



ADAM SMITH ON RELIGION & ECONOMICS

Adam Smith was an 18th Century Scottish philosopher. He is also known as the founder of modern economics and a champion of laissez faire capitalism. His 1776 book, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, usually referred to simply as The Wealth of Nations, is considered a classic. Notably, Smith was also interested in ethics and an earlier work of his was The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759). There are many mentions of religion and religious sects and churches in The Wealth of Nations. Smith drew attention both to the effects of religion on economic relations and of the economic and political effects of religious doctrines and practices. For example, he noted that:

“as the [Hindu] religion does not permit its followers to light a fire, nor consequently to dress any victuals, upon the water, it, in effect, prohibits them from all distant sea voyages. ... [These peoples] must have depended almost altogether upon the navigation of other nations for the exportation of their surplus produce; and this dependency, as it must have confined the market, so it must have discouraged the increase of this surplus produce. It must have discouraged, too, the increase of the manufactured produce, more than that of the rude produce. [because] Manufactures require a much more extensive market than the most important parts of the rude produce of the land.”

Smith also made many observations on state-church relations which, of course, was a subject of intense interest both in Britain and in the American colonies that were just then declaring their political independence. Smith offered the following assessment of the situation in countries that did and did not have state-sponsored religions:

“In a country where the law favoured the teachers of no one religion more than those of another, it would not be necessary that any of them should have any particular or immediate dependency upon the sovereign or executive power; or that he should have anything to do either in appointing or in dismissing them from their offices. In such a situation, he would have no occasion to give himself any concern about them, further than to keep the peace among them, in the same manner as among the rest of his subjects, that is, to hinder them from persecuting, abusing, or oppressing one another. But it is quite otherwise in countries where there is an established or governing religion. The sovereign can in this case never be secure, unless he has the means of influencing in a considerable degree the greater part of the teachers of that religion.

The clergy of every established church constitute a great incorporation. They can act in concert, and pursue their interest upon one plan, and with one spirit as much as if they were under the direction of one man; and they are frequently, too, under such direction. Their interest as an incorporated body is never the same with that of the sovereign, and is sometimes directly opposite to it. Their great interest is to maintain their authority with the people, and this authority depends upon the supposed certainty and importance of the whole doctrine which they inculcate, and upon the supposed necessity of adopting every part of it with the most implicit faith, in order to avoid eternal misery. Should the sovereign have the imprudence to appear either to deride, or doubt himself of the most trifling part of their doctrine, or from humanity, attempt to protect those who did either the one or the other, the punctilious honour of a clergy, who have no sort of dependency upon him, is immediately provoked to proscribe him as a profane person, and to employ all the terrors of religion, in order to oblige the people to transfer their allegiance to some more orthodox and obedient prince. Should he oppose any of their pretensions or usurpations, the danger is equally great. The princes who have dared in this manner to rebel against the church, over and above this crime of rebellion, have generally been charged, too, with the additional crime of heresy, notwithstanding their solemn protestations of their faith, and humble submission to every tenet which she thought proper to prescribe to them. But the authority of religion is superior to every other author-

ity. The fears which it suggests conquer all other fears. When the authorized teachers of religion propagate through the great body of the people, doctrines subversive of the authority of the sovereign, it is by violence only, or by the force of a standing army, that he can maintain his authority. Even a standing army cannot in this case give him any lasting security; because if the soldiers are not foreigners, which can seldom be the case, but drawn from the great body of the people, which must almost always be the case, they are likely to be soon corrupted by those very doctrines."

"But if politics had never called in the aid of religion, ... it would probably have dealt equally and impartially with all the different sects, and have allowed every man to choose his own priest, and his own religion, as he thought proper. There would, and, in this case, no doubt, have been, a great multitude of religious sects. ... Each teacher, would, no doubt, have felt himself under the necessity of making the utmost exertion, and of using every art, both to preserve and to increase the number of his disciples. But as every other teacher would have felt himself under the same necessity, the success of no one teacher, or sect of teachers, could have been very great. The interested and active zeal of religious teachers can be dangerous and troublesome only where there is either but one sect tolerated in the society, or where the whole of a large society is divided into two or three great sects; the teachers of each acting by concert, and under a regular discipline and subordination. But that zeal must be altogether innocent, where the society is divided into two or three hundred, or, perhaps, into as many thousand small sects, of which no one could be considerable enough to disturb the public tranquility."

YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED, AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!! (GET RID OF THAT FILTHY MONEY! BY GIVING IT TO THE NTCOF!)

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:
"FREETHOUGHT DAY"**

**>>> Sunday, October 7th, 2012 <<<
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website has now been updated thanks to Sarah and Rusty Nejd!) , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation..."
- Karl Marx (from an introduction to an unwritten work on the philosophy of Hegel)**



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

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