

Daily Meditation 09/27/2022

Theocracy in America: An Historical Perspective

Good morning.

Today we're taking up the theme of theocracy in America.

And we're looking back, because it certainly is emerging today in many examples, including, of course, the very, very, very minority opinion in the Supreme Court that women should not have a right over their own bodies, but politicians should, overthrowing a 49-year-old legal precedent set by the Supreme Court 50 years ago.

So David Korten, as I point out, has among other things, researched the role of theocracy before the Constitution in America. And he points out that the theocratic nature of colonial governance is obvious, and the types of crimes that were assigned the death penalty in the General Laws and Liberties of New Hampshire, published in 1680.

Among these crimes, for death penalty, were the following: worshipping any God but the Lord God, taking the name of God in vain, witchcraft, sodomy, cursing, or rebelling against one's parents. Doing unnecessary work or travel on the Lord's Day was punishable by fine and whipping.

You found similar provisions in the Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts, 1647, the Capital laws of Connecticut, 1642, and the Articles, Laws and Orders for the Colony of Virginia, 1610 to 1611.

He also points out the teachings of Calvinism, that humans are depraved, he says:

This affirms the underlying dehumanizing premise of neoliberal economics: that humans are by nature capable only of selfish acts. This belief, combined with a belief in the superior righteousness of those blessed with wealth and power, was part of the Calvinists' teaching --

if you're successful, that's proof that you've been chosen by the Almighty.

...This provides a foundation for an easy alliance between contemporary religious theocrats and contemporary corporate plutocrats: the theocrats affirm the moral righteousness of the plutocrats, and the plutocrats provide media and funding support for politicians committed to the theocrats' restrictive social agenda.

So the Calvinist teaching is that, because of a sinful nature, humans can have no role in their own salvation. This comes purely from God's chosen miracle of divine grace.

Predestination also comes in there.

Ultimately, the individual is powerless to influence his or her circumstances in the afterlife through good works. The poor are not victims of a failed economic system, so much as they are damned, the instruments of the devil, and no fate is too harsh for them.

So you can see the influence of theology or religion, or what I would call bad religion, on politics, on economics and culture, as a whole, culture writ large.

So that's why this theme of theocracy that is arising again, is coming out of the mouths of elected politicians in the federal legislature, but also in state legislatures. These are making decisions about how we vote and, of course, choices of whom we vote for.

So it's something for us to be more and more alert about.

And of course, the tremendous role that Opus Dei has had just on the Supreme Court alone is part of this return of theocracy to America.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.