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A Southern Theocracy?

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> ***"The men who wrote our Constitution weren't trying to save the state from the church, but the church from the state."*** (*The Clash of Cultures*
> *A Little Off Center, Louise Fleming, 23 February 2004, The Baxter Bulletin Online [www.baxterbulletin.com*])

Many have argued that the South, or even "America" (whatever that may be these days), ought to be a Christian theocratic state. As Dr. Michael Hill has written, "Though the Framers of our constitutional federated Republic attempted to give us a system in which popular freedom might flourish, they committed a fundamental error by not recognizing the sovereignty of Christ over our civil government." Hill's point is that without official recognition of Christianity in a civil government, "The people, then, became a god...the ultimate and superior tribunal to which all questions of right and wrong were appealed."

" I do not believe that Jesus ever said, "No one comes to the Father except through the State."

Greg Loren Durand says that "God will bless Dixie the very day that the people of Dixie begin again to bless God—by submitting themselves to His Son and seeking His pardon for their rebellion against his Kingdom." In Chapter 22 of his excellent resource book for Southerners, *America's Caesar*, Durand writes, "Politico-religious pluralism is an impossibility, and indeed, has never existed for one moment in the history of mankind..." [*Editor's Note: See below.*]

There is then, a strong movement toward a Christocentric, theocratic, free South. Opposed to this movement are basically two groups: our founding fathers, and Christians who hold that, as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, they ought to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, accepting the words of Jesus ("My Kingdom is not from here", where here is the Koine Greek adverb, *enteuthen*).

Now I should admit up front that I am certainly no theologian. Even if I were, I would run straight on into a subject so complex that it has never been solved. For many, though, the argument revolves around the beliefs of the founding fathers. Christians, especially evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, are fond of pointing out that our founding fathers were "Deists", and not Christians. Oddly, their opponents point to the founding fathers as Christians to buttress their views!

It is important to consider the oft misunderstood term, *Deism*. Generally, Deism is a philosophical view that asserts the immanence, in the phenomenal world, of the Creator. Folks are constantly getting the Deist view mixed up with the *Clockmaker God* who winds up the universe, then retreats for an eternal mint julep and a good trabuco. Deism is quite the reverse, holding that an immanent God is the very fabric of reality. There is nothing and no place that is not God. Thus, even were the majority of the founding fathers Deists, which they were not, Deism did not preclude a revelatory relation to one's Creator in the first place. Contrary, then, to the claim of many in the evangelical and fundamentalist wings of the Christian church, Deism is not the same as atheism. It is, in fact, the the near opposite of atheism (the true opposite of atheism is Gnosticism).. Its very name tells that fact (*DEVS* = "God", Latin).

In his article, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (*www.str.org/free, 16 February 2004*), Gregory Koukl notes that of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, only three were Deists. The rest were "28 Episcopalians, 8 Presbyterians, 7 Congregationalists, 2 Lutherans, 2 Dutch Reformed, 2 Methodists, 2 Roman Catholics, 1 unknown...".

But more important, neither side is correct anyway. Koukl hits the proverbial nail on its proverbial head:

> "The most important factor regarding the faith of Thomas Jefferson—or any of our Founding Fathers—isn't whether or not he had a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The debate over the religious heritage of this country is not about who is ultimately going to heaven, but rather about what the dominant convictions were that dictated the structure of this nation."

And those convictions were simple: a belief in both a Christian God and a civil polity untainted by any notion of theocracy. Churchmen were not to rule the state. Influenced by Calvin (who, of course, was influenced by Luther), the founding fathers recognised the fallen nature of man and erected a system of checks and balances to counteract that fallen nature as best as possible. While the very idea of an American confederacy (as the father of the Constitution, James Hamilton called it) was built on biblical Christian concepts, practices, and principles, the founding fathers were wise enough to have learned from the internecine religious wars in Europe that a theocratic state was a one-way ticket to anarchy.

Having arrived at this conclusion, it is necessary to state what should be obvious: Even

though the founders decreed a non-theocratic polity, nevertheless the governance they left us was founded directly on the Judaeo-Christian system of ethics (and metaphysics, to a great extent). The majority of the founders were Christians, but Christians who had seen enough of religious wars stemming from theocracies.

Contrary, then, to my friend, Dr. Hill, the founders made no mistake at all, nor did they elevate the people to a God. What they did was to make sure that a Christian people were protected from the federal state and, in turn, that the federal state not interfere with religious beliefs and practices. Of course, this state of affairs has since been perverted, so that now we have the odd spectacle of the federal government dictating to the several states precisely what religious beliefs and practices they may or may not pursue. Definitely interference. (Let us not even discuss George W. Bush's celebration of "Kwanzaa".)

"In short, Jesus is safer in the hearts of Christians than in the hands of the state."

But assume a "Christian" theocracy for a moment. Then consider the factionalism rampant in the myriad of Christian denominations. Which faction gets to be "Christian"? Southern Baptists? Methodists? Evangelicals? Roman Catholics? Greek Orthodox? Pentecostalists? How about (shudder) free-thinking Christians who follow no denomination? Do we include only Trinitarian Christians or Unitarian Christians? (Many Protestants nowadays have either forgotten or did not know in the first place that the Trinitarian doctrine, in the Nicene Creed, was formally adopted by the Roman Catholic church at the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325.)

And if the state is based upon Christianity, is it also based on the Bible? If so, whose Bible? The Bible, whatever version you use, is an edited document that comprises a selection (*biblia* in Greek, meaning "books" or "library") of various manuscripts, not one of which comes from the time of Jesus himself. Therefore, throughout the centuries, Christians have sought to refine the "Bible" by comparing various manuscripts in a search for the "correct" reading of a particular passage. The people who do this refining are, in essence, editors. Which editor do you prefer?

If, for example, our Christian theocracy is based upon a fundamentalist Christianity and its doctrine of biblical inerrancy, who gets to decide what a specific verse means? One person? A committee? A roll of the dice? Of course, before we can decide on the interpretation of individual verses, we must first decide upon which translation we shall use. "In the beginning was the Word..." Does the "Word" (*logos* in ancient Greek) refer to the Greek Stoic philosophical definition (a universal, immanent Reason or principle of order)? Or how about the "Word" as defined by Heraclitus (a divine intelligence)? Or a more traditional (Roman Catholic in origin) approach (the "Word" as the Christ)?

We've only begun to touch upon the infinite list of possible permutations of what a "Christian" theocracy might mean. Even so, you can see the potential for conflict. Bloody, long-drawn-out conflict for which the world has already suffered unconscionable pain.

Reinout Temmerman, in his article, *A Reply to Bread, Faith and the Relevance of the Southern Movement*, while supporting most of the points made by *Bread* author, Terry Compton, disagrees with Compton's views on the centrality of Christianity within the Southern movement. Temmerman argues, as I do, from the Constitution, quoting the First Amendment: "The U.S. Constitution explicitly states: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." (Note that there is debate over whether the phrase reads "the establishment" or "an establishment", with the former phrase, with its definite article, more restrictive than the latter, with its indefinite article.) Rep. Ron Paul said:

> "The Court completely disregards the original meaning and intent of the First amendment. It has interpreted the establishment clause to preclude prayer and other religious speech in a public place, thereby violating the free exercise clause of the very same First amendment. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Congress to correct this error, and to perform its duty to support and defend the Constitution." (*The First Amendment Protects Religious Speech, LewRockwell.com, a speech given in Congress, 2 April 2003*)

Would Jews have fought for the Confederate States of America, which they did, had they known that they were erecting a Christian theocracy? I doubt it.

The context of the First Amendment includes religious intolerance in England. For example, the Conventicle Act of 1664, passed during the reign of Charles II, was an "English statute that forbade religious assemblies of more than five people outside the auspices of the Church of England' (*www.encyclopedia4u.com*). The Conventicle Act, which, among other such acts, propelled many Englishmen to the Colonies, was designed to suppress religious dissent, imprisoned thousands of English, including a certain William Penn, who would later lend his name to a new land, Pennsylvania, where individual religious conscience would finally have its day.

But even ignoring the Constitutional argument, there lies a deeper problem for Christians when considering a theocratic state. Allowing a state to dictate its brand of Christianity precludes the individual from inviting Jesus into his heart and soul. For if the state decides what Christianity means, by definition the individual does not. And do Christians really want that? I do not believe that Jesus ever said, "No one comes to the Father except through the State."

There are many good reasons to keep organised religion clear of the state, both for its own good and for the good of the civil polity. This thesis, however, does not imply that the South or the original American Republic was not founded upon Judaeo-Christian principles. Both were. The American Republic was not founded upon Islam, nor Buddhism, nor Taoism, nor Zoroastrianism. The Constitution of the original American Republic was founded "under God", and that God was the God of Abraham,[1] and none other. Modern-day secularism has twisted the Constitution to its non-Christian (or even anti-Christian)

view, which, of course, is a fight to the death between secular humanism and the principles of Judaeo-Christianity.

In this age, it seems tempting to appeal to a theocratic solution to the problem of rampant immorality in our culture.[2] While I agree that Christians should address that problem, I do not agree that they should turn over Christianity itself to any state.[3] States are, by nature, corrupt, as our founders saw with exceptional clarity. From the Christian perspective, states are corrupt because humanity is corrupt. What is needed is not a theocratic state, but a vigilant people to keep guard over their religious liberties.

In short, Jesus is safer in the hearts of Christians than in the hands of the state.

Footnotes:

1. I am aware that Islam traces its God to the Abrahamic God, but the original American Republic was not founded upon the principles of Islam, but of Judaeo-Christianity. Indeed, the current continuation of the war between Judaeo-Christianity and Islam proceeds apace precisely because America is a nation founded upon Judaeo-Christian beliefs (although long since turned to empire).
2. While I personally agree with Terry Compton's "No victory without Christ", I do not agree that the state should direct that victory. For me, Jesus the Christ is not a doctrine, but a personal experience; a revelation. No state, by definition, can have a personal revelation.
3. I should clarify that I am using the word "state" here to refer to a federal state. The Constitution does not prohibit the individual, sovereign states from establishing any religious structure they should choose. It is common knowledge that many of the original 13 states had requisite professions of faith for aspirants to public office, and to this day, a President is required to swear upon a Bible at the administering of his oath of office.

Discussion

(*Editor's Note*: Greg Loren Durand's position now reflects the amillenialist view, and not the postmillenialist view. Durand's book, *Judicial Warfare*, is online at http://www.crownrights.com/reconstruction, and contains insights into biblical law and a critique of the Christian Reconstruction Movement (also known as theonomy). Chapter Nine covers "Theonomic Postmillennialism Versus the Bible," and bears particular importance for this discussion. Here is an excerpt from the appendix by James Henley Thornwell (1812-1862), T*he Relation of the State to Christ*:

> The State, as such cannot be a member, much less, therefore, can it exercise the function of settling the creed and the government, of a Church. The provinces of the two are entirely distinct: they differ in their origin, their nature, their ends, their prerogatives, their powers and their sanctions. They cannot be mixed or confounded without injury to both. But the separation of Church and State is a very different thing from the separation of religion and the State. Here is where our fathers erred. In their anxiety to guard against the evils of a religious establishment, and to preserve the provinces of Church and State separate and distinct, they virtually expelled Jehovah from the government of the country, and left the State an irresponsible corporation, or

> responsible only to the immediate corporators. They made it a moral person, and yet not accountable to the Source of all law. It is this anomaly which we desire to see removed; and the removal of it by no means implies a single element of what is involved in a national Church.

Striking another note was Thomas E. Peck (1822-93):

> The fundamental relations implied in the distinction between "the things which are God's, and the things which are Cæsar's," have been recognized, more or less clearly, from the beginning of the history of our race," and, he continued, "the history of the world, if candidly studied, will show that the church is in much greater danger from the ambition or the stupidity of politicians than the state is from the ambition or avarice of ecclesiastics.

Peck argued that the Northern states comprised a "semi-theocracy":

> The theory of church and state illustrated in the foregoing pages is the Virginia doctrine as we understand it—the doctrine of the Presbytery of Hanover in their memorials to the legislature of that grand old commonwealth from 17752 to 1785, in which last year Mr. Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom became a law. It has been called the "American" theory; but the history of the Northern States has shown that the current theory there has been rather the "semi-theocracy" of New England, according to which, as Mr. Robinson observes, "the church becomes an agency for keeping the proper party in power, a congress-managing society, a public-opinion-manufacturing society. Hence, its three thousand clergymen's memorial to congress, its religious press devoted to Fremontism, and its treasury of religious funds to carry the election in Pennsylvania."

A note on Greg Loren Durand's book, ***Judicial Warfare***, from the Crown Rights Book Company website:

by Greg Loren Durand
published in 2003
paperback; 185 pages

The Christian Reconstruction movement, also known as Theonomy, had its beginnings in 1973 with the publication of Rousas John Rushdoony's Institutes of Biblical Law. Not long after, Greg L. Bahnsen's Theonomy in Christian Ethics appeared, followed by numerous works by Gary North, Kenneth Gentry, Gary DeMar, and others. The stated goal of the Reconstructionists is to "apply the Word of God to all areas of life." However, despite its wide influence and acceptance within some Presbyterian denominations, the theology of

the movement departs significantly from the historic Reformed faith on the subject of Old Testament law, merges the Covenant of Works with the Covenant of Grace, and dangerously undermines the nature of the Gospel itself. Himself a former Reconstructionist, the author of this book carefully documents from the published works of the leaders of the movement that Christian Reconstructionism is a modern-day revival of the 2,000-year-old Galatian error.

To order Judicial Warfare, **click here**.

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