

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.

The Rev. Dorothy Burcaw recently retired as pastor of Lititz Moravian Church and is now serving as chaplain Moravian Manors.

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

being insulted by students were rare events. We had devotions in school. Most of us attended church somewhere. It was a time when if one had a problem in school there was also a good possibility that there would be a greater one waiting at home. Peer pressure, like today carried great weight. We found ourselves accountable to the teacher, the school, each other, our parents, the church, and God. There was a value system where one part of the equation was not separated from the other. I cannot recall an incident where a student was ever abused (other than his or her budding ego) by a teacher or a teacher was sued by a parent. The important elements included in our learning were discipline, God, and this word "responsibility" that Dr. Dunn mentions in his theme.

I believe that as one can not separate discipline and a nurtured spiritual life from learning; neither can one separate responsibility and a focused spiritual belief in God from our living, our work, and, yes, our political life too.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the writers of our Constitution, was no orthodox Christian. In fact, Jefferson leaned more heavily toward Unitarian than Christian views. Jefferson's and James Madison's motives for pushing religious freedom may well have been due to their religious differences with the mainstream Christian orthodox religious movement of their day. This separation of church and state advocated by Jefferson and Madison was never intended to take God

completely out of society to accommodate every whim of every citizen, but rather to stifle any coercive benefits by any one church or denomination.

Dr. Dunn uses the Bible to illustrate his points several times. Jefferson would be more apt to use the teachings of Jesus when Scripture did not conflict with his own reason and motives. The Constitution protects and advocates the toleration that Jefferson espoused, however, it was never the intention of the writers (including Jefferson) to take God and faith in God out of the seats and symbols of government.

There is another area that needs some airing. "Church and state have different purposes, different constituencies, different sources of funding, and different methods for attaining their goals." Let's wade through these one by one. "Church and state have different purposes, different constituencies." This is true on the surface. The church promotes spiritual welfare and the state maintains the physical well being of a society. However, the state cannot attain its goals without a constituency that has a value system that can support quality decisions that need to be made about the well being of others. Lacking this focus, we evolve (some would say that we have arrived) into a hedonistic society that is about "me" rather than the welfare of all its citizens.

Continuing with the last two points, "Church and state have...different sources of funding and means of attaining their

goals.” It is true that the church and government rely on different sources of funding and means of attaining money. The church relies on moral persuasion versus the state’s use of taxation and the Internal Revenue Service as an instrument of its enforcement. However, this last point needs more meat. While the state uses taxation, there is another means that politicians and the political structure use to fund the state. It is through the contributions made by corporate America and those who have enough resources to sway political opinion. This means that if one is not motivated by spiritual qualities that come from institutions like the church, we are left to less than properly motivated leaders who drive the government and the use of its resources.

The present diabolical situations affecting Enron, Worldcom, and others can only be seen through the eyes of people who pay taxes, go to church, earn an honest living, and vote (hopefully for people who will honestly represent their constituents). Many of these honest people now find themselves living in a society under the control of people who lack spiritual direction. Proverbs 29:2 says, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan.”

The tragic September 11, 2001 attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Center further highlights the uncertainties facing our nation. The present economic messes and attacks on our country demand that God and spiritual direction be part of America’s

decision-making processes as never before. Our hope must be to focus on decisions that can be made through a stable value system rather than a system corrupted by rampant greed and those wanting to be all things to all people. The church offers answers to many of society’s problems and offers hope for the future of the state. The values of one’s spiritual qualities, by necessity, must drive the other elements of life and living.

Religious freedom is a “most endangered right.” The danger comes, in my opinion, from those who would separate the worship of God from those who control society and the means of decision-making. The danger is compounded when we trust the legalists to define how we use our God-given rights of religious freedom. The problems we inherit now have come from a spiritual void in many parts of our evolving politically correct society. This present state of affairs by “diminishing the soul” seems much more dangerous to democracy than any perceived coercion by those with religious beliefs.

Harry Mansfield in his theme “The Religious Issue and the Order of Modern Constitutionalism” makes the argument that there is constant tension between religion and freedom. He writes, “Religion offers the highest aspirations for society. Freedom is the choice and cost of having one over the other.... Our three constitutional philosophers (Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke) had their hopes for a permanent improvement in human freedom, but they were too sober to

believe that this could be done without cost. But did they correctly reckon the cost in human irresponsibility—even to their own project—when men are no longer required or expected to take care of their souls? The measures these men adopted to contain religion by containing the soul seem also to endanger freedom.”

On this occasion I must agree with Pat Robertson. Separation of church and state must be a myth if we are to survive as a nation of people who make good decisions for the benefit of our whole society. Keeping God in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Ten Commandments posted on court house walls, and the nation’s flag in our churches are easier alternatives with a more certain outcome than not realizing our responsibility to drive our nation in God’s light as the key

to happiness and success. It makes little sense to separate one from the other.

While I can agree with the intent of Jefferson’s arguments on separation of church and state, our present day reality begs a different solution than what has evolved. Jefferson assumed a responsible constituency that now seems to be lacking in many of our institutions. Most enlightened citizens know the pitfall of this word “assume.”

In closing let’s revisit Jefferson’s remark as quoted. “If a people in a Constitutional democracy think that they can be ... ignorant and free, they imagine a thing that has never been and will never be.” Please insert the word “Godless” between ignorant and free.”

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Who broke the covenant? Over thirty years ago my wife and I joined the Moravian Church by signing the *Brotherly Agreement*, now the *Covenant for Christian Living* (CCL). We covenanted together with the Northern Province of the Moravian Church to believe and live that covenant. We have faithfully done that for thirty-one years. However, recent events, including the spring issue of *The Hinge*, make it evident that the Moravian Church has broken its covenant with us.

The CCL has two clear doctrinal statements, which we were told were Moravian “essentials.” The essentials regarding the exclusivity of Christ and scripture come directly from *The Ground of the Unity* and the Unity Synod. We would not have joined the Moravian Church