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# Gerson (Conveniently) Forgets Racism

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 5, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Michael Gerson this morning has an article in the Washington Post [1]in which he discussed the Obama administration's loss of religious voters. He believes that in its pursuit of "big governement" solutions, the Obama administration fell afoul of religious conservatives who are suspicious of big government, exciting anew what Gerson calls "long-standing evangelical fears of the aggressive secular state."

Strangely, Gerson does not explain the history of such long-standing fears. Specifically, he seems to forget that the proximate cause for the emergence of the religious right was not only Anita Bryant's anti-gay crusade, or the Supreme Court's embrace of abortion rights in Roe, but the 1978 IRS ruling that Christian schools that excluded minorities would lose their tax exempt status. This was the face of the "aggressive secular state" that many evangelicals came to loathe. When the Brown v. Board of Education ruling was finally implemented throughout the South, another example of the "agressive secular state" at work, many conservative whites formed Christian academies that were all-white. When the IRS went after these schools, all hell broke lose.

I am certain that there are those who oppose Obama on strictly principled grounds. I, for one, share the belief that big government is no solution to many problems, although I also contend that the health care reform is not the "government takeover of health care" that some think it is. But, it is beyond shameful for someone as intelligent as Gerson to fail to note the historical basis for evangelical animus against the government simply because that history is an ugly one. Sadly, it is not just history. That racism is with us still.

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