

Cardinal George and a nation state 'gone bad'

Robert McClory | Oct. 31, 2012 NCR Today

Just about everyone knows that Chicago's Cardinal Francis George is battling cancer and nearing retirement. It's understandable that he would be saddened about these developments, but the nearly universal tone of negativity that he projects is troublesome. The cardinal is obsessed with the idea that the government is poised to trample on religious rights and turn this country over to godless secularism. In [a recent column](#) [1] in the *Chicago New World*, George stated his case.

"Communism imposed a total way of life based upon the belief that God does not exist. Secularism is communism's better-scrubbed bedfellow," he wrote. "The present political campaign has brought to the surface of our public life the anti-religious sentiment, much of it explicitly anti-Catholic, that has been growing in this country for several decades. The secularizing of our culture is a much larger issue than political causes or the outcome of the current electoral campaign."

George reiterated a prophecy he shared with a group of priests several years ago: "I was correctly quoted as saying that I expected to die in bed, my successor will die in prison, and his successor will die a martyr in the public square." And, he added, concerning the martyred bishop, "his successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization as the church has done so often in human history."

George wrote that "the unofficial anthem of secularism today is John Lennon's 'Imagine,' in which we are encouraged to imagine a world without religion. We don't have to imagine such a world: the 20th century has given us horrific examples of such worlds. Instead of a world living in peace because it is without religion, why not imagine a world without nation states?"

It is nation states "gone bad," he said, that don't need religion as an excuse for going to war. Every major war in the last 300 years has been fought by nation states, not by the church ... The state apparatus for investigating civilians now is more extensive than anything dreamed up by the Spanish Inquisition, although both were created to serve the same purpose: to preserve a government's public ideology and control of society."

The "greatest threat to world peace and international justice," George continued, is the nation state "claiming an absolute power, deciding questions and making 'laws' beyond its competence."

I find it difficult to think the so-called Obama mandate requiring the church to provide its insured employees with access to contraceptives could alone explain this declamation and others George has uttered on the subject in the last year or two. It's unfortunate that in this year when the church should be rejoicing in the achievements of Vatican II, we get consistent messages of gloom and doom about our ailing culture and a government "gone bad."

And of course, the cardinal is among leaders of the hierarchy who are convinced that much of Vatican II has "gone bad" too, and are about the task of reforming the Great Reform along more traditional lines.

I can neither share nor comprehend this interpretation of our times.

[Read the whole column here](#) [1].

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