

God of All Things?

Speaking at a Christian Men's Breakfast fellowship in October, I suggested that the deeper issue surrounding the widespread political disillusionment in America today is a religious issue. Across the country, we have been experiencing the inadequacy of an emerging new idolatry: the politicization of all of American life. For several decades, I said, there's been an increasing drive for us to turn to the instrumentality of the state, with its apparatus of law and politics, as an institution for solving all of our public problems.

In other words, we are assigning impossibly high expectations to government, to election, to politicians, and to political processes to solve problems of education and the economy, science and technology, the arts, the family, the elderly, minorities, what have you. Even issues of religion. The problem is serious, and it is something that the Old Testament person would immediately recognize, but which we modern Christians do not: life is too big and complex for an idol to save. And when it tries to, its clay feet inevitably become evident.

I'm not sure how my audience took to this principle, but evidently someone from Newsweek must have been listening in. In its cover story titled "Hail to the Chiefs" (Nov. 22), Daniel Stone analyzed the problem, albeit using secular language and categories, by showing significant ways in which the U.S. presidency has grown inordinately since the second world war. As a result, it has become "the most impossible job in the world," precisely because the president now has far too many pots to juggle.

But what really caught my attention was not Stone's take on President Obama as the current White House high priest. It was the cover of Newsweek itself, which I have now clipped and saved. The cover shows a six-armed President Obama precariously juggling far too many things, including the world itself, and looking remarkably like the Hindu goddess Shiva, the destroyer. The title of the image? "God of All Things."