

Religionism's Endemic Hypocrisy and Money

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How many times has it been preached to Us the People that mere exposure to religionism will make us better people? Members of Congress have declared that if the Ten Commandments are placed in public school classrooms, the beneficial moral influence the faith-based posters exert would preclude or at least greatly reduce the odds for one or more students turning into murderers. Part of W. Bush's reasoning for letting faith-based organizations take over the government's responsibility to provide social services to citizens who need them is that social services provided in a religious environment will exert beneficial moral influence merely from the environmental exposure. However, if that was true, then shouldn't those who are the most deeply submerged in the mire of religionism be the most moral citizens in this country or any other? If true, the answer has to be "Yes," but history and current events relentlessly and mercilessly prove the answer *always* has been, *always* is, and *always* will be "No!" The hypocrisy that is SOP for religionists does not allow „Yes" to happen. There it is.

There is a way to demonstrate this that is easy to do. All it takes is time and a variety of news sources. It is highly relevant to the negative consequences we can expect if W. Bush's faith-based initiative is passed by Congress and survives the inevitable test of constitutionality in the U.S. Supreme Court. These negative consequences are already happening as a result of the expansion of using faith-based organizations to deliver governmental social services made by previous, similar, smaller-scale violations of the law known as the First Amendment. They're happening because religionism exerts *detrimental* moral influence, and one of the worst effects of its *detrimental* moral influence is making hypocrisy endemic among religionists. They rarely walk their talk. Whenever one of them does actually walk their talk, the rest of them are flabbergasted and proclaim that person to be a saint!

These negative consequences also refute convincingly the argument that mere exposure to a poster of the Ten Commandments will cause those exposed to experience beneficial moral influence. One of those commandments is „You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:14). It's repeated again in Deuteronomy 5:19 in case the Jews didn't get the message the first time. When the rich young man asks one-third of Christianity's imaginary three-part deity, „Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16), among the list of recommended behaviors is „You must not steal" (19:18). A person doesn't need to be an archbishop or TV evangelist to be able to figure out that stealing is a serious no-no for Jews and Christians. Nor does one have to be an imam or guru or roshi or shaman to know that stealing is generally a „holy" no-no for all religionists, even if only limited to within their sect or cult. The ancient „holy" commandment is also one that cultural evolution has not rendered obsolete, and it is actually extremely easy to obey; therefore, stealing is one behavior that ought to be powerfully responsive to the kind of moral influence religionism exerts.

Hypocrisy works this way when dealing with the treasures stored up on Earth: the religionist *talks* "You shall not steal," then walksoff with some other person's or organization's property or money. This stealing often involves swindles that betray the trust the sheep have in their shepherds, who fleece them relentlessly — *always* have, *always* are, *always* will. The Ten Commandments could be tattooed on the backs of their hands and still fail to exert beneficial moral influence sufficient to enable them to resist the lure of easy money. Nowadays that easy money is often enough the government's.

Am I lying? Is this a wild hypothesis generated by my Atheism? „No!" and „No!" Just start collecting news stories about religious leaders who commit money crimes. There is no need to go spelunking in esoteric sources covered with dust or finding seldom-surfed strands of the Web. The news stories will be found in ordinary news sources available to every person in the U.S. willing to subscribe to them, such as newspapers, news-weeklies, and other magazines that include reporting on current events. It won't take long to accumulate a fat file!

Here are three news stories that were published in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Each one should have given W. Bush, FBI czar John Dilulio, and Marvin Olasky, W. Bush's compassionate conservatism guru, second thoughts about the wisdom of using faith-based organizations to

provide governmental social services. The New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ received over \$1,300,000 from the federal government to provide meals in day-care homes. However, these homes did not exist. The addresses given to the government were for vacant lots and abandoned houses. Seven religionists were involved in this scam. Without Walls International Church in Tampa, FL, operated a faith-based driving school called Restoration & Evangelism Advanced Thru Community Training. One service provided was illegally fixing over 1,000 truck drivers' license tests, charging up to \$1,300 to do it. Drivers from 19 states came to them to be fraudulently licensed before they were busted. Among Clinton's controversial pardons were four Hasidic Jews who had been convicted of stealing over \$40,000,000 from the government. They created a faith-based school to receive the money, which came in the form of education grants, small business loans, and housing subsidies. The problem was this: the parochial school, like the supreme supernatural entity these men worship, did not exist.

As the file increases in bulk, remember this: If religionism truly exerted beneficial moral influence, those most deeply mired in religionism would be the ones most heavily influenced, thus the most moral of all humans. Then ask this question: how many exposures to the Ten Commandments would it take to prevent religious leaders from stealing? If W. Bush would create a President's Commission on Separation of State and Church, that question could be one of the research projects. Wouldn't that be an interesting report? I predict confidently that the results of that research, if conducted with scientific integrity, would not disturb or surprise any Atheist or Freethinker on this planet!

Religious leaders have committed money crimes, are committing them right now, and will continue to commit them for as long as there are sheep needing shepherds to fleece them! A person does not have to be a New Age reincarnation of Nostradamus to make that prediction! Of course, if religionism actually exerted beneficial moral influence, religious leaders would not make the prediction come true. If W. Bush hopes that they will not after they get much more numerous opportunities to do it, then obviously he needs to know this: that hope died several thousand years ago! In fact, it died about five minutes after humans began storing up treasures on Earth rather than waiting to enjoy imaginary treasures in some imaginary heaven. There it is.

Because religionism's detrimental moral influence inevitably turns religionists into hypocrites, the lust for money corrupts them with such efficiency that it competes with the corruption caused by the lusts for political power and sexual pleasure. If it was true that religionism exerts beneficial moral influence, then religious leaders as a whole should demonstrate at least above average moral behavior. They do not. Religious leaders as a whole are the most corrupt religionists. The money crimes religious leaders commit are all too common. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year religious shepherds fleece their flocks without any evidence that their religionism restrains them. The only difference is how big the news story is when they are finally caught.

A person doesn't have to be skilled in esoteric exegesis of Jeremiah or I Ching to be able to predict this: if W. Bush can fulfill his campaign promise to finish the job of transferring governmental social services programs to faith-based organizations, news stories about their money crimes against the government will become all too common.

There it is.

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