

WOODSTOCK BUSINESS CONFERENCE

MADDEN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT LE MOYNE



WBC TOPICS December 2015 Meeting

- Welcome and Self-Introductions
- Woodstock Business Conference Mission Statement
 - The Mission of the Woodstock Business Conference is to establish and lead a national and international network of business executives to explore their respective religious traditions in order to assist the individual executives:
 - To integrate faith, family and professional life,
 - To develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values and
 - To exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large
 - The Conference, grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another's religious tradition. It is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one's religious heritage.
- Scripture Reading: Mark 12:13-17

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax[a] to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

And they were amazed at him.

- Quiet Reflection 5 minutes followed by sharing insights

The True Meaning of Separation of Church and State

- Bill Flax

Contributor - Forbes

Our nation was predicated on unalienable rights with governance through family, church and community, each rightfully sovereign within its sphere. Human dignity, legal equality and personal freedom reflect biblical values imparted on Western Civilization, which retains these values in secular form while expunging their Author from public discourse.

Americans are frequently reminded of what the revisionists deem our greatest achievement: "Separation of Church and State." Crosses are ripped down in parks. Prayer has been banished from schools and the ACLU rampages to remove "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. Moreover, "Separation of Church and State" is nowhere found in the Constitution or any other founding legislation. Our forefathers would never countenance the restrictions on religion exacted today.

The phrase "separation of church and state" was initially coined by Baptists striving for religious toleration in Virginia, whose official state religion was then Anglican (Episcopalian). Baptists thought government limitations against religion illegitimate. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson championed their cause.

The preamble in Act Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia (1786), affirms that "the Author of our Religion gave us our 'free will.'" And that He "chose not to propagate it by coercions." This legislation certainly did not diminish religious influence on government for it also provided stiff penalties for conducting business on the Sabbath.

Nor did the Constitution inhibit public displays of faith. At ratification, a majority of the thirteen several and sovereign states maintained official religions. The early Republic welcomed public worship. Church services were held in the U.S. Capitol and Treasury buildings every Sunday. The imagery in many federal buildings remains unmistakably biblical.

The day after the First Amendment's passage, Congress proclaimed a national day of prayer and thanksgiving. The inaugural Congress was largely comprised by those who drafted the Constitution. It reflects incredible arrogance to reconfigure the Bill of Rights into prohibiting religious displays on public grounds. Hanging the Ten Commandments on the wall of a county courthouse no more mandates religion than judges displaying the banner of their favorite sports team somehow equates to Congress establishing that team as preeminent.

Our forefathers never sought to evict the church from society. They recognized that the several states did not share uniform values. We lived and worshipped differently. The framers were a diverse bunch with wildly divergent opinions on many issues, but eliminating the very foundations of America's heritage would have horrified them. On few issues was there more unanimity.

Where the French Revolution and its official policy of "De-Christianization" quickly devolved into bloodshed and oppression, here freedom flourished. Our independence was seen as the culmination of a march toward liberty, not a rejection of America's historical cultural moorings. Our forbears embraced tradition and left local autonomy largely intact.

Schools, courts and the public square were often overtly Christian and had been since their colonial beginnings. Few Americans would have tolerated a coercive central government infringing on their rights to post religious symbols on local schools, courts or anywhere else.

Americans built society from the ground up. Many had fled oppression. The colonies instituted local self-government indigenously to confirm the rights resident in their persons and property. Few would have willingly been dispossessed by Washington of the very freedoms which they had just secured from London.

Here men could and did rise as their efforts merited. Commoners were unshackled from feudal paralysis and freed to find God individually. Both the economy and church thrived. Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Americans intertwined individual liberty with vibrant faith. "It is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other."

Even non-Christian founders thought religion essential. None would have wished to upend the very basis for education, law or culture. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 states: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

Americans understood freedom without morality quickly devolves into debauchery. Whether from sincere faith, or, prudence instilling an honest, law-abiding, responsible and hardworking populace, all esteemed biblical morality as the bedrock of self government. George Washington believed, "Religion and morality are indispensable supports" for "it is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

The phrase "separation between church and state" was reintroduced by former Klansman Hugo Black, historically one of our most liberal Supreme Court judges. In the 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education*, Justice Black invoked Thomas Jefferson stating, "The First Amendment has erected 'a wall of separation between church and state.' . . . that wall must be kept high and impregnable."

Thomas Jefferson thought differently. The Danbury Baptists wrote to him congratulating his election and objecting to the First Amendment. They thought it implied government dispensed what was not government's to give. Jefferson agreed.

His reply clearly applied "Separation of Church and State" to the establishment and not to the free exercise of religion. As he expressed, what communities did and how they worshipped were not federal affairs. Jefferson later said the central government was "interdicted from intermeddling with religious institutions." Such were state matters.

Freedom of religion was partly moral – protecting our most cherished liberty – and partly pragmatic. Religious animosity tears society asunder, particularly when church is affixed to government. With freedom of conscience assured, conflict becomes less likely. The First Amendment was an insightful compromise between church and state, federal and local authorities. The framers desired to avoid the controversies which engulfed Europe.

As James Madison warned in Federalist 10, “The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; . . . A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, . . . ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power . . . divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to cooperate for their common good.”

Thus the Constitution decreed that Washington had no occasion or authority to interject itself into matters as obviously local as doctrines of faith. Congress was not empowered to establish a church because the framers feared that concentrated power, whether favored religions, standing armies, banking monopolies, or an overarching federal government, invited tyranny.

Church and state were distinct in that the Federal Government could not elevate one denomination over others. Nor could government and its flawed inhabitants usurp divine authority by harnessing politics to the church. Faith is no civil contract, but a personal matter not to be profaned by politics.

State controlled churches frequently exploited this latent power for evil. The Spanish Inquisition didn't originate in the Vatican, but the Castilian court. It was not of the church, but the king. By Philip II, Spain had the makings of the first police state infused with the ill-gotten moral authority of a tyrannical clergy.

Much of our Bill of Rights was meant to prevent dictatorships such as Cromwell's, which married church and state in such manner as to mar many of the freedoms our forefathers sought to enshrine.

The framers witnessed the incessant wars of the mother continent and understood official churches and centralized power fomented abuses. Having two or three competing factions spurred struggles between the parties to secure power, but divesting authority to innumerable smaller jurisdictions without the prospect of any gaining control promoted peaceful freedom.

Episcopalians in Virginia would live amicably next to Catholics in Maryland, Quakers in Pennsylvania or Baptists in their midst. None saw cause for contention because there was no threat that others would gain dominion over them or any prospect that they might gain such dominion themselves. Rivalry was unnecessary because “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”

Establishment has been redefined. Limitations on government have been altered into restrictions on religious expression, which clearly violates the amendment's next clause: “prohibiting the free exercise thereof” and third clause “abridging the freedom of speech.” Meanwhile, Washington publicly imposes politically correct secular religions like worshiping diversity or the environment.

Are our rights inalienable or contrivances from courts? Is government still limited or its power undefined? Is the state answerable to the people or are we but subjects? Do our rights descend from God or derive from man?

What Does Separation of Church and State Really Mean?

- Author: Zach Lee
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Did you know the word “nice” used to mean foolish or stupid? Ironically, people started using it as a way to describe someone as “pleasant” or “decent,” unaware of its original meaning, and over time, “nice” completely lost its original meaning.

The phrase “separation of church and state” is the same way. It meant something to America’s founding fathers, but over time, it took on a new meaning. Today, the phrase means that if something is related to the state, then discussion of religion is forbidden.

History

What did the phrase “separation of church and state” originally mean in the Constitution? Let’s look at a few insights.

The first thing to note is that the phrase doesn’t occur anywhere in the Constitution. It is a phrase that people have inaccurately invented in an attempt to explain the First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

In its original context, this passage meant that the U.S. would not have an official “state Church” like England. The English government officially supported the Church of England, using taxes to support Anglicanism. The founding fathers, who promoted the Revolutionary War, did not want the same kind of church.

This is the extent of this passage from the First Amendment. There is nowhere in the Constitution that forbids individuals from mixing faith and politics or from sharing their faith in a state-related function or location.

Also, the following facts show that, historically, no one interpreted the First Amendment to exclude religion from the political sphere:

- The U.S. Congress used to hold Christian worship services at the Capitol on Sundays.
- The Supreme Court Building was used to house church services on Sundays.
- Twelve of the original 14 states required religious tests for those seeking public office.
- After the Civil War, the First Congregational Church of Washington used the House of Representatives as a worship building.
- In 1863, the U.S. Senate requested that Abraham Lincoln designate an official day of national prayer and humility.
- In 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt (as well as many presidents before him) went on the radio and prayed nationally for our troops and our nation.
- When the First Amendment was implemented in 1791, it was intended to only limit the natural (federal) government and not the state government.

We have seriously misunderstood what “separation of church and state” means. To the founding fathers, the First Amendment existed to keep the state out of the church, not the church out of the state.

Application

There are two applications here for Christians today:

First, we as believers should use our rights and our freedom of religion to promote what is righteous. We are not allowed to be silenced in the public sphere by the government. We should use our rights to stand up, not only for our faith but also against issues such as abortion and the restriction of religious liberty.

Second, we must understand that good interpretation matters, whether we are interpreting the Bible, the Constitution or any other document. If we interpret someone's words in a way that wouldn't make sense to the original audience, we have developed an incorrect interpretation.

May we seek to be good students of interpretation, good students of history and good students of the rights we have as believers in our country.

Questions for Reflection

(Here I use the questions from the first article.)

Be Attentive: Are our rights inalienable or contrivances from courts?

Be Intelligent: Is government still limited or its power undefined?

Be Reasonable: Is the state answerable to the people or are we but subjects?

Be Responsible: Do our rights descend from God or derive from man?

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