

Yankee Steve's Column
for the week of February 11, 2010

Religion, What Is It Good For?

Every religion, including Christianity, has ultimately failed to change society.

At the same time we must acknowledge that the Christian religion, in the first three centuries after Jesus Christ, has changed the way people thought about reality. The Roman and Greek gods vanished into myths. Instead, the way that the prophets and apostles looked at the world now became the norm. Reality changed. The entire post-classical world now looked at the world from the perspective of the apostles and prophets.

Nevertheless, this triumph, unequalled as it was by any other religion, society remained the same. Individuals were changed, for example St. Augustine Bishop of Hippo [354-430 A.D.], who records his spiritual pilgrimage for us in *Confessions*, but the world in which he lived and moved never changed. Augustine knew this. Hence his book *The City of God* in which he points out that one can even be in the church and still not be in Christ.

Having not been woven on a loom of apostolic making, the fabric of society can never be redeemed. The generation that witnessed the first great awakening [1735-45] in America, soon gave way to rationalism. Once again, it was demonstrated that faith, individually or on a large scale, cannot be inherited. Therefore the words of Paul the apostle will always be relevant, "Be not conformed to this world..." [Romans 12:2] The world cannot be saved. Its bias is away from God.

So what good is religion if it cannot change society on the inside? What good is religion if it can only create a subculture made up of twice-born Christians?

Just Like People, Nations Get into Trouble

Much ink has been wasted by poorly taught individuals who have tried to prove that the founders of America were for the most part men of the Enlightenment. Or to put it simply, they were more French than American, which is to say they were inclined to think that religion, if not superfluous was dangerous. But is that the case?

I will admit that four Americans, whose names must be associated with the founding of our country, (the were signers of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution thereby making them founders) were not in the strictest sense Christians, being instead Deists (those who think that the cosmos is run according to created laws and that Providence is an idea without meaning), but I will not at the same time admit that they were in the strictest sense faithful to the deism during times of crisis. You already know their names: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson.

When push came to shove, and the British did shove, even these men who had been charmed by a doctrine that said that God was far away suddenly took to prayer. There are no deists in foxholes.

Maybe you are familiar with a story that comes down to us about how Congress struggled while writing the Constitution. It is a wonderful testimony to the way in which Americans have always couched their history in a context of religion.

Even if society cannot in actuality turn to God, and even if true religion is left up to the individual, it does not mean that our nation cannot call on God in times of trouble which is what it should do now because of the fact that we are now being led by men and women who are without honor. If half or a quarter of what Michelle Malkin has written in her book *Culture of Corruption* is true we may go down in history as the last and greatest democracy.

A True Story

Congress met in 1787 to form “a more perfect union.” At first very little progress was made. States jealous of their rights and motivated by personal interests were about to bring the meetings to a halt. Sounding like a clergyman, George Washington abandoned his deism and went on to admonish the quarreling delegates with these words, “It is too probable that no plan we propose will be adopted . . . If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; *the event is in the hand of God.*” [*emphasis added*]

Founding father Franklin took Washington’s admonishment to heart. He went so far as to rebuke the members for having neglected prayer. This was surprising since Franklin is generally thought of as a skeptic or free-thinker. He was nothing of the sort.

James Madison preserved a letter that Franklin sent to Washington at this time. Franklin served to illustrate that if man is a religious animal as Socrates has said, the American is at the head of the pack, even if he is a man of science and politics as was Franklin. The letter and motion in Congress demonstrates that the fathers did not separate the state from the church because they thought that religion did not serve a purpose, or that we should not witness to our faith because we have been elected to political office.

Doctor Franklin to Mr. President:

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks close attendance & continual reasonings with each other - our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many nays as ayes, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of Human Understanding. We indeed seem to feel our want of political wisdom since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist.

And we have viewed modern States all around Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In the situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding? In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance. I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that “except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of the Tower of Babel; We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves will become a reproach and a bye word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Government by Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move - that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.

Mr. Roger Sherman seconded the motion.

Conclusion

So what is religion good for? In times of trouble nations may call on God even if that nation is like King Ahab in the Old Testament. He was by no means a true believer. Remember, his wife was Jezebel! And recall that he looked the other way when she planned the death of a prophet. But when he humbled himself and put on sackcloth and ashes and walked quietly before God, that same God extended mercy to him. No, he did not die the death of the righteous, but he found mercy in his lifetime. His eyes, if you read the story, never had to look on the horrors that followed his death.

May this nation find mercy. May we no longer be led by foolish leaders into fighting wars that could have been avoided which have in turn endangered our economy, and may we never have to face the hardship that our current fiscal policies will surely bring upon us.

America, learn from the founders of this nation. Learn to call on God in times of trouble. Their prayer was answered. They committed their way to God and their thoughts were guided aright which is the promise of Scripture. Look at the document, the U.S. Constitution, was left for posterity which has been copied around the world, and which has brought freedom to countless millions. If they prayed so must we.

Religion, what is it good for? It saves nations from ruin.

Ever yours,

Yankee Steve Cakouros
oldlineconservative.com