

In America, Church and State Do Not Mix, With Good Reason Don't Try to Re-write History

By William C. Thomas

From the Further Tea Party Emails of Robert Rowland

"I am proud to say that my church is joining with hundreds of other churches and church leaders in America in starting to push back against the false premise of "separation of church and state". The Federal government has been bowing to the false claims of the left for decades and has used the tax exempt status of our churches as a tool for blackmailing us to ignore the true intent of our founding fathers on this important issue. This weekend our church has bravely and boldly brought a speaker who is addressing the truth about our constitutional right to worship and to engage in the issues that determine our nations path, including politics. They are offering some books, "America's Godly Heritage" and "Separation of Church and State", of which I have copies. It's time for Americans of faith to stand up and fight back against the lefts continued assault on our beliefs, and our right to gather in our houses of worship and discuss the important issues facing our nation, all under the umbrella of our Christian faith, without being persecuted for doing so. The left is afraid of our faith, our unity and they try to separate us from the right to join together as Christians to restore our nations founding principles, all of which were founded in a deep faith in God. We must fight back!

I encourage you to speak to your pastors, church leaders and help them step forward in this important battle."

Like many of Rowland's screeds, this one is confusing. I believe he says that his religious freedom is under attack, as is that of others desiring to practice religion. The Left is doing this because the Left is afraid of "our faith." Then he says that Christians need to join together to "restore our nations founding principles, all of which were founded in a deep faith in God." According to Rowland, the Left can threaten the tax exempt status of his religion.

He bases his statements loosely on a David Barton text called "America's Godly Heritage," which points out that most American writing from 1600-1800 used the King James Bible as its reference. The King James Bible was taught in school; the King James Bible was the most quoted text in the United States. David Barton asserts that the Founding Fathers were all Christian churchgoers; therefore, they intended for the United States to be a Christian Nation. The United States, Barton says, should follow Christian principles in its schools and its government.

What Rowland, that great Constitutional scholar, conveniently forgets to note is Article VI, paragraph 3: "...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Those founding fathers were pretty darn smart. Or maybe they had seen what the imposition of religion in public life could do. They were all aware of the English Test Acts which required allegiance to the Church Of England and its dogma before a man could enter university, hold any public office, preach or hold a medical degree; they had neighbors who had fled Europe because of disapproved religious practice; they were only a generation removed from that "Shining City on a Hill" known as Salem, Massachusetts, where religious practice resulted in the hanging of so-called "witches."

What other Christian principles would be enforced? There's that sticky interpretation regarding Roe v Wade; a problem with good people who want to be married but happen to be the same gender; a host of problems with people who practice other religions. Rowland probably did not see this in his zeal to bear false witness.

He says he has copies of "America's Godly Heritage" and "Separation of Church and State." I watched a streaming video of the former, which sounds quite reasonable until it's viewed in the light of History.

Because the King James Bible was the most available book between 1600-1800 in the Western World, it is not surprising that it would be the most oft-quoted work. Because other books were expensive and could only be bought by subscription for those 200 years, it is not surprising that the King James Bible was usually the only written work in many pioneer homesteads. If they could be afforded, the other works of the homestead could include Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and maybe a copy of Shakespeare's Plays. Many British commentators throughout the 1700's and even the 1800's observed that American writing and oratory were dominated by Biblical reference and found it quite tiresome. One of the reasons that Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne were celebrated in Europe before other American authors was because their works did not use the King James Bible as a reference or thinly disguised allegory but described secular, robust American life. He does not explain that American authors after 1800, such as Poe, Melville, Twain, Stowe, Dickinson also were able to describe being American outside the King James Bible because they were able to write about the individuality of American life.

In "America's Godly Heritage," David Barton argues that the framers of the Constitution never intended for the American people to abandon their Christian principles. He quotes John Jay and John Quincy Adams extensively. Neither left a definite intention that the Constitution be used by a Christian nation. In *The Federalist Papers*, which are arguments in favor of and against the Constitution, John Jay discusses foreign affairs. John Quincy Adams, though he could have been present, fresh from his European travels, was not a framer of the Constitution. He writings are not included in *The Federalist Papers*.

If Rowland's church is actively promoting a candidate or a party, then its participation should be questioned because it is in violation of the Constitution. It is not acting separately from the political process. It is being part of it. If that can be proven, Rowland's church and its hypocrisy should be revealed and it should lose its tax exempt status because it demands a religious test.

The Founding Fathers must have been on the Left.

Evidently, Rowland doesn't see far enough to determine why "Christian principles" should not be a requirement of public institutions. Precisely what Christian principles would be enforced? The Ten Commandments? Given Mr. Rowland's record on not bearing false witness, he'd be in direct violation. Wouldn't Rowland have some problems enforcing "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" if he doesn't give all his money to God?

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State."

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to Danbury Baptist Association, CT., Jan. 1, 1802