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The Myth of the Separation of Church and State

by Tim Greenwood

Anytime religion is mentioned within the confines of government today people cry, "Separation of Church and State". Many people think this statement appears in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution and therefore must be strictly enforced. However, **the words: "separation", "church", and "state" do not even appear in the first amendment.** The first amendment reads...

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The statement about a wall of separation between church and state was made in [a letter on January 1, 1802, by Thomas Jefferson to a church \(the Danbury](#)

[Baptist Association of Connecticut](#)). The congregation heard a widespread rumor that the Congregationalists, another denomination, were to become the national religion. This was very alarming to people who knew about religious persecution in England by the state established church. Jefferson made it clear in his letter to the Danbury Congregation that the separation was to be that government would not establish a national religion or dictate to men how to worship God. Jefferson's letter from which the phrase "**separation of church and state**" was written to affirm first amendment rights. Jefferson wrote:

I contemplate with solemn reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. (1)

The reason Jefferson choose the expression "separation of church and state" was because he was addressing a Baptist congregation; a denomination of which he was not a member. Jefferson wanted to

remove all fears that the state would make dictates to the church. He was establishing common ground with the Baptists by borrowing the words of Roger Williams, one of the Baptist's own prominent preachers. Williams had said:

When they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the Church and the wilderness of the world, God hath ever broke down the wall itself, removed the candlestick, and made his garden a wilderness, as at this day. And that therefore if He will eer please to restore His garden and paradise again, it must of necessity be walled in peculiarly unto Himself from the world...(2)

The "wall" was understood as one-directional; its purpose was to protect the church from the state. The world was not to corrupt the church, yet the church was free to teach the people Biblical values.

. The state in America is separated from the church. American government tolerates no single form of religious worship but shelters and protects alike all. John Greenwood taught that there could be but one head of the church and that head was not a King or Queen but Jesus Christ, and that there could be no law for the government of the church other than what the Scriptures contained.

The American people knew what would happen if the State established the Church like in England. Even though it was not recent history to them, they knew that England went so far as forbidding worship in private homes and sponsoring all church activities and keeping people under strict dictates. They were forced to go to the state established church and do things that were contrary to their conscience. No other churches were allowed, and mandatory attendance of the

established church was compelled under the Conventicle Act of 1665. Failure to comply would result in imprisonment and torture.

The people did not want freedom FROM religion, but freedom OF religion.

The only real reason to separate the church from the state would be to instill a new morality and establish a new system of beliefs. Our founding fathers were God-fearing men who understood that for a country to stand it must have a solid foundation; the Bible was the source of this foundation. They believed that God's ways were much higher than Man's ways and held firmly that the Bible was the absolute standard of truth and used the Bible as a source to form our government.

There is no such thing as a pluralistic society. There will always be one dominant view, otherwise it will be in transition from one belief system to another. Therefore, to say Biblical principles should not be allowed in government and school is to either be ignorant of the historic intent of the founding fathers, or blatantly bigoted against Christianity.

Each form of government has a guiding principle: monarchy in which the guiding principle is honor;

aristocracy in which the guiding principle is moderation; republican democracy in which the guiding principle is virtue; despotism in which the guiding principle is fear. Without people of the United States upholding good moral conduct, society soon degenerates into a corrupt system where people misuse the authority of government to obtain what they want at the expense of others. The U.S. Constitution is the form of our government, but the power is in the virtue of the people. The virtue desired of the people is shown in the Bible. This is why Biblical morality was taught in public schools until the early 1960's. Government officials were required to declare their belief in God even to be allowed to hold a public office until a case in the U.S. Supreme Court called *Torcaso v. Watkins* (Oct. 1960). God was seen as the author of natural law and morality. If one did not believe in God one could not operate from a proper moral base. And by not having a foundation from which to work, one would destroy the community. The two primary places where morality is taught are the family and the church. The church was allowed to influence the government in righteousness and justice so that virtue would be upheld. Not allowing the church to influence the state is detrimental to the country and destroys our foundation

of righteousness and justice. It is absolutely necessary for the church to influence the state in virtue because without virtue our government will crumble -- the representatives will look after their own good instead of the country's.

Government was never meant to be our master as in a ruthless monarchy or dictatorship. Instead, it was to be our servant. The founding fathers believed that the people have full power to govern themselves and that people chose to give up some of their rights for the general good and the protection of rights. Each person should be self-governed and this is why virtue is so important. Government was meant to serve the people by protecting their liberty and rights, not serve by an enormous amount of social programs. The authors of the Constitution wanted the government to have as little power as possible so that if authority was misused it would not cause as much damage. Yet they wanted government to have enough authority to protect the rights of the people. The worldview at the time of the founding of our government was a view held by the Bible: that Man's heart is corrupt and if the opportunity to advance oneself at the expense of another arose, more often than not, we would choose to do so. They firmly believed this and that's why an enormous effort to set up checks and balances took

place. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. They wanted to make certain that no man could take away rights given by God. They also did not set up the government as a true democracy, because they believed, as mentioned earlier, Man tends towards wickedness. Just because the majority wants something does not mean that it should be granted, because the majority could easily err. Government was not to be run by whatever the majority wanted but instead by principle, specifically the principles of the Bible.

Our U.S. Constitution was founded on Biblical principles and it was the intention of the authors for this to be a Christian nation. The Constitution had 55 people work upon it, of which 52 were evangelical Christians.(3) We can go back in history and look at what the founding fathers wrote to know where they were getting their ideas. This is exactly what two professors did. Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman reviewed an estimated 15,000 items with explicit political content printed between 1760 and 1805 and from these items they identified 3,154 references to other sources. The source they most often quoted was the Bible, accounting for 34% of all citations. Sixty percent of all quotes came from men who used the Bible to form their conclusions. That means that 94%

of all quotes by the founding fathers were based on the Bible. The founding fathers took ideas from the Bible and incorporated them into our government.

If it was their intention to separate the state and church they would never have taken principles from the Bible and put them into our government. An example of an idea taken from the Bible and then incorporated into our government is found in Isaiah 33:22 which says, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king..." The founding fathers took this scripture and made three major branches in our government: judicial, legislative, and executive. As mentioned earlier, the founding fathers strongly believed that Man was by nature corrupt and therefore it was necessary to separate the powers of the government. For instance, the President has the power to execute laws but not make them, and Congress has the power to make laws but not to judge the people. The simple principle of checks and balances came from the Bible to protect people from tyranny. The President of the United States is free to influence Congress, although he can not exercise authority over it because they are separated. Since this is true, why should the church not be allowed to influence the state?

People have read too much into the phrase "separation of church and state", which is to be a separation of civil authority from ecclesiastical authority, not moral values. Congress has passed laws that it is illegal to murder and steal, which is the legislation of morality. These standards of morality are found in the Bible. Should we remove them from law because the church should be separated from the state?

Our founding fathers who formed the government also formed the educational system of the day. John Witherspoon did not attend the Constitutional Convention although he was President of New Jersey College in 1768 (known as Princeton since 1896) and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. His influence on the Constitution was far ranging in that he taught nine of fifty-five original delegates. He fought firmly for religious freedom and said...

"God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable and that unjust attempts to destroy the one may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both."(4)

In October 1961 the Supreme Court of the United

States removed prayer from schools in a case called Engel v. Vitale. The case said that because the U.S. Constitution prohibits any law respecting an establishment of religion officials of public schools may not compose public prayer even if the prayer is denominationally neutral, and that pupils may choose to remain silent or be excused while the prayer is being recited.

For 185 years prayer was allowed in public and the Constitutional Convention itself was opened with prayer. If the founding fathers didn't want prayer in government why did they pray publicly in official meetings? It is sometimes said that it is permissible to pray in school as long as it is silent. Although, "In Omaha, Nebraska, 10-year old James Gierke was prohibited from reading his Bible silently during free time... the boy was forbidden by his teacher to open his Bible at school and was told doing so was against the law."(4) The U.S. Supreme Court with no precedent in any court history said prayer will be removed from school. Yet the Supreme Court in January, 1844 in a case named Vidal v. Girard's Executors, a school was to be built in which no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect whatsoever was to be allowed to even step on the property of the school. They argued over whether a

layman could teach or not, but they agreed that, "...there is an obligation to teach what the Bible alone can teach, viz. a pure system of morality." This has been the precedent throughout 185 years. Although this case is from 1844, it illustrates the point. The prayer in question was not even lengthy or denominationally geared. It was this: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country."

What price have we paid by removing this simple acknowledgment of God's protecting hand in our lives? Birth rates for unwed girls from 15-19; sexually transmitted diseases among 10-14 year olds; pre-marital sex increased; violent crime; adolescent homicide have all gone up considerably from 1961 to the 1990's -- even after taking into account population growth. The Bible, before 1961, was used extensively in curriculum. After the Bible was removed, scholastic aptitude test scores dropped considerably.

Satan is not a creator. He cannot create anything. All he can do is take that which God has created and 'twist' it upside-down and call it something else. God created good - Satan twisted it into evil. God created

love - Satan twisted it into hate. God created faith - Satan twisted it into fear. Do you see how he works?

Satan also twists the good things that man has created as well. To the point - our founding fathers, many of which were ministers, created the constitution and it's amendments including the First Amendment which provides for legal protection of the Church from the State (i.e. government) - Satan has now twisted that in the minds of the people to "protect" the State and all governmental entities, property, programs, etc... from the Church - banning the very freedoms that the First Amendment guarantees! Now the IRS is already beginning to tell Pastors what they can and cannot preach and teach in their own churches - threatening to revoke their 501(c)(3) tax exempt status!

There is no such thing as a pluralistic society; there will always be one dominant view. Someone's morality is going to be taught -- but whose? Secular Humanism is a religion that teaches that through Man's ability we will reach universal peace and unity and make heaven on earth. They promote a way of life that systematically excludes God and all religion in the traditional sense. That Man is the highest point to which nature has evolved, and he can rely on only himself and that the universe was not created, but

instead is self-existing. They believe that Man has the potential to be good in and of himself. All of this of course is in direct conflict with not only the teachings of the Bible but even the lessons of history.

In June 1961 in a case called *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the U.S. Supreme Court stated, "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others." The Supreme Court declared Secular Humanism to be a religion. The American Humanist Association certifies counselors who enjoy the same legal status as ordained ministers. Since the Supreme Court has said that Secular Humanism is a religion, why is it being allowed to be taught in schools? The removal of public prayer of those who wish to participate is, in effect, establishing the religion of Humanism over Christianity.

This my friends is exactly what our founding fathers tried to stop from happening with the first amendment.

Today in the United States, 90% of the population believes in God! 80% of those believe in the Judeo-Christian Ethic (i.e. believe in Jesus). But Hollywood and the media has convinced most Christians that

they are - **the vast minority!** When in fact Christians are the "Silent Majority!" Alolph Hitler once said that if a well crafted lie is told often enough and long enough it will become as good as the the truth! For example, "the Religious Right" is a totally fictitious entity. There SHOULD be one, but there is no such thing! Christians just haven't seemed to be able get together long enough to realize the strength they would have if they united politically. Now the "Religious Right" is just a straw-man to hide a REAL and very active movement - "the Athiest Left!"

"Separation of Church and State" is just a myth. But it's a myth that if allowed to continue will continue to daily chip away our religious freedoms. We just cannot keep quiet about it any longer. Christians must be taught on this subject now - before it becomes illegal to do even that! All evil needs to flourish is for good men - to do (and say) nothing!

The next landmark ruling came down in 1947. In the case, *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court applied the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment to the states. In the context of the "separation of church and state," the Court's foundational reinterpretation of the Constitution was complete. From 1947

forward, the Court has ruled with regularity on religious issues, in direct violation of the original meaning of the First Amendment. Their rulings, and those of lower courts (federal and State) have become the "law" of "separation of church and state."

That was a very brief description of how the federal courts have taken authority over religious issues, reinterpreting the First Amendment and applying it to the States by way of the Fourteenth Amendment. All of this was done in clear violation of the actual wording of the Constitution, as well as the intentions of its framers. The modern concept of "separation of church and state" can not be justified using the historical record.

We are forced, however, to work with the existing court doctrines. Therefore, what does the phrase mean today as it is applied in American public policy? The First Amendment, which prohibited any "law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," has evolved into something entirely new. During the last generation, the courts, at all levels, have ruled in ways that essentially guarantee the

freedom from religion, instead of the freedom of religion.

"Separation of church and state," as applied to education, means that a prayer at a graduation ceremony is unconstitutional. It also means that students may not pause for a moment of silence at the beginning of their school day. It means that a nativity scene may not be displayed on public property unless there are other displays (e.g. Santa Clause or Christmas trees) that secularize the presentation.



Today's conception of "separation of church and state" has also been used to remove historic crosses from public property, and religious symbols from city seals. It has been used to remove the Ten Commandments from courtrooms, even though they are carved in stone within the architecture of the Supreme Court building. The concept has been used to prevent religious expressions on personalized license plates. And these are but a few of the official applications of the concept, or "law" of "separation of church and state."

One should understand that "separation of church and state" is not actually a law. It is a doctrine, or a legal concept, that has been implemented by the various courts primarily over the last fifty years. If this concept, as originally understood, would have been applied with consistency over the years, America would certainly be a different country right now. Religious expression would flourish, and the courts would not be micromanaging the religious life of the American people.

The government was to accommodate the religious communities; religion and religious expression were to be encouraged