

**General Topics :: Politics****Politics - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/10/27 2:18**

I have found these essays to be thought provoking. The author deals with issues found in conservative and liberal political thoughts. The first essay covers conservatism. The first part of this essay covers the first of eight aspects discussed by this author...

The Problem With Conservatism

J. Budziszewski

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My first conservative experience was in second grade, when I learned America the Beautiful. Verses one and two were merely baffling: I could not picture waves of grain, I could not believe that mountains were purple, and I could not form an association between liberty and pilgrim's feet. But the third verse broke me like glass and made me an idolater. O beautiful for patriot's dream, that sees beyond the years, we warbled; thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears. Somehow the song called forth in my childish heart an answering music that I had never heard in church. I seemed to hear the whine of gulls and the murmur of the sea before a white throne; I was afflicted with a sense of the Fall and a longing for the City whose light is the Glory of God. But I misidentified the City. The song sent me questing for Columbia, not the New Jerusalem. I was told to seek in the ideal futurity of my nation what cannot be made by hands.

What then is a Christian to make of conservatism? The danger, it would seem, is not in conserving, for anyone may have a vocation to care for precious things, but in conservative ideology, which sets forth a picture of these things at variance with the faith. The same is true of liberalism. From time to time Christians may find themselves in tactical alliance with conservatives, just as with liberals, over particular policies, precepts, and laws. But they cannot be in strategic alliance, because their reasons for these stands are different; they are living in a different vision. For our allies' sake as well as our own, it behooves us to remember the difference. We do not need another Social Gospel-just the Gospel.

In a previous essay, "The Problem With Liberalism" (FT, March), I described liberalism as a bundle of acute moral errors, with political consequences that grow more and more alarming as these errors are taken closer and closer to their logical conclusions. Conservatism may be described as another such bundle. The parallel is not perfect, for American culture is balanced at the top of a liberal ridge and is only now considering the descent. Because conservative moral errors have had less time to work among the powers and principalities, we cannot always discern their political consequences. But we can anticipate their fruits by their roots. The moral errors of conservatism are just as grave as those of its liberal opponents.

A minor difficulty in setting forth these errors is the ambiguity of the term "conservatism." Conservatives come in many different kinds, and their mistakes are equally heterogeneous. I should like to stress, therefore, that not every conservative commits every one of the errors that I describe in the following pages. But there is a common theme. Each kind of conservative opposes the contemporary government-driven variety of social reformism in the name of some

cherished thing which he finds that it endangers. One speaks of virtue, another of wealth, another of the peace of his home and the quiet of his street-but although these pearls are of very different luster, none wishes his to be thrown before swine. So it is that conservatives are often able to make common cause, putting all their pearls in a single casket.

The first moral error of political conservatism is civil religionism. According to this notion America is a chosen nation, and its projects are a proper focus of religious aspiration; according to Christianity America is but one nation among many, no less loved by God, but no more.

Our civil religion seems to have developed in four stages. The first stage was the Massachusetts Bay colony. Although the Puritans accepted the orthodox view of the Church as the New Israel, they also viewed it as corrupt. The Church's role of City Upon a Hill had therefore passed to themselves-to the uncorrupted remnant of the faithful, fled to North American shores. Like the Israelites, they viewed themselves as having entered into a special covenant with God to be His people. The same blessings and curses, however, were appended to their covenant as to the one at Sinai; therefore, warned Governor John Winthrop, should the settlers embrace the present world and prosecute their carnal intentions, "the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us be revenged of such a perjured people."

The second stage was the colonies just before the Revolution. Increasing unity among the settlers had given rise to a national sense of covenant with God, but the shared experience of English harassment aroused suspicion that the covenant had been breached. Isaiah's warnings to Israel were invoked by way of explanation: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." Preachers like Samuel Langdon declared that if only the people would turn from their sins, God would remit their punishment, purge the nation of wrongdoers, restore a righteous government-and deal with the English.

The third stage was in the early and middle republic. God was still understood as the underwriter of American aspirations, but as the content of these aspirations became more and more nationalistic it also became less and less Christian. It appeared that God cared at least as much about putting down the South and taking over the West as He did about making His people holy; patriotic songwriters like Samuel Francis Smith used expressions like "freedom's holy light," but they meant democracy, not freedom from sin.

The fourth stage was the late republic. By this time American culture had become not just indifferent to Christianity, but hostile to it. Conservatives still wanted to believe that the nation was specially favored by God, but the idea of seeking His will and suffering His chastening had been completely lost. President Eisenhower remarked that what the country needed was a religious foundation, but that he didn't care what it was. President Reagan applied the image of the City Upon a Hill not to the remnant of the Church in America, but to America as such-its mission not to bear witness to the gospel, but to spread the bits and pieces of its secular ideology.

The mistake in all these stages is confusing America with Zion. She is not the inheritor of the covenant, not the receiver of the promises, not the witness to the nations. It may well be that all nations have callings of sorts-specific purposes which God in His providence assigns them. But no nation can presume to take God under its wing. However we may love

her, dote upon her, and regret her, the Lord our God can do without the United States.

(end of first thought)

Do you agree or disagree with this thought?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: Politics, on: 2006/10/27 2:55

agree.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/10/28 12:39

The second observation on conservative thought...

The second moral error of political conservatism is instrumentalism. According to this notion faith should be used for the ends of the state; according to Christianity believers should certainly be good citizens, but faith is not a tool. To be sure, the pedigree of instrumentalism is not purely conservative; it has followers on the left as well as the right. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, wanted the state to invent a civil religion to his order and then make use of it. Its articles would be proposed "not exactly as religious dogmas" but as "sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject." Most instrumentalists, however, are not so fastidious. They are willing to make a tool of whatever religion comes to hand, whether civil, traditional, or revealed. Religious conservatives who pine for the days when jurists called America "a Christian country" and recognized Christianity as "the law of the land" are deeply in error if they think such statements expressed belief; what they expressed was instrumentalism. In those days the religion that came to hand was Christianity (or at least its counterfeit in civil religion), and the speakers were interested primarily in how it could be used. The eminent nineteenth-century jurist Thomas Cooley admitted as much. Supreme Court Justice David Brewer, controversial author of *America a Christian Country*, was only slightly less explicit.

Viewed from this perspective, the contrast between the jurisprudence of yesterday and today is not nearly as sharp as religious conservatives make it out to be. Although language describing Christianity as the law of the land has disappeared from our cases, judges and legislators are just as interested in the social utility of the faith as they were before-and just as indifferent to its truth. Consider for example the 1984 Supreme Court case *Lynch v. Donnelly*, which concerned whether a Christmastime nativity display could be financed by a municipal government. Members of the Court likened erecting a creche to adopting "In God We Trust" as the national motto and opening judicial sessions with the invocation "God save the United States and this honorable Court." By the comparison, they meant three things.

These acts and declarations have nothing to do with religion. They do not "endorse" the faith, but merely "acknowledge" it, said Justice O'Connor. Indeed they have "lost through rote repetition any significant religious content," said Justice Brennan. Otherwise, they said, they would be establishments of religion, which are forbidden.

On the other hand, they are socially indispensable. They are "uniquely" suited to serve "wholly" secular purposes (Brennan) which could not reasonably be served in any other way (O'Connor). These purposes include "solemnizing public occasions" (Brennan and O'Connor), "expressing confidence in the future and encouraging the recognition of what is worthy of appreciation in society" (O'Connor), and "inspiring commitment to meet some national challenge in a manner that simply could not be fully served if government were limited to purely nonreligious phrases" (Brennan). The last of these purposes is especially interesting-in plain language, it means getting people to do something they would refuse to do

o otherwise.

In fact, they are a noble lie. Obviously, if the mottoes and creches and so forth had really lost all their religious content they would be completely useless for achieving any purposes whatsoever, secular or otherwise. Our rulers feel free to use them because they have lost religious meaning for them; they work, however, because they retain this meaning for the masses.

(end of second observation)

Is this true?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/1 22:06

Third observation on conservative thought...

The third moral error of political conservatism is moralism. According to this notion God's grace needs the help of the state; Christianity merely asks the state to get out of the way. We might say that while instrumentalism wants to make faith a tool of politics, moralism wants to make politics a tool of faith; on this reading, what instrumentalism is to secular conservatives, moralism is to religious conservatives. Surprisingly, though, many religious conservatives seem unable to tell the difference. Whether someone says "We need prayer in schools to make the children holy" or "We need prayer in schools to make the country strong," it sounds to them the same.

Now I am not going to complain that moralism "imposes" a faith on people who do not share it. In the sense at issue, even secularists impose a faith on others-they merely impose a different faith. Every law reflects some moral idea, every moral idea reflects some fundamental commitment, and every fundamental commitment is religious-it proposes a god. Everything in the universe comes to a point. For moralism, therefore, the important distinction is not between religion and secularism, but between faiths that do and faiths that do not demand the civil enforcement of all their moral precepts.

To the question "Should the civil law enforce the precepts of the faith?" the biblical answer is, "Some yes, but some no; which ones do you mean?" The New Testament contains literally hundreds of precepts. However, Christianity is not a legislative religion. While the Bible recognizes the Torah as a divinely revealed code for the ruling of Israel before the coming of Messiah, it does not include a divinely revealed code for the ruling of the gentiles afterward. To be sure, the Bible limits the kinds of laws that Christians can accept from their governments, for "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). However, it does not prescribe specific laws that they must demand from them.

It is not even true that all of God's commands limit the kinds of laws that Christians can accept. To see this, contrast two such precepts: (1) I am prohibited from deliberately shedding innocent blood; (2) I am prohibited from divorcing a faithful spouse. Both precepts are absolute in their application to me, but that is not the issue. If we are speaking of governmental enforcement, then we are speaking of their application to others. The former precept should require very little watering down in the public square, for even nonbelievers are expected to understand the wrong of murder. That is why I may be confident in condemning the legalization of abortion. But the latter precept requires a good deal of watering down.

n in the public square, for before the coming of Christ not even believers were expected to understand the true nature of marriage. "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard," said Jesus, "but it was not this way from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8). No doubt the Pharisees to whom He was speaking were scandalized by the idea that their civil law did not reflect God's standards fully. They must have been even more offended by the suggestion that it was not intended to. Among religious conservatives this suggestion is still a scandal, but it does not come from liberals; it comes from the Master.

Christians, then, may certainly commend a law as good or condemn it as evil. They may declare it consistent or inconsistent with the faith. But not even a good law may be simply identified with the faith; Christians must not speak of a tax code, marriage ordinance, or welfare policy as Christian no matter how much, or even how rightly, they desire its enactment or preservation. That predicate has been preempted by the law of God. The civil law will be Christian-if it still exists at all- only when Christ himself has returned to rule: not when a coalition of religious conservatives has got itself elected.

(end of third observation)

Where do you find yourself in this observation?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/3 2:02

I more or less agreed with the authors depiction of modern conservatism...even if he did somewhat caricature the trends for the sake of brevity. Yet, I could not find myself in these articles, even though I would have considered myself more or less a conservative..(if we must give ourselves one leaning or the other.)

Thinking on the reason for this gulf between my convictions and the conservatism described in these articles led me to conclude these articles are really about neo-conservatism.

A true American conservative remembers that our founding fathers, when planning government, made it a chief aim to keep power from accumulating in the hands of sinful man ...they attempted this by building limitations and structural balance among several bodies of men.

This political philosophy stands in sharp contrast to the neo-conservatism depicted in these articles.

My point is this: Historically speaking, a true conservative would not want to give the government the instrumental, financial, and moral power that today's so-called conservatives seem all too eager to do.

Just a subtle but important point I felt worth mentioning in this thread. :-(Perhaps this is another sign that all men...even Christian conservatives, are all too willing to make idols of government in return for security.

MC

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/3 4:38

Brother Mike wrote:

Quote:

-----A true American conservative remembers that our founding fathers,

Many of the founding fathers were strong adherents to the religion of humanism. Many were influenced by the politics of France and the age of enlightenment where humanism finds its birth.

I have recently visited Plymouth Mass. We took our kids there to learn of the lives of the Pilgrims. I picked up a book that I have started reading. It was written by William Bradford. As I read the history of that first generation, I find that that time was the closest anyone ever came to establishing civil government found upon the precepts of the NT.

Quote:
----- Perhaps this is another sign that all men...even Christian conservatives, are all too willing to make idols of government in return for security.

In another thread I posted a sermon by Voddie Bauchman. In it he described two truths. One is of this world the other is of God. One of his observations pointed to the fact that you have stated above.

He said that those who look for government to secure prosperity and peace will find themselves to be part of the religion of humanism. Think about that statement....Scripture tells us of a time coming where the majority of the human race will submit and worship a man who is the seed of Satan...

God Bless
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/3 4:44

Here is a side note to this thread...A.W. Tozer speaks about things that are germane to this topic...

<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/visit.php?lid=2405>

In Christ
jeff

Re: Politics - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2006/11/3 12:24

Hi rookie...

This is a very interesting essay, and you bring up some very good points. The only issue that I see with this essay (and the previous) is that I don't believe that ANYONE is a true liberal or conservative. On certain issues, we can be considered "conservative" while consider "liberal" on other issues. A person might be "pro-life" in a sense that they oppose abortion. This would make him or her a "conservative" according to the established definition. However, this same person may oppose the "death penalty." This would make that person a "liberal" using the same established definition.

When I vote, I do so using my conscience. I do not have any sort of "allegiance" to a political party or ideology. Rather, I vote with my allegiance to Christ.

Far more often than not, the Republican Party is the party that (at least vocally) opposes abortion, homosexual marriage, unlimited expressions of immorality in the media or restrictions on religious liberty. While this is not always the case with every candidate, it is certainly the norm -- and it is written within the party's "platform." Regardless of whether you live in the United States, Canada or Europe, there is typically a close relationship between political "progressives" and anti-religious sentiments.

I suppose that there is a movement within the Church that calls for almost pure political isolationism. I know a great number of believers that vote for third party candidates. While I admire their convictions, a vote for a third party candidate is often simply a "protest" vote. I would prefer to use my vote against practices like abortion or homosexual intrusion.

Paul used the "political" and "legal" system of the Roman Empire as a means to bring the Gospel to Rome. He used his Roman citizenship as a means of protection from being scourged (Acts 22:22-30). He "appealed unto Caesar" (Acts 25:11) even when he was probably going to be judged innocent by Festus.

It would be easy to simply separate ourselves from the world by our votes. But many of us vote according to our spiritual convictions about life and liberty. While both parties are far from perfect, one in particular embraces the godlessness of

r more than the other. When I vote, I try to vote against the greatest advance of godlessness. While the end is going to come regardless, I will not hasten the acts of godlessness within society by my votes.

:-)

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/3 16:31

Quote:

-----While the end is going to come regardless, I will not hasten the acts of godlessness within society by my votes.

This pretty much sums up my 'politics' as well...

MC

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/3 16:52

Quote:

-----Many of the founding fathers where strong adherents to the religion of humanism. Many were influenced by the politics of France and the age of enlightenment where humanism finds it's birth.

I see that. The 'virtue' I see in those men is not their Christianity per se or that their Government is a miracle of biblical values...I just think they came closer than any other before them.

For me, it's worth noting that our George Washington refused to be a king. Regardless of what we think about his faith, his holding to the American course over his own ambition and glory is a singular achievement in the whole history of government. Compare to Napoleon after the French revolution...Napoleon seemed indignant over the criticism of his self-crowning..."Who do they think I am? Washington?"

When Washington refused to be any more than a President, he became for me the embodiment of conservatism. It's an expression of an ideal without being oblivious that the ideal is rarely realized.

Blessings,

MC

Re: Politics - posted by Rahman, on: 2006/11/3 17:30

Bro Jeff this is a great article you posted, and i find it most insightful of America's history of our perceived marriage between State and God then, and our now seemingly State separation from God whilst still attempting to live in the same house ... In other words still wanting the benefits of His protection under His roof, while increasingly denying Him His due benevolence ...

Quote:

"The mistake in all these stages is confusing America with Zion. She is not the inheritor of the covenant, not the receiver of the promises, not the witness to the nations."

Amen ... The way i view it is AMERICA is not ZION as a political entity, but as a nation THEN, and whose majority NOW still claim Christ IS what makes America as a people "the inheritor of the covenant, the receiver of the promises, and the witness to the nations" ... In my estimation, in the natural, America as a misleading political power is but one of the many kingdoms down the corridor of time that Satan attempted to bribe Christ with ... But America, in the supernatural, as a nation comprised of a now compromised majority of people who profess Christ in ways now so totally misleading to the rest of the world, ALSO qualifies America as recipient to His corrective hand ...

The way i see it (and may God correct me if i'm wrong), as i've said before, is America as a political and economic entity is about to suffer want not so much because of what's done in her by unbelievers, but because of the loss of our savor and light in her as believers ... To me it's like Jonah, ery body in the boat gotta suffer because we've not only run away from our job but now we're even contentedly asleep in the bottom of the boat with dreams of heavenly rapture with a whale s belly not even concievable to our future ...

Our conformity to the things of ungodly America is the REAL reason for the soon shaking ... We as the BODY here, have not done well our job of preservation ... :-o

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/3 23:42

Although I admittedly glow with admiration of how we began...perhaps more then some at SI... I sadly must agree with Rahman's conclusion regarding our current state...

Quote:
-----Our conformity to the things of ungodly America is the REAL reason for the soon shaking ... We as the BODY here, have not done well our job of preservation ..

I've quoted this Puritan thought several times before but it's relevance keeps popping up...

We do not consider our land wicked simply because we see wicked people in it doing wicked things. Instead we determine the land is wicked because we see so many of those who are supposed to be Godly doing wicked things...and suffering little or no reproach.

In line with Rhaman's thoughts, a land is wicked when it's church behaves wickedly. Rather than being even the faintest preservation in the land, these saltless Christians are an indisputable denial of the power of Godliness. When religious people deny the reality of Godliness they are worse than being ineffective against darkness...truly they hasten rebellion against God.

MC

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/4 10:47

Brother Chris wrote:

Quote:
-----The only issue that I see with this essay (and the previous) is that I don't believe that ANYONE is a true liberal or conservative.

I agree. Once I have finished posting the conservative issues I will post the liberal issues.

The point of these observations are to bring to light where all of us stand in the light of Christ.

We must always ask ourselves...who am I? Why?

Because Paul teaches...

2Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

God Bless

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/4 10:50

Brother Mike and Rahman,

It is a spiritual battle that we fight. If I could draw a earthly comparison...it is like fighting the insurgency in the Middle East...Satan never quits.

God Bless
In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/4 10:55

Here is the fourth observation on conservative thought...

"The fourth moral error of political conservatism is Caesarism. According to this notion the laws of man are higher than the laws of God; according to Christianity the laws of God are higher than the laws of man. With this error we have come back to secular conservatives. The peculiar thing about American Caesarism is that the state never says that its laws are higher than the laws of God; it simply refuses to acknowledge any laws of God, in the name of equal liberty for all religious sects.

George Reynolds, a Mormon living in Utah Territory, was charged during the 1870s with the crime of bigamy. In his defense he argued that the law was an unconstitutional infringement of his free exercise of religion. Accepting his appeal, the Supreme Court disagreed. Although it said all sorts of interesting things about why free exercise of religion is good (and why polygamy is wrong-for instance because it leads to a patriarchal rather than republican principle of authority in government), the heart of the rebuttal was a simple distinction between opinions and actions. Appealing to Thomas Jefferson's idea of a "wall of separation between church and state," it held that what people believe is the business of the church, but that what they do is the business of the state. Therefore, the First Amendment does not mean that people may act as their religion requires, but only that they may think as their religion requires; free exercise of religion makes no difference whatsoever to the scope of state power over conduct.

Still favored by many conservatives, this doctrine has startling implications. It means, for instance, that in throwing Christians to the lions for refusing to worship Caesar, the Romans did nothing to infringe the free exercise of Christianity; after all, while being devoured, the martyrs were still at liberty to believe that Caesar was only a man.

A century later, in cases involving other religious groups, the Court conceded the point. Announcing its discovery that faith and conduct cannot be isolated in "logic-tight compartments," it now decreed that "only those interests of the highest order and those not otherwise served can overbalance legitimate claims to the free exercise of religion." But this was too much for judicial conservatives, and the experiment was ended in 1992. Writing for the Court in *Employment Division v. Smith* (II), Justice Scalia appealed to the notion that the issue in free exercise cases is not whether the state's motives are "compelling," but whether they are "neutral." A law that does not expressly single out a particular sect may burden any religious practice to any degree, so long as this burden is "merely the incidental effect" of the law and not its "object." In other words, repression is fine so long as it is absentminded. Pastoral care and counselling could not be forbidden as such but could be forbidden as an incidental effect of regulations for the licensing of mental health practitioners; the sacrament of baptism could not be forbidden as such but could be forbidden as an incidental effect of regulations for bathing in public places. To be sure, since the recent action of the Court, Congress has reinstated the compelling-interest doctrine, lauding its deed as a "Religious Freedom Restoration Act." But surely this is overstatement. After all, even

Under the compelling-interest doctrine, claims to the free exercise of religion can be swept aside whenever the state thinks its reasons are good enough. So much we would have had without a First Amendment.

As our own times have made clear, even releasing nerve gas in public places can be an exercise of religion. Perhaps the blame for our troubles lies with the Framers, for refusing to distinguish the kinds of religion whose exercise should be free from the kinds of religion whose exercise should not. But, foolishly thinking ignorance a friend of conscience, we have followed their lead. Afraid to judge among religions, we put them all beneath our feet; pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of equal liberty, we tumble headlong into Caesarism."

(end of thought)

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/4 12:35

"it is like fighting the insurgency"

That's a great analogy Jeff. Sin (in us) is like an insurgency into territory claimed by God... we keep being surprised that an enemy we just hammered yesterday is already coming back today. Also we are often resistant to accept the government of God in our hearts, and we are not very good at border control. Our eyes and ears let the enemy in too easily and then we wonder why we fall into temptation so easily!

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/6 0:13

Fifth observation on conservative thought...

"The fifth moral error of political conservatism is traditionalism. According to this notion what has been done is what should be done; Christianity, however, though it cherishes the unchanging truths of faith, insists that any merely human custom may have to be repented. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun," writes Koheleth, "the Preacher" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). "Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it?" answers God (Isaiah 43:19).

An illustration of the mischiefs of traditionalism may be found in the 1992 Supreme Court case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reaffirmed the supposed right to take the lives of one's unborn children. By inventing the right in the first place, the Court had shattered tradition; no such use of lethal violence by private individuals had ever been sanctioned in common law. But *Roe v. Wade* had stood for twenty years. As far as the Court is concerned, that makes it a new tradition-and as such, unassailable. Amazingly, the Court upheld *Roe* even while admitting that it might have been decided incorrectly. "We are satisfied," says the majority, "that the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe's* resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded the ruling."

Just how does an unsound precedent have force? The answer, says the Court, is that "for two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized their intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail. . . . An entire generation has come of age free to assume *Roe's* concept of liberty." To put the idea more simply, sex h

as been separated from responsibility for resulting children for so long that to change the rules on people now would be unfair. Therefore, never mind whether what was done was right; what matters is that it was done.

Moral errors gain their plausibility from the truths that they distort. It is certainly true that precedents, traditions, and customs should not be needlessly disturbed; the gain in goodness from a particular change must always be balanced against the harm of change as such. But this truth applies to the choice between a good law and a still better one, not to the choice between a good law and an evil one. The question to ask about moral evil is not whether we have got used to it, but whether it can be stopped."

(end of fifth observation)

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/7 20:11

The sixth observation on conservative thought...

"The sixth moral error of political conservatism is neutralism. This may come as a surprise, because neutralism also comes in a liberal variety. Whereas the liberal sort of neutralist exclaims, "Let a thousand flowers bloom," the conservative sort cries merely, "Leave me alone." In essence, conservative neutralism is the notion that because everyone ought to mind his own business, moral and religious judgments should be avoided. By contrast, while agreeing that one ought to mind his own business-St. Paul warns three times against busybodies-Christianity holds that moral and religious judgments can never be avoided. They must be straight and true before people can even agree as to what their business is.

Not everyone reaches neutralism by the same route, but conservative thinker Michael Oakeshott follows a well-worn path in deriving it from traditionalism. Conservatives, he says, seek activities whose enjoyment springs "not from the success of the enterprise, but from the familiarity of the engagement." What makes this disposition intelligible in politics is "the observation of our current manner of living" together with the belief that laws are "instruments enabling people to pursue activities of their own choice with minimum frustration." But to say this is to reject the view that laws are "plans for imposing substantive activities"; therefore, he holds, conservatism has "nothing to do" with morals or religion.

Of course the conclusion does not follow, and if it were really true then conservatives could make no decisions at all. Rather than being indifferent to questions of good and evil, Oakeshott himself maintains the good of minimizing frustration, and rather than holding no opinion about religion, he holds the opinion that it is better to be ignorant of truth than to be pestered about it. For example he says that people of conservative disposition "might even be prepared to suffer a legally established ecclesiastical order," but "it would not be because they believed it to represent some unassailable religious truth, but merely because it restrained the indecent competition of sects and (as Hume said) moderated 'the plague of a too diligent clergy.'" The difficulty is plain: If not by his own moral and religious standards, then how does Oakeshott know that competition is indecent and diligence a plague? Why not condemn complacency and sloth instead?

Not even rules designed to tell what counts as pestering can work in a neutral way. Always we must add others to make them work-and what we add makes a difference to the outcome. Christianity recognizes this. For example, consider the principles of Subsidiarity and Sphere Sovereignty. Each targets the problem of knowing where the business of one party ends and the business of another begins. Subsidiarity, a precept of Catholic social thought, holds that greater and higher social institutions like the state exist just to help lesser and subordinate ones like the family. Therefore, to destroy the lesser institutions, absorb them, or take away their proper functions is "gravely wrong" and a "disturbance of right order." Sphere subsidiarity is more prominent in Protestant social thought. Ordering social institutions horizontally instead of vertically, it says that each has its own domain, its own authority, and its own ruling norm, for instance love in the case of the family and public justice in the case of the state. Therefore, each should be protected from interference by the others.

Both rules are meant to deal with meddling, but applying either one requires a vast amount of other knowledge, which one must get from somewhere else-just what the neutralist would like to think unnecessary. To test my college students I used to ask, "To which institution would a subsidiarist give the task of instructing children in sexual mores-state or family?" Almost all replied, "The state." Families need help, they argued, because they do a poor job in this area: They rarely t

each children about contraception, sexual preferences, or the many other things which young moderns need to know. I was astonished. Couldn't my students tell the difference between helping the family and absorbing its functions? On reflection their answer was not astonishing at all. They shared neither Christian presuppositions about what sex is for nor Christian presuppositions about how a family works; why then should they have reached Christian conclusions in applying Christian social principles?

There is nothing exceptional about the principles of Subsidiarity and Sphere Sovereignty; no definition of meddling or intrusion can work in a neutral way. Particular moral and religious understandings are always presupposed, and changing them changes the way our definitions work. It follows that forbidding moral judgments will not keep busybodies out of other people's hair. Somehow they must learn the meanings of "other," "people's," and "hair."

end of sixth observation...

Does Christ ever hold to neutrality?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/9 0:38

The seventh on observation on conservative thought...

"The seventh moral error of political conservatism is mammonism. According to this notion wealth is the object of commonwealth, and its continual increase even better; according to Christianity wealth is a snare, and its continual increase even worse. Mammonism is what the Big Tent that some political analysts urge for the Republican Party is all about: ditch the social issues, but hold onto the capital gains tax reduction. To keep your liberty you have to keep your money.

Christians, of course, are not the only ones to have criticized mammonism. Warnings against the love of wealth were a staple even of ancient pagan conservatism. The idea was that virtue makes republics prosper, but prosperity leads to love of wealth, love of wealth leads to loss of virtue, and loss of virtue makes republics fall. Thus if you want your republic to endure, you will do well to seek a site unfavorable to great prosperity—not too warm, not too fertile, not too close to the trading routes. That our secular conservatives disagree with their ancient counterparts will strike no one as a new idea. Odder is the ease with which modern Christians make their peace with mammonism.

An extreme example is found in the late-nineteenth-century Baptist preacher Russell Conwell, who maintained that to make money is the same thing as to preach the Christian gospel. However that may be, to preach his own gospel was certainly the same thing as to make money. So eager were people to hear his oft-repeated Acres of Diamonds speech that he is said to have earned, over a period of years, perhaps six million dollars from speakers' fees alone. Though peanuts by the standards of modern televangelists, at the time that was real money. An inventory of Conwell's more astonishing claims would include at least the following: (1) It is your Christian duty to get rich, and ownership of possessions makes you a better person; (2) The overwhelming majority of rich people are morally upright, and that is exactly why they are rich; (3) It is wrong to be poor, and God does not approve of poor people. That Jesus explicitly contradicts each of these claims (Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 19:23-24, Luke 6:20) leaves Conwell cold.

A more temperate but still objectionable form of mammonism is found in *Toward the Future*, a "lay letter" published in 1984 by a committee of prominent Catholic conservatives. Jesus told the story of a master who entrusts his servants with the care of his money while he is traveling to a distant place to receive a kingship. Upon his return, he finds that one servant has buried his share while the other two have made investments. The timid servant he scolds and dismisses, but the bold ones he praises and rewards with yet greater responsibilities. Traditionally the Church has understood this p

able to mean that just as a king in this world expects his agents to take risks, not burying his money but investing it to earn a return, so God expects his people to take risks, not burying their gifts but using them to build up the Kingdom of Heaven. By contrast, the lay letter understands it to mean simply that God expects his people to invest their money to earn a return. "Preserving capital is not enough," the authors teach; "it must be made to grow." The use of gifts for the sake of the Kingdom becomes the growth of wealth for the sake of wealth.

To be sure, the lay letter's defense of enterprise is not altogether wrong. Material things are not intrinsically evil, it is not a sin to engage in honest business, and, despite its dubious motivational underpinnings, the capitalist type of economy may well be superior to the alternatives. Indeed the cooperative sort of socialism seems to ignore the circumstance of the Fall, and the compulsory sort cannot even be established without the sin of theft. In a fallen world, much can also be said for the "invisible hand" of the market, by which independent individuals, even though selfish, bring about a social good which was no part of their intention. But even Adam Smith recognizes that the invisible hand does not work unless laborers and businessmen submit themselves to the restraints of justice, and that an interest in wealth alone will not induce them to do so. After all, if winning is all that matters, why keep the competition going at all? Why not use one's wealth to wring special privileges from the government and so become more wealthy still? Capitalism depends on a moral spirit which it cannot supply and may even weaken; it is, in the most exact of senses, a parasite on the faith. But a Christian parasite is not by that fact Christian."

End of observation...

This is probably the most important issue that we face as Christians...the poison that makes one blind and deaf.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/11 7:18

The eighth and final observation of conservative thought...

"The eighth moral error of political conservatism is meritism. According to this notion I should do unto others as they deserve. With the addition of mammonism, matters become even simpler, for then those who need help are by definition undeserving, while those in a position to help are by definition deserving. That meritism is not a Christian doctrine comes as a surprise to many people. Large numbers think the meritist motto "God helps those who help themselves" is a quotation from the Bible. What the New Testament actually teaches is that in what we need most, we are helpless; the grace of God is an undeserved gift. According to Christianity I should do unto others not as they deserve, but as they need.

Aristotle taught that vices tend to come in pairs, because one can miss a mark either by way of excess or by way of deficiency-by going too far or by failing to go far enough. That is certainly the case here, for the conservative mistake of meritism stands opposite to the liberal mistake of propitiationism-doing unto others as they want. In fact the commonest way to fall into either mistake is by sheer recoil from the other. The reason is easy to see: We tend to think of justice and mercy as antithetical, so that to practice either I must slight the other. By this line of reasoning the conservative emphasis on desert is a preference for justice, while the liberal emphasis on desire is a preference for mercy. By contrast, in the Christian account of things justice and mercy are corollaries that must be united. They are united in the Atonement because God neither waived the just penalty for our sins nor inflicted it on us, but took it upon Himself. This staggering gift also teaches what the unity of justice and mercy requires: sacrifice. If to us justice and mercy seem irreconcilable, the reason is probably that we are loath to pay the price of their reconciliation; we are afraid of sacrifice and shrink from the way of the Cross.

What does the contrast between meritism and charity look like in ordinary human relationships? Consider the governmental policy of paying women cash prizes for bearing children out of wedlock. Liberals want to continue the policy because

General Topics :: Politics

use they cannot tell need from desire. Meritists propose ending it because the subsidies are undeserved. Although a Christian may accept the cutoff, he cannot accept it for the reason given. All of us at all times need and receive many things that we do not deserve. The problem with the subsidies is that they are not what is needed. They so completely split behavior from its natural consequences that they infantilize their supposed beneficiaries; to infantilize them is to debase them, and no one needs to be debased.

Very well, says the meritist to the Christian, but we both support a cutoff. The rationales differ, but so what? That makes no difference in practice, does it? But it does. After achieving the cutoff, the meritist thinks his work is done, but the Christian thinks his work has only begun. He must now find another way to offer help; and he had better be prepared to pay the price. For a portrait of that price, don't think of a bureaucrat, think of Mother Teresa."

end of thought...

How many conservatives are engaged in leading those who have not to Jesus?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/11/11 14:28

Admittedly having only bobbed and weaved through a great deal of this. And even with the disdain for affiliated politics (party wise) and the particular caution SI has as a sort of unwritten rule in how much tolerance there is for politics as such Some great stuff here;

Quote:
-----In fact the commonest way to fall into either mistake is by sheer recoil from the other. The reason is easy to see: We tend to think of justice and mercy as antithetical, so that to practice either I must slight the other. By this line of reasoning the conservative emphasis on desert is a preference for justice, while the liberal emphasis on desire is a preference for mercy. By contrast, in the Christian account of things justice and mercy are corollaries that must be united. They are united in the Atonement because God neither waived the just penalty for our sins nor inflicted it on us, but took it upon Himself. This staggering gift also teaches what the unity of justice and mercy requires: sacrifice. If to us justice and mercy seem irreconcilable, the reason is probably that we are loath to pay the price of their reconciliation; we are afraid of sacrifice and shrink from the way of the Cross.

That whole 'either/or' that I have failed so many times to rightly express, how well this states it! It goes to all sort's of things we discuss, well beyond politics, those heart searching questions of intent and motive ... ah, this is worth repeating;

the reason is probably that we are loath to pay the price of their reconciliation; we are afraid of sacrifice and shrink from the way of the Cross

Quote:
-----but the Christian thinks his work has only begun.

Yes! Precisely!

Quote:
-----He must now find another way to offer help; and he had better be prepared to pay the price. For a portrait of that price, don't think of a bureaucrat, think of Mother Teresa."

!

Quote:
-----How many conservatives are engaged in leading those who have not to Jesus?

General Topics :: Politics

If I may, would like to propose that the *neither* of party affiliation be replaced by the *other* of who we in fact are as disciples. It changes the question of 'how many _____' anybody's right out of the considerations. Having a great deal of problem still with the leaven of politics and political thought processes having so much inroads into Christian thought, seems very much out of place as something to entangle the two 'philosophies' when only one is true. My two cents anyway.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/11 17:55

Brother Mike wrote:

Quote:
-----If I may, would like to propose that the neither of party affiliation be replaced by the other of who we in fact are as disciples.

As time goes on we all learn to see things we have not before. The emphasis of this thread is to bring to light thoughts and motivations which are not of God. This first part concerns conservative thought or philosophies. The next thrust will highlight liberal thought or philosophies.

As another brother pointed out, we all have drunk from one degree or another of these two philosophical rivers. We may hold to one observation more than another. We may hold both liberal and conservative philosophies. The chief end is summed up by Paul...

2Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

Quote:
-----Having a great deal of problem still with the leaven of politics and political thought processes having so much inroads into Christian thought,

As you have stated there is only one truth. Self examination in light of the word of God will through practice enable us to discern between good and evil. The hard part is the maturing process. The Scriptures have the ability to rip out the vain philosophies of our fathers. The hopes we were taught to love die hard. The result of this work creates enmity between those who allow the Scriptures to have their way and those who shrink back.

God Bless

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/11 18:06

Quote:
-----As time goes on we all learn to see things we have not before

Amen.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/12 14:16

Finally the author's conclusion on Conservative thought...

We have considered what Christians are to make of political conservatism. It might also be asked what political conservatives are to make of Christians. I am afraid that the more faithful we are to our identity in Christ, the less reliable they will find us even as occasional allies; and we must be honest with them. The Christian thinker Michael Novak wrote in his 1969 book *A Theology for Radical Politics* that because God is the source of all truth and good, whatever is true and good is Christian. At that time finding truth and goodness on the left, he therefore baptized the left. Like many Christians of the time, what he forgot was that in order to identify the true and the good, one must have a standard. "Every explanation of the meaning of human existence," said Reinhold Niebuhr, "must avail itself of some principle of explanation which cannot be explained. Every estimate of values involves some criterion of value which cannot be arrived at empirically." By the time he wrote *Confessions of a Catholic*, fourteen years later, Novak had arrived at the same insight. As he explained, his former self had erred in taking his principle of explanation and criterion of value from a worldly faction instead of the community of faith. The "reference group" of Christian activists like himself had somehow become "others on the left"; it should have been others in the Lord.

To repeat the error would be a shame, for the reference group of Christians can no more be others on the right than others on the left. Citizenship is an obligation of the faith, therefore the Christian will not abstain from the politics of the nation-state. But his primary mode of politics must always be witness. It is a good and necessary thing to change the welfare laws, but better yet to go out and feed the poor. It is a good and necessary thing to ban abortion, but better yet to sustain young women and their babies by taking them into the fellowship of faith. This is the way the kingdom of God is built.

It is not by the world that the world is moved-yet how it pulls. Ah, God, help us let go of the heights and the depths, the thrones and dominions, the powers and principalities; to be not conservatives, nor yet liberals, but simply Christians. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts."

J. Budziszewski is Professor in the Departments of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin.

end of conclusion...

The next thrust of this thread will now deal with liberal thought...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/12 15:44

Quote:
-----the more faithful we are to our identity in Christ, the less reliable they will find us even as occasional allies; and we must be honest with them.

This is the line we have crossed...allowing our alliance with politicians to obscure our alliance with Christ. Conservatives have done it without apology since the Reagan years but many other factions of the church such as select African American communities have also been doing it with impunity as well. Today Christians like Jim Wallis, with his "God Politics" and Sojourners organization is making the same mistake that the Conservatives have done. We are willing to make certain deadly compromises, in order to benefit from them.

We want to ply children born of natural descent, of human decision and man's will, with something they do not want. In our campaign to convince the world of our rightness, we have willingly made God's house a den of thieves. Even the honorable Billy Graham has shot himself in the foot more than once from getting too familiar with strangers to Christ.

I grew up in Lynchburg Virginia, attending Jerry Falwell's church as a boy during the Moral Majority years. This notion of 'reclaiming America for God' has been woven into my Baptist DNA. Yet before people act surprised at that, they should remember that the Moral Majority was a worldly reaction against other worldly biases in the media, politics and most of all liberal social churches. The issue here isn't whose worldliness we should align with---the right or the left.

The real lesson is that both the Republican and Democratic unclean thing should be unwelcome in the house of God...unless they come as humble individuals without their party clothes. Yet we American Christians are mixers...we merrily sip our spiritual cocktails, though God himself hates spiritual mixture. He just hates it, especially when it comes to his people. Consider the faultless robes of righteousness, given wholly new for those who had only prodigal rags before.

Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together.

This robe has nothing to do with the conservative morals or liberal social ethics. It is a shame that we have cloaked ourselves in rags when God has warmed us in His finest garments. I'm not saying that we don't go out into the world and contribute as good and dutiful civic people...but we can not continue to bring the world back into our sanctuaries and think we are living dutifully towards the Lord. I'm talking first of the brick and mortar sanctuaries where we dwell locally in peace with one another and God.

Yet far more important is the invisible and universal Church, and the sanctuary of our worship in Spirit and Truth. In this most holy place, saints of every tongue, tribe, and nation leave their flags behind to enter into Christ's blood wrought unity, humbly worshipping God the most exalted above all other powers. Oh that we could pour around the throne as a vast ocean, a single holy nation of the redeemed whose roaring praise rises up like storm clouds before the hushed angels. Someday my friends.

Rookie, I thank God for your systematic assault on our political idolatry. May we continue to wash one another's feet of the dirt and dung from our misguided wanderings.

I keep coming back to John 1. To me it explains what our hope is...not morality, or compassion, or even Godly blessing upon a nation...it is this: Without Christ the whole world is groping in darkness though it gropes with machinery of war, money and power. So how do we react...join in the fray for the cause of Christ? God save us from such a denial of Christ! What partnership can light have with darkness? For we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Let's not expect the darkness to understand this, though the darkness recruits us, and utilizes some of our morality and even religion.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/13 2:30

Brother Mike wrote:

Quote:
-----Without Christ the whole world is groping in darkness though it gropes with machinery of war, money and power. So how do we react...join in the fray for the cause of Christ?

I have finally found a church here in Hershey...the pastor's sermon today was taken from 2 Chronicles 35:

2Chr. 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. 21 But he sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God, who is with me, lest He destroy you." 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo.

2Chr. 35:23 And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." 24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

2Chr. 35:25 Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.

2Chr. 35:26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the LORD, 27 and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

His sermon was focused on hearing God. In the case of King Josiah, he failed to obey God. The result was deadly. He knew beforehand that God's word had prophesied that the nation of Judah would be destroyed by a heathen nation. King Necho a non-believer, was used by God to warn Josiah. The king would not go against Judah. Yet Josiah in order to trick Necho, disguised himself and picked a war with King Necho.

What can be learned from this example? Only through the feeding on Scripture and the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit can we too recognize the works of God. Only through Scripture can we find that God does speak to those who are ready to listen.

The book of Daniel teaches us about revelation. The dreams Daniel received, especially in the last half of the book, give us a way to understand how revelation often works. Each time Daniel dreams, the content of the dreams build upon one another. As time goes on, the picture grows clearer. The other thing we learn is that Daniel waits on the Lord.

We live in evil times, we suffer greatly from what we do not know.

The pastor closed with this exhortation...

Eph. 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which

are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”

Eph. 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

This is what we are called to...redeeming the time, because the days are evil...

Awake, you who sleep
Arise from the dead
And Christ will give you light...

God Bless you Mike and all the congregation

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/11/13 4:15

Quote:

-----Refrain from meddling with God

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain? (If we join in their plotting, we join in their vanity...)

Quote:

----- finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

2 The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD
and against his Anointed One. (How do they do this? Not always by disrespecting God's name publicly as some are concerned with. Instead, because of the depravity of their natures, many worldly rulers appear to keep religion but in reality work and fight against the character and spirit of God.)

3 "Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters." (The spirit of our age...)

4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them. (God is not impressed by our power nor fretting over our enemies...)

5 Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

6 "I have installed my King
on Zion, my holy hill." (Yet we strive for political dominion upon an unholy dunghill.)

7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD :
He said to me, "You are my Son ;

today I have become your Father.

Quote:

-----For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

8 Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession. (Jesus has been actually given what men vainly imagine is theirs...)

9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."(God will judge this world that we love so dearly...who will we run to for safety?Must we wait for the destruction of our government to run to God...is He our fallback or our first love?)

10 Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth. (Judgement and the conclusion of all of man's evil activities, is imminent...How does the worldly way we live deny this warning to kings? If we cannot heed this warning then who can?)

11 Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling. (Rejoice because fear of God demolishes our fear of man!)

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment...

Quote:

-----When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him...though our outward predicament grows more dire by the day. Though Abaddon is to be released upon the Earth, God is our refuge. Though love will grow cold with many, it need not with us, because we are shielded by God's power.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him alone. If we do not have this glorious hope, then the world and its failing governments are all the more without hope. We use the language of the Lord, but we participate in worldly systems and in doing so render our words meaningless. We might render God's Word meaningless if it were up to us to fulfill them...but God will fulfill His own promises regardless of our confidence in them. This is the warning to kings...and the lukewarm church.

Blessings brethren,

MC

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/20 2:22

Now for the liberal debate...

"The Problem With Liberalism

J. Budziszewski

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Believers in the congregation of my youth took for granted that Christianity and liberal politics were opposed. The Bible seemed to back them up; of Lyndon Johnson's two great wars, for instance, they viewed the first, the war in Vietnam, with enthusiasm because America was a "City upon a Hill," while viewing the other, the war on poverty, with indifference because "the poor will always be with us." An antiwar socialist, I rebelled, eventually leaving the faith completely. When in middle adulthood I returned, I found myself in a congregation of a different kind. Here, to my surprise, the believers took for granted that Christianity and liberal politics were brothers. Again Scripture was gleaned for support. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"-obvious backing for the welfare state. "There is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"-a manifesto for feminism. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him"-homosexual activists asked for no more. As a teen-ager I had hurled some of the same verses against my elders. God had devised a cunning penance.

Of course, both sides were tearing passages out of context and reading into them things that are not there. The City upon a Hill is the Body of Christ, not the United States of America. If the poor will always be with us, then we will always have to care for them. I am expected to look after the least of Christ's brethren myself, not to have the government send them checks. The apostle who said that in Him there is no male or female also said that in the family their roles are different. And the apostle who said that God is love also claimed for God the authority to define that love.

Unfortunately, knowing these things does not answer the ideological question. Should Christians be political liberals? Or even, to put the query the other way around, Can they be?

In one way, both forms of the question are wrong-headed. According to the letter to the Philippians, our commonwealth is in Heaven, not on earth. In the same vein, the Great Commission shows that the mission of the Church to the world is to preach the gospel, not to underwrite any worldly regime or ideology. Therefore the primary identity of the Christian is in Christ-it cannot be in liberalism, any more than it can be in conservatism, communism, or communitarianism.

But to stop at this truth would be evasive. Although the faith does not mandate any worldly regime or generate any worldly ideology, it does stand in judgment upon worldly regimes and ideologies. Moreover, Scripture makes clear that so long as human institutions do not defy God's commandments, we are to submit to them. Under a monarchy, submission might mean nothing more than obedience. In a republic, however, submission includes participation, so we have no alternative but to take positions on political questions. Willy-nilly, this involves us in responding to the worldly philosophies by which other people settle such questions.

The result? Even though I am not a duck, I will sometimes seem to quack like a duck. I cannot be a liberal and I cannot even be in strategic alliance with liberals, but I may from time to time find myself in tactical alliance with them-just as with conservatives-defending the cause of particular laws, precepts, or policies that they too approve, but for reasons of their own. To keep my head, I had better be clear about what those reasons are and how they differ from mine. So although we cannot ask whether Christians can or should be political liberals, we can and should ask what Christians are to think of liberalism.

At the threshold of the question we run into another problem. The term "political liberalism" can mean several things. In which sense are we using it here? Its principal meanings are threefold. Broadly, it means constitutional government with a representative legislature and generous liberties. In political economy, it means a competitive, self-regulating market with minimal government interference. Colloquially, it means the contemporary variety of government-driven social reformism. The first sense makes both Senator Kennedy and Speaker Gingrich liberals. The second makes the Speaker a liberal, but not the Senator. The third makes the Senator a liberal, but not the Speaker. For present purposes I use the term in the third.

My thesis is that, even as worldly philosophies go, political liberalism is deeply flawed. We may best describe it as a bundle of acute moral errors, with political consequences that grow more and more alarming as these errors are taken closer and closer to their logical conclusions. I am not speaking of such errors as celebrating sodomy and abortion-for these are merely symptoms-but of their causes. Nor am I speaking of all their causes-for this would require reading hearts-but of their intellectual causes. I am not even speaking of all their intellectual causes-for these are too numerous-but of the most obvious. No claim is here made that every political liberal commits all the moral errors all the time. Nor do I claim that all the moral errors are logically compatible, so they even could all be committed all the time. Certain moral errors support certain others, but others are at odds, so they must be committed selectively. One must not expect logical coherence in moral confusion.

The political implications of the faith are more negative than positive, so rejecting liberalism does not mean accepting conservatism. In the first place, under the influence of a liberal culture conservatives often fall for liberal moral errors too. In the second place, like every worldly ideology conservatism commits heresies of its own. But we can study conservatism another time."

(end of introduction)

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/11/21 2:39

The first observation on liberalism:

" The first moral error of political liberalism is propitiationism. According to this notion I should do unto others as they want; according to Christianity I should do unto others as they need. Numerous mental habits contribute to the propitiatist frame of mind. Most of my college students, for instance, think "need" and "want" are just synonyms. Many also construe the Jeffersonian right to pursue happiness as a right to be made happy by the government. Propitiationism corresponds to a style of politics in which innumerable factions, both organized and unorganized, compete to become government clientele, fighting not only for shares of the public purse (such as grants and loan guarantees) but also for governmental preferences (such as trade barriers and racial quotas) and for official marks of esteem (such as multiculturalist curricula and recognition of homosexual unions). Of course, in a representative system every government functionary, whether liberal or not, finds it difficult to resist group pressures. Propitiationism, however, reinforces the habit of giving in by making capitulation a moral duty.

Christians can slip into propitiationism by misunderstanding the Golden Rule. This happens when we read Do unto others as you would have them do unto you as though it implied Do unto others as they would have you do unto them-"I'd want others to honor my demands, so I should honor theirs." The mistake lies in overlooking the fact that the "you" to whom the precept is addressed is a free subject of the kingdom of heaven, not a stranger. We are therefore speaking of what in Christ we would have others do unto us-to minister to our godly needs, not to our foolish or sinful wants. Unto others we should minister in the same way. It follows that keeping the Golden Rule may even mean saying "No" or suggesting a better way. Jesus instructs us to feed the poor, and so we should; but Paul says to the church at Thessalonica, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

To be sure, it is easier to see the need to say "No" to a greedy industrialist who wants the government to protect him from honest competition than to a teen mother who wants to marry the government instead of a man. Both want what is bad for them, yet he is likely to get much more of what he wants but doesn't need than she is. The sloppy sort of compassionator is tempted to say, "If he gets what isn't good for him, then it's only fair that she should get what isn't good for her." But to give it to her might be to take her sole beatitude away. Find another way to help her. Blessed are those who cannot pay the entry fee to Hell."

end of observation...

How are our views or values aligned with this observation?

In Christ
Jeff