

Foundationalist Paper No. 5 ***Separation of Church and State***

Religion: What is it good for? Religion has only four functions in society. This is not said to diminish the importance of religion in our life. Religion, Spirituality, or Faith, whichever name you choose to call it plays a vital role in our families, communities, towns, cities, nations, and our world. Numerating the functions is a means by which we are merely analyzing why religion is such an important influence in our lives. And, why our Founding Fathers had it *exactly* right.

Your religion is important to you, and you should keep it to yourself. We want to clarify this point; religion should be a personal decision in that people of different religions can work, play and live together in peace. The fact that one person calls their religion by a different name than another, does not change the function of religion in either case. The customs of religions are different, but these are simply different actions to achieve the same results. The United States by virtue of its first constitutional amendment has proven it is possible for a Muslim, Christian and Atheist to live, work, and play together in the same community. This is a lesson the world neglects to learn at its own peril.

The first function of religion is to pacify the fears we, as human beings have regarding death. We do not know what happens when we die, and this fear is instinctual. We cannot scientifically prove what happens upon death, but we need answers. Therefore, we turn to religion and develop a faith about the “afterlife.” This helps to alleviate our fears and allows us to lead a comfortable productive life without dealing with the anxiety of death being the end. Our mind has an incessant need to believe there is a point, a meaning to life if you will, and religion allows our mind to function by having faith that the meaning will be delivered upon our death.

The second function of religion is to allow us to transfer the responsibility of our lives and the universe to a supreme being. If we believe that someone or something is in control of our lives, then we relieve ourselves of the responsibility of life. To some people, it is much more comfortable to believe there is a “plan” for each of us than to believe that life is a series of random unconnected events, and our station in life is a direct result of the decisions, actions, or inactions we make regarding each individual random event. Praying provides us an avenue to plea our case to the man/woman/being that has set that plan into motion.

The third function of religion is to provide another outlet for the human animal to establish his sociology. Humans are social animals. We establish societies at every

level or our culture, from our families, to our neighborhoods, our towns, our cities, our governments, and even to our world. Churches and religions provide another avenue for humans to gather together, help one another, and belong. Personal experience with organized religion is that the first question asked will be one of two: 1. Are you a member of a church? 2. What religion do you belong to? These questions speak to belonging and the socialization of religions and churches, and their importance in our communities.

The successful society has rules written and unwritten that define acceptable behavior within that society. We refer to the part religion plays in defining acceptable behavior as establishing society's Moral Compass. It is this Moral Compass that directs our society, and teaches us what is right and wrong.

The fourth function and certainly the most sinister, is to help governments keep the masses under control and in poverty. It is certainly easier to accept the inequities and injustices of life here on earth if we believe that we are paying penance for an eternal life in a place where the streets are paved with gold.

The four functions of religion lend themselves quite comfortably to being manipulated by a government, whether that government is of a nation or a religion itself, to force the masses to bend to their will. It was our Founding Father's first hand knowledge of the oppression at the hands of religion, and their desire to limit the power of government in all aspects of life that led to the First Amendment of the Constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

We, as Americans must realize and admit frankly to ourselves and the world that ours is a nation founded upon the Judeo-Christian Ethic. The Holy Bible provides the lessons by which we define our Moral Compass. We have not always been true to our Moral Compass, and this is when we have stumbled most seriously as a nation.

It is from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptists in 1802 that we derive that famous clause, "...a wall of separation between church and state." This clause, if interpreted literally must only be half correct. Government cannot be involved in religion. It is a mischievous element in its natural encroachment into our personal lives, but this encroachment must be kept at bay in all areas of religion. No religion must ever be allowed to be forcibly instituted among Americans.

The converse however, must not be true. A God-like presence must be involved in government. When no supreme being is acknowledged, people begin to see themselves as supreme: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin refused the acceptance of a higher authority and executed many of the most evil crimes against humanity the world has ever witnessed. Only the moral direction provided by the belief of a supreme being can check the naturally evil tendencies of a society or government of society. In the United States specifically, our government was founded, and our history rooted in the morals of the Judeo-Christian Ethic. Americans should not be ashamed of this fact; we must embrace it. Americans must begin to behave as they know they should. There are no areas of gray when dealing with right and wrong. Our society (with the skilled assistance of the legal profession) has become expert at rationalizing away improper behavior. It is impossible for society to legislate morality. Morality must be left in the hands of the individual.

The United States' Moral Compass is more critical today than ever given the transient nature of our society. Once, the morality of a community was maintained by a strong sense of responsibility/honor to our fellow citizens. That sense of responsibility/honor holds less power today than it once did. We can drive relatively quickly to a distant community, behave immorally, and return home with no one but our conscience being any the wiser. It is not uncommon for people to live in multiple communities across our nation in their lifetime. This lack of "roots" in a community makes it far easier to perform questionable acts, then move to a different community where again, no one but your conscience knows about your past transgressions; thus increasing the importance of your Moral Compass.

The government of the United States of America must be based on the foundation of morality taught by the Bible. This is not to imply or state emphatically that our government should be Christian or Jewish. However, it must subscribe to the morals taught by these religions. We can do unto others as we would have others do unto us without becoming a Christian.

The United States of America was founded by men of high moral character, and that moral character was derived from the lessons written in the Holy Bible. John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States said, "Providence has given our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as privilege and interest, of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." Americans must come to the realization that having God in government is good, and that God is the one referred to in the Bible. If you are of a different religion, this is the hardest part of understanding what it truly means to be an American: God is in government, but government is not in your life. Live your life the way you want to

live it. The Constitution guarantees you that right. But, our government and its institutions will continue to reference God and use the lessons written in the Bible to guide our actions. This is necessary for all of us to continue to have freedom of religion and maintain the “wall of separation.”

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