

# "The Separation of Church and State"

A response  
to a response to  
my 10.22.01 letter  
in the CAPE COD TIMES

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR essay today rightly says that the Muslim world, unlike the West, hasn't had an Enlightenment. It doesn't ask why. My answer would be that whereas early Christianity had the seeds of **self-criticism** & therefore reformation, early Islam did not. The high civilization Islam developed a millenium ago was based on its earlier-than-Christianity exploiting of the early West, viz. Greek mathematics & philosophy. As Europe began to emerge from the Dark Ages & offer competition with Islamic civilization, Islam, instead of profiting from the culture conflict, closed in upon itself & today is suffering multivalently from the cultural underdevelopment which Osama bin Laden considers a virtue.

Jefferson, father of the phrase which titles this Think-sheet, was, among our Founding Fathers, the closest to a French-Enlightenment *philosoph*: none of the others had so negative an attitude toward religion (& even he never dissociated himself from the Church of Virginia [later, the Episcopal Church]). Today he's the darling of humanists, successors to the 18th-century Enlightenment intellectuals, who proved to be not smart-smart but (since their unrealistic radicalism led not to freedom but to tyranny) dumb-smart.

A well-known Cape Cod humanist, upon reading this letter of mine, accused me (in longhand) of recommending, vis-a-vis PS/religion, yesterday: "What gives you the right to change the rules to recreate an environment proved unhealthy....?" By e-mail I responded, "Do you really consider healthy the present environment, created when the rules were changed?" (Quoted material below is from this e-mail.)

1 Notice the titler's misunderstanding (on which I complained to the paper): such religion as is now taught in our public schools is in history courses, & some readers of the title--thinking me ignorant of that fact--would not bother to read the letter! Rather, I'm complaining about the religion-absent ethos, which "make[s] sense of history, and of life, without assigning any positive role to religion," & which disdains Christian, Jewish, & Muslim complaints about school activities Sunday morning--the week's one common period for religious education (as well as being the major period for Christian worship).

2 It's Hallowe'en time: "the separation of church and state," besides being a debatable political doctrine, is a ghost-mask used by humanists (whose philosophy has come to dominate public education, as in 1934 the Humanist Manifesto said it would) to frighten the public away from critical thinking about (as I end my letter) "what we have been doing to ourselves." Instead a stimulant to thought, humanists use the phrase as a thought-depressant.

3 My e-mail begins & ends with thanks to this humanist: ending, "But thanks for caring: so many don't." Our self-criticism always is in need of help from other-minded people at the table. (Democracy is excluding nobody from the table.) The rest of my e-mail covers territory most of which is familiar to my readers.

4 "Jefferson's phrase, [a wall of] 'separation of church and state,' wasn't intended to mean separation of religion from education: paid by government, I opened

## Religion has a part in teaching history

Three cheers for "Religion matters," your Oct. 17 editorial.

Refreshingly, you do not blame the churches for Americans' religious ignorance. Most of our children never come under the influence of churches, synagogues or mosques. Let's put the onus where it belongs, namely, on our public schools, which "have been sanitized of religion."

Now that we're at it, let's be realistic and bold enough to face the fact that "Religion matters" would not be an additional message in our public schools. In at least two ways it would be a countermessage. The present message is "Religion doesn't matter."

"Religion doesn't matter" because it doesn't figure, doesn't have a place at the table. If you think as children do, what's left out is unimportant or it wouldn't be left out; what doesn't get your attention doesn't get you, and you don't have to worry that you might be tested on it.

But what gets your attention gets you. When we offer sports on Sunday mornings in competition with churches' and synagogues' religious education, the message is "Sports matters, religion doesn't."

Yes, our public schools should teach "the role of religion in world affairs." But the religion-absent, secular mentality has taught our teachers to make sense of history, and of life, without assigning any positive role to religion. And the media tend to be anti-religious, as evidenced by the recent PBS series titled "Evolution."

What the terrorists did to us Sept. 11 just might shock us into examining what we have been doing to ourselves.

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all my class-sessions at the U. of Hawaii with prayer."

5 "Nor was it intended to mean separation of religion from government: all sessions of Congress are opened with prayer," & government employs clergy as chaplains in the military (& has chaplains in the guidelines for federally supported Hospices).

6 "Nor was it intended to protect citizen from hearing something that might offend them. Nothing could be taught [or done] that would offend nobody! Some Americans resent the shaping influence of Christianity throughout American history: do you really think that resentment should be sufficient reason to keep America's children ignorant of this formative fact in their common heritage?"

7 Nor was it intended to forbid, at the state level, the **union** of church & state. If my wife & I, Congregational clergy in Mass., had been citizens of the USA when the First Amendment was enacted, our salaries would have continued to come from the state government 29 years longer! The First Amendment forbad Congress from "establish"ing any church (their being eight state establishments of particular churches/religions at the time). Was there any move then (or since) to make a particular church/religion the official establishment in the USA? Not then, never since. There being no clear & present danger that any church/religion would come to pious hegemony by action of government or some particular religious body, why the first clause of the First Amendment? Memories of the "old country," where *every* country/nation had an official church/religion (by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which forbade any nation from trying to impose its religion on any other nation)....The "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment forbad Congress, the federal legislative organization, from interfering with religious organization's freedoms (of assembly, worship, speech).

Humanists read the First Amendment as imposing restrictions on religion even though the prohibitions are, expressly, only on Congress.

8 "The fallacy of the excluded middle applies here. The situation is not either/or. I represent the middle, being liberal (or would the U. of Hawaii let me teach the world's religions?) & a committed classical Christian" free to witness in public places to my faith. The First Amendment certainly did not mean that public education should be (as the CAPE COD TIMES editorial says it is) "sanitized of religion." The First Amendment is about political & religious *organizations* ("state" & "church") --not about muzzling the citizenry when in public places such as public schools. Much of the U.S. Supreme Court legislation (sic) on religion hypocritically violates the First Amendment in the name of honoring it.

9 Finally, let's illumine state/church by studying, in 1P.2.9, the phrase describing us Christians as βασιλειον ἱεράτευμα *basileion hierateuma* "royal priesthood." "In origin, priesthood ["church"] and kingship ["state"] are not separate from one another; on the contrary, priesthood is a function, perhaps the principal function, of the Kingship, and the officiating priests are merely the King's surrogates in local and limited duties. [Prefigured in Judaism, clear in early Christianity,] the holy community is to be a 'kingly priesthood' in relation to the whole world [over which Christ is King], not as ruling it...but as mediating the divine power and blessing to all mankind." Corporate priesthood: Christianity had no priests till after the Constantinian establishment; all, in offering their God-given gifts on the altar of service, were priests (all in function [as 1Cor.12], none in office).--103-5, F.W.Beare, THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER (Mac/47/rev.59). Chaplains in federal & state legislatures are living fossils (no derogation intended) of royal priests. Taken as two nouns, our phrase can be translated "a kingdom, a priesthood": Jesus Christ our Savior & Lord is prophet, priest, & king--the roles distinguishable but inseparable. My point? Church & state should not be united & cannot be separated.

## QuoteUNQUOTE

FROM TODAY'S MAILBAG

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WILLIS ELLIOTT

Craigville