

PIE IN THE SKY

*Live on hay.
Work and pray.
There'll be pie
in the sky
when you die.
It's a lie.*

Despite proclamations upholding the U.S. Constitution, more than half of its citizens are under the delusion that they live in an officially Christian nation. The separation of church and state which Jefferson crafted in the 1770s has been eroded by corporate sponsorship of religious fundamentalists since the 1930s. Their merger with the Christian Right is documented in *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invested in Christian America*, (Basic Books), by Kevin M Kruse, a history Professor at Princeton.

Infuriated by the mild reforms of the New Deal, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers made use of the clergy after surveys had shown that the public gave more credit to the pulpit than to any other platform.

Rev. James W. Fifiield became known as 'Saint Paul of the Prosperous' from his consoling the consciences of millionaires at First Congregational in Los Angeles where he compared reading the bible to eating fish – you throw out the bones about the evils of wealth and savour the fleshpots of its accumulation. In 1935, he set up Spiritual Mobilisation to push for 'freedom under god'. Within fifteen years, it had a weekly radio show on 800 stations, offering cash prizes for ministers to preach the gospel of wealth.

A rival in the person of Rev Abraham Vereide had ministered to the corporate bosses in Seattle and San Francisco for the distress caused by their striking workers. He promoted prayer breakfasts to bring the executives and the politicians together. By 1952, he had conducted weekly prayer meetings in both houses of Congress, opened 'God's Embassy' in the national capital, and held 'dedication ceremonies' for freshly installed Justices of the Supreme Court. Government Departments soon institutionalised prayer breakfasts, serving as an informal 'loyalty test'. 'Reds' were known not to pray.

Billy Graham became the most notorious propagandist for capitalism. The Garden of Eden, he preached, had 'no union dues, no labor leaders, no snakes and no disease.' All government intervention was socialism, or what Fifiield had called 'pagan statism'. In 1952, Graham took his Crusade to Washington and got congressmen to serve as ushers at his rallies, starting with a formal service on the steps of the Capitol. His success seemed unstoppable. He talked the legislature into a National Day of Prayer, and supplied scriptural quotations for Eisenhower's election addresses.

Ike accepted Graham's support but knew better than to abolish the New Deal reforms in one throw. Instead he had himself re-baptised a few days after his inauguration in 1953, broadcast from the Oval Office to the American Legion's 'Back to God' campaign, went to the inaugural National Prayer Breakfast with Rev. Vereide and opened his first cabinet meeting with a prayer.

In 1954, Congress added 'under God' to the Pledge of Allegiance before placing 'In God We Trust' on the postage and the currency. In 1956 the phrase became the nation's motto.

Meanwhile, the corporates had been too savvy to trust god to advance their propaganda efforts. By the early 1940s, the 'capitalism' stank to high heaven after two world wars, fascism and the Great Depression. In *Taking the risk out of democracy*, Australian industrial psychologist Alex Carey documents how the National Association of Manufacturers and their like paid millions of dollars to marketing agencies to road test a new brand label. By 1945, they had come up with 'free enterprise'. Thereafter, employer federations spent at least \$100 million a year until the threat from organised labour and New Dealism had been beaten down by the mid-Fifties, aided by McCarthyite Red scares.

To be effective these propaganda campaigns had to be out in the open while their funding was fixed behind the altars. Historically illiterate hacks like RN's Frantic Kelly disparage Kruse and Carey as conspiracy theorists. The business manoeuverings they reveal are conspiracy facts, footnoted to the last tax-deductible dollar. Harvard hands out MBAs for mastering their operation and method.

Humphrey McQueen

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