

Should we separate Church and State?

From My Side



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I had an enlightening conversation in my CPR class. We smoked cigarettes outside afterwards and chatted about politics in the cold. The person with whom I conversed is a die-hard Republican and I am a Democrat. We still found common ground. We both believe that separation of Church and State is a must.

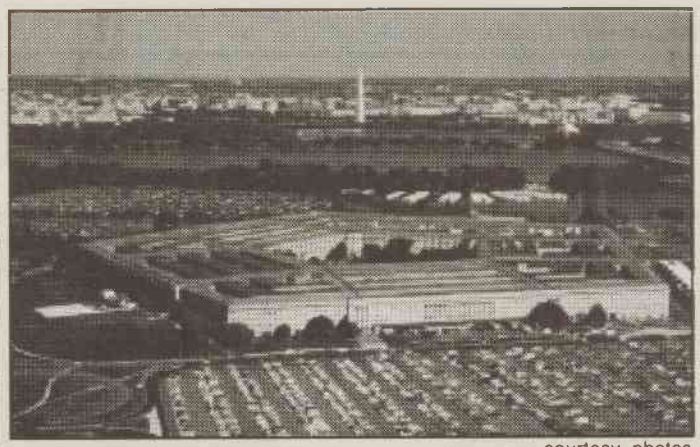
Religion, as defined by *Webster's Dictionary*, is a "belief in and reverence for a supernatural powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe."

From my side, religion is a man-made concept designed to answer questions that can never be answered. For those who choose to become part of religion, it is an end to a search for greater things, but still optional. Government, however, is never optional. Every society needs order, laws and guidance. Not every person within a society needs his or her neighbor's version of God.

So why shouldn't we want this



A small Southern Baptist church stands freely just like the Tentagon in Arlington on the edge of Washington, DC.



courtesy photos

separation? If America is based on freedom, aren't the quintessential freedoms to choose whether to support, give faith to, and agree with a group of people applicable here? Why should your morals, dictated to you by your Sunday school teacher, be dictatee to me and why should I abide by them?

Originally, people like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison vied for complete separation of church and state. Even though the Constitution was signed in 1776, prior to the Revolutionary War, 13 colonies still had dictated "correct" religious orders supported by religion taxes. Dissenters were discriminated against, disqualified from holding public office, exiled, fined, jailed, beaten, mutilated, and sometimes even

executed. Could this get any more hypocritical? Okay America, listen up. (Ahem) We can all make our own decisions about religion, but if you don't make the *right* decision, then we are going to despise your ability to stand on your own laurels enough to banish you from participating in our society? All I can say is wow. Where is the freedom in that Free America?

And since we are on the subject, who does George Bush think that he is, trying to pass constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage? This is the supreme mama of the clash of church and state. He takes the morality standpoint. Where do his morals come from? Christianity. Why are Christians morals any more valid than a Buddhist's

or Muslim's or Jew's? They aren't!

If you start incorporating religion and politics, before you know it we will be in the same shape as the Iraqis. Ladies, get ready to cover your faces, be sold to your husband for a cow and a piece of land and walk in his shadow for the rest of your life.

If you are going to have Bibles in school, you must also have the Qur'an, the Book of Mormon, the Tanakh, and the Tao-Te Ching. If you are going to say, "in God we trust" you must also say in Jehovah, Allah or Yahweh we trust too. Otherwise this free America is only free when it comes to matters that don't deal with or incorporate religion.

The Way I See It

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The discussion of "separation of church and state" usually stirs up a great deal of controversy. I find this interesting because the term separation of church and state is not found in the Constitution. This catch phrase has been used to draw political lines in the sand regarding certain issues concerning the well being of Americans. The Constitution simply states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." When it comes to the topic of separating government and religion, the way I see it, they are inseparable because the government has become a religion.

Although the *Webster's Dictionary* defines religion as, "a cause, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith," and government as a system of, "authoritative direction and control," our government demands its citizens believe in and embrace with fervor programs that provide little hope for lasting security.

One of these failing programs is Social Security. Although this program had good intentions, in its current form it simply traps people into a dependence on government for their needs. Government officials would have us believe that, left to our own devices, we would not plan for and invest in our retirement. I say this because we as Americans no longer need to ask what we can do for our country; we are told what we will do. This should not be the case.

Americans should no longer be forced to place their faith in the Social Security system, which is neither social nor secure. We should be allowed to plan our own futures according to our own research and beliefs.

I have spoken with people who are on social security and they have told me that, had they been allowed to invest all the money that the government had taken from them, they could have retired at a higher standard of living than the one provided by "Uncle Sam." Since this was not possible, they are forced to hold fast to their faith in this abysmal system.

It is time that we, as Americans demand our rights to choose to contribute to social security or invest in our own form of retirement. We as Americans need to demand that the government stop seizing portions of our pay-

checks for "social security" in the hopes that a "savior" will manifest him or herself in the next election. A savior will never come. There may be some that like the system and continue to contribute to it, but it should be a choice, not a mandate from on high.

Our government has gone beyond the boundaries of providing for the common defense, promoting the *general* welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty. In its attempt to take care of each and every need of its citizens, it has moved closer to becoming the church of the United States.

Until we as citizens seek to change the system, and prove that we can take care of ourselves, we will never be able to have a true "separation of church and state." Keep in mind this is simply, the way I see it.