pyramids are a lasting testimony to the building prowess of the Egyptians. They are also evidence of the religion and political theory of Egypt. The very shape of the pyramids tells us something about Egypt's political philosophy. Egypt was a top-down system of total control. The Pharaohs believed in political centralization. All of life was controlled through the Pharaoh's decree. Their silent witness in the desert kingdom of Egypt should remind us that any top-down political structure is doomed to fail.

In the pyramid society the state controls everything. The ruler is both priest and king. He "is the person who has contact with the gods."[1] In modern pyramid societies the state is god and politics its priesthood. When the people want relief, they turn to the state. The liberals certainly believe in statist salvation, but it's the conservative working class that continues to vote to keep the gravy train coming from Washington.

The Pharaohs were not incorporating a new idea in the development of their political philosophy. All those who reject the true God want to be "like God" (Gen. 3:5). God is the controller of all things. Rebels against God want to control, to manipulate, and eventually to enslave. This is the dream of all empire-builders. Given enough power and authority, these power merchants believe that all of life can be controlled by man and for man, and more often than not, Christians believe it too. If Christians really believed that God was indeed the Ruler of the Nations, they would vote for men who had the guts to say no to every appropriation bill that crossed their desk. Our attacks have been leveled against the liberals for too long. Christians are at fault. We believe in the pyramid society.

Decentralization: The Essence of Freedom

There is a great danger in following the political model of Egypt, no matter how good the intentions. Political centralization creates a society of nearly endless political control. The Bible outlines a decentralized social order where power is diffused and the potential for corruption and tyranny are minimized. Freedom is enhanced because of the diluted strength of the one by the maintenance of the many.

> *The biblical social order is utterly hostile to the pyramid society.* The biblical social order is characterized by the following features. *First*, it is made up of multiple institutional arrangements, each with its own legitimate, limited, and derivative sovereignty under God's universal law. *Second*, each institution possesses a hierarchical chain of command, but these chains of command are essentially *appeals courts* -- "bottom-up" institutions -- with the primary duty of responsible action placed on people occupying the lower rungs of authority. *Third*, no single institution has absolute and final authority in any instance; appeal can be made to other sovereign agents of godly judgment. Since no society can attain perfection, there will be instances of injustice, but the social goal is harmony under biblical law, in terms of an orthodox creed. God will judge all men perfectly. The State need not seek perfect justice, nor should citizens be taxed at the astronomical rates necessary to sustain the quest for perfect justice.[2]

Constantinian Top-Downism

Constantine, it is said, imposed a top-down state religion on the disintegrating Roman Empire. The Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) "secured for Christianity the privileges of a 'licensed cult' (*religio licita*)," and, thus "guaranteed the right of all to profess the faith, and removed any legal disabilities which they might suffer in consequence."[3] Numerous freedoms were granted to Christians, including the restoration of status lost because of a conscientious objection to certain pagan practices; freedom of assembly and worship; restitution for the confiscation of land and other property. The Church was also recognized as a corporation; it was authorized to own property.[4]

Constantine's reign, however, came on the heels of an already established Christian revival throughout the Empire. Even persecutions could not stop the advance of God's kingdom. "[D]espite persecutions, Christianity had grown to such a degree that it was now considered a threat to the State."[5] Accommodation became the tool of the state. Philip Schaff describes Constantine's place in the progress of the gospel:

> When Constantine planted the standard of the cross upon the forsaken temples of the gods, he but followed the irresistible current of history itself. Christianity had already, without a stroke of the sword or of intrigue, achieved over the false religion the internal victory of spirit over matter, of truth over falsehood, of faith over superstition, of the worship of God over idolatry, or morality over corruption. Under a three hundred years' oppression, it had preserved its irrepressible moral vigor, and abundantly earned its new social position. It could not possibly continue a despised sect, a homeless child of the wilderness, but, like its divine founder on the third day after his crucifixion, it must rise again, take the reins of the world into its hands, and, as an all-transforming principle, take state, science, and art itself, to breathe into them a higher life and consecrate them to service to God.[6]

In time, however, Constantine went beyond these basic freedoms and set the stage for Theodosius and a state imposed ecclesiocracy. Rushdoony writes:

> Christianity represented strength, and Constantine believed in strength; it represented the power of God, and Constantine believed in the power of God *as a Roman*. As Constantine saw it, the function and calling for the church was to revivify the Roman Empire and to establish on a sound basis the genius of the emperor. Constantine was respectful, kindly, and patient with the church, but in all this he saw the church still as an aspect of the empire, however central a bulwark. The evidence indicates that he saw himself somewhat as Eusebius of Caesarea saw him. Even as God was sovereign and monarch over all in heaven, so Constantine was sovereign and monarch on earth. Eusebius wrote, "Thus, as he was the first to proclaim to all the sole sovereignty of God, so he himself, as sole sovereign of the Roman world, extended his authority over the whole human race."[7]

In time, the church "gladly surrendered herself to the care and protection"[8] of the state. While the state should have a protective function regarding the church, the church does not "surrender herself" to the state, giving up jurisdiction. The church has its own courts, rulers, and jurisdiction. The Western church maintained its own courts because of rampant paganism in the legal system. Administratively and institutionally the Eastern church "merged with the empire to form with it but one politico-ecclesiastical organism and acknowledged the emperor's right to administer her."[9]

Even when the state is Christian and its courts function on a Christian base, the church must maintain itself as a complimentary government. The church's courts function regardless of the spiritual condition of the state. When the courts are Christian, the church still has jurisdiction over its members. In fact, the church has *primary* jurisdiction. When the state courts are corrupt, the church offers a refuge for those seeking justice.

A Christian civilization means more than converting the state so that it will follow the dictates of God's law as it relates to its civil jurisdiction. All institutions must be guided by biblical law. Individuals, families, and churches are not to turn jurisdiction over to the state for security. The church does not relax its duties in society because the state is now more Christian.

Christians should not expect too much from involvement in politics. God has designed the state to do only so much. Its power is great, but its jurisdiction is limited. The state is often seen as a cure-all for the nation's ills. For example, while changing the Supreme Court to reflect a Christian world view would be welcomed, the nation as a whole would probably rebel at many pro-Christian pronouncements. The abortion issue is a case in point. By the indifference shown by the American public, Christians included, it would seem that most Americans prefer abortion, or at least are willing to tolerate it in what has been described as a "pluralistic society." They might not accept convenience abortions, but they would want some limited right to abortion: family planning, population control, the mother's "mental health," teenage pregnancy, and "defective children."

All of society must be transformed. We have not arrived when we can say that we now have a Christian state, that is, a Christian President, a Christian Supreme Court, a majority of Christian Congressmen, and other Christian politicians. In fact, we will not have a Christian state until we have Christian Christians, Christian families, and Christian churches. Humanism continues to march forward because our nation is basically humanistic.

Endnotes

1. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1971), p. 41.
2. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion Versus Power Religion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).
3. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1940] 1980), p. 178.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Marcellus Kik, *Church and State: The Story of Two Kingdoms* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963), p. 34.
6. *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans [1910] 1981), vol. 3, p. 92.
7. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, p. 149.
8. Alexander Schmemann, *Church, World, Mission* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), p. 37.
9. *Ibid.*

ACTIVISM: Has the Light Gone Out?

by John W. Whitehead

There is a discouragement -- or should I say a "smallness" -- in activist circles these days. Activism was once considered the wave of the future. Now few even use the term.

The great majority of movements come and go, no matter how powerful. Some of the most powerful burn out the fastest. Almost all the activists I began working with are now gone. Some have had mental breakdowns. One is selling ads. One is making movies. Others are pretending to be good Christians by voting and going to