas made the new nation with its Constitution and Bill of Rights "a haven for the cause of conscience." No longer could magistrates order citizens to support churches they did not attend and recite creeds that they did not believe. No longer would "the loathsome combination of church and state" - as Thomas Jefferson described it - be the settled order. Unlike the Old World that had been wracked with religious wars and persecution, the government of America would take no sides in the religious free-for-all that liberty would make possible and politics would make inevitable. The First Amendment neither inculcates religion nor inoculates against it. Americans could be loyal to the Constitution without being hostile to God, or they could pay no heed to God without fear of being mugged by an official God Squad. It has been a remarkable arrangement that guaranteed "soul freedom."

It is at risk now, and the fourth observance of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is an appropriate time to think about it.

Four years ago this week, the poet's prophetic metaphor became real again and "the great dark birds of history" plunged into our lives.

They came in the name of God. They came bent on murder and martyrdom. It was as if they rode to earth on the fierce breath of Allah himself, for the sacred scriptures that had nurtured these murderous young men are steeped in images of a violent and
vengeful God who wills life for the faithful and horrific torment for unbelievers.

Yes, the Koran speaks of mercy and compassion and calls for ethical living. But such passages are no match for the ferocity of instruction found there for waging war for God's sake. The scholar Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer carefully traces this trail of holy violence in his important book, *Is Religion Killing Us?* [Trinity Press International. 2003]. He highlights many of the verses in the Koran that the Islamic terrorists could have had in their hearts and on their lips four years ago as they moved toward their gruesome rendezvous. As I read some of them, close your eyes and recall the scenes of that bright September morning which began in the bright sun under a blue sky:

"Those who believe Fight in the cause of Allah, and Those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil." (4:76)

"So We sent against them A furious Wind through days of disaster, that We might Give them a taste of a Penalty of humiliation In this Life; but The Penalty of the Hereafter will be More Humiliating still: And they Will find No help." (41:16)

"Then watch thou For the Day That the sky will Bring forth a kind Of smoke (or mist) Plainly visible, Enveloping the people: This will be a Penalty Grievous." (44:10-11)

"Did the people of the towns Feel Secure against the coming Of Our Wrath by night While they were asleep? Or else did they feel Secure against its coming in Broad daylight while they Played About (carefree)? Did they then feel secure Against the Plan of Allah? - But no one can feel Secure from the Plan of Allah, except those (Doomed) to ruin." (7:97-99)

So the holy warriors came - an airborne death cult, their sights on God's enemies: regular folks, starting the day's routine. One minute they're pulling off their jackets, shaking Sweet n' Low into their coffee, adjusting the height of their chair or a picture of a child or sweetheart or spouse in a frame on their desk, booting up their computer - and in the next, they are engulfed by a horrendous cataclysm. God's will. Poof!

But it is never only the number of dead by which terrorists measure their work. It is also the number of the living - the survivors - taken hostage to fear. Their mission was to invade our psyche; get inside our heads - deprive us of trust, faith, and peace of mind: keep us from ever again believing in a safe, just, and peaceful world, and from working to bring that world to pass. The writer Terry Tempest Williams has said "the human heart is the first home of democracy." Fill that heart with fear and people will give up the risks of democracy for the assurances of security; fill that heart with fear and you can shake the house to its foundations.

In the days leading up to 9/11 our daughter and husband adopted their first baby. On
the morning of September 11th our son-in-law passed through the shadow of the World Trade Center toward his office a few blocks up the street. He arrived as the horrors erupted. He saw the flames, the falling bodies, the devastation. His building was evacuated and for long awful moments he couldn't reach his wife, our daughter, to say he was okay. Even after they connected it wasn't until the next morning that he was able to make it home. Throughout that fearful night our daughter was alone with their new baby. Later she told us that for weeks thereafter she would lie awake at night, wondering where and when it might happen again, going to the computer at three in the morning to check out what she could about bioterrorism, germ warfare, anthrax and the vulnerability of children. The terrorists had violated a mother's deepest space.

Who was not vulnerable? That morning Judith and I made it to our office at Channel Thirteen on West 33rd Street just after the second plane struck. Our building was evacuated although the two of us remained with other colleagues to do what we could to keep the station on the air. The next day it was evacuated again because of a bomb scare at the Empire State Building nearby. We had just ended a live broadcast for PBS when security officers swept through and ordered everyone out. This time we left. As we were making our way down the stairs I took Judith's arm and was struck by the thought: Is this the last time I'll touch her? Could what we had begun together a half century ago end here on this dim, bare staircase? I forced the thought from my mind, willed it away, but in the early hours of morning, as I sat at the window of our apartment looking out at the sky, the sinister intruder crept back.

Terrorists plant time bombs in our heads, hoping to turn each and every imagination into a private hell governed by our fear of them.

They win only if we let them, only if we become like them: vengeful, imperious, intolerant, paranoid. Having lost faith in all else, zealots have nothing left but a holy cause to please a warrior God. They win if we become holy warriors, too; if we kill the innocent as they do; strike first at those who had not struck us; allow our leaders to use the fear of terrorism to make us afraid of the truth; cease to think and reason together, allowing others to tell what's in God's mind. Yes, we are vulnerable to terrorists, but only a shaken faith in ourselves can do us in.

So over the past four years I have kept reminding myself of not only the horror but the humanity that was revealed that day four years ago, when through the smoke and fire we glimpsed the heroism, compassion, and sacrifice of people who did the best of things in the worst of times. I keep telling myself that this beauty in us is real, that it makes life worthwhile and democracy work and that no terrorist can take it from us.

But I am not so sure. As a Christian realist I honor my inner skeptic. And as a journalist I always know the other side of the story. The historian Edward Gibbon once wrote of historians what could be said of journalists. He wrote: "The theologians may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian [read: journalist] He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a
long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings."

The other side of the story:

Muslims have no monopoly on holy violence. As Jack Nelson-Pallmayer points out, God's violence in the sacred texts of both faiths reflect a deep and troubling pathology "so pervasive, vindictive, and destructive" that it contradicts and subverts the collective weight of other passages that exhort ethical behavior or testify to a loving God.

For days now we have watched those heart-breaking scenes on the Gulf Coast: the steaming, stinking, sweltering wreckage of cities and suburbs; the fleeing refugees; the floating corpses, hungry babies, and old people huddled together in death, the dogs gnawing at their feet; stranded children standing in water reeking of feces and garbage; families scattered; a mother holding her small child and an empty water jug, pleading for someone to fill it; a wife, pushing the body of her dead husband on a wooden plank down a flooded street; desperate people struggling desperately to survive.

Now transport those current scenes from our newspapers and television back to the first Book of the Bible - the Book of Genesis. They bring to life what we rarely imagine so graphically when we read of the great flood that devastated the known world. If you read the Bible as literally true, as fundamentalists do, this flood was ordered by God. "And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh... behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (6:5-13). "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die." (6:17-19) Noah and his family are the only humans spared - they were, after all, God's chosen. But for everyone else: "... the waters prevailed so mightily... that all the high mountains....were covered....And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts...and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died....' (7:17-23).

The flood is merely Act One. Read on: This God first "hardens the heart of Pharaoh" to make sure the Egyptian ruler will not be moved by the plea of Moses to let his people go. Then because Pharaoh's heart is hardened, God turns the Nile into blood so people cannot drink its water and will suffer from thirst. Not satisfied with the results, God sends swarms of locusts and flies to torture them; rains hail and fire and thunder on them destroys the trees and plants of the field until nothing green remains; orders every first-born child to be slaughtered, from the first-born of Pharaoh right on down to "the first-born of the maidservant behind the mill." An equal-murderous God, you might say. The massacre continues until "there is not a house where one was not dead." While the Egyptian families mourn their dead, God orders Moses to loot from their houses all their gold and silver and clothing. Finally, God's thirst for blood is satisfied, God pauses to rest - and boasts: "I have made sport of the Egyptians."

Violence: the sport of God. God, the progenitor of shock and awe.

And that's just Act II. As the story unfolds women and children are hacked to death on
God's order; unborn infants are ripped from their mother’s wombs; cities are leveled - their women killed if they have had sex, the virgins taken at God's command for the pleasure of his holy warriors. When his holy warriors spare the lives of 50,000 captives God is furious and sends Moses back to rebuke them and tell them to finish the job. One tribe after another falls to God-ordered genocide: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites - names so ancient they have disappeared into the mists as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, infants in arms, shepherds, threshers, carpenters, merchants, housewives - living human beings, flesh and blood: "And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them...(and) your eyes shall not pity them."

So it is written - in the Holy Bible.

Yes, I know: the early church fathers, trying to cover up the blood-soaked trail of God's sport, decreed that anything that disagrees with Christian dogma about the perfection of God is to be interpreted spiritually. Yes, I know: Edward Gibbon himself acknowledged that the literal Biblical sense of God "is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason" and that we must therefore read the scriptures through a veil of allegory. Yes, I know: we can go through the Bible and construct a God more pleasing to the better angels of our nature (as I have done.) Yes, I know: Christians claim the Old Testament God of wrath was supplanted by the Gospel's God of love [See The God of Evil, Allan Hawkins, Exlibris.]

I know these things; all of us know these things. But we also know that the "violence-of-God" tradition remains embedded deep in the DNA of monotheistic faith. We also know that fundamentalists the world over and at home consider the "sacred texts" to be literally God's word on all matters. Inside that logic you cannot read part of the Bible allegorically and the rest of it literally; if you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, and the depiction of the Great Judgment at the end times you must also believe that God is sadistic, brutal, vengeful, callow, cruel and savage - that God slaughters.

Millions believe it.

Let's go back to 9/11 four years ago. The ruins were still smoldering when the reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell went on television to proclaim that the terrorist attacks were God’s punishment of a corrupted America. They said the government had adopted the agenda "of the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians" not to mention the ACLU and People for the American Way (The God of the Bible apparently holds liberals in the same low esteem as Hittites and Gergushites and Jebusites and all the other pagans of holy writ.) Just as God had sent the Great Flood to wipe out a corrupted world, now - disgusted with a decadent America - "God almighty is lifting his protection from us." Critics said such comments were deranged. But millions of Christian fundamentalists and conservatives
didn't think so. They thought Robertson and Falwell were being perfectly consistent with the logic of the Bible as they read it: God withdraws favor from sinful nations - the terrorists were meant to be God's wake-up call: better get right with God. Not many people at the time seemed to notice that Osama bin Laden had also been reading his sacred book closely and literally, and had called on Muslims to resist what he described as a "fierce Judeo-Christian campaign" against Islam, praying to Allah for guidance "to exalt the people who obey Him and humiliate those who disobey Him."

Suddenly we were immersed in the pathology of a "holy war" as defined by fundamentalists on both sides. You could see this pathology play out in General William Boykin. A professional soldier, General Boykin had taken up with a small group called the Faith Force Multiplier whose members apply military principles to evangelism with a manifesto summoning warriors "to the spiritual warfare for souls." After Boykin had led Americans in a battle against a Somalian warlord he announced: "I know my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his God was an idol." Now Boykin was going about evangelical revivals preaching that America was in a holy war as "a Christian nation" battling Satan and that America's Muslim adversaries will be defeated "only if we come against them in the name of Jesus." For such an hour, America surely needed a godly leader. So General Boykin explained how it was that the candidate who had lost the election in 2000 nonetheless wound up in the White House. President Bush, he said, "was not elected by a majority of the voters - he was appointed by God." Not surprising, instead of being reprimanded for evangelizing while in uniform, General Boykin is now the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. (Just as it isn't surprising that despite his public call for the assassination of a foreign head of state, Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing was one of the first groups to receive taxpayer funds from the President's Faith-Based Initiative for "relief work" on the Gulf Coast.)

We can't wiggle out of this, people. Alvin Hawkins states it frankly: "This is a problem we can't walk away from." We're talking about a powerful religious constituency that claims the right to tell us what's on God's mind and to decide the laws of the land according to their interpretation of biblical revelation and to enforce those laws on the nation as a whole. For the Bible is not just the foundational text of their faith; it has become the foundational text for a political movement.

True, people of faith have always tried to bring their interpretation of the Bible to bear on American laws and morals - this very seminary is part of that tradition; it's the American way, encouraged and protected by the First Amendment. But what is unique today is that the radical religious right has succeeded in taking over one of America's great political parties - the country is not yet a theocracy but the Republican Party is - and they are driving American politics, using God as a a battering ram on almost every issue: crime and punishment, foreign policy, health care, taxation, energy, regulation, social services and so on.

What's also unique is the intensity, organization, and anger they have brought to the public square. Listen to their preachers, evangelists, and homegrown ayatollahs: Their
viral intolerance - their loathing of other people’s beliefs, of America’s secular and liberal values, of an independent press, of the courts, of reason, science and the search for objective knowledge - has become an unprecedented sectarian crusade for state power. They use the language of faith to demonize political opponents, mislead and misinform voters, censor writers and artists, ostracize dissenters, and marginalize the poor. These are the foot soldiers in a political holy war financed by wealthy economic interests and guided by savvy partisan operatives who know that couching political ambition in religious rhetoric can ignite the passion of followers as ferociously as when Constantine painted the Sign of Christ (the "Christograph") on the shields of his soldiers and on the banners of his legions and routed his rivals in Rome. Never mind that the Emperor himself was never baptized into the faith; it served him well enough to make the God worshipped by Christians his most important ally and turn the Sign of Christ into the one imperial symbol most widely recognized and feared from east to west.

Let’s take a brief detour to Ohio and I'll show you what I am talking about. In recent weeks a movement called the Ohio Restoration Project has been launched to identify and train thousands of "Patriot Pastors" to get out the conservative religious vote next year. According to press reports, the leader of the movement - the senior pastor of a large church in suburban Columbus - casts the 2006 elections as an apocalyptic clash between "the forces of righteousness and the hordes of hell." The fear and loathing in his message is palpable: He denounces public schools that won't teach creationism, require teachers to read the Bible in class, or allow children to pray. He rails against the "secular jihadists" who have "hijacked" America and prevent school kids from learning that Hitler was "an avid evolutionist." He links abortion to children who murder their parents. He blasts the "pagan left" for trying to redefine marriage. He declares that "homosexual rights" will bring "a flood of demonic oppression." On his church website you read that "Reclaiming the teaching of our Christian heritage among America’s youth is paramount to a sense of national destiny that God has invested into this nation."

One of the prominent allies of the Ohio Restoration Project is a popular televangelist in Columbus who heads a $40 million-a-year ministry that is accessible worldwide via 1,400 TV stations and cable affiliates. Although he describes himself as neither Republican nor Democrat but a "Christocrat" - a gladiator for God marching against "the very hordes of hell in our society" - he nonetheless has been spotted with so many Republican politicians in Washington and elsewhere that he has been publicly described as a "spiritual advisor" to the party. The journalist Marley Greiner has been following his ministry for the organization, FreePress. She writes that because he considers the separation of church and state to be "a lie perpetrated on Americans - especially believers in Jesus Christ" - he identifies himself as a "wall builder" and "wall buster." As a wall builder he will "restore Godly presence in government and culture; as a wall buster he will tear down the church-state wall." He sees the Christian church as a sleeping giant that has the ability and the anointing from God to transform America. The giant is stirring. At a rally in July he proclaimed to a packed house: "Let the Revolution begin!" And the congregation roared back: "Let the Revolution begin!"

(The Revolution's first goal, by the way, is to elect as governor next year the current
Republican secretary of state who oversaw the election process in 2004 year when a surge in Christian voters narrowly carried George Bush to victory. As General Boykin suggested of President Bush's anointment, this fellow has acknowledged that "God wanted him as secretary of state during 2004" because it was such a critical election. Now he is criss-crossing Ohio meeting with Patriot Pastors and their congregations proclaiming that "America is at its best when God is at its center.") [For the complete stories from which this information has been extracted, see: "An evening with Rod Parsley, by Marley Greiner, FreePress, July 20, 2005; Patriot Pastors," Marilyn Warfield, Cleveland Jewish News, July 29, 2005; "Ohio televangelist has plenty of influence, but he wants more", Ted Wendling, Religion News Service, Chicago Tribune, July 1, 2005; "Shaping Politics from the pulpits," Susan Page, USA Today, Aug. 3, 2005; "Religion and Politics Should Be Mixed Says Ohio Secretary of State," WTOL-TV Toledo, October 29, 2004].

The Ohio Restoration Project is spreading. In one month alone last year in the president's home state of Texas, a single Baptist preacher added 2000 "Patriot Pastors" to the rolls. On his website he now encourages pastors to "speak out on the great moral issues of our day...to restore and reclaim America for Christ."

Alas, these "great moral issues" do not include building a moral economy. The Christian Right trumpets charity (as in Faith Based Initiatives) but is silent on social and economic justice. Inequality in America has reached scandalous proportions: a few weeks ago the government acknowledged that while incomes are growing smartly for the first time in years, the primary winners are the top earners - people who receive stocks, bonuses, and other income in addition to wages. The nearly 80 percent of Americans who rely mostly on hourly wages barely maintained their purchasing power. Even as Hurricane Katrina was hitting the Gulf Coast, giving us a stark reminder of how poverty can shove poor people into the abyss, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that last year one million people were added to 36 million already living in poverty. And since 1999 the income of the poorest one fifth of Americans has dropped almost nine percent.

None of these harsh realities of ordinary life seem to bother the radical religious right. To the contrary, in the pursuit of political power they have cut a deal with America's richest class and their partisan allies in a law-of-the-jungle strategy to "starve" the government of resources needed for vital social services that benefit everyone while championing more and more spending rich corporations and larger tax cuts for the rich.

How else to explain the vacuum in their "great moral issues" of the plight of millions of Americans without adequate health care? Of the gross corruption of politics by campaign contributions that skew government policies toward the wealthy at the expense of ordinary taxpayers? (On the very day that oil and gas prices reached a record high the president signed off on huge taxpayer subsidies for energy conglomerates already bloated with windfall profits plucked from the pockets of average Americans filling up at gas tanks across the country; yet the next Sunday you could pass a hundred church signboards with no mention of a sermon on crony capitalism.)
This silence on economic and political morality is deafening but revealing. The radicals on the Christian right are now the dominant force in America's governing party. Without them the government would not be in the hands of people who don't believe in government. They are culpable in upholding a system of class and race in which, as we saw last week, the rich escape and the poor are left behind. And they are on they are crusading for a government "of, by, and for the people" in favor of one based on Biblical authority. [sic — obviously an editing glitch — KQ]

This is the crux of the matter: To these fundamentalist radicals there is only one legitimate religion and only one particular brand of that religion that is right; all others who call on God are immoral or wrong. They believe the Bible to be literally true and that they alone know what it means. Behind their malicious attacks on the courts ("vermin in black robes," as one of their talk show allies recently put it,) is a fierce longing to hold judges accountable for interpreting the Constitution according to standards of biblical revelation as fundamentalists define it. To get those judges they needed a party beholden to them. So the Grand Old Party - the GOP - has become God's Own Party, its ranks made up of God's Own People "marching as to war."

Go now to the website of an organization called America 21 (http://www.america21.us/Home.cfm). There, on a red, white, and blue home page, you find praise for President Bush's agenda - including his effort to phase out Social Security and protect corporations from law suits by aggrieved citizens. On the same home page is a reminder that "There are 7,177 hours until our next National Election.....ENLIST NOW." Now click again and you will read a summons calling Christian pastors "to lead God's people in the turning that can save America from our enemies." Under the headline "Remember - Repent - Return" language reminiscent of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell reminds you that "one of the unmistakable lessons [of 9/11] is that America has lost the full measure of God's hedge of protection. When we ask ourselves why, the scriptures remind us that ancient Israel was invaded by its foreign enemy, Babylon, in 586 B.C. ....(and) Jerusalem was destroyed by another invading foreign power in 70 A.D. .... Psalm 106:37 says that these judgments of God ...were because of Israel's idolatry. Israel, the apple of God's eye, was destroyed ... because the people failed... to repent." If America is to avoid a similar fate, the warning continues, we must "remember the legacy of our heritage under God and our covenant with Him and, in the words of II Chronicles 7:14: 'Turn from our wicked ways.'"

Just what does this have to do with the president's political agenda praised on the home page? Well, squint and look at the fine print at the bottom of the site. It reads: America21 is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to educate, engage and mobilize Christians to influence national policy at every level. Founded in 1989 by a multi-denominational group of pastors and businessmen, it is dedicated to being a catalyst for revival and reform of the culture and the government." (emphasis added).

The corporate, political and religious right converge here, led by a president who, in his own disdain for science, reason and knowledge, is the most powerful fundamentalist in American history.
What are the stakes? In his last book, the late Marvin Harris, a prominent anthropologist of the time, wrote that "the attack against reason and objectivity is fast reaching the proportions of a crusade." To save the American Dream, "we desperately need to reaffirm the principle that it is possible to carry out an analysis of social life which rational human beings will recognize as being true, regardless of whether they happen to be women or men, whites or black, straights or gays, employers or employees, Jews or born-again Christians. The alternative is to stand by helplessly as special interest groups tear the United States apart in the name of their "separate realities' or to wait until one of them grows strong enough to force its irrational and subjective brand of reality on all the rest."

That was written 25 years ago, just as the radical Christian right was setting out on their long march to political supremacy. The forces he warned against have gained strength ever since and now control much of the United States government and are on the verge of having it all.

It has to be said that their success has come in no small part because of our acquiescence and timidity. Our democratic values are imperiled because too many people of reason are willing to appease irrational people just because they are pious. Republican moderates tried appeasement and survive today only in gulags set aside for them by the Karl Roves, Bill Frist and Tom DeLays. Democrats are divided and paralyzed, afraid that if they take on the organized radical right they will lose what little power they have. Trying to learn to talk about God as Republicans do, they're talking gobbledygook, compromising the strongest thing going for them - the case for a moral economy and the moral argument for the secular checks and balances that have made America "a safe haven for the cause of conscience."

As I look back on the conflicts and clamor of our boisterous past, one lesson about democracy stands above all others: Bullies - political bullies, economic bullies and religious bullies - cannot be appeased; they have to be opposed with a stubbornness to match their own. This is never easy; these guys don't fight fair; "Robert's Rules of Order" is not one of their holy texts. But freedom on any front - and especially freedom of conscience - never comes to those who rock and wait, hoping someone else will do the heavy lifting. Christian realism requires us to see the world as it is, without illusions, and then take it on. Christian realism also requires love. But not a sentimental, dreamy love. Reinhold Niebuhr, who taught at Union Theological Seminary and wrestled constantly with applying Christian ethics to political life, put it this way: "When we talk about love we have to become mature or we will become sentimental. Basically love means...being responsible, responsibility to our family, toward our civilization, and now by the pressures of history, toward the universe of humankind."

Christian realists aren't afraid to love. But just as the Irishman who came upon a brawl in the street and asked, "Is this a private fight or can anyone get in it?" we have to take that love where the action is. Or the world will remain a theatre of war between fundamentalists.
Bill Moyers is a broadcast journalist and former host the PBS program NOW With Bill Moyers. Moyers also serves as president of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy.
Before this book I was only aware of Dunbar through two of his collections of poetry, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* and *Poems of Cabin and Field*. The Sport of the Gods demonstrates that Dunbar is a fine prose writer as well. The story kept me intrigued throughout. Read more.

Wow, I am traumatized by what happened to this family. The cruelty and destruction of relationships was displayed throughout this book with impunity! Read more. One person found this helpful.