

## Faith (?) Based

The wind of God that is about to blow through the nation will also have the effect of clearing the Church of some nonsense and foolish ideas it has clung to over the years. One of those ideas is that government can, somehow, take the place of the Lord in terms of solving the problems of this world.

I have often written that political power is a poor substitute for the Almighty and His Kingdom, and that politics (being a human construct) is limited in what it can do in terms of effectiveness. This is not to say that it does not have the potential to do great good – it certainly can, but only when the people move upon the institution for such good. Otherwise, inertia has control as government's chief objective appears to be stability and maintaining the status quo.

One other such disadvantage of government is that when those who are a part of it are at odds with the Kingdom of God, then the Kingdom's work tends not to get done by government. Even if a government program is set up to do righteous things, and is administered by members who are believers, this is not always for certain. Eventually change comes to government and programs established for righteous purposes can be turned by new administrators for less-than-righteous purposes.

A case in point are the "faith-based initiatives" set up under the previous administration that permitted programs for social work begun by churches, synagogues and the like to receive government funding to assist their operations, under the impression that such institutions could do a better job of dealing with such problems than the government. At the time, the charge was raised that this was government entanglement in religion which violated the "separation of church and state" principle that Thomas Jefferson alluded to – not *in* the Constitution of the United States, but in a letter to someone *about* the Constitution. As I'm sure I don't need to remind you, over the years this principle – meant by the Founders to prevent the creation of a national church and keep government's hands off of faith – has been twisted around by the courts to mean religion should stay out of government.

Despite the objections, the program apparently was successful, enough for the new administration that has just taken office to not only continue, but announce plans to expand it. In his first speech to the National Prayer Breakfast, President Barack Obama outlined plans for what is now to be called the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and described his vision:

"We will also reach out to leaders and scholars around the world to foster a more productive and peaceful dialogue on faith. I don't expect divisions to disappear overnight, nor do I believe that long-held views and conflicts will suddenly vanish. But I do believe that if we can talk to one another openly and honestly, then perhaps old rifts will start to mend and new partnerships will begin to emerge. In a world that grows smaller by the day, perhaps we can begin to crowd out the destructive forces of zealotry and make room for the healing power of understanding."

Now, let me begin by saying that I do not believe the stories that circulated prior to the election that President Obama is a Muslim at heart. At the very least, I believe that

the President *believes* himself to be a Christian, and as such I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. (I'm also praying for the safety of the President and his family, and that the Lord would give him good, Godly counsel so that he may make decisions that please the Lord – partly because I don't want to see this country decline even further and partly because God Himself is pleased when you pray for your leaders; refer to 1 Timothy 2:3.) But one man's saint can be another man's zealot, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see where, in the wrong hands, this attitude can go.

Faith-based organizations seeking Federal dollars will have to toe the Federal line on employment practices and how the money is spent, which means that such organizations will be faced with the choice of being eligible for Federal money or staying true to the Gospel. In order to continue to receive Federal funds, the organization may be compelled to abide by regulations that contradict the Word of God. Or the group may have to hire people who do not necessarily agree with – or live in direct violation of – the Word. And you can fill in the blank yourself about *which* violation controls that person when they try to push the envelope on hiring; it doesn't matter which violation it is, because eventually they'll *all* make the effort at diluting or nullifying the message of the Gospel. It may not happen today, it may not even happen with *this* administration, but the further this society runs away from the Lord, sooner or later, it *will* happen. When someone pays the freight, they get to call the shots about how it's delivered. The Word bears this out in Proverbs 22:7: "The rich rule over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender."

The good news is there is a way around this awkward situation, and one that some folks are daring to apply to secular concerns...

### ***Just don't take the money.***

Now, I realize that what I've just written will be seen as *anathema* to some people, and quite possibly cause some heads to explode. But think about this for a minute: I love my country, I do all my civic duties (voting, jury duty, etc.), I say the Pledge of Allegiance every day with those of my students who bother and I try not to gripe (too much) about how much is taken out of my paycheck in taxes. But I am also a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I'll spend more time there – like eternity – than I will here. What's more, I have *chosen* to accept the Lord Jesus and, with that choice, citizenship in the Kingdom; while I consider it to be a great blessing to be born in America, the fact remains that none of us have any say in the site of our birthplace.

As members of the Body of Christ our dependence should be, first and foremost, upon the Lord who is able to get around trivial, earthly matters like economic conditions, lack of resources, governmental "red tape," etc. If God has ordained a particular enterprise, if it is His Will that the organization exists in the first place, and if the organization's leaders are in the center of His Will, then God will see that it gets all it needs in the way of material resources. In fact, God has a unique way of being *Jehovah Jireh* – displaying His ability to provide – in the midst of drought, famine and lack in general to those who wholeheartedly serve Him. (Remember the Widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17 who God intervened for to provide Elijah with food during the drought!)

Not only that, but with the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit, God is able to direct the utilization of His resources to where they will do the most good, or away from

where they will be used for evil purposes. And unlike government, He is also able to lead without confusion or mixed signals. As a teacher, I am all too familiar with the conflicting and contradictory regulations from at least two or three governmental bodies my colleagues and I have to operate under, relying on the opinion of the district's legal department to make sure we do not run afoul of some department or other. No such "fog" exists in the Kingdom for those who stay close to the Lord. So why, when you as a believer have *this* kind of access, would you even consider accepting resources from an entity that is increasingly at odds with our Lord and comes with so many strings attached you could do needlepoint with them?

Vying for the title of the oldest joke in the world is the one where a guy goes into the doctor's office, bends his elbow and says, "Doc, it hurts when I do this!" Anyone older than the age of three knows the punch line: "Well, don't do that!" The reason why God simply doesn't take us immediately to Heaven when we accept Jesus is that we have a job to do for the Kingdom here on Earth. And if He began the work in you, He will see it through to completion. Let those whose hope is in their own efforts, cleverness or meanness scrounge what they can from the government and put up with the regulations. Let us put our hope in the Lord and let the world see what He can do.

For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ  
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