

## The Christian and Civil Government (27<sup>th</sup>)

(The study today continues with the history of the struggles for religious freedom in the United States of America. Today's lesson shows how our nation strayed from the initial intent of the First Amendment and is in bondage to pagan philosophy.)

In our last podcast we saw that the Baptists, both in England and New England, were interested in the war with England with the hopes that it would go toward liberty of conscious in worship not only in the New World but also in the Old. Furthermore, we found that the Baptist, Isaac Backus, was central in this struggle. Some today may think that this study is a waste of time in searching the past and validating the influence of the Baptists in securing this freedom and that it is not relative to today. I can assure you that the connection of civil government and its role with religious worship and the freedom to worship according to one's conscious is vital today. In fact, in some ways, it may be even more essential today than in the early days of our country. While there were restrictions regarding worship in the colonies of North America and particularly in the New England states, those limits were the results of the Protestants and the theology of the Reformers that they adopted from the Catholics. Though wrongly interpreted, those rules and laws were ostensibly from the premise of the Word of God. It is little known that the problem is that the idea of civil government regulating the worship of God outside of the Old Testament theonomy is pagan philosophy. In an earlier podcast we quoted from Leonard Verduin's *The Anatomy of a Hybrid* and the influence of the Roman philosopher Seneca upon Calvin in forming his views of civil government used to exercise discipline upon "heretics." Before Seneca, we find that Plato, too, believed that civil government should dictate the worship of the citizens. Listen as we read from Book X of Plato's laws:

No man shall have religious services in his house, but he shall go with his friends to pray and sacrifice in the temples. The reason of this is, that religious institutions can only be framed by a great intelligence. But women and weak men are always consecrating the event of the moment; they are under the influence of dreams and apparitions, and they build altars and temples in every village and in any place where they have had a vision. The law is designed to prevent this, and also to deter men from attempting to propitiate the Gods by secret sacrifices, which only multiply their sins. Therefore let the law run:—No one shall have private religious rites; and if a man or woman who has not been previously noted for any impiety offend in this way, let them be admonished to remove their rites to a public temple; but if the offender be one of the obstinate sort, he shall be brought to trial before the guardians, and if he be found guilty, let him die. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1750/1750-h/1750-h.htm>

By this we see that the intelligentsia of the state is only smart enough to know what is to be worship and how it is to be instituted. Unless worship is in conformity to the state—civil government—then the "offender" is to be "brought to trial ... and if he be found guilty, let him die." But what has all of this to do with our society today, it may be asked? It is answered: much in every way. Little does the public know that our modern educational system in America as outlined by John Dewey is based on the Prussian educational philosophy and it was founded on the philosophy of Plato. Plato also believed that the children belonged to the state and they were to be educated for it. The Word of God teaches that the children belong to the parents and the parents are to teach the children according to the Scriptures, cf. Ephesians 6:1-4. Obviously we cannot go into great details to

show the development of our educational system, but we will give a few quotes for verification. To do this, we will quote from Rousas J. Rushdoony's book *The Messianic Character of American Education*. On page 15, he wrote "For the Greeks, authority came from the *polis*, not from God." The meaning of *polis* is a city state in ancient Greece, especially as considered in its ideal form for philosophical purposes. The quotes from Rushdoony are as follows:

Both Plato and Aristotle had a deep insight into the meaning of man's social and institutional life. To live together with one's fellows in a community involves fitness so to live. This fitness, in turn, implies discipline, instruction, training; that is, education. The highest type of individual life is found in community life. Ethics passes into or includes politics, and the education of the individual is education for the state.

Man is not only a social animal, he is a statist animal. Being continuous with all reality, he has no discontinuity with the mass, and no law to live by in terms beyond that commonality and continuity. Hence, "the education of the individual is education for the state." Man in evolution, unlike man created in the image of God, has no element of transcendence and no law beyond the commonality. He is continuous with his fellow men, and that continuity is best fulfilled in democracy, which is man's "completion." ...

John Dewey, indeed, spoke of "the necessity for the participation of every mature being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together: which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals," and called this "the keynote of democracy as a way of life." Thus, men must play gods to become truly human. But for Dewey democracy is "the truly human way of living," and "the foundation of democracy is faith in the capacities of human nature." "Man is a social animal," and education is into sociality, and "the heart of the sociality of man is in education." To move forward in this faith will produce "a fuller and deeper religion," possibly manifest already in the decay of the older forms, and "the spiritual import of science and of democracy" will lead to "that type of religion which will be the fine flower of the modern spirit's achievement."

From the continuity through democracy and its established church, the state school, we arrive at Dewey's governing presupposition, *The Great Community*, the secular version of the New Jerusalem. Clark [i.e, Gordon H. Clark from his book entitled *Dewey*] has observed, of Dewey's concepts of ethics and the state, "The state can do no wrong, for right is determined by what the state does." ...

Hegel had held that the state is the actuality of the ethical Idea, in and by itself the ethical whole, the actualization of freedom, mind on earth, "the march of God in the world," the "actual God" and the manifestation of history. For Hegel, these things came to focus in the Prussian state. Dewey, holding the same faith, more modestly than Hegel and Marx, saw this "actual God" as yet in the future but drawing near in his Great Community. At present, because it is unborn or at best shadowy, "the Public will remain in eclipse." Man will not be truly man until this "actual God," the "Great Community," is born. Man is not created in the image of God but of society, and therefore as yet is not fully man. It is no wonder that even a non-Christian such as Bertrand Russell has seen in Dewey's philosophy a "cosmic impiety" which increases "the danger of vast social disaster."

For Dewey, "the seer" of the Great Community was Walt Whitman, and "democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion." ...

Dewey's influence on contemporary life and thought has been extensive in religion, philosophy, and other areas, but chiefly in education and jurisprudence. The Supreme Court in particular has long reflected his influence with a devastating cynicism of all categories of faith and life other than the omnipotent state, which has been exalted and furthered with unrelenting force. It is questionable whether liberty can long survive under a continued onslaught of Deweyism. ... Pages 120, 158-159, 160, 161.

Again, it may be asked, "What does all of this have to do with today?" Again I say, "Much in every way." Recently, Thomas Griffith, a recent retired Court of Appeals judge testified before the U.S. Senate in support of Amy Coney Barrett as follows:

In taking the oath, the judge makes a solemn promise with God as witness that when acting as a judge, she will be a different person than when she's not acting as a judge. Robert Bolt's portrayal of Thomas More in *A Man for All Seasons* captures this point simply and powerfully: "What is an oath," More asks, "but words we speak to God?" In other words, for a person of Faith, the judicial oath is a promise to the Nation and to God that she will not do the one thing her secular critics most fear: reach for outcomes based on her religious world view. When wearing the robe, there is no conflict between following God and Caesar. It's Caesar all the way down. See Chuck Baldwin's October 22, 2020 newsletter entitled "For Whom Will I Vote?"

In the words of Baldwin, "So, in the world of Barrett and Griffith, anyone who takes a governmental oath (judge, sheriff, police officer, mayor, county commissioner, governor, legislator, etc.) is obligated to deny God's Revealed Law ... and one's own moral conscience to be a slave of Caesar."

This should be sufficient to show that this issue of the Christian and civil government is as vital and essential as in the founding of the laws of our country. That the educational system was forced on the people to indoctrinate our children from the earliest age of this pagan-catholic-reformed ideology and it has turned our nation into what it is today. Ideally, this lesson should have been published months ago, but we trust it will be beneficial to show why we are in our current state. The Lord willing we will return to the establishing of the First Amendment as seen in the life of Isaac Backus in our next podcast. Farewell for now and may God be pleased to grant us mercy to worship Him in all freedom.