



**Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue  
in the City of New York**

**The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, OBE, DD, *Rector***  
**John Scott, LVO, D. Mus., *Organist and Director of Music***  
**[www.SaintThomasChurch.org](http://www.SaintThomasChurch.org)**

**Sunday, November 11, 2007**  
*Remembrance Sunday*

*Choral Evensong for the Patriotic and Historical Societies*  
*at 4pm*

+

A Sermon by  
The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, Rector  
on  
Saint Mark 12:13-17

+

*GOD BLESS AMERICA*

They brought [a coin] to him and he said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar’s.”

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Thomas Jefferson is not known for his Anglican churchmanship, yet an Anglican he was, and he may have been more than nominal. He served on a vestry. Although his religious opinions appear to me to have been more Deist than orthodox Christian, he did write God into the Declaration of Independence, which credits God for endowing human beings with the unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Jefferson did play fast and loose with Scripture and did a cut-and-paste job on the Bible in order to produce a merely ethical, rational testament free of the miraculous and supernatural elements that testify to the divinity of Jesus Christ. But editing the scriptures to suit one’s own taste is not new, and Mr. Jefferson knows better now.

It was certainly one of Jefferson’s great contributions to Christendom and the history of civilization to press for and to achieve the non-establishment of any Church by the state; that is to say, the separation of the Church and the State, and that is not to say, the banishment of religion from the state or the public sphere. It remains to be seen whether the great Republic Mr. Jefferson helped found can maintain the balance and tension implied in the founder’s position. Since the Revolution, we have never been a theocracy or even an officially Christian nation, nor have we been a purely secular, much less an anti-religious state. We have refused to establish a church or sanction a particular religion or denomination, but we have also recognized and encouraged the contributions of many creeds, churches, and faiths.

We have talked about a founder of the United States, What about the Founder of Christianity? From what I can see from the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, we are so far on solid ground, so far as Christian theology is concerned. Both Jesus and the Apostles give the State its role under God as the power of this world to bring law and order, to administer justice, to keep the peace and if necessary use force to do so. Included in this state power is taxation; indeed Caesar’s own image is impressed on the currency, as we saw Jesus point out in tonight’s second lesson.

But whose image is stamped on our souls? Is it not God's image; God who gave us the power to live, to think, to choose, and to love? The kingdom of God is a different sort of kingdom from Caesar's. Jesus Christ is a different sort of king from Caesar. When he was on trial for his life, standing before Caesar's agent Pontius Pilate, he was asked concerning this very matter. Are you a king, are you the king of the Jews, Pilate asked Jesus. My kingdom is not of this world, replied Christ. If it were, he said, my servants would fight...but my kingdom is not of the world. If you are baptized, if you endeavor to follow Jesus, you are a citizen of this kingdom he speaks of.

We are greatly privileged to be citizens of the United States. Like the United Kingdom from which we declared independence, we are saturated with many Judeo-Christian influences and with a tradition of liberty and justice spanning more than a millennium. The unique dignity of every human being as a child of God; the freedom of the will as the exercise of the image of God in man; the danger represented by power in the hands of fallen human beings; these are but some of the theological insights that undergird our inheritance of civilization. The English-speaking peoples of the world generally have enjoyed this heritage and its ideals. Yet great as it is, it is still the kingdom of this world. Just as ancient Greece and Rome were great manifestations of civilization, they were still the kingdoms of this world. The kingdom of God is of a different order. It is not based on power or coercion, as the kingdoms of this world must be. It is based on love, self-giving, self-sacrificing love. Its king reigns from his cross. Yet strangely, the kingdom of God outlasts all other kingdoms. God's kingdom is eternal, and it breaks in on the worldly kingdoms, interrupts them, influences them, re-directs them, transcends them.

It is probably best if we keep the agencies of these two kingdoms, the State and the Church, separate, and let them do their own ministrations. It may be a fine thing when we see Christian virtues blossoming in the State, but that doesn't mean the clergy or religious officials should be walking in the halls of power or preaching politics, much less does it mean that statesmen or politicians should preach in the churches or define doctrine. Jesus is not a king "of this world," and Caesar is not lord of our souls. One rightly senses a great trespass when the two are confused.

When the servants of Jesus Christ live up to the calling they were given at their very baptism as citizens of the kingdom of God; when they also participate as good citizens of their own country; then blessing abounds. The Christian who attends to his citizenship in God's kingdom will be the best kind of citizen in Caesar's kingdom. The Church which bends itself to the promotion of the Christian Gospel, to the teaching of Christ's precepts, to the doing of good works in all directions, will be the best kind of institutional influence on the culture in which it is placed. It sounds and is very simple, in the words of the old ecumenical hymn, "They'll know we are Christian by our love." Love in the Church will, in the long run, produce justice in the state. It is one of the ways in which God can most truly bless America.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.