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# THE RISE OF AMERICAN FUNDAMENTALIST

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The End of American Pluralism?



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## **Introduction: The American Dichotomy between the Production and Restriction of Liberty**

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In 1776, America embarked on one of the greatest human experiments -a nation conceived in Liberty. Establishing the foundation of the American republic on the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal; endowed by their creator with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Today, this single founding belief has drawn diverse ethnic and ideologic populations to America to practice and pursue their own happiness. Liberty is a balancing act between the individual and society where the government is expected to provide for individual rights without impeding the rights of others. Nowhere is this conflict between the private and public more evident than in the case of religion. Due to the Establishment clause, the United States government must simultaneously promote individual belief without endorsing any single belief. This is extremely difficult for American's extensively diverse society when individuals want to express their religion within a public setting. In public schools or in government institutions the expression of religion is a difficult issue because religions compete within the public to have their version of the truth accepted and gain converts.

While government seeks a peaceful coexistence of religions in society, some religious factions believe they have the moral imperative to mold society in their image. This is the case with the Fundamentalist movement in the United States. Fundamentalist Christians believe that the foundation of United States is built around Christianity and that modern society and government has strayed from its original purpose to enforce the laws of God (Maltby 2013).

Fundamentalists seek to return America to creating laws based on fundamental Christian values and to reintroduce Christianity into politics (Maltby 2013). As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, government must in turn become increasingly neutral to accommodate all beliefs. For Fundamentalists, this accommodation is perceived as government pushing God out of politics (Maltby 2013). This has led to a rise in Fundamentalism which poses a threat to the peaceful coexistence of religions in the public as fundamentalists strive to mold society in their image. This paper will analyze how the development of church and state in America has created binary system between the private and public, track the rise of Fundamentalism as a response to increasing secularization and identify the characteristics of Fundamentalism that seeks to destroy the pluralist nature of democracy.

According to the Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord, according to the Greek philosophers; the beginning of wisdom is wonder. We are thus compelled from the very beginning to make a choice, to take a stand. Where then do we stand? Are we confronted with the incompatible claims of Jerusalem and Athens to our allegiance (Janssens, 2008)?

-Leo Strauss, *Jerusalem and Athens*

Leo Strauss, a German political philosopher, stressed the importance of the battle between two dichotomies within political philosophy –the struggle between Jerusalem and Athens. It is the fight between reason and revelation; secularization and faith. Like Strauss, many Americans believe that the relationship between faith and government are juxtaposed and that citizens must make a choice between their allegiance to God or government. Government has a dual duty to maintain the two conditions of freedom: negative liberty and positive liberty. Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles or constraints (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2016). Positive liberty, however, is the possibility to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purpose (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2016). Both positive and negative

liberty define the freedom of what an individual can do in the society and what the society can do to the individual. It is the perception that there is freedom from certain actions and freedom to do certain actions. Negative and positive liberty define the dichotomy in American's concept of liberty because America has a dual role to provide liberty while simultaneously restricting it.

### **The Mitigation of Liberty between the Public and Private Sphere**

This means that liberty is mitigated between two different spheres within the community: the public sphere and the private sphere. The public sphere includes institutions that belong to the collective including public schools, public offices, and government organizations. The public sphere is often where freedom is limited because it is where all individuals must coexist without harming each other. Every decision and policy in the public sphere is representative of the community and reflective of the beliefs of the majority of the individuals within the public. The private sphere, however, is where the individual independently acts. This sphere is where freedom is expanded because an individual's decisions and actions are only reflective of him or herself and an individual can exercise such freedom unless it negatively impacts the society. This means that in the private sphere, individuals are provided the freedom to act while in the public sphere the government protects an individual's freedom from the actions of those who might harm them. This relationship between the private and public allows the United States to negotiate binary systems within the Constitution. Binary systems are two related concepts that are opposites (Dehart and Holloway 2014). Examples of such binary systems are: the freedom of speech versus the freedom from libel, the freedom of expression versus the freedom from obscenity, the freedom of religion versus the freedom from the establishment of religion. While

these principles may seem related, one requires the expansion of freedom while the other produces limitations. Essentially, as one gives the other takes away.

The problem with this regulation of the private and public is that increasing individual freedom decreases the common good in the public. This means that often the interests of the private and public are pinned against each other where government must decide between private rights versus the public good. For example, an individual with absolute freedom can yell fire in a crowded room without any regard to the harm they create for other individuals. In turn, a society with oppressive policies harm an individual's civil liberties. The interests of the private individual and the interests of the society are, therefore, juxtaposed. While taxes have great public utility by creating schools or maintaining infrastructure, taxes have low private interest because they take away an individual's spending power. The role of government is to maintain the duality of freedom by mitigating the competition between private rights and the public good.

### **Binary Negotiation and the Origin of Government**

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In fact, political theorist John Locke believed that this negotiation between private rights and the common good is the origin of government. Locke states that while humans are naturally good and often follow the "Golden Rule", there are "degenerate men" in society, who with their freedom, do harm unto others because there is no fear of reprimand. Individuals enter a community through a social contract by giving up some of their individual freedom in exchange for protection from degenerate men who might harm them. In the Second Treatise of Government Locke writes,

For in the state of nature, to omit the liberty he has of innocent delights, a man has two powers: The first is to do whatsoever he thinks fit for the preservation of himself, and others within the permission of the law of nature: by which law, common to them all, he and all the rest of mankind are one community, make up one society, distinct from all other creatures. And were it not for the corruption and viciousness of degenerate men, there would be no need of any other; no necessity that men should separate from his great and natural community and by positive agreement combine into smaller and divided associations (Locke 1690).

The consensus within a social contract is that while individuals give up some of their freedom to exist within the state, their liberty is actually increased because they are protected from harms that could create greater limits on their freedom. For example, while stealing limits an individual's freedom, murder is the complete extinguishing of an individual's freedom. Government intervention in freedom is the most tolerable choice given the potential risks.

### **The Social Contract and the Role of "Liberalism"**

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The purpose of government is to regulate the condition of freedom by subtly intertwining individual freedom with the regulation of the public. Michael Foucault defines this form of governmentality as Liberalism. Liberalism focuses on promoting freedom while mitigating the public harm with limited government regulation. However, Foucault believes that understanding of Liberalism is much more complicated than freedom. For government Liberalism is, "the management and organization of the conditions in which one can be free," and is the, "problematic relationship between the production of freedom and that which in the production of freedom risks limiting and destroying it" (Foucault 1978). The role of the government in Liberalism is to maintain the balance between private freedom and public good.

These two different conditions of freedom allow the United States to be a pluralist society. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines a pluralist society as a common civilization that allows diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups to maintain and develop their traditional culture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2016). America is the epitome of a pluralist society because Americans have the freedom to practice their own faith and express their own culture. In a world full of regimes that seek to create conformity, America seeks diversity. This has created a unique situation where minorities have an incentive to remain in America because they are accommodated. Consequently, American demographics are drastically changing. In fact, United States Census Bureau reported in 2010 that the United States is projected to become a minority-majority nation for the first time by the year 2043 (U.S Census Bureau 2010). By 2060, minorities are projected to comprise fifty-seven percent of the United States population (U.S Census Bureau 2010). Population Reference Bureau demographer Mark Mather states that "No other country has experienced such rapid racial and ethnic changes (Roberts 2008).

### **Pluralism and the Accommodation of all Religious Beliefs**

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With such changes in the American demographic, accommodation of beliefs is necessary for individuals to coexist within society. While the United States in the past has successfully negotiated freedom of religion and the freedom from the establishment of religion between the private and public, this was done with the majority of citizens identifying with the Christian faith. Often, the Supreme Court has allowed Christian beliefs and traditions to remain in the public sphere because of their cultural and historical significance. For example, the United States



Pledge of Allegiance cites that the United States is “One nation under God” and the House of Representatives still holds a prayer in their open proceedings. While the close historical link between the United States government and the American identity with Christianity is undeniable, contemporary America is transforming to a country with no express majority and a changing identity. For example, between 2007 and 2014 the Christian religion lost 7.8 percent of the total US population while Non-Christian religions gained 7.9 percent of the total US population (Pew Research Center 2015).

Consequently, America can no longer tacitly endorse Christianity in the public sphere while also meeting the dual demands of both negative and positive liberty. With increased representation of differing religions, upholding positive liberty would imply that society must accommodate all religious traditions within the society to “realize one's fundamental purpose.” Examining the dual paradox of negative and positive liberty in the context of religion highlights the difficulties created by the plurality of beliefs in America because most religions exist to define “one’s fundamental purpose.” Any public policy addressing what an individual can and cannot do regarding their religious beliefs can, by its existence alone, create barriers to an individual’s right to pursue their fundamental purpose.

For example, America can no longer allow Christian prayer in the public forum without necessarily permitting Muslim prayer, Jewish prayer, etc. Such competition would increase tensions between religions. A public allowing religions to naturally compete in the society would be a public ruled by the principle of natural selection. This would mean that for religions to succeed in society they would push weaker minority religions out of the public in order to become dominant. Instead, to protect all rights of the individual, government is forced to create a state of neutrality where there is no competition in the public. This means that religion is pushed

to the private where religions only impact the individual and not the collective. Locke states that this removal of religion from the common wealth is necessary because,

there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth (Locke 1689).

Religions to a certain degree have advocated and accepted this separation between the private and public, church and state, because they understand that it is the only way to protect the individual freedom to worship in a democratic society with diverse beliefs. The state cannot bring religion into the public sphere without the threat of establishing a religion which can mark the beginning of persecution and illiberal policy.

### **The Separation of Church and State: The Legacy of the U.S Constitution**

This conflicting dichotomy is due to the intrinsic competition between the responsibilities of the government set forth by the Constitution. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution states that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise clause thereof." This clause pins two competing principles against each other: the freedom of religion and the freedom from the establishment of religion. The Constitution does not define what an individual can do but only what government cannot do. This means that when regulating the freedom of religion, the government is relying solely on the idea of negative freedom or freedom from. Laws preventing government from establishing a religion or prohibiting the exercise of religion are all freedom from policies because it protects individuals from government oppression. This means that to follow the First Amendment,

government must remove all the obstacles of worship in the public by allowing all individuals of every religion free exercise. If government cannot accommodate all religions fairly and equally within the public it cannot tolerate any religion for the fear of favoring one religion and creating the perception that it is establishing a state religion.

For example, in 1963 the School District of Abington Township required schools to begin each day with a reading from the bible followed by the recitation of the lord's prayer without any comment or discussion from the teachers or students. For the Schempp children, who belonged to the Unitarian faith, such recitations were contradictory to their religious studies especially in the case of the recognition of the trinity. While their father, Ellory Schempp considered having his children excused from attendance, he believed that such actions would make his children vulnerable to ridicule and isolation in school by both teachers and students. In a plea to the Supreme Court, Schempp questioned the constitutionality of classroom religious exercises. In the case *School District of Abington Township v Schempp*, the Supreme Court concluded that not only was the government provision unconstitutional but that the Establishment Clause not only forbade governmental preference of religion but had an active duty in establishing neutrality (*Abington School District v Schlepp*, 1963). Justice Clark in the majority opinion wrote, "In the relationship between man and religion, the State is firmly committed to a position of neutrality (*Abington School District v Schlepp*, 1963)." Even Justice Douglas in the concurring opinion wrote, "The state acts unconstitutionally if [it tries] to [attain] religious ends by religious means, or if it uses religious means to serve secular ends where secular means would suffice (*Abington School District v Schlepp*, 1963)." In such cases, neutrality is often the rule of thumb in which the Supreme Court abides by. This is because within the public it is nearly impossible to accommodate all religions. In 1962, in the case of *Engel v. Vitale* the Supreme Court ruled that

even the most neutral religious observance can alienate families of religions and that the mere promotion of a religion is sufficient to establish a violation (Engel v Vitale 1963). This means that the accommodation of religions within the public sphere is nearly impossible.

### **Accommodation: The Need for “Secularism”**

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In recent years, Minnesota city has received an influx of Somali immigrants creating a spike in the enrollment of school districts of students who speak English as a secondary language but also believe in the Muslim faith. To accommodate such students, St. Cloud Minnesota’s middle and high schools allow prayer time for students, including Muslim students, as federal law requires (Mitchell 2016). The schools offer private rooms used for prayer so students can observe their beliefs (Mitchell 2016). Districtwide, school lunch menus also provide pork-free options for students (Mitchell 2016). However, even with such well-intentioned neutral policies, the school district has encountered many problems including unequal treatment of religious observance between Christian and Muslim students (Mitchell 2016). The Muslim religion requires prayer five times a day at specific times, this can greatly disrupt the class schedule and make Christian students feel they receive unequal treatment because they cannot participate in religious observance as many times because their religion doesn’t prescribe for it (Mitchell 2016). This means that religious observance soon becomes an escalated practice where each child of each faith requires equity within the school that is impossible.

Yet, in 2013 Governor Phil Bryant signed into law that schools can develop policies allowing prayer in schools (Chen 2016). While the governor stressed that such prayer could not be state sanctioned he noted that schools are limited public forums and the reintroduction of prayer into schools protects the students and parents’ religious freedoms (Chen 2016). This

seems to be a trend among many states including Florida which approved a bill to allow students to read inspirational messages at assemblies and sporting events and in Missouri where voters approved a constitutional amendment giving residents the right to “pray and acknowledge God voluntarily in their schools (Chen 2016).” While one may think that such states would be reminded of the strict constitutional stance the Supreme Court has taken on prayer in public schools it seems that many religious Americans continually seek to fight back. Americans must remember that it is true that religion has been closely identified with our history and government. Many of the Founding fathers believed devotedly that there was a God and that the unalienable rights of man were rooted in Him. This perpetuation of this belief can be seen through the continuance in the oaths of office from the Presidency to the Alderman of the final supplication, “So help me God.” In fact, in the dissenting opinion of the *School District of Abington Township v Schlepp*, Justice Stewart in the dissenting opinion wrote,

I do not believe that this Court, or the Congress, or the President has, by the actions and practices I have mentioned, established an “official religion” in violation of the Constitution. And I do not believe that State of New York has done so in this case. What each has done has been to recognize and to follow the deeply entrenched and highly cherished spiritual traditions of our Nation -traditions which come down to use from those who almost two hundred years ago, avowed their “firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence” when they proclaimed the freedom and independence of this brave new world. (*Abington School District v Schempp*, 1963).

The word secular means, “of or relating to the world,” and does not relate to the supernatural, religious, or church (Sweetman 2006). The call for secularization in government policies is based on the argument that the problems of the world requires tangible solutions not transcendental. When managing a society, government looks towards science to achieve efficiency in policies to meet the needs of a changing society and to bring progress. Science provides an environment of objective neutrality which is necessary in effectively managing

societies. Science and secularization go hand in hand and have issued an era in American society which allows societal needs and trends to dictate the direction of government rather than static biblical law and scripture. In recent years, this trend has been increasing progressive legislation and Supreme Court rulings that have accommodated many minorities (Nyhan 2015). From gay marriage and transgender bathroom laws to immigration reform the United States has experienced systematic detachment from religious frameworks to make policy decisions (Nyhan 2015).

However, Justice Stewart brings a stark reminder that disallowing all forms of worship can be just as damaging to American freedom. Stewart writes, “A refusal to permit religious exercises thus is seen, not as the realization of state neutrality, but rather as the establishment of a religion of secularism (Mishler et al. 1993).” While the fear of the establishment of religion pressures the government to establish a policy of secularism, the government is simultaneously establishing a state without the presence of God. Many individuals overlook the fact that religions are theological systems that include belief in a higher power and the lack of belief. The lack of faith in politics can make the same bold statement to society as the belief in god.

For Americans’, government is not just policy regulation but a part of the identity of the American people. Created by the people, for the people, the government is not perceived as a removed authority but a reflection of the people. Issues in government policies are not just forums of debate or discussion but direct threats on individual freedom, for politics is personal. Policy establishes the parameters of society and the values and morals that hold it together. This is the heart of the Liberalist Dilemma where the American identity is intrinsically entwined with the concept of government. Foucault further explains in his lectures on, “The Birth of Biopolitics,” that,

Liberalism in America is a whole way of being and thinking. It is a type of relation between the governors with regard to the governed. Let's say, if you like, that whereas in a country like France disputes between individuals and the state turn on the problem of service, of public service, [in the United States] disputes between individuals and the state turn on the problem of freedoms. I think this is why American liberalism currently appears not just, or not so much as a political alternative, but let's say as a sort of many-sided ambiguous global claim with a foothold in both the right and the left (Foucault 1978).

### **A Paradox: Secular Authority May Need Religion's Values**

While it may seem easy for government to simply regulate religion out of the public sphere, this can be very detrimental to the American identity. Government regulation is only successful when it reflects the American identity and values. The real problem with government regulation is that it must adapt to the values of a changing American society. Today, American is experiencing an identity crisis in understanding who we are and what we value. For many Americans, being a moral nation is a prerequisite for being a free and just nation. For others, freedom and justice are essential to the morality of the individual.

The problem to this civilization of science and secularization is that it extracts the most important element out of society. Secularization undermines the need for religion offering an alternative mode of understanding that does not need a theological framework. However, Carl Schmitt warns that, "If the theological disappears, so does the moral; if the moral disappears, so does the political (Bahnsen 2002)." For many Americans, religion provides the framework in which individuals determine what is moral and immoral and policy decisions are made on this belief (Meier 1995). Since for many Americans morality stems from Christianity they believe that the American principles of liberty, democracy and republicanism were divinely inspired.

Without God, there would be no good in government. Noah Webster, author of the first American Speller and the first Dictionary remarked,

The Christian religion, in its purity, is the basis, or rather the source of all genuine freedom in government... and I am persuaded that no civil government of a republican form can exist and be durable in which the principles of that religion have not a controlling influence (Strossen 2006).

Americans have observed a long history in political rhetoric in which God and government are synonymous. The United States is virtuous country made for a righteous people. As John Adams declared, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other (Strossen 2006). This is why in the past the common threads that have tied Americans together is their belief in God and their belief that they are doing God's will.

### **The Christian American Identity**

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After September 11, President Bush declared his counterterrorism efforts a "crusade" (Jelen 1989). While Bush is not famed to be one of the most poetic United States Presidents, he did not choose his words negligently. Bush created a foreign policy dichotomy in which he expressed his vision of the world in terms of "good and evil," and "us and them." As President George W. Bush stated, "Your either with us or against us (CNN, 2001)." In fact, Bush eased the American transition from the targeted war in Iraq to the grander scale of targeting international terrorist networks in which he labeled as the "axis of evil". The grand moral scale of Bush's approach to U.S. foreign policy was driven by the goal of conquering evil and a dismissal of concerns about the means employed. To many neoconservatives and other conservatives like Bush, the United States is like the biblical "City upon a Hill" referencing the phrase from the



parable of Salt and Light in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. Mathew 5:14 states, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Menendez 1977). In this sense, some politicians believe that America is an exceptional nation and has a duty to bring virtue to the world. The moral convictions of the Bush administration are consistent with the idealistic image of America as a shining "city upon a hill," as an image seen in stark contrast with the evil forces it is attempting to eradicate.

Yet, the reason why the American psyche is so ingrained in this identity of American exceptionalism is based on Christianity is due to reinforcement of such concepts by the government. For example, the McGuffey Readers, a series of graded primers widely used as textbooks in American schools popular between the mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century, sold 120 million copies ranking its sales equivalent to Webster's dictionary and the Bible (Clymer 1984). As an institutionalized textbook, McGuffey Readers, "hailed American exceptionalism, manifest destiny, and America as God's country," McGuffey also taught young readers that America would have, "a future mission to bring liberty and democracy to the world" (Clymer 1984).

In fact, the United States government has often used Christian religious dogma to unify the American people to gain support for aggressive foreign policies. In 1956, to combat the "godless communism" during the Cold War the United States cultivated the belief that America is a Godly nation (Foster 2011). Because of this belief, United States made several changes including the currency motto which was transformed from *E pluribus unum*, meaning out of many one, to "In God We Trust (Foster 2011)," Even the pledge of allegiance reiterates that Americans are "One nation under God." Taking religion out of politics out of the public, for many individuals is taking destroying the American identity.

The problem is that America is actually torn between two different identities between being a Christian nation versus a secular popular culture. As religion is exiled to the private sector to maintain liberty, science and secularization have become the reigning forces within the public. However, this banishment of religion from the public has led to what most modern scholars believe is the final twilight of the Gods (Casanova 2009). Anthony F.C Wallace states,

The evolutionary future of religion is extinction. Belief in supernatural beings and in supernatural forces that affect nature without obeying nature's laws will erode and become only an interesting historical memory (Wallace 1966).

Christianity is therefore in decline within American. According to a Gallup poll, up until the 1980's eighty percent of Americans declared themselves Christians while today, less than fifty-seven percent do so (Newport 2009). Robert Jones of the Public Religion Research Institute traces the decline of white mainline and evangelical Protestants in his new book, "The End of White Christian America." To prove the finality of his declaration, he even starts the book with an obituary notice: "After a long life spanning nearly two hundred and forty years, White Christian America -- a prominent cultural force in the nation's history - has died (Cook 2016) Many Americans share this opinion that increased secularization and adherence to science has allowed men to become their own 'Creators', able to create anything and discover their own answers (Gey 2007). In this environment, there is no capacity for God or moral decisions. A society with no capacity for God protects the right to worship in the private sector because it is no longer the guiding mechanism of the society.

Susan Harding describes the rise of Fundamentalism as the nightmare of secularism (Torkel 2012). This is because the fundamentalist movement is backlash against progressive ideology and secularization that has marginalized and eliminated the fundamentalist ideology in

the public (Edwards 2015). With this rise in Fundamentalism, the United States will no longer be able to maintain the fragile balance between religion and government and the private and public. This is due to the fact that Fundamentalists seek to create internal 'enemies' within the United States to consolidate power and polarize people into rigid secular or religious sects. As Fundamentalists groups stand before the Supreme Court steps and proudly raise slogan that support gays burning in hell, Fundamentalists emphatically exclude members of the society who fear their rights are at stake if such beliefs were to take hold within politics. For Fundamentalists, such exclusion is absolutely necessary because the morality of the public can harm an individual's salvation (Edwards 2015). Establishing fundamentalists beliefs in society is extreme important because by accommodating such minorities, America has strayed from its traditional values and fundamental principles (Edwards 2015). Fundamentalist seek to return America to the Christian nation it once was and to stop the decline of morality in society due to secularization (Edwards 2015). The absolute and uncompromising principles of fundamentalists on public matters creates an environment where the United States government is to make a choice between the rule of Jerusalem and the rule of Athens. Yet, the unsettling reality is that Fundamentalists have valid argument.

### **Government Perpetuation of the Christian Identity**

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While the United States was not formed as a Christian nation, Christianity has unequivocally shaped American identity and democracy. The Pilgrims were the first Christians to reach the soil of New England with hopes of building a true and godly commonwealth that would complete the work of the Protestant reformation (Schmidt and Gaustad 2002). Further colonization followed this trend of establishing a state religion. Most colonies attempted to enforce strict religious observance. Laws mandated that all citizens attend a house of worship

and pay taxes that funded the salaries of ministers. By the revolution, nine of thirteen British colonies had officially established a state religion (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). Dissenters in these colonies who sought to practice or proselytize a different version of Christianity (or a non-Christian faith) were often prosecuted (Schmidt and Gaustad 2002). The concept of a separation between church and state was very foreign to colonizers' who were still under the thumb of the British Empire that prescribed monarchical rule with an imperial church.

However, even after the Revolutionary War the practice of state sponsored religion persisted. In Virginia, laws restricted where non-Anglican pastors could preach. As the Baptist faith began increasing in popularity, Virginia authorities arrested Baptist 'dissenters' for preaching without a license (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). Despite this persecution, Baptist followers showed increasing resilience to state oppression and petitioned the Virginia State Assembly demanding freedom to worship without fear of prosecution (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). Thomas Jefferson supported these petitioners in their fight for religious freedom. Jefferson tried to pass the Virginia Statute for religious freedom but was repeatedly rejected (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). The bill was opposed by many who believed that religion was essential to citizens' morals and without state support religion would wither away.

For years, Thomas Jefferson could only offer his sympathies and sent letters of support to those suffering of religious prosecution. Unbeknownst to Jefferson, one such letter would become a doctrine for proponents of religious freedom and provide the framework for government legislation. In a letter to Danbury Baptists facing religious discrimination in Connecticut, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature

should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State (Jefferson 1802).

Jefferson strictly believed that the relationship between "Man and his God" belonged to the private and that man should not have to account for his faith or worship. Jefferson believed that religion violated American's fundamental rights. Despite Jefferson's efforts to create a wall between Church and State, in 1784, Patrick Henry introduced a bill that imposed a tax on citizens to support churches (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). The bill was vetoed with the efforts of James Madison who wrote an essay on religious freedom titled, "Memorial and Remonstrance" (Mancini and Rosenfeld 2015). This essay convinced legislatures that religious freedom was important for maintaining democracy and that the government's establishment of religion was an impermissible infringement into American's private rights. Finally, in 1786, Thomas Jefferson's bill was passed.

### **The Incongruence of the Fundamentalist Agenda and American Governance**

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Yet, the concepts that both Madison and Jefferson introduced both stemmed from a deeper political philosophy. During the Enlightenment period, many philosophers understood that religion was an integral aspect of cultural identity. The Enlightenment thinkers addressed the questions of what is community, why does government form and what is morality? Their beliefs became the foundation of American political thought and the formation of the Constitution. Concerning religion, enlightenment philosopher John Locke describes that the necessary conditions for a moral society. He writes in his essay, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," that a

moral society naturally exists in the relationship between man and God with no need for an intermediary. No man can rule over the relationship between man and his God, because forcing an individual to conform to a faith that is not their true belief is no true conversion and no genuine form of salvation. Locke writes:

For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing. Whatever profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our own mind that the one is true and the other well pleasing unto God, such profession and such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation (Locke 1689).

It is Locke's belief that salvation must come from within an individual. When religion is compulsory and individuals are forced to conform, the principles of increasing the morality of the community is diminished because there is no sincerity or authenticity in that conversion.

Locke also believed that allowing magistrates to have the power to sponsor religion would be falling into the same traps of tyrannical government that United States was trying to escape. The common belief on the concept of right to rule before the Enlightenment period, extended from Robert Filmer's essay *Patriarchia*. Filmer claimed that God gave the world to Adam to rule the common and have sole dominion because of his paternal authority (Locke 1690). In Filmer's perspective, monarchs, like Adam, were given the authority by God to have sole dominion over the world from property, to people. John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government*, citing the Book of Genesis, refuted this logic, stating that, 'God, hath given the world to men in common,' and, "nobody has originally a private dominion" (Locke 1690). It is the people who have the power over government. It is government's duty to secure the rights of the people including their rights to life, liberty, and justice. Without protecting the general welfare or providing just rule society can revolt. The church, instead, exists to promote salvation.

These two entities serve separate functions and, therefore, must be considered separate institutions. To Locke, God does not give civil magistrates the authority to compel anyone to his religion nor does he burden them with the duty to care for man's souls (Locke 1689).

For a democracy to survive establishing a state religion, the people would have to be uniform in their faith, beliefs, and modes of worship. Locke states,

For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are impertinent, because they are not proper to convince the mind. Neither the profession of any articles of faith, nor the conformity to any outward form of worship (as has been already said), can be available to the salvation of souls, unless the truth of the one and the acceptableness of the other unto God be thoroughly believed by those that so profess and practice (Locke 1689).

Democracy suffers from the same thing it protects –freedom. Freedom allows factions to form which divides society through each faction's differing interests. Factions are dangerous in democracies because majority factions can over take minority factions and silence certain groups within society. In Federalist Number Ten, James Madison addresses the issues of factions stating that the federal government must become a republic (Schell and Ott 2015). A republic cannot overwhelm the interests of the whole because more perspectives are represented. More perspectives mean even greater factions where not a single majority can rule the system. The United States Republic was built to create an environment of accommodation and tolerance, a system to protect us from ourselves. This need for government to represent more interests, beliefs, and ideology to combat majority factions, however, created a unique dichotomy where religion has been pushed to the private sphere rather than the public.

### **Fundamentalism Seeks to Establish a De Facto State Religion**

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To produce freedom for all, the public sector must become increasingly tolerant. The state cannot bring religion into the public sphere without the threat of establishing religion which can mark the beginning of persecution and illiberal policy. The state excludes religion with an “assertive” role because the public law must exhibit neutrality and universal justice to all people, blind to personal preference (Kuru 2007, 571). However, there is an exception to this general belief. Fundamentalist Christians often find it impossible to separate their “private” and public perspectives. Fundamentalists do not want to embrace diversity in society but instead seek conformity. Fundamentalists believe that the Bible is inerrant which means the Bible is the only consummate authority to guide the nation from moral degradation (Torkel 2012). The Bible is also, to Fundamentalists, a completely accurate account of God and of historical or scientific fact. Therefore, many Fundamentalists seek to establish a state guided by the right religious values and laws.

Many fundamentalists believe that Christians must take dominion over the Earth to bring about the Millennium in which Christ will appear (Edwards 2015). Salvation, therefore, is not based on one individual's struggle but depends upon the morality of the nation. The morality and actions of the individual affect the future of society and the morality of the society affects the future of the individual. For fundamentalists, the necessity to maintain such morality in the public sector is not just a fight for political control but the celestial battle between good and evil. When society does not follow Christianity and immorality of the society can incite the apocalypse to begin (Edwards 2015). Alternatively establishing a Christian nation can incite the second coming where Christ will appear and bring a thousand years of peace and paradise on Earth (Edwards 2015).



This requires the total adherence to scriptural authority to which is considered infallible and inerrant. Scripture is believed to be the inspired Word of god to mankind – but it is not literally the word of God. The Bible contains a divine message, but that message is expressed in human terms. Thus, Scripture is seen to be the inspired Word of God that comes to the church mediated through the words of human writers. Infallabists argue that the authors of the biblical books were inspired, by god, to be authors of HIS message. Fundamentalism is a call for society to follow the traditional and fundamental values that they have strayed from. In the United States it is the belief that ultimate salvation of man and society is based on the adherence to the word and laws of God and this should be reflected in societal laws to establish the one and only understanding of morality. Greg L Bahnsen states, “When God says homosexuality (for instance) warrants capital punishments, then that is what social justice demands; that is how heinous with respect to social relations the crime is in God’s judgment (Bahsen 2002).” To fundamentalists, social justice is dependent on God and His ancient, archaic, infallible doctrine which completely uncompromising.

### **Fundamentalists Seek a Religious State Through Increasing Political Power**

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The cause for concern is that Christian Fundamentalists seek the reintegration of fundamental values back into society as a response to the increased liberalization of the Supreme Court and society. In fact, Fundamentalists are becoming increasingly political. Approximately there are 50 million evangelicals in the United States and led by the Fundamentalist wing that seeks to mobilize this huge conservative and religious bloc gaining significant political power

(Zwier 1982). The New Christian Right leaders have become a potent force in U.S politics in successfully mobilizing their target constituency in electoral arenas. For example, in both the election of 1980 and 1984, the New Christian Right were able to register millions of voters (Zwier 1982).

Also, The New York Times and CBS Poll found that eighty one percent of white “born-again” Christians voted for Reagan because of his traditionalist values in 1984, giving Reagan a considerable advantage (Clymer, 1984). This constituency group has been characterized as the as “the sleeping giant” of electoral politics because fundamentalists often remove themselves from politics because governmental policies do not reflect their beliefs. For Fundamentalists, engaging with a secularist society means being submitted to the corruption and immorality of the public and politics (Edward 2015). When fundamentalists believe that the public and politics has strayed too far from Christianity, fundamentalists seek to isolate themselves from the community they don’t identify with. Jonathan J. Edwards writes:

Political activism has always been a troubling problem for Fundamentalist believers. One the one hand, they are called to live in the world, pay their taxes, do their work well, and so forth. One the other hand, politics is a corrupt and seductive realm, and believers who get caught up in it might forget their heavenly calling to preach the gospel and convert unbelievers for the kingdom of God (Edwards 2015).

This untapped voting power is what conservative politicians aim to target into political action (Menendez 1977). While fundamentalist Christians have remained silent, and removed from politics, the social norm is changing by religious political leaders advocating their followers to become more involved in politics and create social change. This is because Fundamentalists also have a moral imperative to secure the nation’s celestial future (Edwards 2015). The belief that modernity and change will destroy the American identify, beliefs, morality and tradition

drives fundamentalists to seek political and social reform. This fear has been increasingly exploited in the 2016 presidential election. In an interview with *The Brody File*, Ted Cruz implored conservative Christian voters to take back America by exercising their right to vote. Cruz declared, “There are ninety million evangelical Christians in the United States, it’s about thirty percent of our population. In the last election fifty-four million evangelical Christians stayed home... We can turn our country around but only if the body of Christ rises up” (Brody 2015).

Americans at times do not fully understand the importance and the power of such religious undercurrents within the political and public sphere because they have the false sense of security that religion has been banished to the private. Yet, it is the very essence of a pluralist society where such religious undertones can come out of the shadows of the private sphere and reenter the public. Every election, Americans see the same political pattern of changing tides switching from Democrat to Republican then back again. This is the nature of democracy making sure that each party is unable to consolidate power and for representatives to stick to the will of their constituency. When a politician is elected, it is assumed that that individual represents his or her constituency. What that politician believes and says is reflected in the people who voted for them. Tracking popular political rhetoric can be closely tied to societal trends. For example, a North Carolina Congressman condemned his opponent, a Southern Baptist Divinity School graduate, for failing to support, “the principles outlined in the word of God (McKim 1985).” Yet, more alarmingly one supporter of another congressional candidate commented that she was working to “get some of God’s people in” because she was “tired of having the devil’s people run things (McKim 1985).” This ideology divisive to society because it sends the message that the public is either with God or with the Devil based on their adherence to

the Fundamentalists beliefs (Walzer 2015). Under Fundamentalist dominion, the public sphere becomes exclusionary where citizens are demonized because they do not conform to strict societal standards.

When George W. Bush first ran for President, he famously proclaimed that his favorite political philosopher was Jesus Christ (Mailto and Yang 2005). Mr. Bush also remarked that he believed in a divine plan for the world. In his speech to Congress nine days after the September 11th attacks, the president stated that, “freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them (Mailto and Yang 2005).” President Bush, as the representative of the United States created a public tone during his administration that the United States and the fate of the world was not only dependent on good governance but on God. His comments created the perception that God is involved in the affairs of men, and to be against freedom and justice is to go against the will of God. By the standards of most evangelical Christians, these beliefs would be considered unremarkable. Yet, a President is the head of a state representing all people not just evangelicals. According to reporters Href Mailto and Carter Yang, “People in the United States get uncomfortable when a president wears his faith on his sleeve every day (Mailto and Yan 2005).”

Despite this fact, Bush while campaigning for reelection used so much biblical, evangelical rhetoric that one might have thought he was running for church deacon and not the leader of a diverse, democratic, and ostensibly secular nation. While this made many Americans uncomfortable, Bush was specifically targeting important demographics in his electorate -the Christian right. Even though this strategy seemed to many as too exclusionary to constituents

who were uncomfortable with his biblical rhetoric, this tactic paid off with seventy nine percent of individuals who voted for Bush cited “moral values” as the 2004 elections most important issue (Nadine Strossen). What Bush revealed in his election was that many Americans still associate the United States as a Christian nation and that such religious rhetoric and politics can have significant success. This means that, in the future, a Fundamentalist agenda could play an important role in pushing the tone and direction that politics takes.

### **Fundamentalists May Destroy American Pluralism**

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Yet, the rise of fundamentalist values is in direct conflict with the pluralist nature of Liberalism. Accommodation is a difficult policy to maintain for states trying to maintain and monopolize power to establish its legitimacy as a sovereign. As Anthony Marx writes in his novel, “Faith in the State: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism,” that,

To achieve monopoly, states are often not faced with a dyadic issue of imposing their rule over an already unified society but are instead face more complex challenges with “the sovereign” facing competing or antagonistic groups. To avoid being disempowered or defeated by those competing groups aligning, the state may forge an alliance with one group, which is solidified by the exclusion of a different group from specified rights and reinforced prejudice of another (Jelen 1989, 22).

State formation and monopoly of power is built on the power of exclusion not inclusion. By creating a common enemy, a group, or a state can unify factions within society to combat a greater threat. This ideology is Nationalism which is the unification of the identity and interests of the individual to the identity and interests of the state where the individual sees its government as its ally. This means that the nation and the individual must have a common enemy. Chantal Mouffe writes,

In the West, it is the very identity of democracy which is at stake; in so far as it has depended to a large extent on the existence of the Communist other that constituted its negation. Now that the enemy has been defeated, the meaning of democracy itself has

become blurred and needs to be redefined by the creation of a new frontier. This is much more difficult for the moderate right and for the left than for the radical right. For the latter has already found its enemy. It is provided by the enemy within, the immigrants, which are presented by the different movements of the extreme right as a threat to the cultural identity and national sovereignty of the 'true' Europeans. I submit that the growth of the extreme right in several countries in Europe can only be understood in the context of the deep crisis of political identity that confronts liberal democracy following the loss of the traditional landmarks of politics. It is linked to the necessity of redrawing the political frontier between friend and enemy (Mouffe 1993, 3).

Today, in society we have no external, overarching enemy that can unify the people of the United States. With the fall of Communism and the reduced threat of terrorism, it becomes increasingly difficult for the state to convince individuals to sacrifice their liberty to band together to defeat a greater threat. However, government often employs the same tactic to convince the public to align their interests with the state by creating an internal threat. For example, in the most recent election, Donald Trump used the internal threat of illegal immigrants to motivate Americans to vote. Carl Schmitt argues that political competition solidifies this friend and enemy identification because,

every human being symbolically a combatant...as long as the state is a political entity this requirement for internal peace compels it in critical situations to decide also upon its domestic enemy.... The high points of politics are simultaneously the moments, in which the enemy is, in concrete reality, recognized as the enemy (Schmitt 1996, 23).

Identifying the enemy is crucial in consolidating power in politics. For fundamentalists and the conservative right, creating a common adversary can unify fractured groups in Christianity under one common goal and mobilize a community to create conservative social change.

Unfortunately, it is this in the fundamentalist ideology of absolutism that is detrimental to the political fold. Liberalism seeks inclusion while Fundamentalism seeks exclusion. Fundamentalist

churches have been portrayed as havens for people seeking moral absolutism in response to the severe anxiety induced by the chaos of modern life (Brown 1962).

Ted G. Jelen (1989) believes that religious worldviews and fundamentalist beliefs in particular are the most effective buffers against existential anxiety because they create a sense of psychological security and hope of morality. Moreover, by living up to the religious standards of value, religious individuals can obtain the approval of God and their community increasing their sense of value. Thus, adhering to strong fundamentalist beliefs following exclusion is a way to regain a sense of belonging and self-esteem (Jelen 1989). For Fundamentalists, excluding members of society and creating an enemy solidifies a Christian American identity. Fundamentalists stand against compromise and creating specific target groups allows Fundamentalists to reinforce their identity and establish solidarity within the community (Jelen 1989).

Plural democracy cannot exist when political opponents do not seek cooperation because they believe that binary systems can be obliterated. Many Fundamentalists believe that since good can conquer evil, and society can dictate the morality of the individual. For fundamentalists, there is an end to the battle between good and evil when God finally returns to begin a thousand-year age of peace and serenity. Pluralism cannot exist in an environment where absolutes reign. While Fundamentalists seek to destroy their enemies, Liberalism creates an environment in which such antagonistic religions can still coexist. With Fundamentalism a factor within the public sphere, Liberalism must continue to push religious freedom into the private sphere so that the public can remain neutral, fair, and accommodating. Yet, if Fundamentalists continue a trend of establishing strong political power, it is possible that religious policies will

create immense conflicts for the United States separation of church and state and the pluralist nature of American society. For fundamentalists Liberalism is an existential threat to society which has prevented America's purpose to the form of One Nation Under God.

### **Conclusion**

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In a congratulatory letter to Bush following his electoral victory, Dr. Bob Jones III, president of Bob Jones University wrote,

In your re-election, God has graciously granted America – though she doesn't deserve it – a reprieve conservative judge, and exercise forceful leadership with the Congress in passing legislation that is defined by biblical norms regarding the family, sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom, freedom of speech, and limited government. You have four years – a brief time only – to leave an imprint for righteousness upon this nation that brings with it the blessings of Almighty God (Strossen 2006).

Fundamentalism seeks to salvage and reestablish the controls of religious norms in the public sector. They wish to imprint righteousness into the United States and establish freedom under the right authority – God's authority. The pluralist democracy described by Mouffe, built on Liberalism cannot exist in the reality that Fundamentalism has created within our society. The future of the American politics will be a battle ground where enemies are identified, sought out, and destroyed. Pluralism cannot be maintained in such an environment. Fundamentalists with their aim to seek absolute dominion will force the hand of government to prevent the Fundamentalist threat on pluralist democracy. American government will either align itself with the traditional values and strict moral beliefs of Fundamentalists to create greater freedom under the supervision of God, or banish religion further into the private sphere to keep the neutrality of policy for a diverse population. This means that the pluralist nature of democracy is on the precipice of disintegration because the future rules of governance will be a choice between reason and revelation, the rule of Jerusalem and the rule of Athens.



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