

ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

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Is Faith in the State Replacing Faith in God?

At the last minute during their convention, the Democratic Party added the name of God back into its platform. At the Republican Party convention, Republicans invoked the name of God 12 times. Since platforms and conventions are now more about symbolism than substance in our political culture, is this contrast between the political parties important? Actually, no. But there is a much larger issue at stake here. In so many ways, faith in the state and its benevolence is replacing faith in God. In some ways, this is the most important issue facing our culture today. Let me explain.

First of all, consider some of the symbolism of the recent Democratic convention:

1. Throughout the convention, the theme of “Government as Community” pervaded the speeches and symbolic aspects to the Party. Columnist Peggy Noonan writes that this theme was promoted as “the thing that gives us spirit and makes us whole. But government is not what you love if you’re an American, America is what you love. Government is what you have, need and hire. Its most essential duties—especially when it is bankrupt—involve defending rights and safety. . .” The concept of Government as Community is actually a dangerous concept, for it places government at the center of our lives—a place historically and traditionally reserved for the family and the church or synagogue. It was truly an astounding, yet quite revealing, theme for the convention.
2. Although obviously symbolic, the decision by the Democratic Party platform committee to eliminate any mention of God in the platform language was breathtaking. Arguably emblematic, the mention of God in a platform carries little conviction but the decision to consciously leave God out is an intentional, willful departure from decades and decades of tradition. Equally significant was the conscious decision to leave out mention of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. When the press and the Republican Party protested both issues, President Obama directed that these two references be included in the platform language. When the chair asked the convention for a vote to restore the mention of God and including the administration’s own stand on Jerusalem, the voice vote was a resounding “no.” After three tries, he asserted his authority by overriding the “no” vote. Such symbolism speaks volumes about where our culture is, especially the political culture on the leftwing of our political spectrum.
3. One of the most egregious demonstrations of faith in the state is Sandra Fluke. There is no greater example of postmodern autonomy than Fluke. Amazingly, she was given a spot on the speaking platform at the Democratic Party convention. Noonan describes her as a “fabulously confident ingenuous-seeking political narcissist. . . She really does think—and her party apparently does think—that in a spending crisis with trillions in debt and many in

need, in a nation in existential doubt as to its standing and purpose, in a time when parents struggle to buy good sneakers for their kids so they're not embarrassed at school . . . that in *that* nation the great issue of the day, and the appropriate focus of our concern, is making other people pay for her birth-control pills." Is it really the state's business to fund immorality? Is it really the state's role to subsidize Ms. Fluke's immoral choices? If she chooses to live that way as a student at Georgetown University, that is her choice. But why is it a political issue or why is it obligatory that the state fund her birth control needs so that she does not get pregnant? That is not a matter of public health! That is a matter of immorality subsidized by the state—and that is ethically wrong.

4. Since the New Deal of FDR, one of the greatest concerns among many economists, ethicists and political leaders has been the growing dependence of people on the US government. We sometimes call that the development of an entitlement culture. Very few people regard an entitlement culture as a positive development. Two simple facts point out how serious this entitlement culture has become: (1) Between 48% and 50% of Americans who should pay some kind of income tax are paying no income tax!! That is an astonishing statistic. That means over 48% of Americans are receiving some kind of financial aid from the US government and are paying nothing in income taxes. I am of the opinion that every American of tax-paying age should pay some taxes, even if it is a token \$50 per year. If you pay no taxes, you demand more from the state and contribute nothing to the state. That nearly one-half of Americans pay no income tax at all is ethically wrong. (2) In early September the Department of Agriculture released a report detailing that 46,670,373 Americans are now on food stamps. That is an all-time record, at an annual cost of \$71.8 billion; \$770 billion over a decade. In other words, one out of seven Americans depend on the state to buy one of life's most basic needs—food. There is no question that the economic downturn has hurt Americans and explains why this program has grown. But it actually grew due to the expansion of the program with the Bush era's appalling 2002 farm bill, expanded in 2008 with Pelosi's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and expanded again with the 2009 stimulus program. This is not government compassion; this is fostering utter dependence on the US government for political benefit. Once that benefit is available, it is impossible to take it away. That is the case with the fact that only half of Americans pay income taxes and that is the fact with the expanding food stamp program. This is not compassion; this is financial stupidity. Nothing speaks more loudly of economic and financial failure than these two facts.
5. In this shift to the state caring for all of our needs, there is one curious and telling omission. For all the compassion that seemingly comes from food stamps and half of Americans paying no income taxes, and from funding personal immorality through state-funded birth control pills, where is the compassion for the unborn child? The Democratic Party lauded the pro-abortion argument throughout the convention. The prominence of Planned Parenthood and NARAL leaders and the rigid pro-abortion language of the Party's platform sent the message that America cares only for the mother's right to an abortion—and they want the state to fund it all. In our culture today, there is no mention of the rights of the child in the womb. There is no mention of the suffering of a child murdered through a saline solution, or through the D and C method that cuts the baby into pieces. Our nation has gone so far in its twisted and debased logic that we now have a major political Party that subsidizes immorality in the

name of compassion, fosters dependence on the state in ever-increasing ways—but raises no concerns, accepts no protest and will not even consider the barbarity of having no compassion on the unborn child. That is not a high mark of civilized life; that is a mark of barbarism.

A faith in God fosters a dependency on Him, not the state. A faith in God fosters a degree of individual responsibility for one's actions, not a dependency on the state that meets all human needs and cares nothing about individual ethics or morals. A faith in God sees life as of worth and value, regardless of its stage of development and regardless of whether it is in the womb or out of the womb. As a civilization, our faith in the state as our ultimate savior is sowing the seeds of our very destruction. It is indeed a very sad state of affairs for what was once a great nation!

See Peggy Noonan in the *Wall Street Journal* (8-9 September 2012) and a *Wall Street Journal* editorial (5 September 2012), "Food Stamp Nation."