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## **Serfs on the Plantation, Part 4**

**by Jacob G. Hornberger**

David Koresh and his followers challenged the cult of the omnipotent state. And for that, they paid the ultimate price — death at the hands of United States governmental officials. The message was a powerful one for American serfs: "As long as you behave and obey, everything will be fine; but dare to challenge us, and you will pay the price."

The cult of the omnipotent state has millions of followers in the United States. Americans of today view their government in the same way as Christians view their God: they worship and adore the state, and they render their lives and fortunes to it. Statists believe that their lives — their very being — are a privilege that the state has given to them. They believe that everything they do is — and should be — dependent on the consent of the government. Thus, statists support such devices as income taxation, licensing laws, regulations, passports, trade restrictions, and the like.

A branch of the statist cult is that of the Christian-statists. The followers of this cult acknowledge the existence of God by Sunday attendance in church. But they believe that Caesar — the state — should still reign supreme over their lives. An example of a Christian-statist prayer would be:

"Oh mighty state, we worship and adore you. You provide us our sustenance when we are in need — our food, our housing, our medical care, our schooling. Our other God says that it is only through the sweat of our brow that we shall eat bread. But He is in error. For you provide us our daily bread with no sweat at all. You make us good, oh mighty state, because you provide welfare for the poor, the elderly, businessmen, foreigners, and all others who benefit from thy largess. We praise you, oh mighty state. We give you thanks."

Statists made much to do about the kookiness of the Branch Davidians, i.e., their belief that David Koresh was Jesus Christ. But their kookiness was nothing compared to the kookiness of believing that the state is a god who, through coercion, is able to make people good, caring, and prosperous.

Moreover, by focusing on the beliefs of the Branch Davidians, rather than on their own beliefs, Christian-statists ignore some very important points. First, by supporting the welfare state, Christian-statists have rendered unto Caesar their lives, their economic activities, and the fruits of their earnings. Second, by supporting the state's interference with people's peaceful choices through the regulated economy, they have denigrated the God-given gift of free will. And third, by supporting the taxation that takes from some to give to others, they have actively involved themselves in the violation of God's commandment against stealing.

David Koresh and his followers committed a heinous crime in the eyes of the statist cultists: they pledged ultimate allegiance to God rather than Caesar. While the Branch Davidians may not have had a sound understanding of the philosophical framework of the statist cult and all of its ramifications, one thing is clear: Koresh and his followers refused to idolize the state. They recognized what true Christians throughout history have recognized: that a government whose laws violate the laws of God is evil and, therefore, that it is the duty of Christians to follow the laws of God, even at the expense of their lives.

### **The Ownership of Arms**

But the Christians at Mount Carmel committed another heinous crime in the eyes of the statist: they accumulated weapons to defend themselves from the evil conduct of U.S. governmental officials.

While the state permits the serfs to do such things as write letters to the editor, publish books, vote, and so forth, it will not permit them to engage in conduct that threatens the state's omnipotent control over the citizenry. And the accumulation of arms — especially high-powered ones — threatens that control.

Therefore, acquiring a few guns to shoot geese or burglars is permitted by the state. But accumulating massive amounts of arms to defend one's self from the state is considered a major offense — and death without trial is the threatened punishment.

Actually though, the right to own arms has very little to do with geese and burglars. The right to own arms has one primary purpose: *to ensure that governmental officials do not become too tyrannical.*

Since ancient times, rulers have disarmed the citizenry with the intent of taking control over their lives. Rulers have always understood that when the citizenry is disarmed, the state can more easily enforce its orders. The key to a meek and compliant people, as history has so clearly shown, is a disarmed citizenry.

Our American ancestors clearly understood this. They remembered that taxes and regulations had precipitated the Revolution, but they also recalled that there had been one immediate cause for the war: their own governmental officials had attempted to confiscate their arms!

When is the use of arms against governmental officials justified? *When it is the only means by which people can defend themselves from the evil conduct of their own government. When the lawmaker and the law-enforcer become the lawbreakers, it is the right and duty of the citizenry to meet force with force.*

When public officials use force to engage in evil conduct against the citizenry, some people choose not to resist the evil — they submit to the tyranny peacefully; or they turn away when others are subjected to the tyranny; or they support the tyranny, usually out of fear. Others resist the evil, either within their own minds or openly through speech or force; they fear God much more than they do death at the hands of the state.

### **Sin vs. Evil**

In justifying their incineration of the Branch Davidians, U.S. governmental officials made much to do about the sinfulness and evil of David Koresh and his followers. But sinfulness and evil are not the same. In his book *People of the Lie*, the noted psychiatrist M. Scott Peck explained:

"Sin is nothing more and nothing less than a failure to be continually perfect. Because it is impossible for us to be continually perfect, we are all sinners. . . Evil is defined as the exercise of political power — that is, the imposition of one's will upon others by overt or covert coercion — in order to avoid. . . spiritual growth. In other words, the evil attack others instead of facing their own failures. . . . Evil people feel themselves to be perfect. . . Since the evil, deep down, feel themselves to be faultless, it is inevitable that when they are in conflict with the world they will invariably perceive the conflict as the world's fault. Since they must deny their own badness, they must perceive others as bad. They *project* their own evil onto the world. They never think of themselves as evil; on the other hand, they consequently see much evil in others. . . . Strangely enough, evil people are often destructive because they are attempting to destroy evil. The problem is that they misplace the locus of the evil. Instead of destroying others they should be destroying the sickness within themselves."

### **Conclusion**

Fifty years ago, in his book *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich Hayek argued that Americans were traveling the same road that all others in history, including the communists, fascists, and Nazis, had traveled. People scoffed. But Americans did indeed travel that road. Believing they could exchange the liberty bestowed by God for the siren-song of governmental security, Americans instituted their welfare state and their managed economy. And now they are discovering the horrible truth: by abandoning the principles of their ancestors, they have neither liberty nor security.

What is the solution for the American people? To abandon the cult of the omnipotent state — to dissociate themselves from, and openly oppose, the evil actions of their own government — to acknowledge that their support of the welfare state and the managed economy was not only an economic error but a sinful one as well — to stand for the repeal, not the reform, of this evil and immoral way of life — to recognize that their lives, liberties, and properties are rights endowed in them by God, not privileges given by government — to move toward the ideas and ideals of America's Founding Fathers — *and to pledge never again to become serfs on the plantation.*

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