

Fathers wanted it to be and what it is now has not been defined. The Founding Fathers wanted *freedom of religion*, but too many of the advocates today are pushing for the *freedom from religion*. A part of the heritage of this country is its religious heritage. Going back to the creation story, when we strive to be what we are not called to be, we lose our identity. Already many parents are asking

questions about the identity of their own children.

When this separation is proclaimed and practiced in terms of the principle of governance rather than in the policies of governance, this republic will fulfill the dreams of the fathers and prepare the next generation for its future.

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Dorothy O. Burcaw

It is tempting to just say "Amen!" to Dr. James Dunn's article on the separation of church and state. I echo the comment on the last page of his paper noting, "A good many problems relating to church-state separation are those we bring upon ourselves by simply not insisting that the church be the church and the state be the state."

I was aware of the data he presented that fifty percent of the people in the United States are in weekly worship at a church, synagogue or mosque. In countries such as Great Britain where there is a state church, only ten percent of the population is in worship, yet every citizen is supporting the state church through taxes. Dr. Dunn notes, "For religion to be vital it must be voluntary." I echo another "Amen" to that.

If we, in the United States of America, strictly adhered to "let the church be the church and the state be the state" ideology

we would not have problems. Yet political expediency makes the separation fuzzy. There are certain religious ideologies which stress that they have the truth and will support candidates who have the truth as they see it. This would sometimes exclude women, even Christian women, and certainly those of another religion.

The fact that his discussion is titled separation of church and state, instead of separation of religion and state, suggests that we haven't even begun to recognize that Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and every other large or small religions should receive the same "rights" as Christians do. If we have true separation of church and state, has our democracy the right to deny building permits just because the locals don't want "them" in our neighborhood?

How far does our "religion" dictate how we deny good people election? There were those who expounded that if John F. Kennedy was elected, then he would have been the puppet of the Pope. I received an e-mail

from someone in our church who encouraged us not to vote Democrat, because if Joseph Lieberman became president, he would be unable to make a decision on a Jewish Holiday. This was posted to an online group within the Moravian Church and many responded that his comments were inappropriate. Still, these views were raised only two years ago.

I agree that being created in the image of God means that we are able to respond to God, and every freedom brings responsibility. My concern remains that, for many, religious freedom means that every one is free to think as he or she pleases, as long as he or she thinks as I do. Televangelists are masterful at this. There was such a hue and cry across the nation when some televangelist tried to link the horror of September 11 with the decrease in moral values, claiming that the terrorist attack was God's retribution. That is part of religious freedom, to let them

say such things. Another part of religious freedom is to remind them of the reality that not all think as they do.

I agree that separation of religion and state does not require separation of God from government, but I wonder if we will feel the same if the Muslim population grows, as predicted, to be majority religion in this country by the middle of this new century. Will we be in the minority? Will we continue to be free to worship as we choose? Will we be free to take our holy days from work?

If we can say "yes" to those questions, then we can truly say that religion is separate from state, just as our ancestors tried to say in our constitution. My prayer, yes my Christian prayer, is that the framers of the constitution got it right at the beginning. Only time will tell.

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Robert Peek

The discussion about government versus religious freedom is still evolving in our society and the courts. The focus now seems skewed from its original intent. Joseph Story (1833), founder of Harvard Law School, writing about the First Amendment points out that it never intended for the government to be completely neutral about our Christian religion. The intention was to only

ensure that the government would not coerce others in their religious understandings whatever that might be.

In response to Dr. Dunn's theme, I was taken back to another time forty years ago. It was some time ago, but in hindsight it was a time of some stability for our society. I cannot remember an incident where a policeman was needed at our school. Student misbehavior in the classroom and teachers