

State Religion – I

November 26, 2011

What part should the State play in protecting or promoting the Catholic religion? Any Catholic who knows that Catholicism is the one true religion of the one true God can only answer that the State, being also a creature of that God, is bound to serve as best it can his one true religion. On the other hand any liberal who believes that the State is incompetent to tell which is the true religion because, for instance, religion is in any case the individual's business, will answer that the State must protect the right of all its citizens to practise the religion of their choice, or none at all. Let us look at the Catholic arguments.

Man comes from God. His nature comes from God. Man is by nature social, so his socialness comes from God. But the whole man, not just part of him (First Commandment), owes worship to God. So the socialness of man owes worship to God. But the State is nothing other than the society formed by the socialness of all its citizens joining together in their body politic. Therefore the State owes worship to God. But amongst all different worships necessarily contradicting one another (otherwise they would not be different), maybe all are more or less false but certainly one alone can be fully true. So if there is such a worship, fully true and recognizable as such, that is the worship which every State, as State, owes to God. But Catholicism is that worship. Therefore every State, as State, owes Catholic worship to God, including even today's England or Israel or Saudi Arabia!

But an essential part of worship is to render to God the service of which one is capable. Of what service is the State capable? Of great service! Man being social by nature, his society has a great influence on how he feels, thinks and believes. And a State's laws have a decisive influence on moulding its citizens' society. For instance, if abortion or

pornography are made legal, many citizens will come to think that there is little or nothing wrong with them. Therefore every State has in principle a duty by its laws to protect and promote Catholic faith and morals.

Such is the clear principle. But does that principle mean that every non-Catholic should be rounded up by the police and burnt at the stake? Obviously not, because the purpose of worshipping and serving God is to give him glory and to save souls. But inconsiderate action on the part of the State will have the opposite effect, namely of discrediting Catholicism and alienating souls. Therefore the Church teaches that even a Catholic State has the right to abstain in practice from taking action against a false religion when taking that action would cause a still greater evil, or hinder a greater good. But every State's duty in principle to protect Catholic faith and morals remains intact.

Does that mean forcing Catholicism on the citizens? Not at all, because Catholic belief is not something that can be forced – “Nobody believes against his will” (St Augustine). What it does mean is that in a Catholic State where taking such action may or should not be counter-productive, the public practice of all religions other than Catholicism may or should be prohibited. This logical conclusion was denied by Vatican II, because Vatican II was liberal. Yet it was common practice in Catholic States before the Council, and it will have helped many souls to be saved.

Kyrie eleison.