Despising God

Flavius Josephus was a first century historian who authored *Antiquities of the Jews*. In Book 6 ("From the death of Eli to the death of Saul"), Josephus offers a report virtually identical to *1 Samuel 8* on how the nation of Israel rejected their previous theocracy in favor of a monarchy.

When Samuel became to old to continue "judging" (not ruling) the Hebrew people, he appointed his sons to "judge" in his stead. But Samuel's sons were corrupt (secular) and the people cried out for an alternative form of government. The resultant rejection of the former Hebrew theocracy strikes me as analogous to America's rejection of our former Republic and its attendant God-given, "unalienable Rights".

The italicized highlights, bracketed comments and footnotes are mine.

According to Flavius Josephus:

Book 6, Chapter 3

1. But Samuel the prophet, when he had ordered the affairs of the people after a convenient manner, and had appointed a city for every district of them, he commanded them to come to such cities, to have the controversies that they had one with another determined in them, he himself going over those cities twice in a year, and doing them justice; and by that means he kept them in very good order for a long time.

2. But afterwards he found himself oppressed with old age, and not able to do what he used to do, so he committed the government and the care of the multitude to his sons, ... for these men turning aside from their father's good courses . . . perverted justice for the 'filthy lucre of gifts and bribes, and made their determinations not according to truth, but according to bribery, and turned aside to luxury, and a costly way of living; so that as, in the first place, they practiced

what was contrary to the will of God,[1] so did they, in the second place, what was contrary to the will of the prophet their father, who had taken a great deal of care, and made a very careful provision that the *multitude should be righteous*.

3. But the people, upon these injuries offered to their former constitution and government by the *prophet's* sons,[2] were very uneasy at their actions, and came running to the prophet[3] . . . and informed him of the transgressions of his sons; and said, That as he was himself old already, and too infirm by that age of his to oversee their affairs in the manner he used to do, so they begged of him, and entreated him, to appoint some person to be king over them, who might rule *over* the nation,[4] and avenge them of the Philistines, who ought to be punished for their former oppressions. These words greatly afflicted Samuel, on account of his innate *love of justice*, and his *hatred to kingly government*[5] . . .

4. . . . God appeared to him, and comforted him, saying, That he ought not to be uneasy at what the multitude desired, because it was not he, [the prophet Samuel] but Himself [God] whom they so insolently despised,[6] and would not have to be alone their king; that they had been contriving these things from the very day that they came out of Egypt;[7] that however, in no long time *they would sorely repent* of what they did, which *repentance yet could not undo what was thus done for futurity*; that *they would be sufficiently rebuked for their contempt*, and the *ungrateful conduct* they have used towards me, and towards thy prophetic office.[8] "So I command thee to ordain them such a one as I shall name beforehand to be their king, when thou hast first described what *mischiefs* kingly government will bring upon them, and openly testified before them into what a great change of *affairs*[9] they are hasting."

5. When Samuel had heard this, he called the Jews early in the morning, and confessed to them that *he* was to ordain them a king;[10] but he said that he was first to describe to them what would follow, what treatment they would receive from their kings, and with how many mischiefs they must struggle.

"For know ye," said he, "that, in the first place, they will *take your sons* away from you, and they will command some of them to be drivers of their chariots, and some to be their horsemen, and the guards of their body, and others of them to be runners before them, and captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;[11] they will also make them their artificers, makers of armor, and of chariots, and of instruments;

[1] Samuel's sons formed a "secular" government.

[2] Implication: Samuel administered as a *prophet*, as an agent of God and servant (trustee) for the people. But he did not "rule" the people so much as advise them of what was right and wrong according to God.

[3] This "emergency" justified radical action not previously authorized by God or the previous "government".

[4] The nation of Israel, formerly subject to only God would now be subject to a mortal man. Implication: While Samuel governed as a prophet, he was not "over" the people; he was one of and equal to the people as another subject of God.

[5] He implies that man's monarchy is anathema to God's justice.

[6] Thus, to prefer a monarchy and rule by man to theocratic rule by God is despicable.

[7] This implies there may be an ancient urge in man to seek an earthly king and hierarchical social order based on "instinct" rather than God's will.

[8] Those who despise God's rule and their future generations will be be punished severely; their ingratitude will not be easily repented or quickly forgiven.

[9] Change of "state"?

[10] Even though the monarchy was an expression of contempt for God, that monarchy must nevertheless be ordained by a man of God. I.e., even a monarch's sovereign power must flow from God.

[11] The king will draft your sons to serve and die as his soldiers.

they will make them their husbandmen also, and the curators of their own fields, and the diggers of their own vineyards; nor will there be any thing which they will not do at their commands, as if they were *slaves* bought with money.[12] They will also appoint your daughters to be confectioners, and cooks, and bakers; and these will be obliged to do all sorts of work which women *slaves*, that are in *fear* of stripes and torments, submit to.[13] They will, besides this, *take away your possessions*,[14] and bestow them upon their eunuchs, and the guards of their bodies, and will give the herds of your cattle to their own servants:[15] and to say briefly all at once, you, and *all that is yours, will be servants to your king*, and will become *no way superior to his slaves*; and when you *suffer* thus,[16] you will thereby be put in mind of what I now say. And *when you repent* of what you have done, you will beseech God to have mercy upon you, and to grant you a quick deliverance from your kings; but *he will not accept your prayers, but will neglect you, and permit you to suffer the punishment your evil conduct has deserved*."[17]

6. But the multitude was still so foolish as to be deaf to these predictions of what would befall them; and *too peevish to suffer a determination which they had injudiciously once made*, to be taken out of their mind;[18] for they could not be turned from their purpose, nor did they regard the words of Samuel, but peremptorily insisted on their resolution, and desired him to *ordain them a king immediately*, and not trouble himself with fears of what would happen hereafter, for that it was *necessary* they should have with them one to *fight their battles*, and to *avenge them* of their enemies, and that it was no way absurd, when *their neighbors were under kingly government*, that they should have the *same form of government* also.[19] So when Samuel saw that what he had said had not diverted them from their purpose, but that they continued resolute, he said, "Go you every one home for the present; when it is fit I will send for you, as soon as I shall have learned from God who it is that he will give you for your king."

Book 6, Chapter 4

4. Then Samuel called the people together to the city Mizpeh, and spake to them in the words following, which he said he was to speak by the command of God: - That when *he* had *granted* them a *state of liberty*,[20] and *brought their enemies into subjection*, *they were become unmindful of his benefits, and rejected God that he should not be their King*, as not considering that it would be most for their advantage to be presided over by the best of beings, for God is the best of beings, and they chose to have a man for their

[12] Under the monarchy, the male *subjects* will have *no God-given rights* to shield them from obeying any arbitrary order of the monarchy.

[13] Under the monarchy, the women would have no God-given rights to defend against government abuse.

[14] The monarchy will claim to own all property, deny the people the right of ownership.

[15] The subjects will be taxed as foreigners and the revenues will be used to enrich government employees rather than serve the people.

[16] Having despised their status as subjects *of God*, they *will* suffer as *subjects* of man.

[17] Having despised the blessing of God's liberty, you will not simply pray your way back into God's favor. The penalty for surrendering God's blessings will be *longstanding*.

[18] The damn fools were too stubborn to relent even when they'd been advised of the folly of their choice.

[19] A "one world government?"

[20] Liberty was valued during the American Revolution just as it was i the Old Testament. Patrick Henry is famous for saying, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains or slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take but as for me: *Give me Liberty!* or give me death!" My point is that "liberty" is not just a "buzz word". Its meaning and value have been recognized by those with eyes to see for at least 3,000 years.

king;[21] while kings will use their subjects as *beasts*,[22] according to the *violence of their own wills and inclinations*, and other passions, as wholly carried away with the lust of power, but *will not endeavor so to preserve the race of mankind as his own workmanship and creation, which, for that very reason, God would take care of*.[23] "But since you have come to a fixed resolution, and this *injurious treatment of God* [24] has quite prevailed over you, dispose yourselves by your tribes and scepters, and cast lots."

. . . .

6. Then said the prophet, God gives you this man to be your king . . . . So as soon as the people had made acclamation, "God save the king," the prophet wrote down what would come to pass in a book, and read it in the hearing of the king, and laid up the book in the tabernacle of God, to be a witness to future generations of what he had foretold. . . . Saul [the new king] also went away to Gibeah, where he was born; and many good men there were who paid him the respect that was due to him; *but the greater part were ill men, who despised him* and derided the others, who neither did bring him presents, nor did they in affection, or even in words, regard to please him.[25]

From a spiritual perspective, Israel's rejection of God's theocracy seems similar to America's rejection of her "Republican Form of Government". In both case, the nations "despised" God's blessings of liberty and/or unalienable Rights, and instead opted for rule by a monarch or collective. In both case, a free people under God voluntarily chose to accept the degraded status of slaves—creatures without God-given rights.

It seems possible that the anger inspired by Israel's contempt for God's theocracy in the 11th century B.C. might be re-kindled by America's 20th century contempt for the Republic that secured our God-given, unalienable Rights. And if God is as unrelenting against America's contempt as he was against Israel's contempt, then . . . .

The strong implication is that God will not suffer man to mock the blessing of liberty. While the burden of obedience to God's law (which is attached to God's grant of liberty and unalienable Rights) may seem great, it may later seem trivial compared to the suffering imposed by monarchs and collectives.

If the God of the Bible is real, by surrending our Republic and opting for a democracy we may have unwittingly expressed contempt for God and thereby exposed ourselves to the loss of God's protections or even his punishment.

To learn more about Flavius Josephus visit http://bible.crosswalk.com/History/BC/FlaviusJosephus/

[21] This passage closely approximates what seems to have happened when Americans surrendered the Republic that secured their unalienable Rights to embrace a democracy which rejects those Rights and the God that granted them. While the Hebrews chose a king to hold sovereign power, Americans chose a collective. But in both cases, they rejected God's blessings.

[22] "Beasts": creatures without God-given rights.

[23] While the Creator is naturally inclined to protect his creations (mankind), earthly kings and man-made collectives are not. The lives of "subjects" are routinely sacrificed. It's estimated that in the 20th Century, over 100 million persons were killed by their own governments.

[24] To reject and despise the "state of liberty" God provided is not a "victimless crime"—it is an assault on God, Himself. According to Benjamin Franklin, "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

[25] From its inception, the monarchy was beset by human jealousies and political divisions that would ultimately lead to internal strife and national destruction. While these animosities are always present in human relations, a nation and government united under the values and authority of a single God would inevitably be less divisive or prone to self-destruction.

A "Formula" for Terrorism

by Alfred Adask

Cole Porter crooned, "In olden days, a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking." Same could be said for mass murder of innocent civilians. There was a time when wars were fought by soldiers and armies who served individual kings or governments. Civilians sometimes watched epic battles from the sidelines as spectators, much like modern fans watch football games. Civilized nations did not intentionally engage in the mass murder of civilians.

However, with the American Civil War, and then World Wars I & II, "collateral damage" (the deaths of civilian non-combatants) became widespread and acceptable. Later, the Cold War and the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), elevated the idea of killing civilians from unfortunate "collateral damage" to the war's fundamental object. Combatants no longer threatened to destroy each other's armies; they threatened to annihilate each other's nation. As Mr. Porter sang, "Now Heaven knooows, an-y-thing goes!"

The following excerpt from an interview with a former Soviet intelligence officer hints at the philosophical reason why non-combatants are no longer safe from military annihilation: popular government. When nations were ruled by monarchies or dictatorships, the common man was excused from annihilation by foreign armies because commoners had no say in the operation of their government and thus could not be held personally liable for their government's acts. The foreign army's object was to capture or kill the enemy king and all those who fought on his behalf. The non-combatant subjects of a king were recognized as innocents and (though subject to inadvertent harm) not "officially" attacked or killed.

However, with the onset of "popular" governments—Republics and democracies where the mass of ordinary people had some control over the operation of their governments—that mass of ordinary people also became personally liable for their government's acts and thus subject to punishment for those acts.