



Has the State Invaded the Church?

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Advocates of the Separation of Church and State argue that tax-exempt Christian organizations should not influence political affairs. The initial idea was to prevent a violation of the separation of church and state by mingling religion and politics, but recently, advocate organizations have begun a campaign that carries dangerous implications for churches in America.

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State have begun sending volunteers into churches to observe the sermons by pastors to see if candidates are being endorsed. Since churches are tax-exempt organizations, using them to advocate for a political candidate violates the laws surrounding their tax-exempt status. In a Worldnetdaily article, Barry Lynn, head of Americans United, filed a report with the IRS against the First Baptist Church of Springdale, Arkansas. In the report, he stated that "The pastor's description of the candidates' stands and their personal religious beliefs was obviously aimed at encouraging congregants to cast ballots for Bush. The church is known for its stands on social issues and its opposition to legal abortion and gay rights." While the church possibly advocating a particular political candidate can threaten the church from within, the greater threat comes from the fact that individuals are observing pastors and then reporting back to the government.

To have individuals who observe churches and then report church activities back to the government threatens the very freedom of churches to function without state

interference. If the power of state can be brought to bear on churches through the threat of taxation, then it is the state and not the church that becomes the determining factor in what Christian leaders may say. Should Christian and state ideas clash, as in issues such as abortion and gay marriage, the state would have the power to override Christian ideas by taxes, fines and regulations. This very interference of the church by the state is an indication that a nation is about to lose the very freedom it has so enjoyed.

Church leaders run a risk when they advocate for a particular candidate, not because they might lose their tax-exempt status or that it might violate election laws, but because the ideas of Judeo-Christianity should rise above and supersede any political loyalties. Christian leaders should be loyal to the teachings of the Bible above that of conservatism and liberalism. This leaves the congregation free to vote for the candidate they feel best supports Biblical teachings. If leaders advocate for a candidate's beliefs, they run the risk of putting those beliefs above the teachings of the Bible, elevating a man above God.

The issue surrounding the observers isn't just about political candidates, but also about the moral teachings themselves. Even if a pastor never mentions a single candidate's name, they teach definitive moral ideas on civil issues that candidates often deal with, such as abortion and gay marriage. Christians usually find these moral teachings best represented by conservative candidates and are more likely to vote for them.

While churches are

free to speak out on issues while not endorsing a particular candidate, using the threat of taxation will have an impact on the type of candidate that will come to dominate the voting booths. Christian leaders acting to protect their churches may avoid issues that candidates are debating, like abortion and gay marriage, leaving the congregation without any moral clarity or guidance. At the same time, liberal leaders, who tend to oppose traditional church teachings on such issues, are free to use whatever means available to propagate their views, increasing the chance that voters will choose candidates that support liberal views over church teachings. In essence, the voting base would dry up for conservatives and shift over to liberals, ensuring victory for proponents of liberal thought in future elections and in most political offices. Christian thought tends to be against centralized governmental dominance, whereas liberal thought stands close to Socialist thought, which supports centralized government and state involvement in all American affairs, including church affairs, for the sake of compelling state interests such as tolerance and diversity.

The church in America has always represented God in the nation and has preserved Christian thought since the nation's founding. This invasion of the church by the secular state is a step to silence Christian thought, fulfilling the axiom, "The State is God and God is the State." Christianity asserts that God rules in the affairs of men and the State asserts that men rule in the affairs of God. These are the worldviews struggling for control in America.

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environmental price. Countries who borrow from the bank or the fund must accept "structural adjustment policies" in order to receive the loans. These policies require the government to open its economy, almost unrestricted, to foreign corporations. The workers and environment are exploited by these corporations for inhumane prices. The country will now focus resources mainly on growing export crops rather than supporting family farms and the local community. Public utilities and public industries will also be allowed to be privatized under the "structural adjustment policy." The World Bank and the IMF further perpetuate the poverty gap between rich and poor nations that they claim to be alleviating.

Our world is no longer one ruled by many governments, but by globalized corporate control. Big business' and banks, unchecked by a largely ignorant public, dictate the trade, equality (or lack thereof), freedom, power and health of the masses. There is only one Republic left: the Republic of Global Consumerism.

Ignorance is no claim to pardon from guilt; the choice not to learn is one of the most guilt-ridden. In a globalized world we all share guilt. The best one can do is actively seek a solution for the problems that face our world in their personal life as well as on a

larger scale.

To obtain knowledge, but not to act is to coward away from the responsibilities bestowed on the privileged (western civilization.) We, the people of the United States, have put off our responsibilities to the global community for too long. The time has come to fight against the corporate grip on our world and take our Republic back.

"There is enough on this planet for everyone's needs but not for everyone's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi

*Websites for more information on these topics:

Media Centralization:

www.viacom.com.

www.cjr.org/tools/owners/index.asp

WTO:

www.wto.org.

www.citizen.org/trade/wto/index.cfm

World Bank and IMF:

www.imf.org.

www.worldbank.org

Others:

www.globalexchange.org/campaigns.

www.hrw.org, www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.

www.globalissues.org