



No Separation of Mosque and State

While the ACLU worries about whether a Christmas decoration in the public library or a moment of silent prayer in school violates the First Amendment, other non-Christian nations have no trouble at all with combining religion and government. The notion that a “separation of church and state” is indispensable to civil liberty would have flabbergasted the Founding Fathers. In fact, when the Constitution was adopted, about half of the original states had a “state” religion. Eventually all of these states were disestablished (the “state” religion status was ended) but this had absolutely nothing to do with the First Amendment, whose clear words collectivists always seem unable to read: “Congress shall make no law....” is how that amendment begins. Congress did not mean state legislatures.



Even when state governments had state religions, it did not infringe upon the religious liberties of other Americans. It simply meant that in those states it was proper to recognize a particular branch of Christianity as the one that the state adopted. In states such as Connecticut and Massachusetts, Jews and those who did not belong to the state church, such as Catholics, established parochial schools or went to public schools and colleges, served on juries and voted, and, in general, exercised every practical right which current godless Americans believe flows from the separation of Christ and State (which is what the Separation of Church and State really means to these people).

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Other nations renowned for their tolerance and tranquility have also had one or another branch of [Christianity as an official state religion](#). Most of these nations, such as Scotland, Switzerland, Norway, Costa Rica, Finland, England, Malta, Iceland, Greece, and Denmark routinely rank as among the freest and least oppressive in the world on issues such as religious worship. Sweden finally ended the state religion (Lutheranism) at the end of the 20th century. This would not have surprised the Founding Fathers at all. The Constitution, these men (most notably, Adams, pictured above) warned us, was intended "for a moral and religious people."

What about Jews? George Washington’s famous Letter to the Jews of Newport makes it clear that Jews in America were not merely tolerated but welcomed. The Founding Fathers separately made very similar statements about America as a welcome land for any Jews who wished to live here. The first Jews elected by Gentiles to any public offices in the world were in the United States and, just as Christians who were not members of the state religion of a particular early state exercised all practical rights, so did Jews in America. There was no real difference between how well Jews did in those colonies that had a formal state religion — New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia,



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and New Hampshire — and those that had no state religion. In fact, the first Jew to serve in our national government during the Revolutionary War was Francis Salvador from South Carolina and the first Jew elected governor of a state was David Emanuel in Georgia.

Does that mean that the influence exerted by state religion is universally benign? No: What matters is not the principle of separation of religion and government but rather the nature of the religion connected with government. Christianity clearly demands tolerance and love for all mankind. Jesus' parable of the "Good Samaritan," for example, is a perfect example of how Christians are commanded by God to view non-Christians. So too are commandments such as "Love your enemy. Pray for them that curse you." That sort of theological underpinning produces tolerance, which then infuses government with similar tolerance. So it is that, after the United States, the most tolerant nations — England, Denmark, Scotland, Costa Rica, and Norway — have always had state or national Christianity (Britain [Church of England], Denmark [Lutheranism], Scotland [Catholicism], and Church of Norway [also Lutheranism]).

While the separation of church and state has had no relationship to the practical liberties of people, religions such as Islam and Shinto — or metaphysical systems such as Buddhism and Hinduism — have historically not been tolerant. Nepal, which had Hinduism as its state religion until recently, has a history of violence and intolerance. Sri Lanka, which has Theravada Buddhism as its state religion, is in the last stages of a gruesome and long civil war in which Buddhists have murdered Hindus in horrific ways, and vice versa. Most people associate Buddhism and Hinduism with nonviolence (which is not, actually, part of the doctrine of either — although there are consequences for violence in the afterlife). Why anyone would expect that the metaphysical system of Hinduism —which, until Europeans introduced Christian values, practiced the suttee (burning alive of the widows of husbands who had died), Thugee (religious murder to appease the goddess Kali), and oppression of "untouchables" (as in India) — would be "peaceful" is a mystery.

Worst, though, are those nations which formally adopt a religion of violent oppression. Islam today bears a striking resemblance to the Shinto in Imperial Japan (Kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers, as well as as the mandate of world conquest. There are no less than 26 nations in Asia and Africa in which Islam is the state religion. In many even the attempted conversion of people to other religions is a capital offense.

Should it surprise us then to learn that on Sunday thousands in Bangladesh violently protested recent changes to the nation's 1972 Constitution that retained Islam as the state religion of the nation but which diminished somewhat the role of Islam in government? The [Bangladesh Nationalist Party](#) demanded that "absolute faith in Allah" be put back in the constitution. Not only riots but strikes have also crippled the nation. The protesters, chanting, "There is no God but Allah" blocked highways and started fires. They also attacked police, as Sheikh Ainul Haj, the district police chief related: "The activists ... beat seven of our officers who are injured. We shot rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the unruly mobs."

All religious practitioners have not exhibited the same tolerance for non-practitioners that typically is demonstrated in Judeo-Christian cultures. The surest path of peace and liberty has most often been shown by those willing to embrace the Bible and those faiths that nourish their souls on its wisdom and goodness. Anti-Christian, anti-Jewish states such as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have been among the most oppressive in the world, suggesting a penetrating question: Why do we try to separate our God from America? America and its liberties were founded upon faith, and these liberties die without God —



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a historical fact evil and prideful men wish to deny.

As John Adams said: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."



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