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<http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html>

**Society is Neither Church Nor State**

*Dozens of major religious groups and denominations are urging Atty. Gen.  
Eric H. Holder Jr. to renounce a Bush-era memo that allows faith-based  
charities that receive federal funding to discriminate in hiring. / Should religious charities that receive federal grant money be allowed to discriminate in hiring?*

Two fundamental sociological *misunderstandings*underlie the request for renunciation.

1.....The request assumes that the social entitles involved are only two, namely, "state" (that is, government) and "church" (that is, religion as embodied in institutions). Picture this error as two tangent circles. Now picture the reality as one basic circle (namely, the American society, the totality of human existence within America's geo-boundaries) bisected by A DOTTED LINE (not a solid line) into equal hemispheres of "church" and "state," separate bu*t interacting institutional servants of society*.

2.....The second sociological misunderstanding is that religious associations founded to serve society (rather than to serve "church") should be subject to all the laws of the state, including laws *violating the character of those associations as religious communities* motivated and energized to serve by their spiritual unity.

Comments:

a.....To "promote the general welfare" is, in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, a purpose of our Federal government. Since promoting its general welfare should be the intention of*all* entities (persons and institutions) within*any*society, the Constitution announces the intention of the Federal government to participate in specified ways in an objective common to the creation and maintenance of any human community.

b.....Ideally, all entities within any society will gather around a common table to deal with the common question, How can we best work separately and together to "promote the general welfare"?

c.....Ideally, a particular human need beyond the capacity of the individual will be met by the entity able to meet it most expeditiously, most efficiently, least expensively. This is an implicate of the sound social principle of*subsidiarity*.

d.....Opposing the principle of subsidiary is the ideology of "a wall of separation between church and state," a wall with no doors - not a dotted line of church/state separation, but a solid line. This ideology *misfits* the dynamic American reality past and present, which has been and is a wall with many doors (graphically, a dotted line).

e....One such door permits "state" funds to flow to "church" service-agencies able to serve specific social needs for less money than would be required for the state to serve those needs directly. Those who worry about "big government" should be natural supporters of this efficiency.

f.....American generosity at home and abroad is unequaled by any other society. But charity alone is *inadequate* to "promote the general welfare" of our people

g.....The structures of the "church" to serve "the general welfare" exceed the financial resources of the "church" so to serve even though employees of such structures are generally low-paid and much of the work is done by volunteers. The machine is ready to go, but*lacks sufficient fuel*. If the work were shifted to "state," the government would have to build the machine, provide the fuel, and employ the workers with little hope of cost-relief by volunteers.

h.....The "faith-based" service agencies are, by their own charters, to serve the general public, not just the members of the particular faith, and are to do so without promotion of the faith. Any violation of either provision should automatically*disqualify* the organization for any public funding.

i.....Some see an ulterior government motive in the whole "faith-based" social agency idea. Is the government's unspoken purpose to shift all "state" direct people-help over to "church," voluntary associations? The financial inadequacy of the latter should lay that worry to rest.

j.....The sociological fact is that a faith-based service agency is an organ of a faith community and *is itself a faith community*. Faith communities, as they assemble, celebrate their faith: worship is the center of the community and the start of each day. This reality assumes that gathered employees and volunteers are of the faith. For the "state" to require that employment be open to unbelievers in the particular faith is in violation both of the social fact that the agency is a faith community and of the sound principle of subsidiarity. But American individualism makes these violations probable.

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  SEPTEMBER 21, 2009; 9:18 PM ETSAVE & SHARE:  [Send E-mail](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/emailalink?sent=no&link=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html&title=Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State)   [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html&t=Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State)   [Twitter](http://twitter.com/home?status=Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20-%20http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html)   [Digg](http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html&title=Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State)   [Yahoo Buzz](http://buzz.yahoo.com/buzz?publisherurn=washington_po284&guid=washington_po284:http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html)   [Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/post?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html;&title=Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20-%20On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog;)   [StumbleUpon](http://www.stumbleupon.com/submit?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html)   [Technorati](http://technorati.com/search/http:/onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/09/society_is_neither_church_nor_state.html)    
PREVIOUS:**[**JUST SAY NO TO FAITH-BASED DISCRIMINATION**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/susan_brooks_thistlethwaite/2009/09/no_to_faith-based_discrimination.html)**| NEXT:**[**CAN'T SERVE GOD *AND* UNCLE SAM**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/cal_thomas/2009/09/cant_serve_god_and_federal_government.html)

**Comments**

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Discrimination in hiring by religious charities is basically clannish selfishness.

It's very unchristian.

It's also inappropriate to take public tax money from everybody and prohibit non-members of the clan from being considered for employment in such public projects.

Need anyone say more?

**POSTED BY: NORRIEHOYT | SEPTEMBER 26, 2009 11:24 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20norriehoyt%20%20|%20%20Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20%20|%20%204706907&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4706907%26blog_id=618)

I seem to recall reading that the reason the early christians were put to death was because they refused to pay takes that would support the Roman temples. It is not that they were discriminated against, it is that they chose not to participate in the state and suffered the same punishment that all such persons experienced (tax evaders).

Now, they want us to promote their agenda and it is ok to take money from the Hindus, the animists, the atheists to support the "church" because it is more efficient etc.

This sociological stuff is humbug cover for the real agenda of hegemony.

hariaum

**POSTED BY: NAVIN1 | SEPTEMBER 25, 2009 4:05 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Navin1%20%20|%20%20Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20%20|%20%204706785&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4706785%26blog_id=618)

Secular Jewish organizations are funded largely by Jews, hire nonJews of every ethnicity, "race," reliigion, do not have religious iconography anywhere, etc. They are secular.

They serve everyone, generally, nonJews. They are nonprofit, nonsectarian.

If Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus wish to set up organizations such as those, no problem.

Otherwise, no money de moi. I would rather it go to those living on American Indian reservations, Appalachians, et al.

There is no shortage of money within the major religions. End, really, of discussion. No nonprofit status for religious institutions.

For human services, the government can set up delivery systems following the model of successful NGO's. I wrote a grant, which, though not exactly following that model, came close. It was funded and is providing a large variety of services to those in need sans religion. Interestingly, I'm told, this absence has been a great source of relief to clients.

Communities in which houses of worship play a significant role would, of course, communicate with providers. Clergy would be invited to volunteer their services.

**POSTED BY: FARNAZ1MANSOURI1 | SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 11:46 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Farnaz1Mansouri1%20%20|%20%20Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20%20|%20%204706702&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4706702%26blog_id=618)

Hi friends

I don’t think that the Atheists Agnostics have done much in the field of providing help to the humanity in ‎the field of health and education and feeding the needy. The Church and other religious organizations have ‎established these organizations on firm bases. Funding to religious organizations should therefore continue ‎and the Atheists Agnostics should not hinder it, till such time they had established similar organization and ‎are effective to that extent. Why to stifle already established channels for nothing?  
‎  
I love Jesus and Mary as mentioned in Quran.  
‎  
Thanks

I am an Ahmadi peaceful Muslim

**POSTED BY: PAARSURREY | SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 10:23 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20paarsurrey%20%20|%20%20Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20%20|%20%204706685&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4706685%26blog_id=618)

There is neither a bold nor a dotted line at present. There are no boundaries. Faith-based funding must end. Every week, despite endless commitments, I work to make this a reality, and I will not stop until it does.

After that, ending nonprofit status for religious institutions is my next great cause. Rev., I am not alone, not by a long, long shot.

Believers are welcome to fund their respective religious institutions. There is no more reason why I should subsidize a church than a Japanese restaurant.

Btw., rev., know who Anna Le was? Have you read Brad Hirschfield's column? Don't ask me to pay for this, Rev. It's got to end.

**POSTED BY: FARNAZ1MANSOURI1 | SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 5:42 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Farnaz1Mansouri1%20%20|%20%20Society%20is%20Neither%20Church%20Nor%20State%20%20|%20%204706643&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4706643%26blog_id=618)

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