

Separation of Church and State: The Myth

Olfat El-Mallakh, Adjunct Faculty, College of DuPage

Abstract

In every culture signs of religion abound. For religion is one of the fundamental components of the shaping of any civilization. The concept of separation of Church and State might have worked beautifully in America for a while. But then globalization happened...the melting pot melted becoming colored mosaics.

Nowadays, as a matter of survival, people are insisting on their roots and establishing their identities. For individuals, religion is a personal identity. And always for nations, religion proved to be a political entity. Marxism's failure, for the most part, was the insistence on denying the existence of a supreme being and negating individuality.

Examining some major world religions and philosophies will highlight the difficulty of the concept of separation of church and state to take root in the global world. Notice that on the American dollar, the world's favorite currency, a prominent phrase reads: "In God we trust." Jesus preached a separation of church and state, "Render...unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's." However, Jesus, after all, insisted that His Kingdom is not of this world!

The controversy persists.

To entertain the topical problem of the separation of church and state we need to define numerous terms and concepts. To examine the particular role of 'religion' in human culture is a must. Bear in mind that the term 'church' stands for the term 'religion,' throughout this article. So let us start from the beginning.

In the beginning there was globalization. This new cultural phenomenon is not new! Globalization started with the dawn of humanity. Mankind is perpetually on the move, connecting the dots, looking for food, water, shelter and trading partners with which to exchange commodities and ideas. In addition they looked for ways to instigate a hopeful future for their progeny. A sense of hunger and adventure, a sense of fulfillment and obligation, a sense of survival and responsibility led humankind to work the land, fly the sky, and reach the moon, on its way to Mars. Continuously, humans pushed on and persevered successfully, you might say—whether appealing to the gods or appeasing the gods wherever they went and whatever they confronted. Survival is for the fittest, or more likely, for those who had supreme power on their side, they concluded.

In traditional societies, where the family, the tribe, and the village were the first concern, the religion was more important than the individual. The focus was on the sacred. Our first encounter of humongous cultural pluralism was in the Roman Empire, in Late Antiquity:

“Roman political organization linked widely divergent geographical areas and their ... cultures while at the same time imposing common cultural bonds that helped to create a common culture. The Roman Empire...connected all of Western and Eastern Europe, the Near East, North Africa, most of the areas surrounding the Black Sea, Armenia, the Caucasus, and extended far into modern Iran and Iraq. The languages common to all those areas included Latin and Greek, but regional languages continued to be spoken and written; significant literature survives...in such languages as Punic, Coptic, Aramaic, Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian. Religion also played an important role in unifying disparate cultures...Although the degree of acculturation always needs careful delineation, the simultaneous uniformity and great diversity of cultures clearly marks the religions of Late Antiquity.”¹

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution the focus revolved around the factories, smog, displacement, urbanism and diversity, a new reality at hand. “Relationships are no longer based on moral or religious duty but become based on rational expediency and legal requirements.”² A hint of separation of church and state in the West is observed at this time.

Today, in our time, the beginning of the third millennium, the known world is not brought together under one empire; however we are nations with different ideas, different governments, different ideologies, different climates and geographies, seeking nothing but survival. Globalization is thus “redefining the context for doing religion.”³ Religions are in the foreground. And “for the first time in history people are being called upon to transcend traditional boundaries of family, village, tribe, and nation to see themselves as citizens of the world, with all the complex and frightening implications that transition may hold.”⁴ Globalization has thus become “a massive process of social change resulting from the growing interconnectedness of human social, cultural, economic, and religious life that is realtering human activities on a planetary-wide scale.”⁵

¹ Richard Valantasis, ed., *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.

² Kent E. Richter, *Understanding Religion in A Global Society* (Belmont, California: Thomas Wadsworth, 2005), 14.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 384.

Forum on Public Policy

Globalization is a collision of tides—or is it? This uneasiness began the day humankind looked across the river wondering if the grass was greener on the other side. When humanity decided to travel to the horizon, for surely a treasure was there, they thought. When the little child at the beach pondered whether he could make a tunnel in the sand, to get to the other side of the ocean. Someone yelled: ‘Strip the cloud of its silver lining.’ And someone else went to the moon! What is the power behind all of this? The Sun, Water, Wind, or Fire...

The fire is lit. Beware lest we are consumed by it!

The world itself appears different to different peoples with different religious values. Our world is in the process of becoming a global community. And it is scary: we do not want to blend. Societies are acting as individuals, celebrating their differences rather than embracing their similarities. Disagreements are the responses. Fright is the dictator of actions because traditions, histories, beliefs, practices, economics, education, politics, families and religious systems are at stake! Those basic institutions of modern societies are overwhelmed with the threat of evanescence. Clashes!!!

While time still permits—as in we are running out of time—we should briefly survey the conundrum of the separation of church and state. Perhaps by examining some major world religions and philosophies the perplexity of such an ideal will be highlighted. Indeed, it is admirable for the separation of church and state to take root in the global world; however, in our apocalyptic global world, it would be infeasible.

Confucianism, for instance, is a Chinese philosophy that regulates relationships among humans whether in the public or private sphere. In Japan’s Shintoism, the national religion, one is born a national subject, subject to the state beliefs. Tibetan Buddhism rules at once spiritually and temporally. In Judaism, Yahweh gives the Law. And in Islam, Sharia’ah, Allah’s law, governs. The economic theory of capitalism is based on the theology of John Calvin, a Christian reformist. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was a shrewd businessman, whose revelation encouraged entrepreneurship. In Hinduism, secular work, such as service to the community in all aspects, is believed to be a way of worship.

However, an agreed-upon definition of the word 'religion' is essential, for cultural variances are met in our global undertakings on a regular basis. We seem to give the benefit of the doubt. We tend to accommodate. We would rather have superficial encounters. But this mode of behavior is disastrous. We are just realizing that ignorance is evil.

For starters 'religion' is not just a word. It is a field of study. It encompasses several disciplines, such as historiography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy and phenomenology. *Webster's Dictionary* says the following about 'religion': "The service and worship of God or the supernatural; commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance; a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices; a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith."⁶

The anthropologist and author James Frazer in his theorizing about 'religion' writes: "Are the forces which govern the world conscious and personal, or unconscious and impersonal? Religion, as a conciliation of the superhuman powers, assumes the former...it stands in fundamental antagonism to magic as well as to science, which hold that, the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically."⁷

Sigmund Freud readily decided that: "Religion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity."⁸ Such disease is treatable with psychoanalysis, he insisted. Meanwhile, Carl Jung considers 'religion' a positive force, expressed in mythology and literature as the human experience.⁹ It follows then that in our post-modern time 'religion' is identity. It is an essential component that identifies a human being.

⁶ Henry Bosley Woolf, ed. in chief, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts: G & C Merriam Company, 1975), 977.

⁷ Daniel L. Pals. *Seven Theories of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16

⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim's thoughts on 'religion' center on "the idea of society (as) the soul of religion."¹⁰ In other words, society is understood as a unit composed of "language, laws, customs, ideas, values, traditions, techniques, and products...They are in the world before we individuals arrive; the moment we are born, they impose themselves on us; as we grow through childhood, they mold us; in adulthood, they animate and guide us; and, just as surely, in death they survive us."¹¹ Durkheim defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things ...things set apart and forbidden." He continues: "These practices unite into one moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."¹² The sacred belongs to the community and the profane to the individual.¹³ Thus the community is sacred.

Mircea Eliade, the scholar who devoted his time to the study and writing on the comparative study of religion, states: "For primitives as for the man of all pre-modern societies, the *sacred* is equivalent to a *power*, and in the last analysis, to *reality*. The sacred is saturated with *being*. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy...Thus it is easy to understand that religious man deeply desires *to be*, to participate in *reality*, to be saturated with power."¹⁴ We find that Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism agree with his treatment of the sacred.

We are *Homo religiosi*—this is an integral part of our make-up as humans.¹⁵ For "human beings are what scholars refer to as homo religiosus: We are by nature inclined to look outside ourselves and beyond time and space to a divine power...that creates, directs, and judges the world and our individual lives. All men, said Homer, need the gods."¹⁶

Defining 'religion' is no simple matter. 'Religion' is part of everyone and everything and more. It connects the visible to the invisible, the tangible to the intangible. It is simply an essential component and affects this phenomena we call *life*, and hence all in it.

¹⁰ Ibid , 88.

¹¹ Ibid., 95

¹² Ibid., 99.

¹³ Ibid., 99.

¹⁴ Ibid., 165.

¹⁵ James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, fifth edition, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005), 12.

¹⁶ Jon Meacham, *American Gospel*, (NewYork: Random House, 2006).

Atheism is a 'religion' since its discourse is concerned in negating the components of 'religion.' It occupies its time talking about what it claims does not exist in order to refute its existence.

Karl Marx calls his 'religion' in terms of communism and thus writes: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."¹⁷

Marx believes that "belief in a god or gods is an unhappy by-product of the class struggle."¹⁸ This famous thought of Karl Marx culminates in the following statement: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real (economic) distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusion."¹⁹

Man makes religion, so he argues.

Author Daniel L. Pals in his book, *Seven Theories of Religion*, suggests the following: "If in a given field of study we cannot find a theory general enough to explain all of the relevant data we have no alternative but to proceed piecemeal. We employ a variety of theories with limited explanatory scope even if a satisfactory overreaching theory of the relationship among the partial theories is lacking. The absence of a general explanatory theory of all the important aspects of religions characterizes the current situation in the history of religions. Equally characteristic, but largely ignored, is the existence of a variety of fruitful explanatory theories of a limited scope of

¹⁷ Daniel L. Pals, *Seven Theories Of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 129.

¹⁸ Ibid., 139.

¹⁹ Ibid., 141.

application, each of which is capable of contributing to the overall understanding of the complexity of religious history.”²⁰

The cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz seems to have come up with a more inclusive, workable definition of ‘religion’: “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivation in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”²¹

One thing is certain though:

“Religion poses a general human problem because it disrupts community. It does so with a new force in the modern world because divergent traditions that in the past did and could develop separately...are today face to face...Different civilizations have in the past either ignored each other or fought each other; very occasionally in tiny ways perhaps they met each other. Today they not only meet but interpenetrate; they meet not only each other, but jointly meet joint problems, and must jointly try to solve them. They must collaborate. Perhaps the single most important challenge that mankind faces in our day is the need to turn our nascent world society into a world community.”²²

It is time to examine some of the major world religions.

Hinduism in India

India was partitioned along sectarian lines: the creation of Pakistan, and hence Bangladesh, of which the majority is Muslims. Meanwhile India still has a large minority of Muslims. The two ideologies of Hinduism and Islam are so different from each other. Hinduism is hierarchical while Islam is egalitarian. Sikhism, which came on the Indian scene in the fifteenth century, is a religion to reconcile Hinduism to Islam. A Hindu founded Sikhism, resulting in the fact that

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Ibid., 244.

²² James C. Livingston, *Anatomy Of The Sacred*, fifth edition, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005), 357-358.

Sikhism traditions have more similarities to Hindu traditions than Islamic traditions. However, Sikhism is a monotheistic religion like Islam. There is no separation of Church and State in Sikhism. Thus, Hinduism becomes the unifying factor of India, in spite of the differences encountered among the different areas, languages, and style of worship. Hinduism is equated with nationalism which gives rise to the Hindu nationalist party.²³

Hinduism, with its caste system, is already talking politics. Religion is not a matter of choice, but is already assigned in terms of varna, skin color. People are born into their castes. People do the jobs that are assigned to their castes. People marry within their castes. People worship in their castes' temples. People spend their lives trying to obey the rule of their castes and achieve their duty of amassing good karma to insure a better reincarnation. Each religious caste has different duties and privileges, different punishments and rewards. A religious caste denotes status in the society. People are born as either rulers or followers.

In other words, the castes are ranked hierarchically. The upper caste is the Brahmin, the priestly caste. They are the thinkers, the intellectuals and the spiritual leaders. They are the philosophers, the teachers and the artists. The warriors of old become modern-day administrators and organizers. The merchants become modern-day producers, engineers, and skilled people. The farmers become modern-day laborers, the wage earners

Huston Smith writes: "India never confused democracy with egalitarianism; justice was defined as a state in which privileges were proportionate to responsibilities."²⁴ Work, especially secular work, is one of the four paths to worship, in order to achieve enlightenment. The Indians are hard workers.

Religion in China

In modern communist China the main goal is to "guide religion to adapt to socialism...it is a political strategy to unite religious believers, at home and overseas, behind the Chinese

²³ Ted Gerard Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, editors, *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective, The One, The Few, And The Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

²⁴ Huston Smith, *World's Religions, A Guide To Our Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994), 44.

Communist Party...There are mechanisms for the religious groups to voice their concerns to the party and the government...each religious group has representatives in the national and regional People's Political Consultative Conferences, in which they can talk things over with representatives of the party and the government, and there are periodic informal exchanges between national and local Party and government heads and the various religious official."²⁵

Confucianism, a religion in China, adopted the practical order of the society in a series of codes of behavior: *Li*, "rules of social propriety"²⁶ is sacred and believed to be the "Mandate of Heaven."²⁷ It promotes virtues and values that mirror heaven. Heaven and earth are already reflected in each other. There is no separation of church and state within this pragmatic religion. It is on the rise in China. It does not offer any threats, but rather encourages the right set of values and virtues respected in the Chinese culture. It is embedded in their understanding of the role of the individual towards himself, his/her family and country.

Confucius said: "Only be dutiful towards your parents and friendly towards your brothers, and you will be contributing to government."²⁸

A Confucian sage summarized the human problem as follows: "Whence do the rules of decorum arise? From the fact that men are born with desires, and when these desires are not satisfied, men are bound to pursue their satisfaction. When the pursuit is carried on unrestrained and unlimited, there is bound to be contention. With contention comes chaos; with chaos dissolution. The ancient kings disliked this chaos and set the necessary limits by codifying rules of decorum and righteousness...It is through rites that Heaven and earth are harmonious...He who holds to the rites is never confused in the midst of multifarious change; he who deviates there from is lost."²⁹

²⁵ Mary Pat Fisher and Lee W. Bailey, *An Anthology Of Living Religions* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2008), 162.

²⁶ James C. Livingston, *Anatomy Of The Sacred*, fifth edition, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005), 238.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁹ Mary Pat Fisher and Lee W. Bailey, *An Anthology Of Living Religions* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2008), 239.

Confucius reiterates: “Of all things to which the people owe their lives the rites are the most important. If it were not for the rites, they would have no means of regulating the services paid to the spirits of Heaven and Earth; if it were not for the rites, they would have no means of distinguishing the positions of ruler and subject, high and low, old and young; if it were not for the rites, they would have no means of differentiating the relations between male and female, between father and son, and between elder and younger brother, and linking far and near by the ceremony of marriage.”³⁰ Manners make the man.³¹ Confucius understood the efficacy of morality and the importance of the belief in the trust of the informed, educated and noble oneself to make the difference.

China celebrates Confucius as the great teacher in ceremonies in his temple on September 10—Teacher’s Day. Taiwan honors Confucius as a prominent figure on September 28, his birthday.

Judaism in Israel

In Judaism, the separation of church and state is not a doctrine. Israel ratified a covenant with Yahweh, in which they received the Law and the Land, and in return they honored Yahweh and worshipped him alone. Yahweh is in command!

Today, Israel, a Jewish State, is “an ethnic democracy.”³² Kenneth D. Wald writes: “In the proclamation of independence issued on May 15, 1948, the founders declared Israel’s central purpose to ‘open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.’”³³ The government is secular, in the sense that Israeli citizenship is not limited to Jews. Religious freedom is encouraged. The different religious communities choose their official day of rest.³⁴ Religious matters are in the hands of Orthodox Judaism. There is no civil divorce. Divorce is obtained from the religious courts. In modern-day Israel, Jewish Law, Halakhah, is enforced through rabbinical

³⁰ Ibid., 241.

³¹ Ibid., 241.

³² Ted Gerard Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, editors, *Religion And Politics in Comparative Perspective, The One, The Few, And The Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102.

³³ Ibid., 102.

³⁴ Ibid., 103.

courts. And Islamic courts have jurisdiction over Muslim family matters. In both cases, their decisions are backed by the state.

The story of the family of Abraham and his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, led to Judaism and Islam respectively. Back then Abraham and Sarah were losing patience. Sarah took matters into her own hands and offered her maid, Hagar, to Abraham, so the barren couple could have a son. Ishmael is born. However, Sarah gives birth at age 90 to the son of the covenant, Isaac. Both sons are blessed, but Yahweh makes it clear that Isaac is the son of the covenant.

The story of God in history focuses on the calling together of a new community. God sought Abraham; surprising him by saying, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”³⁵ Abraham and Sarah answered the call. By answering the call of God, Sarah and Abraham committed to the cultural change and the worship of one deity, and the institution of the governance under God’s law. They learned to trust in God to deliver his promises to them and to deliver them from their enemies.

The descendants of Abraham and Sarah through Isaac experience the renewal covenant in Sinai. In Sinai, they were a nation in formation under the guidance of Moses. Moses received the Commandments from Yahweh. A life system was developed with over 600 laws. The Torah is their main sacred scripture, written by Moses in the Hebrew language.

Ishmael, the other son of Abraham by Hagar, is the head of that other branch of the family of Abraham. The Arabs are his descendants. His daughter married Esau, son of Isaac who is Ishmael’s half brother, and brother to Jacob, renamed Israel, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jews and the Muslims are cousins. Arabic and Hebrew are sister languages. Both people are Semitic.

³⁵ Holy Bible, *The New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Genesis 12: 1-3).

Islam in the world:

“Lo! Your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then mounted He the throne. He covers the night with the day, which is in haste to follow it, and has made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by His command. His verily is all creation and commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!”³⁶ In other words: His is the creation and the Commandment.

Islam does not recognize borders. To answer the question what is Islam is to start a treatise. Islam is a religion, a culture, a thought process and a way of life. Islam is a religion that shapes a culture and was shaped by the norms of Arabia. Ideal Islam is a structured way of life that establishes the community of Islam, known as the ‘ummah,’ and which should be governed by the Shariah, the Islamic law. Muhammad is the prophet of Islam and is believed by the Muslims to be the seal of the prophets—the same prophets of the Judaic-Christian tradition. Muhammad’s temporal rule of Arabia defined Islam as a political and ideological force.³⁷ And for this reason, Islamists reject “any separation of politics and religion in Islam.”³⁸

The Qur’an, the sacred scriptures of Islam, is revealed in the Arabic language: “And this (Qur’an) is a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds, which the trusted spirit descended with to (communicate) to your heart that you may be a warner in eloquent Arabic (in plain Arabic speech).³⁹ Several verses in the Qur’an reiterate the fact that the scriptures are revealed in the Arabic language. Thus, making the case that Arabic must be a sacred language, the speech of Allah, God. They indicate that any translation of the text to any language is considered interpretation rather than translation of the text. And that the scriptures should be read, recited and chanted in Arabic.

³⁶ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library) 7:54.

³⁷ Ted Gerard Jelen and Clyde Wicox, editors, *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective, The One, The Few, And The Many*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 141.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁹ Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur’an*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 26: 192-195.

The Ummah is the community of the people that makes up the sum of individuals embracing Islam wherever they are. Therefore Islam does not recognize borders. “Men were once a community of one faith; but they differed (and followed different ways). Had it not been for the word proclaimed by your Lord before, their differences would have been resolved.”⁴⁰ In the religion of Islam, Muhammad was to establish a new ummah, which would embody God’s design for humanity that will result in uniting humankind into one ummah, one religion. This had already started in 622 A.D., the day of his Hijra to Medinah. In Medinah he became the ruler and the preacher. There is no separation of church and state here. In Medinah the pattern of the ummah was ordained. There is no division between the secular and the religious. The political and the spiritual are one. The Shariah rules the ummah. The jurisdiction of the ummah is known as Dar al-Islam, meaning the abode of Islam. When people submit to the will of God completely and obey his prophet they become equal to each other no matter where they are. They all belong to the brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam. Allah is one. The ummah defines itself as an expression of his unity. The Qur’an says: “O men, we created you from a male and a female, and formed you into nations and tribes that you may recognize each other. He who has more integrity has indeed greater honor with God. Surely God is all-knowing and well-informed.”⁴¹

The unity of the ummah is on display whenever Muslims perform the daily ritual prayers all over the world repeating the same words. This is also evident when Muslims congregate in Mecca, at the yearly pilgrimage sampling all races and languages. This meeting prefigures the ideal of the nation of Islam. It is the ultimate goal of the religion when the world becomes Dar al-Islam with no more infidels, non-believers.

The word Islam comes from the root of the word ‘salam,’ meaning peace. Islam means to surrender completely in peace to the will of Allah. “The Arabs of the desert say: ‘We believe.’ ‘Tell them: You do not believe.’ ‘Better say: We submit;’ for belief has not yet penetrated your hearts.’ If you begin to obey Allah and His Apostle, He will not withhold the least (of the recompense) of your labor. Verily Allah is forgiving and kind.”⁴² In other words, complete submission to the will of Allah and obedience to his prophet Muhammad are the prerequisite to

⁴⁰ Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur’an*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 10:19.

⁴¹ Ibid., 49:13.

⁴² Syed Vickar Ahamed, *The Quran* (Lombard, Illinois: Book of Sign Foundation, 2005), 49:14.

the belonging to the religion of Islam. “Say: Should I find some other protector besides Allah the creator of the heavens and the earth, who nourishes all and is nourished by none? Say: I am commanded to the first to submit to Him, and not be an idolater.”⁴³

Islam is considered the ideal religion chosen for all humanity. “Today I have perfected your system of belief and bestowed my favors upon you in full, and have chosen submission (al-Islam) as the creed for you.”⁴⁴

The Qur’an considers Jews and Christians as ‘Dhimmi,’ people of the Book, and they are tolerated: “There is no compulsion in matter of faith.”⁴⁵

But “fight those people of the Book who not believe in Allah (God) until the Last Day, who do not prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have forbidden, nor accept divine law, until all of them pay protective tax in submission.”⁴⁶

This is the way people of the Book can live under Shariah: “Declaration by Allah and His Apostle of dissociating from those idolaters with whom you have a treaty. (They can) move about for four months freely in the land, but should know they cannot escape the law of God, and that Allah can put the unbelievers to shame. A general proclamation is made this day of the Greater Pilgrimage on the part of Allah and His Apostle, that Allah is not bound (by any contract) to idolaters, nor is His Apostle. It is, therefore, better for you to repent. If you do not, remember that you cannot elude (the grip of) Allah. So announce to those who deny the truth the news of painful punishment.”⁴⁷

“O you who believe! When you go forth to fight in the way of Allah, be careful to discriminate, and say not unto one who offers you peace: You are not a believer, seeking the chance profits of this life (so that you may despoil him). With Allah are plenteous spoils. Even thus were you

⁴³ Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur’an*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984) 6:14.

⁴⁴ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library), 5:3.

⁴⁵ Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur’an*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:256.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9: 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9: 1 – 3.

before; but Allah has since then been gracious unto you. Therefore take care to discriminate. Allah is ever informed of what you do.”⁴⁸

Medina at the time of Muhammad “became the paradigm for the Muslim empires that expanded throughout the Middle East after the Prophet’s death, and the standard that every Arab Kingdom struggled to meet during the Middle Ages. The Medina ideal inspired the various Islamic revivalist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, all of which strove to return to the original values of Muhammad’s unadulterated community as a means to wrest control of Muslim lands from colonial rule (though they had radically different ideas about how to define those original values). And with the demise of colonialism in the 20th century, it was the memory of Medina that launched the Islamic State.”⁴⁹

In Reza Aslan’s opinion, author of *No God but God*, “today, Medina is simultaneously the archetype of Islamic democracy and the impetus for Islamic militancy.”⁵⁰

Aslan continues his discourse: “Muslim extremists in Afghanistan and Iran have used the same community to fashion various models of Muslim theocracy. In their struggle for equal rights, Muslim feminists have consistently drawn inspiration from the legal reforms Muhammad instituted in Medina, while at the same time, Muslim traditionalists have construed those same legal reforms as grounds for maintaining the subjugation of women in Islamic society; for some, Muhammad’s actions in Medina serve as the model for Muslim-Jewish relations, for others, they demonstrate the insurmountable conflict that has always existed, and will always exist, between the two sons of Abraham...All Muslims regards Medina as the model of Islamic perfection...Medina is what Islam was meant to be.”⁵¹

Islam is a perfect theocracy; no room for separation of church and state.

Christianity is not of this world:

⁴⁸ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library), 4: 94.

⁴⁹ Reza Aslan, *No god but God*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

It seems very clear that separation of church and state is possible in Christianity. However, it is only possible because the scriptures ordain the believer to do so.

Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here.”⁵²

“I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. That they all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one; I in them, and you in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me. Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The World has not known you, but I have known you; and these have known that you sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them.”⁵³

The Christians status, thus, in the world is very different and is peculiar to other people. Their perception of life is mysterious to the rest of the world, but to them it is clear! Therefore, they are to render a certain service to the world and this is to be a witness.

⁵² Holy Bible, *The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989) John 18:36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, John 17: 14-26

They have been called to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ. Paul implores the Christians: “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”⁵⁴

Christians have duties and responsibilities towards the State where they reside: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities, that exist, are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For, rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For, he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for, he does not bear the sword in vain; for, he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject not only because of wrath but also for conscience sake. For, because of this you also pay taxes, for, they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”⁵⁵

Here the Christians are enjoined to honor and obey the governments they live under.

And “therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”⁵⁶

And “therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., 2 Corinthians 5:20.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Romans 13:1-7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1 Peter 2:13-17.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Forum on Public Policy

And “remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”⁵⁸

Obedience, obedience, obedience prescribed to the Christians: “Teacher, we know that you are true, and care about no one; for you do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, why do you test me? Bring me a denarius that I may see it. So they brought it. And he said to them, whose image and inscription is this? They said to him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answered and said to them, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”⁵⁹

Jesus said: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”⁶⁰ Paul continues the thought: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay’ says the Lord, therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”⁶¹

God is calling all Christians to celebrate the fact that they are people of God, in spite of anything that could happen to them.

Because Peter says, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”⁶²

And Paul stresses the fact that Jesus delivered the Christians and is reminding them of their destiny, “that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his

⁵⁸ Ibid., Titus 3:1-2.

⁵⁹ Mark 12:14-17.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Matthew 26:52.

⁶¹ Ibid., Romans 12:20-21.

⁶² Ibid., 1 Peter 2:9-10.

glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, and who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that, in him, all the fullness should dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless, and above reproach in his sight. If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I Paul, became a minister.”⁶³

Although Christianity preaches to stay out of government, the question becomes what to do with Europe today, once a Christian majority? European Union! Great Britain is a state church. France insists on being secular. Religious pluralism is the demography of the present-day Europe as a result of globalization. Immigration, participation, composition, decisions, education and religious apparel are at play; the world has become a dizzying place!

People crossed the Atlantic with dreams of religious freedom and economic opportunity. In 1776 America drafted its ‘Declaration of Independence’ from Great Britain. The Declaration of Independence opens thus: “When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

⁶³ Ibid., Colossians 2:10.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and happiness. Prudence indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes...

“We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general congress, assembled, appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States...And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”⁶⁴

The opening of the Constitution of the United States reads: “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”⁶⁵ Already some religious lexicon is noticed. Words such as ‘blessings’ and ‘ordain’ are interesting and do reflect the mode of thinking of the founders of the United States of America in spite of their careful drafting and planning of a secular environment, where the separation of church and state would be in effect. There is no escape from oneself!

The First Amendment to the Constitution is part of the Bill of Rights that was ratified in 1791. The First Amendment instantaneity dealt with religion reflecting the founders’ thoughts on the viable topic of religion and was enacted in the first Congress. It reads: “Congress shall make no

⁶⁴ The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, The Gato Institute, 1998, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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 to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”⁶⁶

It should be noted that in the first Congress chaplains were appointed “in both houses and adopted as part of the ordinance governing the Northwest Territory, the directive, religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of learning shall forever be encouraged.”⁶⁷

George Washington expressed his view on ‘religion’ in the following thought: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”⁶⁸ Adding to that, the thought of Thomas Jefferson, whose rumination on religion is that religion “is a supplement to law in the government of men and the alpha and omega of the moral law.”⁶⁹

Jon Meacham, in his book *American Gospel*, sums what the founders of America achieved in offering a model and powerful republic to the world: “Democracy is easy; republicanism is founded on moderation. Democracy is loud, raucous, disorderly; republicanism is quiet, cool, judicious—and that we still live in its light is the Founders’ most wondrous deed.”⁷⁰

When Thomas Jefferson was governor of Virginia he wrote a statute for religious freedom that passed in 1786:

“I. Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as it was in his Almighty power to do; that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as

⁶⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁷ Charles W. Dunn, *Religion in American Politics*, (Washington, D. C.: CQ Press, 1989), 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁰ Jon Meacham, *American Gospel* (New York: Random House, 2006), 247.

Forum on Public Policy

well as ecclesiastical, who being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greater part of the world, and through all time; that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor, whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness, and is withdrawing from the ministry those temporary rewards, which proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labors for the instruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry; that therefore the proscribing of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which in common with his fellow-citizens he has a natural right; that it tends only to corrupt the principles of that religion is meant to encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of worldly honors and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it; that though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way; that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own; that it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government, for its officers to interfere when Principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order; and finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate, errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them:

“II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no way diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.

“III. And though we well know that this assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act to be irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall hereafter be passed to repeal the present, to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.”⁷¹

In President Thomas Jefferson’s reply to the letter of the Banbury Baptist Association of Connecticut in 1802 he expresses the position of the republic in matter of separation of church and state. He writes: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign 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 & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural rights in opposition to his social duties...”⁷²

Here Jefferson expressed the concept of erecting a wall of separation between Church and State. This indicates that the thought of separation of Church and State is not a natural state. But rather it requires the stone and mortar to secure the edifice. This raises an alarm! Thus this points to the

⁷¹ Ibid., 253-254.

⁷² Ibid., 264.

contention faced by the world. You know walls crumble! Rome fell! Is separation of church and state a myth?

James Madison wrote to that effect: “I must admit...that it may not be easy in every possible case to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the civil authority with such distinctness as to avoid collisions and doubts on unessential points.”⁷³ .

It is curious that in 1796 America signed a treaty of peace and friendship with the Bey of Tripoli. Article II of the treaty reads as follows: “As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion, - as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen [Muslims], - and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan [Muslim] nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”⁷⁴ It was the Americans who were suffering from piracy attacks on their commercial ships in the Mediterranean, and yet Article II of the treaty is very defensive. And of course the treaty came with a price: America had to pay a total sum of \$1 million.⁷⁵

Abdel Rahman of Tripoli answered them: “It was ...written in the Koran, that all Nations who should have acknowledged their [the Muslims’] authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon whoever they could find and to make Slaves they could take as prisoners, and that every Mussulman who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise.”⁷⁶

“And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid., 241

⁷⁴ Ibid., 262.

⁷⁵ Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy, America in the Middle East 1776 to the present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 26.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁷ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran* (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library), 2: 193.

And the debate continues!

There are those who say that the American Constitution is founded on Christianity and that Jesus should be at the helm of the government; they quote the following passages from the Bible:

“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”⁷⁸ “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels—as I also received from my Father; and I will give him the morning star.”⁷⁹

“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in his wrath, and distress them in his deep displeasure: yet I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to me, you are my son today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel. Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in him.”⁸⁰

“For the kingdom is the Lord’s and he rules over the nations.”⁸¹

“The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning. You have the dew of your youth. The Lord has sworn and will not relent, you are

⁷⁸ Holy Bible, *The New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Revelation 1:5.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Revelation 2:26-28.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Psalm 2:1-12.

⁸¹ Ibid., Psalm 22:28.

a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at your right hand; he shall execute kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the nations. He shall fill the places with dead bodies. He shall execute the heads of many countries. He shall drink of the brook by the wayside. Therefore he shall lift up the head.”⁸²

“Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For, he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is evident that he who put all things under him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to him, then the son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”⁸³

“And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence.”⁸⁴

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”⁸⁵

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.”⁸⁶

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”⁸⁷

⁸² Ibid., Psalm 110:1-7.

⁸³ Ibid., 1Corinthians 15:24-28.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Colossians 1:17-18.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1Peter 5:4.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Acts 20:28.

⁸⁷ Ibid., John 6:37-39.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life to the sheep.”⁸⁸

Ponder the fact that on the one hand, the secularists still appropriate that religions by definition are matters of the spirit and they should not be concerned with governmental affairs. And that on the other hand, Islam is a socio-political system challenged by and challenging the western ideals of a democratic government which calls for the separation of church and state.

So while pondering, it came to pass that in the 21st century a rise in fundamentalism manifested itself in a literal interpretation of sacred texts across the globe. This demands a serious study of the major religions so that the members of the human family can hold an educated discourse that may lead—let us hope—to tolerance, understanding and respect so that we are able to maintain an intelligent dialogue lest we destroy ourselves in the name of our most sacred possessions: the word(s) of the Holy across the globe.

A case study: How the West understands Oath and how Islam comprehends it:

Webster's Dictionary defines “oath” as: a solemn, usually formal, calling upon God or a god to witness to the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says. Oath is a solemn attestation to the truth or inviolability of one’s words; something as a promise corroborated by an oath.⁸⁹

When a Christian swears under oath it means “you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”⁹⁰ It means you should keep your word and do as promised.

When a Muslim takes an oath, he is free to dissolve it: “Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and His messenger toward those of the idolaters with whom you made a treaty.”⁹¹ “And a proclamation from Allah and His messenger to all men on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from obligation to the idolaters, so is His messenger. So if you

⁸⁸ Ibid., John 10:11.

⁸⁹ Henry Bosley Woolf, ed. in chief, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Massachusetts, 1975).

⁹⁰ Holy Bible, *The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Exodus 20:16.

⁹¹ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library), 9: 1.

repent, it will be better for you; but if you are averse, then know that you cannot escape Allah. Give tidings O Muhammad of a painful doom to those who disbelieve.”⁹²

Some oaths may be disregarded:

“Allah has made lawful for you (Muslims) absolution from your oaths, and Allah is your protector. He is the knower, the wise.”⁹³

Oaths have to do with one’s intentions:

“Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths. But He will take you to task for that which your hearts have garnered. Allah is forgiving, clement.”⁹⁴

“Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will take you to task for the oaths which you swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is the feeding of ten of the needy with the average of that wherewith you feed your own folk, or the clothing of them, or the liberation of a slave, and for him who finds not (the wherewithal to do so) then a three days’ fast. This is the expiation of your oaths when you have sworn; and keep your oaths. Thus Allah expounds unto His revelations in order that you may give thanks.”⁹⁵

George Washington was the first to institute the custom of taking the presidential oath on *The Holy Bible* in the United States of America in 1776.

Keith Ellison was the first American Muslim senator elected to the United States Congress for Minnesota’s fifth congressional district, and he took his oath of office on the Qur’an, the Islamic Sacred Scriptures. It was the same Qur’an which belonged to Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and the third president of the United States of America. Keith Ellison set a new precedent in 2007.

⁹² Ibid., 9:3.

⁹³ Ibid., 66:2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 2:225.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 5:89.

However, Islam reaches beyond religion. It is a complete way of life. It is a prophesied political ideology. It believes that its mission is to govern the entire world under the Shariah law, the Islamic law, according to Allah. It is very clear that Article VI of the Constitution of the United States does not apply to it.

Keep in mind that Article VI of the United States Constitution “forbids a religious test as a requirement for public office.”⁹⁶ So does this make taking an oath a mere protocol? A comportment, which the elected official should take lightly? In any case this is something the electors cannot ignore! Especially since Muslims appearing in the Western courts of law would rather use the Qur’an to take their oath upon, when needed. Should the West then accommodate according to its celebrated tolerance?

In my opinion the word ‘accommodate,’ in this case, resonates with ‘discriminate!’

The argument continues. Our liberty is at stake. Separation of Church and State: is it capable to dominate? The founders struggled and Thomas Jefferson decided to erect a wall of separation, albeit not in the constitution of the United States. An abstract wall is fragile. And it is definitely difficult to maintain. In a diverse environment it becomes the only hopeful solution. However, it is a myth, an ornate!

In the words of Martin Marty, the acclaimed scholar, in his book, *Politics and Religion and the Common Good*—a wonderfully rich title that carries a wishful thought, I believe—“Religion and Politics are always dynamic and changing.”⁹⁷ Helas! I am afraid that this thought does not include all the major worldviews of the world consulted above. In other words all peoples won’t be able to agree on the definition of the “common good.” What is good for you might not be good for me!

⁹⁶ The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, The Gato Institute, Washington, D.C., 1998.

⁹⁷ Martin Marty, *Politics and Religion and the Common Good* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 157.

This idea is seen in the writing of John Locke, who greatly influenced the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson: “I say it is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and everyone would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands, than which nothing, can be imagined more absurd. Thus, therefore, that matter stands. No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship, which is truly acceptable to God.”⁹⁸

I find that this thought of John Locke is absurd. His idea could not be accepted universally. Since in Judaism you are a Jew if your mother is a Jew and in Islam you are a Muslim if your father is a Muslim etc...

The dispute elevates.

Where from here?

The controversy persists.

References

The Holy Bible. *The New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.

Ahamed, Syed Vickar. *English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran*. Lombard, Illinois: Book of Sign Foundation, 2005.

Ali, Ahmed. *Al-Qur'an. A Contemporary Translation*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Aslan, Reza. *No god but God, The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Dunn, Charles W. *Religion in American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1989.

Fisher, Mary Pat, and Lee W. Bailey. *An Anthology of Living Religions*, second edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2008.

The Gato Institute, *The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution of the United States*, Wahsington, D.C., 1998.

Hanson, Eric O. *Religion and Politics in the International System Today*. Cambridge:

⁹⁸ David Stewart and H. Gene Blocker, *Fundamentals of Philosophy*, sixth edition, (Upper Saddle Rive, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006), 416.

Forum on Public Policy

Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Jelen, Ted Gerard, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective' The One, The Few, And The Many.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Marty, Martin. *Politics Religion and the Common good, advancing a distinctly American conversation about religions role in our shared life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.

Meacham, Jon. *American Gospel 'God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation.'* New York: Random House, 2006.

Oren, Michael B. *Power, Faith, and Fantasy 'America in the Middle East 1776 to the present.'* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Pals, Daniel L. *Seven Theories Of Religion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke. *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran.* New York: A , Mentor Book,New American Library.

Richter, Kent E., Eva M. Rapple, John C. Modschiedler, and R. Dean Peterson. *Uderstanding Religion In A Global Society.* Belmont, California: Thomas Wadsworth, 2005.

Smith, Huston. *World's Religions ' A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions.'* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994.

Stewart, David and H. Gene Blocker. *Fundamentals of Philosophy, 6th ed.* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006.

Valantasis, Richard, ed.*Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Wald, Kenneth D., and Allison Calhoun-Brown. *Religion and Politics in the United States, 5th ed.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.

Woolf, Henry Bosley, editor in chief. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.* Springfield, Massachusetts, 1975.

Zaleski, Philip and Carol Zaleski. *Prayer, A History.* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 2005.

Published by the Forum on Public Policy

Copyright © The Forum on Public Policy. All Rights Reserved. 2006.