In this thesis, I argue that Christian fundamentalism is a threat to the traditions of religious liberty and the separation of church and state in US liberal democracy. I support this claim by exploring the writings of men who were instrumental in the foundation of the US, concluding that they stressed several concepts, including support for religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Thereafter, I explore how the blueprint laid out by the founders has been followed by looking at the debate around church/state separation in terms of modern day arguments. I then discuss the position of Christian fundamentalism, what it is reacting to and what it is proposing. Lastly, I discuss the ramifications of the Christian fundamentalist agenda and propose a course of action that preserves religious liberty and church/state separation and alleviates anxiety about religious trivialization.
The Necessary Limits of Religious Influence on Public Policy

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

______________________________
Shawn M. Kaltenberg, Author
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This thesis is the result of several years of study as an undergraduate and graduate student. My journey began when I majored in both Religion and Philosophy as an undergraduate and culminated in this project as a graduate student at Oregon State University. Since becoming a student here, I’ve gained several conceptual tools that have allowed me to gain insights that have not previously occurred to me. While my worldview has expanded because of these tools, I fully acknowledge that there is always more to learn, to explore, and to experience.

I would like to thank everyone who supported me in this endeavor with encouragement, sound advice, and comforting words in moments of frustration. Thank you all for keeping me on task and for asking tough questions that forced me to evaluate my positions. I especially want to thank my wife, Amanda, for her support. She has provided me with a solid foundation from which to work with her wisdom, understanding, and love.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife Amanda and my unborn child. Amanda is my “rock,” my solid foundation that gives me the strength to endure difficulty and frustration. She quietly cheers me on when I succeed and comforts me with loving arms when I do not. My son is my inspiration to try as hard as I can so that he may be proud of my efforts. I hope this thesis serves as a positive example for him to withstand adversity, frustration, and desperation to succeed in the goals he sets out to accomplish.
The Necessary Limits of Religious Influence on Public Policy
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy, on September 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1960, in front of the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, declared,

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him (npr.org).

At the time of the speech, many people wondered whether Kennedy’s Catholic faith would allow him to make decisions independent of the Vatican. Kennedy’s speech was an attempt to address those concerns. Religious faith was a moderate concern at that time. It has become even more influential in the current political climate.

I believe that the position Kennedy takes in his speech is consistent with the views of the nation’s founders. Kennedy claimed that his faith would remain separate from his duties as president by stating that the Vatican would not have influence over him and his decisions. The lack of separation of his faith and political power could violate the religious liberty of people who are not Catholic. Furthermore, the lack of separation could violate the First Amendment of the Constitution. It is permissible
to have religious faith and to espouse your religious views but it is not permissible to incorporate faith in politics because this would make possible the religious orthodoxy that the founders had fled.

Since the late 1970s, religion has increasingly influenced politicians, political issues, and policy in the US. The rise of religious fundamentalism in the US, embodied in groups such as the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and others, is the cause of such influence. This is an important problem in politics because it involves the tradition of the separation of church and state and religious liberty. I believe that the best solution is one in which religious groups maintain their religious liberty while maintaining a separation of institutions by limiting their influence on politicians to an informing role rather than a determining role on public policy decisions.

Within this thesis, I will show that the rise of Christian fundamentalism in politics is a violation of the intentions of the founding fathers. I am going to argue that religious influence on politicians and public policy is an attempt to gain control of US political power for purposes that are acceptable only to Christian fundamentalists. While fundamentalists may believe their intentions are justified, I believe that excessive political influence on their behalf is detrimental to religious liberty, liberal democracy, and the liberty of anyone who does not subscribe to their Christian fundamentalist beliefs.

Underlying my argument is the assumption that some the founders of the US held in agreement the need for religious liberty as a cornerstone of equality for the
people of the US. I will also assume that the some founders were in agreement that
the need for a separation of church and state was necessary for the vitality of religious
liberty and the avoidance of tyranny. The creation of the US happened for several
reasons: taxation without representation, tyranny from afar, and so on. Another
interpretation is that the underlying reason was religious liberty, a theme that was
prevalent from the earliest colonies to the agreement of the Constitution by the
founders. The nonestablishment of religion, which implies church/state separation, is
addressed in the first few words of the first Amendment of the constitution, so I
believe it was considered to be imperative for the liberty of all US citizens and the
preservation of the country that the founders were working to form. Additionally, I
assume that as the tradition of the separation of church and state has played out to
modern times, there are two positions that best exemplify the concerns people may
have while preserving my interpretation of the founders’ intentions of a separation of
church and state. On the one hand, I will present the position of maintaining the
separation and needing a secular justification for the state while acknowledging that
religion has some value in society. On the other hand, I will present the position that a
separation is necessary while stating that religion has a much more substantive role in
society than what it currently is given or argued for by the first position. I will
proceed from these points and will not offer justification for them within this thesis.

Having briefly introduced the topic of my thesis and discussed the assumptions
for which I will not argue, I will dedicate the rest of this chapter to defining some of
the terms that I will be using throughout this thesis and to explaining the contents and goals of each of the ensuing chapters.

The introduction of my thesis topic included one key term that I will be using in this thesis: fundamentalism. The description given in *Webster’s New World Dictionary* best articulates the meaning that I will intend to use throughout this thesis. According to *Webster’s*, fundamentalism is “1) religious beliefs based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, regarded as fundamental to Christian faith and morals 2) the 20th Century movement among some American Protestants, based on those beliefs” (546). I will add that fundamentalism is not relegated to Christianity only but is most often identified in the US as Christian in nature.

In Chapter Two, I will present a brief cross-section of the historical tradition of the separation of church and state. The selected reviews for this portion of my thesis were chosen to provide the reader with background knowledge and context of how the tradition of religious liberty and separation of church and state came to be. I have two goals for the chapter. First, I will present an interpretation of the views of some of the founders that support the case for a separation religion and government. Second, I intend to show that each of the founding fathers I will present share characteristics in regards to equality, religious liberty, and the separation of church and state.

In Chapter Three, I will present two perspectives of how the tradition of separation of church and state has played out. The two selected works provide opposing points of view that we commonly see being debated in the current conception of US liberal democracy. The first perspective I shall present proposes
that it is necessary for policy to be based on secular premises. The second perspective proposes that the tradition of separation has gone too far in pushing religion out of the public sphere to the extent of trivialization.

In Chapter Four, I will present the perspective of Christian Fundamentalism, including the causes of its emergence, its propositions, and what I believe to be the newest manifestation of the Religious Right. The materials reviewed are intended to show that the goals of Christian Fundamentalism are to accumulate power and influence so that they can mold society along their predetermined Biblical ideologies.

Chapter Five is a summary of the points of the previous chapters, suggestions for future research, and a proposal for a practical solution to conflict within the tradition of separation of church and state in US liberal democracy that preserves the separation while elevating religion to its rightful role in society.
Chapter 2 - History

The need to understand the history behind the on-going debate surrounding the issue of the wall of separation of church and state is vital to my argument. Therefore, in this chapter I present the writings and perspectives of three founding fathers who were instrumental in shaping the relations of church and state in the US and the writings of a contemporary female philosopher who is the culmination of those three men. The purpose of this presentation is twofold. First, I will present six principles, courtesy of Martha Nussbaum and her book, Liberty of Conscience, that were prevalent in the ideas of the people responsible for laying the foundation of religious liberty in the US. Second, I will present selected works from Roger Williams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson to illustrate their commitments to the principles identified by Nussbaum. In the process, I will also show that each of these thinkers have determined that religious liberty and a separation of church and state is necessary; thus the notion of separation of church and state is a part of the tradition of the US.

Martha Nussbaum

Martha Nussbaum is a contemporary philosopher with interest in political philosophy and ethics. Her book, Liberty of Conscience, is concerned with the tradition of religious liberty in the US and the occasional attacks upon it. Its purpose is to clarify the tradition and warn of the calamities that may befall the US if religious
liberty is not defended from the attacks by people who wish to establish religious orthodoxy of one religious group or another.

Martha Nussbaum states that several different, but related, ideas are present in the tradition of church and state in the US. The founders that influenced the development of the US stressed concepts and connected them in various ways. These concepts included liberty, conscience, equality and equal respect, protection from majorities, neutrality, separation, accommodation, and establishment. The unifying key to these concepts is equality. From equality we derive the notion of nondomination, which may beget requirement of differential treatment in the form of accommodation, and having equal status in the public sphere. Equality is supplemented by the idea of liberty of conscience. Neutrality helps to preserve equality among people, but sometimes accommodation is needed to protect minority groups from the majority. Nonestablishment occurs when there is neutrality and liberty, or the lack of coercion. The most prominent form of nonestablishment displayed is the rejection of a state orthodoxy. Lastly, separation has the purposes of protecting religion from government influence and vice versa, but is primarily valued for its ability to protect equality. It ought to be noticed that many of the founding fathers were more concerned about protecting religion from government while Nussbaum seems more concerned with protecting the state from religion.

These concepts can be combined into six distinct principles that are prevalent in the constitutional tradition. Nussbaum lists them as:
1. The Equality Principle. All citizens have equal rights and deserve equal treatment from the government.

2. The Respect-Conscience Principle states that respect for citizens requires that the public square respect the notion that other people have differing religious commitments and that these commitments can become a greater part of their lives. Nussbaum believes that it must also provide a protected space in which citizens may act as their consciences dictate. Respect does not mean that the public square or an individual must approve of various theological or ethical claims. Nor does it mean having to say that a religion is correct or the valid route to the understanding of life. It also does not imply that the government must respect all religious perspectives, such as those that contradict or threaten the foundations of constitutional order and equality of citizens. It does mean respecting people as human beings with their own choices to make in religious matters and a right to make those choices freely.

3. The Liberty Principle. It states that respect for other people’s conscientious commitments requires substantial liberty. This liberty includes religious liberty, liberty of belief and speech, of religious practice, and of religious bodies to organize their own affairs.

4. The Accommodation Principle suggests that sometimes people, usually members of a minority religion, should be exempted from generally applicable laws for reasons of conscience.
5. The first two principles require a further principle: the Nonestablishment Principle. The state may not make any endorsements in religious matters that would signify orthodoxy, creating in and out-groups.

6. The Separation Principle. The previous principles, excluding the Accommodation Principle, can only be implemented if we accept that a certain degree of separation should be created between the Church and State, so that they have separate spheres of jurisdiction. This is represented by the Separation Principle.

"This is a distinctively American combination of principles," according to Nussbaum (25). Most European countries with establishments have some space for religious liberty. These traditions send a message to minority religious groups that the community is structured by the established major religion and that this ordering of society creates little to no conflict. Minorities are not prosecuted but are expected to assimilate and conform. For example, Muslim women are not permitted to wear their veils or hijabs in France.

The American tradition of religious liberty is by no means tidy, well articulated, and with each step connected by a convincing path of reasoning. The US has had many people with different ideas shaping it. John Adams and George Washington generally approved of religious freedom and believed that government should encourage religion. Patrick Henry fully supported religion and pushed to have it actively supported by the government. Thomas Jefferson held the opposite opinion
and believed that the state needed to be protected from religion. James Madison believed that a separation was essential for democracy and for the vibrancy of religion.

Madison and his fellow founders had a difficult task of trying to unite the country under a single banner. When the Constitution was being written, there was not a national consensus on religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Some states supported a separation while others endorsed government support of religion, specifically Christianity. Complicating matters, there were divergent views in the state among the state legislatures as well as within the Continental Congress. Adams was inclined to give more state support to religion. Washington regularly used state authority to promote religion in the Continental Army, but was not as aggressive as Adams in wanting state support of religion. Madison and Jefferson, though, were pushing for a strict separation of church and government, with Madison wanting to extend that push to include separation at the state level.

After the Constitution was written, some advocates of religious freedom thought that the Constitution did not go far enough. They were seeking an affirmation of religious freedom, among others, in the form of a Bill of Rights. Several of the founders were on opposite sides of this issue as well, with founders such as Madison being in opposition to the demand of a Bill of Rights while Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson were in favor of it.

After much debate the founders agreed upon a Bill of Rights was necessary, but then could not agree on the language of the First Amendment. The discussion over the amendment only really ended when Congress passed the Fourteenth
Amendment, which prohibited the states’ ability to infringe on the rights of citizens. Prior to that, the First Amendment was limited to the national level of government only. This limitation was important because it allowed the founders to agree on the passage of the amendment despite not agreeing on the philosophical issue of how religion should be separate from the government. Madison wanted separation on all levels of government while other lawmakers wanted local government support of religion and thought the amendment would preserve the states’ rights to continue to support religion (Waldman 157).

The Constitution and the First Amendment did not solve the debate over the separation of church and state in the US. Historically, precedent was in favor of establishment and Williams, Madison, and Jefferson, among other founders, were actually quite radical in supporting separation. Despite the founders not agreeing on the issue of separation of church and state, there are some commonalities in the form of the previously described principles, courtesy of Martha Nussbaum. I have selected three authors to illustrate how Nussbaum’s principles are common among the founders and are at the core of the American tradition because they are evident in the ideas and writings of some of those people that helped to found the nation.

Roger Williams, The Bloody Tenet of Persecution (1644)

Roger Williams was born in London in 1604 and immigrated as a Puritan to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. Five years later, he was banished from the colony due to his Baptist views and his advocacy of the rights of Native Americans.
He moved south into what is now Rhode Island and founded Providence. His belief in religious tolerance led Rhode Island to become the first colony to offer religious freedom. He called for religious liberty for Christians, Jews, Turks, “anti-Christians,” and pagans because he understood that religious persecution was counterproductive (www.reformedreader.org).

Roger Williams is an important figure in the historical discussion of the separation of church and state because of what he thought and wrote. He is significant to Nussbaum because his ideas of religious tolerance, religious freedom, and separation of church and state are an early expression of the concepts and principles that Nussbaum discusses. Williams is of great importance to the framing of this thesis because of his repudiation of religious orthodoxy in what is to become the United States. Additionally, his ideas were influential to other noteworthy thinkers and writers that helped shaped the nation, particularly Thomas Jefferson. To omit Roger Williams’ contribution from the discussion would do a disservice to all who were influenced by and came after him.

In 1644, Williams wrote the “Bloody Tenet of Persecution,” presumed to be a philosophical source of the First Amendment. It is a response to Boston minister John Cotton’s call for state enforcement of Puritan orthodoxy in Massachusetts. The central text contains twelve points and is written as a dialogue between two characters, Truth and Peace. The point of the dialogue, similar in style to Platonic dialogues, is to lead the reader to the position held by Roger Williams, that of tolerance, religious liberty, and a separation of church and state. Williams believed that all individuals and
religious bodies were entitled to religious liberty as a natural right and that civil
governments did not have the authority to enforce religious laws because their
authority only covered matters of economic and social matters, not matters of
conscience. Williams believed that any use of secular authority and law to promote
any religious sect was contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments
(1785)

James Madison was surrounded by religious influence for most of his life. His
father was a vestryman in an Anglican church in Virginia. He attended the University
of New Jersey, now called Princeton. During his studies, Princeton was known to be
an evangelical Christian school that produced passionate evangelicals. Through the
influence of his teachers and other students, Madison was quick to realize the value
that religion held for people despite his being religiously dispassionate. Madison was
also influenced by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. His studies contained science
and philosophy melded with religion. Thus, he saw the value in and championed the
idea of religious liberty.

The importance of James Madison in the conversation of the separation of
church and state is due to his beliefs and the work he did in forming the foundational
documents of the US. Prior to his career as the fourth president of the United States,
he wrote most of the US Constitution as well as authored many of the Federalist
Papers that were intended to sway public opinion to ratify the Constitution. He was
also the principle proponent of the affirmation of religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. His beliefs and writings, including the aforementioned writings, are similar to those expressed by Roger Williams and also exemplify many of Nussbaum’s principles.

James Madison’s work, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” is a fifteen point objection to a bill proposed by Patrick Henry providing legal support for “the Teachers of the Christian Faith.” He echoes the objections of Williams 150 years earlier to a state-sponsored religious orthodoxy. Madison’s intention when writing the “Memorial” was to protest the adoption of Henry’s bill. Had Henry’s bill been passed into law, it would have provided for state support and funding of the Anglican religion. An establishment of a state religion would be a violation of the equality of the citizenry. Madison argued that if the state has the power to promote one faith over another, then it also has the power to promote a particular sect over another within the same faith.

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Danbury Baptists (1802)

Thomas Jefferson spent a good portion of his life being critical of Christianity. He wasn’t completely opposed to what religion had to offer. He was critical of Christianity because he thought that the Christian leaders of the past and present had corrupted people’s perspective of Jesus, turning him from an ordinary man teaching practical morality into a shaman or faith healer. He was also critical of Christianity because he was convinced that majority religions were opposed to freedom and
religious liberty, particularly when religion becomes entangled in the affairs of government. He was opposed to blind faith and favored reason-based belief. It was this way of thinking about religion, and specifically Christianity, that shaped his political perspectives in regards to religion.

Thomas Jefferson’s value to this discussion is due to his contribution to the formation of the US as well as his personal opinion regarding religion and its role in society. As one of the founders of the nation, he was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. His opinions and writings also reflect an influence from Roger Williams and demonstrate some of Nussbaum’s principles. He is also important for this thesis because his metaphor of a “wall of separation between church and state” has been influential in judicial interpretation of the Establishment Clause.

The phrase “wall of separation between church and state” was coined by Thomas Jefferson in a reply to a letter from the Danbury Baptists Association (churchstatelaw.com). The Danbury Baptists had written to Jefferson because they felt that their religious liberties were restricted in the state of Connecticut. Jefferson’s reply addressed only establishment on a national level rather than addressing the concerns of the Danbury Baptists in regards to established religion on the state level. Sympathetic to the Baptists’ situation, Jefferson’s intention was not to build a wall that meant complete independence of religion and government, although philosophically he was in favor of complete separation.
The Principles

In articulating the contemporary tradition of religious liberty, Nussbaum observed that several of the founding fathers had similar ideas in their writings and ideas. She refers to the combination of these concepts as the six principles. These principles are evident in the writings of Roger Williams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson that I have previously introduced. The writings of each author may not exemplify each of the principles, but as I will show next, each author exemplifies at least a few of Nussbaum’s principles.

The Equality Principle

The fourth point of James Madison’s “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments” exemplifies the equality principle:

Because, [Patrick Henry’s] bill violates that equality which ought to be the basis of every law, and which is more indispensable, in proportion as the validity or expediency of any law is more liable to be impeached. If "all men are by nature equally free and independent," all men are to be considered as entering into Society on equal conditions; as relinquishing no more, and therefore retaining no less, one than another, of their natural rights. Above all are they to be considered as retaining an "equal title to the free exercise of Religion according to the dictates of conscience." Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to embrace, to profess and to observe the Religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose
minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us.

(churchstatelaw.com)

Additionally, Madison’s fifteenth point states,

Because, finally, "the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his Religion according to the dictates of conscience" is held by the same tenure with all our other rights. If we recur to its origin, it is equally the gift of nature; if we weigh its importance, it cannot be less dear to us; if we consult the Declaration of those rights which pertain to the good people of Virginia, as the "basis and foundation of Government," it is enumerated with equal solemnity, or rather studied emphasis. (churchstatelaw.com)

The fourth point of Madison’s claims against Henry’s bill states that the equality of the people of the US, the basis of every law, would be in jeopardy if the bill were to be enacted. The bill will give state support to a religious group regardless of good intentions. This claim against Henry’s bill sets historical precedent for opposition to state support of a religious group. The fifteenth point embodies the Equality principle because it refers to the notion that the right to free exercise ought to be guaranteed as much as other rights and that this right is a natural right that undergirds the rights of the citizenry of the US. It is also a good example of other principles such as the Religious Liberty principle and the Respect-Conscience principle, discussed next.
The Respect-Conscience Principle

The sixth point of Roger Williams’ “Bloody Tenet of Persecution” states that “it is the will and command of God that (since the coming of his Son the Lord Jesus) a permission of the most paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to all men in all nations and countries…” Williams’ eleventh point states that “the permission of other consciences and worships than a state professeth only can (according to God) procure a firm and lasting peace”. Williams’ twelfth point states that “true civility and Christianity may both flourish in a state or kingdom, notwithstanding the permission of divers and contrary consciences, either of Jew or Gentile” (www.reformedreader.org).

Williams is making the claim against the authorities of the Massachusetts Bay colony that people of differing religious beliefs ought to have the right to practice their faith and that this right is bestowed upon them by the command of God. Further, he claims that having the government give allowance to the practice of various faiths, in this case even those that are not Puritan, will bring peace to the state. Considering how important faith is to people, then and now, I feel that giving people space to practice their faith could lead to a more peaceful state as compared to the discontent that would arise with the prohibition of any religion that the state authorities deem illegal.

Regarding the Respect-Conscience principle, the first point of Madison’s objection to the Henry bill states,
Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, "that Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. (churchstatelaw.com)

Madison is claiming, first, that the right to practice one’s own faith is a “fundamental and undeniable truth,” and second, the proper expression of one’s faith is incompatible with the threat of “force or violence.” If a particular religion were sponsored by the state, those that were not originally of that faith would not be expressing their “duty” to the creator with the reason and conviction they otherwise would with their chosen faith. In a religious orthodoxy, their faith would only be expressed by the threat of force or violence. Thus it is better that people are allowed to have the right to the free practice of their faith in a society without a religious orthodoxy.

Thomas Jefferson writes in his “Letter to the Danbury Baptists” that “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” (churchstatelaw.com).

Jefferson is responding to the pleas of help from the Danbury Baptists that the state of Connecticut was not fully respecting their right to free exercise of their faith.
In this brief sentence, Jefferson states that he believes that they, as well as other faiths, ought to have the right to free exercise of their faith. His words tell us that we are not accountable to others for our faith, including the government. This implies that the government ought to respect differing religious perspectives, thus giving people space for the free exercise thereof.

**The Liberty Principle**

Madison’s third point in his “Memorial and Remonstrance” illustrates the Liberty Principle. It states,

> it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens, and one of [the] noblest characteristics of the late Revolution… We revere this lesson too much, soon to forget it. Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects? (churchstatelaw.com)

Madison’s ninth and tenth points imply the Liberty Principle because they state,

> [9] Because the proposed establishment is a departure from that generous policy, which, offering an asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion, promised a lustre to our country, and an accession to the number of its citizens… Instead of holding forth an asylum to the persecuted, it is itself a signal of
persecution. It degrades from the equal rank of Citizens all those whose opinions in Religion do not bend to those of the Legislative authority…. [10] Because, it will have a like tendency to banish our Citizens. (churchstatelaw.com)

Both of these objections embody the Liberty principle because of their concern that religious orthodoxy will lead to persecution and oppression. The state orthodoxy that Madison believes will occur with the passage of Henry’s bill would severely limit the substantial liberty needed for freedom of conscience that asylum seekers are looking for in the US. It would also limit the freedom of conscience for those citizens that are already in the US who may not subscribe to the orthodox faith. The passage of Henry’s bill would result in people leaving the US, as Madison argues in point ten.

The Accommodation Principle

James Madison comes close to offering an example of the Accommodation Principle in the fourth point of his objection to Patrick Henry’s bill. Madison writes,

[Henry’s] bill violates that equality which ought to be the basis of every law…If "all men are by nature equally free and independent," all men are to be considered as entering into Society on equal conditions; as relinquishing no more, and therefore retaining no less, one than another, of their natural rights. Above all are they to be considered as retaining an "equal title to the free exercise of Religion according to the dictates of conscience." Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to
embrace, to profess and to observe the Religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us.

(churchstatelaw.com)

Madison does not explicitly make that claim that people of various faiths, usually of minority faiths, ought to be exempt from generally applicable laws. What I have presented here are elements of the Accommodation Principle. The principle is made up of aspects of the Liberty, Respect-Conscience, and Liberty principles. Madison’s point that I have presented contains these three elements. He states that “all men are by nature equally free”, which is the Equality Principle plainly stated. The Respect-Conscience Principle is demonstrated when he writes, “equal title to the free exercise of Religion according to the dictates of conscience”. To practice a person’s faith, he/she needs the freedom to practice it as their conscience dictates and possibly necessitating some degree of accommodation. Lastly, when Madison writes about how we have had the freedom to choose our faiths, we ought to preserve that right for everyone else, even if they choose another faith. In other words, other people need the liberty to choose for themselves according to their consciences. These three points together make up the criteria for Nussbaum’s Accommodation Principle although not specifically stating the principle. It is worth noting that issues of accommodation largely do not surface until the 20th Century.
The Nonestablishment Principle

Williams’ eighth point is a reflection of Nussbaum’s Nonestablishment Principle when it states,

God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls. (reformedreader.org)

First, this point states that it is not the will of God for the English colonies to have a state sponsored religion. This is a major statement when considering at the time people were fleeing England because of religious orthodoxy and that Williams was addressing his “Bloody Tenet” to the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who were also guilty of the same intolerance due to religious orthodoxy that they had fled from. Second, Williams’ point suggests the possible hazards of having state mandated religious orthodoxy. Interestingly, he refers back to the Respect-Conscience principle when he claims “the ravishing of conscience” as a likely outcome of religious orthodoxy.

Similarly to Williams’ statement, Madison’s sixth and seventh objections refer to Christianity’s independence from the government. They state,

[6] Because the establishment proposed by the Bill is not requisite for the support of the Christian Religion. To say that it is, is a contradiction
to the Christian Religion itself; for every page of it disavows a
dependency on the powers of this world: it is a contradiction to fact; for
it is known that this Religion both existed and flourished, not only
without the support of human laws, but in spite of every opposition
from them… [7] Because experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical
establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of
Religion, have had a contrary operation…More or less in all places,
pride and indolence in the Clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity;
in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution. (churchstatelaw.com)

These objections demonstrate the Nonestablishment principle in its insistence
that the Christian religion does not need to become orthodox for its continued
existence. Additionally, the objections warn, like Williams previously, of the
problems that result with religious orthodoxy. Most importantly, though, Madison
makes the claim that religious orthodoxy harms religion.

**The Separation Principle**

Williams’ fifth and tenth points both reference the Separation Principle
because they state,

[5] all civil states with their officers of justice in their respective
constitutions and administrations are proved essentially civil, and
therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual or
Christian state and worship…[10] an enforced uniformity of religion
throughout a nation or civil state, confounds the civil and religious, 
denies the principles of Christianity and civility. (reformedreader.org)

I feel that these points clearly illustrate Nussbaum’s Separation principle. The fifth point says that government officials are limited in their roles as government officials to issues that are state business. Their authority does not and should not extend to those matters that are religious. The tenth point is suggesting the hazards that will result without a clear separation of state and religion. I believe that Williams is implying a need to have two separate realms of influence for the state and religion. Together, the two points are making a clear argument of why society ought to have a separation of powers between the realms of church and state.

Williams continues the argument of the separate duties of church and government officials in his dialogue between Peace and Truth. Williams, as Peace, writes,

So that magistrates, as magistrates, have no power of setting up the form of church government, electing church officers, punishing with church censures, but to see that the church does her duty herein. And on the other side, the churches as churches, have no power of erecting or altering forms of civil government, electing of civil officers, inflicting civil punishments as by deposing magistrates from their civil authority, or withdrawing the hearts of the people against them, to their laws. (reformedreader.org)
Unlike the prior points Williams makes regarding the Separation Principle, in this dialogue he is pointing out that that the government and religious officials each have their own limits to their jurisdictions. The government officials, the magistrates, cannot meddle in the affairs of the church or take up the powers of the church. Similarly, church officials are limited in their influence in government affairs to the extent of their being members of the commonwealth. Beyond that limit, they cannot usurp the power of the government.

Madison also has several points that reference the Separation Principle. The second, fifth, and eighth points state,

[2] Because if religion be exempt from the authority of the Society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the Legislative Body. The latter are but the creatures and viceregents of the former. Their jurisdiction is both derivative and limited: it is limited with regard to the co-ordinate departments, more necessarily is it limited with regard to the constituents… [5] Because [Henry’s] bill implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious truth; or that he may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy. The first is an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of Rulers in all ages, and throughout the world: The second an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation… [8] Because the establishment in question is not necessary for the support of Civil Government. (churchstatelaw.com)
The three points suggest a need for two separate spheres for government and religion to occupy. In the second point, Madison is making the same claim as Williams regarding the limits of government jurisdiction in religious affairs. The fifth point reinforces that second point by arguing that the Civil Magistrate is not qualified to handle the duties of church officials. Any attempt to take on the duties of the church by a government official would be a perversion of the essence of religion. Lastly, the eighth point argues that religion is not needed for the support of the government. Government can and will endure without the intervention of religious officials in its affairs.

Thomas Jefferson presents the most referenced statement of the Separation Principle when he writes in his letter to the Danbury Baptists,

that the legislative 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 and State. (churchstatelaw.com)

Jefferson’s contribution is important because he refers to the Establishment clause in his statement about a wall of separation. He also recognizes the need for separation when he writes that the legislative powers of the government do not have jurisdiction over opinions, particularly those that are of religious matters. He is also
indicating an affirmation of religious liberty despite when certain actions are contrary to the public good when he writes that the “powers of government reach actions only.”

Notice in each of the examples of the Separation Principle how the founders seem to be primarily concerned with the separation of government from religion. The exceptions come with Williams’ tenth principle, his dialogue between Truth and Peace, and Madison’s eighth point that seem to suggest that religion ought not be concerned with the affairs of government.

The presentation of Roger Williams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson is part of a historical discussion that illustrates the intellectual and political themes found by Martha Nussbaum. These themes are important to the fabric of the country but are not the only viewpoint. I am relying on Nussbaum’s insights to discover what ought to be the case in the 21st Century from interpretations of the founders I have presented.

Martha Nussbaum, Liberty of Conscience

Martha Nussbaum, in her book, Liberty of Conscience, discusses the Pilgrims’ journey to the new world and how it helped to shape the role of religion in American culture. The story of the Pilgrims’ journey to the new world is meaningful because it shows that religious liberty is important to people and it is often distributed unequally. In the case of the Pilgrims, the dominant majority in England did not risk allowing others worshipping God the way that they wished because they had established their Anglican faith as the orthodox religion in England. This orthodoxy allowed the Anglican majority to be favored in society and to subordinate and persecute those
faiths that were not orthodox. Thus, the Pilgrims and other marginal faiths were not equal citizens because their rights were not equally respected by the English government. The Pilgrims’ journey to the New World, then, was their attempt to recover the liberty and equality they lost in England. Tragically, the Puritan effort to recover liberty and equality was coupled with their own desire to establish a religious orthodoxy of their own in the new world. The struggles that the Pilgrims faced in England and their desire for religious liberty became influential in the development of church/state relations in the US. Those struggles that the Pilgrims and other minority religious groups had to endure in England give US citizens an idea of what they ought to be guarding against. Conversely, when working to achieve religious liberty for all, US citizens also ought to be wary of a total separation of church and state.

Nussbaum does not specify what she means by a total separation. I take a total separation of church and state to mean a complete absence of religious presence in all that falls under the jurisdiction of the state. This would mean the removal of symbolic references to God in all public documents and public buildings, from all money, oaths of office, the pledge of allegiance, and so on. Anything considered religious would be relegated to houses of worship and the homes of their respective followers.

People like to be in “in-groups” because members receive special rights that nonmembers do not. The orthodoxy of the Church of England is considered an in-group while the Pilgrims and other marginalized faiths in England can be considered to have been “out-groups.” As an in-group, the orthodoxy of England was given special rights and privileges not shared with the Pilgrims. When in-groups are created,
particularly when involving religion, equality and respect for equality are difficult for people to sustain. Liberty of conscience is not possible without equal liberty and liberty of conscience among people is not equal if the government announces a particular faith as the religious orthodoxy that will define the nation. Even if the orthodoxy is not coercively imposed, it creates out-groups, like the Pilgrims in England, that result in not all people being equal in the public square. In the case of religious orthodoxy, Nussbaum writes, “minorities have religious liberty at the sufferance of the majority and must acknowledge that their views are subordinate, in the public sphere, to majority views” (2).

The political tradition in the US rejects religious orthodoxy because it is widely believed that all citizens are equal and should have equal rights. The US has had a commitment to religious equality courtesy of the efforts of the founders. I have previously presented the views of three men, Williams, Madison, and Jefferson, who have contributed to the US conception of church/state relations. In colonial America, there was much intolerance for religions that were different. But the experience of living together eventually gave rise to consensus that the future of constitutional order must be dedicated to fair treatment for all deeply held religious beliefs. The founders of the US wrote protections into the Constitution for fairness. The First Amendment provides the first two protections for citizen’s rights: the free exercise of religion and the prohibition against national orthodoxy.

Constitutions do many good things for liberal democracies so it is especially important that the US Constitution protects vulnerable groups and people from the
tyranny of the majority. In many ways, we are all weak and liable to fear, contempt, and a lust for inequality. The US Constitution acts as a “fixed star” of tradition that can guide us (Nussbaum 3). And this is why the current threats to the constitutional tradition need to be identified, criticized, and resisted.

The current threat to religious fairness is one that is not local or short-lived. It is organized, highly funded, and is widespread. This threat proposes that the values of a particular brand of conservative evangelical Christianity define the US; its members are seeking public recognition that the Christian God is the nation’s guardian. This threat is commonly identified as the Religious Right. Their agenda threatens to create in-groups and undermine religious equality. Many people in the US are not Christian, now or at the time of the country’s founding. Nussbaum states that about 8 to 17% of colonialists belonged to a recognized church. The propositions that Christian evangelicals advocate, the singleness of God, the concern of God for people, and the existence of a deity, are all divisive because of the richness in religious diversity in the US. They are also concerned with the moral “decline” of society and the need to return to their idea of family values. The propositions are a push to institutionalize evangelical Christian fundamentalism as the state religion. Further complicating matters, rhetoric from politicians that highlight Christianity create an effect that suggests that those who do not share particular religious values are less than fully American and less equal.
Nussbaum writes,

Many citizens of goodwill, who would be horrified by the repression of minority religion or by the very suggestion that all citizens do not have equal rights, see the trend toward public endorsement of a religious national identity as innocuous, or even good—because they do not see the way in which it is connected with unequal liberty and unequal standing in the public domain. (9)

Many people think that religion is important and precious and do not like to be told not to bring their faith into the public square. To these people, the separation of Church and State sounds like a marginalization or subordination of religion and that the defenders of separation have contempt for religion. In some cases, they are correct because religious fairness is under attack from the political left as well as the right.

Separation of Church and State is a good thing, nevertheless. It supports equal respect and prevents the public realm from establishing religious doctrine that denigrates or marginalizes some groups of people. No one ought to believe in a total separation. The state is omnipresent in people’s lives and a total separation from religion would be unfair, if not impossible. Nussbaum suggests that there needs to be other guiding principles to tell us how far and when separation is a good thing. Separation should not express a desire to marginalize religion. It is part of a tradition that sought to put religion in a place apart from the government. This is not because the founders thought that religion had little or no importance for people and the
choices they make. Separation is about equality and protecting religion, particularly minority religions. Nussbaum believes that it protects religion from government to keep it from being corrupted and protects government from religious bickering that could impede the governmental process. The amount of separation required should be determined by values other than overt separation. A denial of separation is an imposition of the ways of the majority on all people, making the statement that the majority is orthodox and minority groups are outsiders. So we must find a middle ground between a complete denial of separation and absolute separation.

The principles that Martha Nussbaum has discussed and that I’ve shown to be present in the foundation of the country, as made evident by the selected works of Roger Williams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson, seem to have created the middle ground between the extremes of national orthodoxy and absolute separation. The concepts and principles do not deny people the right to practice their religious faith nor do they allow for the promotion of any one faith. What I perceive to be the middle ground, created through the efforts of several people, such as Williams, Madison, and Jefferson, is under assault from both sides of the separation debate. My concern, though, is the very real threat of religious influence on government policy. The key to resolving the church/state separation issue in the US is finding the balance between a person’s faith and civic obligations so that neither is subordinated nor corrupted. I will address this topic in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 – The Modern Debate

The history of the discussion of separation of church and state reaches back as far as the first colonies in the new world. The founding fathers had to address the topic when forming the new nation. In this chapter, I will look at how the intellectual tradition of separation of church and state plays out in our liberal democracy. I will present two different perspectives on the current state of the tradition.

Political philosopher Kent Greenawalt, representing the first perspective, has reservations about the role of religion in the public realm, particularly with politicians making decisions on public policy using religious convictions. Greenawalt acknowledges that relying on religious convictions is not prohibited by law and sees the value in religion in answering questions that are unanswerable by other means. But he does wonder if it is appropriate for public officials in matters of governance.

Legal scholar Stephen Carter, representing the second perspective, is concerned with cultural attitudes about religion in the public realm. He is concerned that a perspective like Greenawalt’s trivializes religion when the faithful are told to act rationally and treat their faith as a hobby rather than a cornerstone of their lives. He seeks to find a balance of separation without trivializing faith.

Greenawalt, Religious Convictions and Political Choice

Kent Greenawalt, in his book, Religious Convictions and Political Choice, is concerned about the extent to which citizens and government officials in the US should rely on their religious convictions when they decide what political actions they
will take. When considering the many facets of religious/government relations, Greenawalt focuses on the connection between people’s religious convictions and their political choices.

The act of relying on one’s own religious views when adopting a political position is not a violation of the law. But is it appropriate to base a political standard on moral premises that are gleaned from one’s own religious beliefs? If the role of government is such that the aim of citizens and government officials in their political lives is understood to be bringing about and achieving justice, the moral premises considered relevant to justice become of critical importance. If we consider this way of viewing the matter, the place of religious convictions is related to substantive conceptions of the “good” and other fundamental beliefs about human existence. Greenawalt claims that arguments based on these types of conceptions turn on the possibility of shared premises of justice and shared criteria for determining truth. A problem occurs when we consider the various backgrounds of people, their upbringing, religious foundations, education, and so on, making it difficult to have a shared understanding of the premises a person may use or even a shared criteria for determining truth.

Greenawalt comes to the conclusion that,

Legislation must be justified in terms of secular objectives, but when people reasonably think that shared premises of justice and criteria for determining truth cannot resolve critical questions of fact, fundamental questions of value, or the weighing of competing benefits and harms,
they do appropriately rely on religious convictions that help them answer these questions. (12)

This reliance is appropriate for citizens, but is also, in some instances, appropriate for legislators and even judges. Nevertheless, the laws and policies of the US must be based on non-religious grounds. To base laws and policies on religious beliefs would be a violation of the Establishment clause and would be in opposition to the founding fathers’ intentions as pointed out in the previous chapter. Relying on basic nonreligious beliefs is more appropriate because they are not subject to the disagreements that religious beliefs may be subject to and they also provide shared premises of justice and truth to arrive at the creation of laws. Religious diversity, while ideal in society, does not promote shared premises due to the diversity of beliefs from one faith to another. Thus, society is better off trying to resolve its disputes on non-religious grounds.

**Liberal Democracy**

Greenawalt then outlines a model of liberal democracy, the point of which is to show that a substantially secular or separationist model of liberal democracy does not keep people from using their religious convictions in making political choice and that it provides a base against which conclusions about specific issues can be judged (14). Some of the elements that Greenawalt determines to be essential to a model of liberal democracy are indirect governance and extensive individual liberty. Indirect governance and individual liberty entail dispersed political power, citizens’ rights to express themselves and citizens having the ultimate political authority. Additionally,
government power over peoples’ lives is limited so that people can develop their own values, religious beliefs and practices and so on, and citizens are free to express those unique qualities. This notion is consistent with Nussbaum’s Liberty Principle from the previous chapter which states that people require substantial liberty for their religious beliefs.

More elements of the model of liberal democracy include the separation of governmental and religious institutions, the Government’s nonsponsorship of religion, and secular purposes for laws. Despite the ties of the government and religion, liberal democratic theory rests on a secular justification of the state. The dominant theory is the social contract: the government is justified by the consent of the governed and by its protection of natural rights. Similar to this is utilitarianism: the government is justified by its capacity to promote human welfare or the satisfaction of people’s preferences. Additionally, supplemental justifications may be applied, such as being ordained by God, so that even if religious believers do not share the justifications for state legitimacy they nonetheless can share the conclusions that government is a legitimate social institution.

However, if religious liberty is a defining feature of liberal democracy, constraints need to be set on the government’s promotion of religious truth. The political theory of the US, as well as its traditions and documents, plainly bar promoting particular religious positions as indicated in the previous chapter. The holding of particular religious beliefs is not the proper aim of government. Religious tenets are better left to the private sphere because government support of any
particular faith impinges on the liberty and sense of respect for those people who oppose sponsorship. If civic virtue is at issue in needing to have government sponsorship, civic virtue and respect for the government can be maintained in the private sphere by religious morality and by promoting good civic attitudes in schools and elsewhere in ways that are not particularly religious. The assumption that liberal democracy in the US should not promote religious truth represents the fullest principle of religious liberty. It represents the tradition of religious tolerance and government separation from religion in social conditions.

Greenawalt acknowledges that some people think that a lack of religious grounding and support in government affects cohesion and stability. Greenawalt is skeptical, though, that governmental promotion of religion is the proper way to supply religious underpinnings (20). It appears, when comparing the US with European countries with established churches, religion may be more vital as a separate entity. This is a conclusion that Williams, Madison, and Jefferson had recognized as well. The government’s not holding particular religious beliefs, or what Greenawalt refers to as the principle of nonsponsorship, is expanded by adding to it the idea that government cannot further the beliefs of one religious faith at the expense of another. We can conclude from this idea of nonsponsorship that government must not promote particular religious views, government must be neutral between religions, government and religion ought to be separate, government should not dictate to religious organizations and vice versa, and laws adopted by the government ought to be based on some secular objective, by promoting the “good” in a way that is comprehensible in
nonreligious terms. Greenawalt is quick to point out that despite the need for government to abide by the principle of nonsponsorship and all that it implies, he believes that this does not show an inappropriateness of a reliance on religious convictions when leaders or citizens make important political decisions.

The principles of liberal democracy also involve aspects of individualism and rationalism. Greenawalt writes,

Liberalism is often associated with a rejection of corporate authority in favor of individual autonomy and with a belief that important questions can be resolved by rational inquiry. What is called liberal religion, for example, is religion that emphasizes rationality and individual discovery of truth and downgrades emotional commitment, scriptural revelation, and hierarchical control. (21)

We know that a liberal democracy can thrive even in countries in which a significant number of people do not necessarily accept liberal premises. We also know that a person need not be an unyielding individualist or rationalist to believe that a liberal democracy is a highly desirable form of government. Rather, a person may only need to understand that democratically elected officials are more trustworthy than a small number of unelected elites and that even elected officials cannot be fully trusted unless there are safeguards for all people via established guarantees of personal freedom, checks and balances, and traditions of liberty. An approval of liberal democracy does imply an acceptance of some degree of individualism. A liberal democrat rejects the
compulsion of beliefs and patterns of life. They also regard informed individuals as vital to the protection of a fair political process. Human beings are social creatures and a partial truth can be achieved by dialogue with one another. Social units, such as communities, families, and so on, where dialogue is often held, are fulfilling aspects of human life and can have priority over the individuals in them. Thus, a person may support a liberal democracy because it would allow for a growth of different kinds of social units. This notion suggests that extreme individualism is not needed for a justification of liberal democracy, although the social contract is.

Greenawalt states that excessive rationalism is also not a required component of justification of liberal democracy. A person can be skeptical of the effectiveness of reason and still be distrustful of unelected elites. Acceptance of liberal democracy may presuppose an ability of people to use reason to work out most practical conflicts, but that does not mean that a person must accept the belief that the use of reason can solve all the fundamental human problems. The issue that concerns Greenawalt is how much liberal democracy is committed to some form of rationalism such that a reliance on religious convictions is thought to be unreasonable. He writes, “The centrality of this problem is evident once one understands that the argument against reliance on religious convictions often comes down to an argument for reliance on premises that are deemed rational in some way that excludes religious convictions” (23). A strong commitment to rationalism seems unlikely because it results in conflict between what political decisions a person ought to make for the sake of the public and those that a person ought to make in their own self interest. A weak commitment to
rationalism might be such that rational deliberation is only one component of decision making, that only officials ought to decide rationally, or that some issues ought to be decided by other means. This seems unlikely because of the inconsistency that could result. What is needed is a moderate form of rationalism that does not entail an exclusive reliance on reason in the political realm or an acceptance of a narrow form of rationalism despite a commitment to publically accessible reasons of decision.

**Religious Convictions**

Religious convictions are relevant, though, because those convictions that are familiar in this society weigh heavily on people’s ethical choices, even choices about law and government policies. If true, religious convictions are only inapt if the convictions themselves are wrong, if they only replicate what can be determined by methods more akin to notions of liberal democracy, or if they are “disqualified by some aspect of liberal democracy or its underlying principles” (Greenawalt 30). There are many different religious faiths in the US and each can affect political choices in a variety of ways.

Greenawalt focuses primarily on Christian and Jewish beliefs because of their prevalence in US society. Similar to other faiths, they both try to make sense of the natural and social world. They both also offer a “deep understanding” of the place of humans, provide guidance about the best way to live, and embody ethical teachings. The sources of ethical guidance come from sacred texts, authoritarian statements made by religious leaders, consultation with the religious community, and direct inspiration via prayer or meditation. The most obvious kinds of guidance come from the Ten
Commandments and biblical formulations of the Golden Rule. Religious sources can recommend attitudes to hold in one’s heart and mind and they incorporate broad perspectives about human nature and society. These perspectives include factual appraisals and a vision of the “ultimate meaning” of human life and the place of people in the universe. An understanding of these perspectives can determine a person’s view of what an ideal human life may be like and could affect ethical judgments about how a person ought to govern their life and how to deal with others.

Another kind of guidance involves how a person conceives the nature of a religious object and the role that person occupies in relation to that object. An example is the belief in a loving God and, by reflection, the determination of an ethical stance based on that belief.

The multiple sources and insight of Christianity and Judaism are not mutually exclusive but could be reinforcing and correcting. However, the kind of guidance that is thought to be a central component to a particular person will differentiate that person’s perspective of Christian ethics from another person’s perspective. Generally, the differences that result from the differing perspectives are where controversy in Christian ethics lies. People differ in the kinds of guidance they receive from religious sources available to them. Additionally, there are varying degrees of confidence assigned to the conclusions they reach. The problem Greenawalt is wrestling with is how can you have public discourse when not everyone shares the belief in God or even the same belief in God? He believes that it is not possible. Religious diversity,
which was promoted by the founding fathers and supported by the First Amendment, is not conducive to a common or shared “good.”

**Relying on Religious Convictions**

There are critical connections between religious convictions and ethical choices. Greenawalt writes, “Unless there are good reasons for religious believers to discount the evident relevance of religious convictions for political choice, those convictions will affect some political decisions they make” (35). When Greenawalt refers to a person relying on religious convictions, he means to include convictions that are general and lie in the background of a decision as well as those that are more upfront. The clearest instance of a reliance on religious convictions occurs when a person is certain that they will make a different political choice had they disregarded their religious convictions. In some cases of reliance, the religious convictions of a person or others will be causally related to the conclusion that the person or group reaches. In other cases, religious convictions may only play a casual role in decision making that is not readily apparent to the person making the decision. Nevertheless, a person is relying on religious convictions if their abandonment would result in the person seriously reconsidering the position they would take. If they are confident of the position taken and are uncertain of the position they would have taken without their religious convictions, that person is relying on those convictions to a particular extent even if it is possible that that person would arrive at the same conclusion without the convictions.
But is it reasonable to ask people in a liberal democracy to not rely on their religious convictions? If people try to forgo their reliance on religious convictions then all those who are uncertain about the practicality of their convictions should reexamine their political choices to see what the weight of nonreliance would be on their choices. Greenawalt writes, “A norm of nonreliance has implications for their process of choice as powerful as its implications for those who know their conclusions would be different absent their religious convictions” (38).

Greenawalt points out three positions on the relevance of reliance of religious convictions in confirming what is discoverable by reason. He first identifies the position that what is morally right can be determined without reference to religious truth. Religious sources may then be able to confirm what we already understand by reason and ethical intuition. The second position is such that a person’s religious perspective will critically affect how a moral question is resolved. This position affirms the belief that human beings are incapable of doing and understanding what is morally right without revelation via religious sources. The third position is such that human rational understanding is capable of going a long way in settling what is morally right but some questions may depend on religious convictions. Moral truths not established by reason could be revealed by convictions and may be compatible with reason. Revelation could also provide depth of understanding to what was revealed by reason. Or the threads of reason and revelation could intertwine for determining truth.
From these three positions, we can see that people who think religious sources are a ground for politically relevant ethical truths will be disenfranchised by any injunction to disregard religious sources and will be asked to make decisions using only one part of what they perceive to be relevant data. A serious effort to exclude the reliance of religious convictions would be difficult because many believers do not understand how the distinct threads of religious morality fit into the development of their moral and political positions. Greenawalt writes,

"even when a person’s degree of self-awareness and self-expression allows relatively clear identification of the place of his religious premises in a structured account of his position, neither he nor others may know whether initial religious convictions has led to moral judgment or initial moral intuition has led to adoption of religious convictions that support the intuition." (44)

To try to dispel the influence of the religious convictions of a believer is taxing. It may be necessary, in theory, to impose such a requirement upon people. But the practical nature of such a command is nearly impossible.

Greenawalt’s model of liberal democracy shares many of the same elements that are present in the preceding chapter. He discusses individual liberty, religious liberty, nonsponsorship, and separation of church and state and points out that these concepts do not keep people from using their religious convictions. However, they do imply that liberal democratic theory rests on a secular justification of the state and he
concludes that “Legislation must be justified in terms of secular objectives” (12). He

does see the relevance in appropriately relying on religious convictions in problem
solving and decision making when rationality cannot bring resolution. Thus, he has
found a balance of a secular justified state with a space for religious faith.

**Carter, The Culture of Disbelief**

Stephen Carter, in his book, *The Culture of Disbelief*, is concerned about the
attitudes that liberal culture has toward religion in society. He claims that there is a
constant message in American society that if one’s religion conflicts with daily social
life, that person is expected to ignore the religious demands and act “rationally.”
Religion, he claims, is trivialized when religious beliefs are treated as arbitrary and
unimportant. Interestingly, Carter points out that the United States has a deeply
religious citizenry but is zealous in guarding public institutions against explicit
religious influences. The religious component to a person’s life is to remain private.
This results in a split in people between their public and private selves. We often
think that when religious convictions move people to action in the public square, that
their motives are oppressive. Often religions are denounced for trying to impose their
beliefs on other people. But we err when we presume that all religious motives are
oppressive and compound that error when we insist that the faithful keep their
religious ideas to themselves. Consider, for example, the Civil Rights movement and
its religious foundation, its supporters, and how the movement may not have occurred
without religious influence (Waldman 203-204).
Stephen Carter’s goal is neither to tear down the wall of separation between church and state nor to impose oppressive religion upon other people. His is an effort to understand why religion, and its expression, is seen negatively in society and to try to discover if there is a way to preserve the separation of church and state without trivializing faith. The results of his inquiry lead Carter to believe that, ultimately, the public role for religion is to be a safeguard against state authority. The Protestant Reformation began the process of freeing religion from the state, creating the possibility of a strong, independent moral force in society. Being autonomous gives religions the opportunity to play the vital role of critics of secular institutions. This autonomy is supported by the secular state by maintaining the principles that the founding fathers promoted.

Religion and Autonomy

Society tends to view religion as something that is private. When religion is made public, it likely will be ridiculed, particularly if it is unorthodox, irrational, or unconventional. America tends to be most comfortable with those religions that fall within the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions. Within these three main groups, Americans tend to be most comfortable with religions that consist of a few private worship sessions or prayer and that leave the rest of the week to secular pursuits. This sort of attitude exerts pressure on the faithful to treat their faith as a hobby rather than a significant part of their lives. This pressure seems to inhibit the religious freedom of those individuals but even more on the individuals whose faith does not fall within the aforementioned three main traditions. This pressure seems to be significant enough
that it could hinder religious autonomy. Autonomous religious groups, Carter writes, “should not be beholden to the secular world, that they should exist neither by the forbearance of, nor to do the bidding of, the society outside of themselves” (34). To truly be free, religions, and their adherents, ought to be able to engage in practices that society may not approve. This means that the faithful ought to be able to do more than treat their faith as a hobby by doing more than attending a few worship or prayer sessions. They ought to be able to engage the greater society in religious discussion without fear of censorship or violence. Autonomy, though, is often missing from America’s relationship with religion. Frequently, autonomy is confused with freedom. This freedom is the freedom to worship and be religious. Autonomy of religions, on the other hand, involves the recognition of the melding of the individual and the faith community as something special in religious life.

Religions, when autonomous, are independent centers of power within society and can act as a counterweight to the state’s authority. Carter refers to Alexis de Tocqueville’s observations of American society and he summarized those observations up into two chief functions of religion. First, religions serve as sources of moral understanding, without which a democratic society where majority rules would likely succumb to tyranny. Second, religions mediate between the citizen and the government’s institutions by providing an independent moral voice. Inherent in these two functions is the idea that the religiously devout may take positions that differ from those of the state. This aspect of religion, the power of resistance, is what
religious critics seem to fear most. However, the power to influence the faithful to resist the policies of the state is how religion serves democracy (Carter 36).

Carter then points out that a common argument against religious faith is that the trivialization of faith or pressures to treat one’s faith as a hobby does not exist and that religion is always present in our politics and law. In fact, we read about it, hear about it, and see it whenever a politician quotes bible passages to win a political debate or says “God bless you and the United States” at the end of their political speeches or when a religious leader speaks up about a moral issue such as abortion or gay marriage. Carter insists that this type of religious talk is not the same thing as taking religion seriously nor does it mean that religious talk in political rhetoric gives people of faith the respect they and their religion deserve. In fact, this sort of religious talk is how our politicians actively trivialize religion.

We have come to expect that political leaders, when in the public square, engage in “civil religion,” which is defined by law professor and author Frederick Mark Gedicks as the expression of “faintly Protestant platitudes which reaffirm the religious base of American culture despite being largely void of theological significance” (Carter 51). These platitudes are now expected in political speeches and really don’t contain any theology unless it is a theology of “God bless America.” We seem to be less comfortable when religious people invoke the name of God in ways that are more profound than the civil religion our politicians practice. This makes it seem as though the public square really is not as open as many people would like to believe. It seems to me that Carter is presenting a view that is somewhat compatible
with Nussbaum and the founders though he is arguing from a different position. His starting point is the absence of religion from the public square and he is working to bring it back into the public square while trying to preserve its integrity by keeping it separate from government influence.

Carter mentions a political theory that legal scholar Sanford Levinson refers to that suggests that contemporary liberal philosophers want to create a conversational space, the public square in essence, in which individuals of various differing worldviews can engage in dialogic battle in accordance to a set of conversational rules that all will accept (55). The idea is that although people may have differing backgrounds, we all share particular moral premises in common. Those ideas that are not held in common, such as religious ideology, will be excluded and what remains may be the basis for conversation. This, of course, limits discussion to those things that do not have anything to do with religion and makes the public square not welcoming or just. This is very similar to Greenawalt’s position. Greenawalt is also arguing for a standard of public discourse that is acceptable and useable by all people. He suggests that such a standard would be a moderate form of rationalism, rather than religious beliefs.

When we guard the public square against religious incursion we have to face the fact that an overwhelming majority of people in the United States use their religious faith and traditions for moral guidance in their lives, including the political aspect of their lives. However, when politicians evoke God’s will to support political efforts, politicians are trivializing religion. When religion is used in this way, politics
is guiding faith, rather than faith guiding politics. Preachers have a similar difficulty when trying to discern whether their true intentions are political or religious in origin. Political preachers try to explain to their parishioners what God wants them to do in the political world, such as taking an active position on the issues of global hunger or backing one side in a conflict over another. All of the political preachers believe that the political positions they are advocating to their flock are positions that God wants them to advocate. However, when a person’s theology fits perfectly with their politics there is reason to suspect that the person is not discerning God’s will but is actually determining a political path and looking for justification through God.

There is nothing wrong with letting religious faith be the wellspring of a citizen’s public action. Carter points out though that a person ought to be careful to discern whether it is God’s word or human politics that is doing the work. He writes,

if religion is to be a prop to support secular social and political movements, one cannot sensibly speak of it as an independent force in the world. If the role of the religionist is first to make up his or her mind about which political position to take and next to search for religious arguments to support the already selected view, the idea of faith as the source of the moral inspiration is trivialized. (81)

I think that this is a very important piece of Carter’s argument. He is implying that the proper role of religion is to be an independent sphere separate from government. While the founding fathers seemed more concerned about keeping government out of
religion, Carter is concerned about keeping religion out of politics so that the
independent nature of religion can be preserved. Additionally, Carter is stating that a
religious position ought to be determined before holding a political position. Holding
a political position and seeking religious justification for it is a trivialization of
religion and several people on of the political right and left are capable of being guilty
of this. Politics and religion are always going to cross paths, particularly on sensitive
social issues, but when political viewpoints are determined prior to, rather than
subsequent to, religious viewpoints, the religious viewpoints tend to be polluted. This
is a problem for political preachers because their lectures are often polluted by politics
to the point that they are using God’s word to bend their parishioners to what the
preachers deem to be the “correct” political view. This trivializes religion, according
to Carter, because it makes God seem more like one of us rather than us being many of
God. The infusion of politics into religion in this way also makes faith less
independent from the state because faith is determined by politics instead of a need for
God’s guidance. Again, this is an issue that the founders were trying to prevent.

Exclusivity

Many religions make claims that they are the religion that God listens to
exclusively. A problem occurs when large and influential Christian denominations
make claims of exclusivity. This problem does not lie in the truth or falsity of the
claim but, rather, the tendency of those groups to take action in the secular world that
is consistent with their claims as they grow in power. Carter writes, “one must
distinguish between the religious motivation for a moral position that is otherwise
within the power of the state to pursue and the religious motivation for a moral position that simply involves the oppression of members of other, less politically powerful faiths” (91).

Despite claims of exclusivity, many Christians believe that they ought to be tolerant of other faiths. Many of those other faiths, though, object to the idea that Christians ought to tolerate them. The fundamental message of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment is that of religious equality. The reason for the rejection of tolerance is because tolerance generally means an allowance for something to exist, not because of equality or right, but because of the forbearance of those who hold the power to determine something’s existence. The United States is pre-dominantly a Christian country with several Christian denominations being very influential. These denominations, if this suggestion is correct, have the power to withdraw their tolerance of other less influential religions at any time, thus diminishing any standing they may have had in the country. Equality is needed in addition to tolerance. He also points out that this suggestion of tolerance can apply to the secularists having all of the power and, only by forbearance, is religion allowed in the country. The language of tolerance is the language of power. In light of the need for tolerance and respect among religions and between religions and the secular, how can religion be regulated in the public square for the safety of everyone who may not be religious or even the right kind of religion? And should religion even be regulated?

The United States does try to enforce a separation of church and state but this enforcement via the First Amendment originally was an effort to protect religion from
the state, not the other way around. This means that the government shall not force people to adhere to sectarian religious traditions or favoring one faith over another. It does not mean that people, whose motivations are religious, cannot inform the government or keep the government from listening to them. It was the intentions of the founders to protect religion from government influence as well as to protect those people that may not participate in the more established faiths.

The religion clauses that the founders developed should be read as a way to avoid tyranny of the state. To avoid tyranny, religions ought to be sustained and nurtured as independent intermediaries, thus, they need to be protected from more than just overt discrimination. Often religions ask for, and receive, exemptions to laws that apply to everyone else, such as paying taxes or religious members being exempt from certain aspects of military service. Recall that this is Nussbaum’s Accommodation Principle. These exemptions allow religions to act as intermediaries between the state and the citizen and prevent tyranny from the state or the majority. Without the exemptions, religions would be subject to the coercive authority of the state and that some religions may be crushed under the weight of secular law and culture. The secular dominance could cause believers to become radicalized and act in destabilizing and antisocial ways. Without protection, the dominant culture could declare marginalized or oppressed dissenters as criminals. This act could remove believers, movements, and entire religions from society all at once.

If the state were to enact a law that impinges on a religion’s ability to sustain itself, the state would be required to show that there is adequate reason to enact the
law and enforce it, such as for drug enforcement or public safety. It is for this reason that the Free Exercise Clause is needed but this also needs to be more than a sign of indifference or neutrality from the government. This is why exemptions, or accommodations, are needed. Majoritarian religions are likely more in line to the rules and laws of society, thus they likely wouldn’t need much more protection other than the Free Exercise Clause. Religions on the margin of mainstream society, such as the Native American Church or the Mormons, are more likely to object to and have practices found to be more objectionable by the majority of society.

Consider the speeches of John F. Kennedy on September 12th, 1960, or Mitt Romney on December 6th, 2008. Both felt that they had to give speeches regarding their faiths, Catholicism and Mormonism respectively, in order to allay the fears of the more mainstream Protestant voters. If these religions were part of the mainstream at the time that each address was given, likely they would not have been compelled to justify their faiths. In the case of minority religions, exemptions are needed, and most deserved, for these religions so that they can survive but also so that they can maintain their status as intermediaries and provide resistance against mainstream rule. Thus, “the reason for accommodation becomes not the protection of individual conscience, but the preservation of the religions as independent power bases that exist in large part in order to resist the state” (Carter 134).

Carter does point out that a balance may be needed because of how disastrous it would be for all religions to engage in the many forms of discrimination that secular law forbids while hiding behind the right to free exercise. He also notes that it would
also be disastrous to not allow for the exemptions for religions. Deciding the
exemptions would place a heavy burden on the court system but it is necessary to
strike a balance.

In an ideal society, religion would be an intermediary between the state and the
people. It would be an influence on government and not vice versa. However, we live
in a welfare state and the government is often involved in offering special treatment to
religions. Religions receive tax exemptions and charitable deductions which result in
special treatment in the tax code. They also serve functions in society and, thus,
receive monetary support from the government, such as education or disaster
assistance. In these ways, government is already involved in religion and has the
capacity to control many facets of religion.

Religion as Inferior?

Carter returns to arguments made by some for keeping religion out of the
public square. This time, though, he discusses how a religious way of knowing is
relegated to an inferior status in the justification of moral and factual claims. Carter
will argue that the public square ought to be open equally to religious and nonreligious
arguments.

Carter writes, “The requirement of justification simply means that a
hypothesis—whether about the natural or moral world—must comport with certain
rules before it will be accepted” (214). He suggests that the rules of the natural world
are easy to test but rules of morality are not. The Enlightenment introduced
Rationalism to philosophy, pressing the case for human reason and making God’s
authority unnecessary for the justification of truth claims. Carter states that, “…by observing and deducing, [a person] could resolve both moral and factual propositions without the need for resort to divine authority” (215). A problem arises in that justification is knowledge that needs its own justification. An infinite regress is now apparent. Carter argues that John Rawls and other theorists of the liberal tradition wish to keep the discussion strictly to secular dialogue when trying to determine the validity of moral claims. This, according to Carter, is demeaning and unsatisfying to people within the faith communities.

The problem, Carter notes, which liberal philosophy has with religious ways of knowing the world is that it is a system of belief based on faith. The public square relies on dialogue as a tool for discovering truth and religion violates two rules of the dialogue: 1) beginning at inaccessible starting points and 2) reasoning through inaccessible methodology. Greenawalt would agree with this critique by Carter. By violating these two rules, people who do not share a particular religious view may find some religious claims or concepts to be inaccessible. However, Carter points out that we often have different starting points and methodologies regardless of religious faith. Nevertheless, the lack of a testable hypothesis is why the state cannot account for the epistemologies of the religious. But the validity of moral claims does not rely on testable hypotheses.

Carter suggests that the ultimate solution will be for liberalism to develop a politics that accepts whatever form of dialogue, religious or not, that a member of society puts into the public square. He writes,
Epistemic diversity, like diversity of other kinds, should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished. What is needed, then, is a willingness to listen, not because the speaker has the right voice but because the speaker has the right to speak. Moreover, the willingness to listen must hold out the possibility that the speaker is saying something worth listening to; to do less is to trivialize the forces that shape the moral convictions of tens of millions of Americans. (230-231)

The religions that last a long time do so because they have some relevance to human life. That relevance comes in the form of core moral truths that the religions hold dear. Those kernels of moral truth may be enough so that even if most of the public rejects any or all religious traditions, many will be moved or inspired by the moral claims that religious members look to as a result of their religious convictions.

Religious dangers to the secular and minorities are avoided by appeals to the courts and the Establishment Clause. Secular dangers are avoided by appeals to the legislature and the ballot box. It is the error of liberalism to suspect that it is the religious right’s religiosity rather than its platform that is the enemy.

Summary

Kent Greenawalt and Stephen Carter, in both of the previous selections, are trying to get to the same thing, a place for religion in society, although they arrive at similar end points by coming from different positions and focusing on differing issues.
Greenawalt is concerned about the role of religion convictions in deciding political actions while acknowledging that religion is an important part of people’s lives. His goal is to find a balance between the secular justified State while providing a space for religious faith. Carter is concerned about the trivialization of religious faith and believes that religion ought to have a role in society but as a safe guard against state authority. His goal is to also find a balance of separation without trivializing faith. His ultimate solution is the need to develop politics where all forms of dialogue are accepted in the public square.

Stephen Carter is a response to Kent Greenawalt because they have disagreements about how the debate about separation of church and state ought to play out. Carter wants more of a public face for religion. However, he cautions about the horrors of a Christian nation. He notes that religions of all different types have a great potential for committing atrocities in the name of God. It is no wonder that people tend to distrust them, especially if they are allowed to have a significant influence in our daily lives. But Carter does point out that the evils done in the name of God should not cause us to relegate religion to the level of a hobby. Usually, it has been the alliance of religion and government that has allowed the atrocities to occur. The closer religion gets to the center of secular power, the less of a distinction there is between the state and religion. This would be an abandonment of religion’s position as the moral critic of the state. It is the job of the people to always be on guard against the likelihood that some religions in the United States will try to use their protected social positions as a way to impose oppressive doctrine on other people. In the next
chapter I will explore why fundamentalism has arisen and grown in intensity and will
determine what the Religious Right wants and hopes to accomplish in their endeavors.
Chapter 4 - Christian Fundamentalism

Stephen Carter, when advocating for a more substantive role for religious communities in the public realm, warned about the unification of religion and government. The mixing of the institutions of church and state has led to many atrocities throughout history and prevents religion from actualizing its role as a safe guard against state tyranny. However, it is the intention of some Christians to intertwine religion and government to form a theocratic nation.

A five volume work, The Fundamentalist Project, focuses on the fundamentalism of various religions around the world. For the purposes of this thesis, I would like to focus on its analysis of Christian Fundamentalism. The work determines that the actions any fundamentalist movement makes are determined by the variables of structure, chance, and choice. Structure refers to the society that the fundamentalism is found in and includes the governing system, its religious makeup, its economic climate, and other relevant social features that determine a society. The structure of a society is a dependable predictor of fundamentalism’s actions. Chance refers to the unpredictable events that occur in or around a society such as an assassination, economic downturn, war, and many other possible events. Lastly, the choices the leaders of the fundamentalist movement make also determine the course of action for that fundamentalist movement. Whether to be active in politics or to remain separated from the larger society, a fundamentalist movement’s leader has the power to determine the actions of the movement. While the latter two variables, chance and choice are difficult to predict, they are important in how they affect the more stable
predictor, structure. “Interrelating in complex ways…structural variables are ‘turned on and off’ by chance events and converted into options by the decisions of leaders” (Almond 502). The variables of the Twentieth Century US society made it possible for Christian fundamentalism to strive for church/state unification.

The conclusions that The Fundamentalism Project makes are threefold. First, it concludes that being interactive, reactive, and oppositional are traits inherent to a religious fundamentalist movement, such as the kind the US has seen in the latter half of the 1900s. These traits mean that fundamentalism is drawn to engagement with the world beyond the protective walls it has built for itself. This also means that Christian fundamentalism will inevitably become political. For Christian fundamentalists in the US, where historically they have been more prone to separation from the larger society for most of the movement’s history, they have become increasingly politically active.

Second, fundamentalism is genuinely religious despite being political. The religion of a fundamentalist movement is important because it underpins the political position of the movement, what it is opposed to and its remedy, as well as setting policy and implementing it within the movement.

The third conclusion is that fundamentalist hegemonic desire is tempered politically by the variables of the structure of society, such as economic, political, and social trends. It is also tempered religiously by the boundaries of the religion of origin, depending on the followers’ willingness to manipulate belief and tradition for political, rather than spiritual, purposes (Almond 503-504).
The variables of a pluralistic world that affect the fundamentalist’s actions, growth, and decline demonstrate the complexity of the situation they are in. Fundamentalist movements are hegemonic and anti-pluralist and are caught in a paradox of a separationist mentality, which nurtures their culture and mentality; and their desire to engage the world politically, where they would encounter the need to compromise and interact with others resulting in an abandonment of the original position of their enclave.

Karen Armstrong’s book, The Battle for God, is a critical look at the history of fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. For the purposes of this chapter I will focus on her discussion of Christian fundamentalism, and will discuss the causes of its emergence, the social issues and policies Christian fundamentalists are against, and the social changes they are proposing. I will also include additional commentary from John Max Morell and his book, It’s Religious Fundamentalism, Stupid. I intend to show that the Christian fundamentalist agenda is a threat to US liberal democracy and the antithesis of the intentions of the founders of the US regarding the relations of church and state.

**Background**

“A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something” (Marsden 1). More accurately, fundamentalism is an evangelical that is militantly opposed to liberal theology and secular changes to cultural values and is willing to stand up and fight. Fundamentalists are not clearly defined groups because they are informally
organized movements that have grown out of the evangelical movements. Central to the evangelical tradition is the belief of Christ’s saving work through his death on the cross, the necessity for trusting in Christ for eternal salvation, and the inerrancy of the Bible. Eventually, a separatist attitude would be added due to the belief that a separation from the larger society would be beneficial to faith. As mentioned earlier, the desire for separation paired with the desire to engage a pluralistic society for change places fundamentalism in a paradox. However, Christian Smith, in his book, *American Evangelism*, argues that the tension between separation and engagement aids the vitality of evangelicalism or fundamentalism (150).

Evangelism influenced nearly all denominations in the US, including Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationists, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Pentecostals and others. The Pew Forum conducted a nationwide poll, consisting of more than 35,000 adult participants. 78.4% of the participants self-identified as Christian generally, while 51.3% identified more specifically as Protestant. Of those that identified as Protestant, 26.3% of the 51.3% identified as followers of evangelical churches (http://religions.pewforum.org). If this sampling is an accurate portrayal of the greater population of the US, we can see that evangelical Protestants hold a significant amount of religious identity in the US, with only Catholics and Mainline Protestants a close second and third with 23.9% and 18.1%, respectively. While not every evangelical Christian is militant to the extent of being a fundamentalist, the percentage of evangelical Protestants that would also identify as
Fundamentalist is likely significant, but difficult to determine because fundamentalism is a movement rather than a group.

Karen Armstrong states that the people who identified themselves as fundamentalists did so to distinguish their faith from more liberal Protestants who were thought to be distorting the Christian faith. Fundamentalists focused their faith on particular core doctrines and a literal translation of the bible in an effort to retrieve fundamentals of the Christian faith. Armstrong writes,

> All over the world, people are finding that in their dramatically transformed circumstances, the old forms of faith no longer work for them: they cannot provide the enlightenment and consolation that human beings seem to need. As a result, men and women are trying to find new ways of being religious…they are attempting to build upon the insights of the past in a way that will take human beings forward into the new world they have created for themselves. One of these modern experiments…is fundamentalism. (xv)

Characterized as a battle between good and evil, the campaign Christian fundamentalists are engaging in is one against the enemy of secular policy and beliefs that are hostile to religion. It is when the charismatic leaders refine the core beliefs into an ideology that an action plan emerges and the fundamentalists take action, motivated by fear and anxiety about the modern secular world. Although only a small number of Christian fundamentalists are radical enough to commit acts of terror, most
of them are adamantly opposed to many aspects of modern society that are thought of as “good” by mainstream society. Armstrong writes,

> Fundamentalists have no time for democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, peacekeeping, free speech, or the separation of church and state…. [They] reject the discoveries of biology and physics about the origins of life and insist that the Book of Genesis is scientifically sound in every detail. (xi)

Armstrong characterizes the fundamentalist view of the literalism of the bible as trying to “turn the mythos of their faith into logos” (xvii). People of the past had two complementary ways of thinking and acquiring knowledge called mythos and logos. Mythos provided context to the lives of people. It was not practical because it did not help them get through their daily lives. Its primary concern was to alleviate anxiety about the unknown by giving meaning to the world and was not intended to be taken literally. Origins of life, the afterlife, and the meaning behind events all fall under this form of knowledge. Taking mythos literally could be disastrous because it is not empirical or based on reason. Armstrong writes, “…what worked well in the inner world of the psyche was not readily applicable to the affairs of the external world” (xvii). Logos, on the other hand, is the rational and scientific thought that is now prevalent in today’s society. It is based on facts and corresponds to the realities of the world. The rise of the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s pushed logos to the forefront of human understanding with the advancement of science and technology.
and resulted in the view of mythos as superstition. The new way of viewing the world contradicted the spirituality provided by the mythos of the old religions. With the change in society, fundamentalists have tried to turn the mythos of their faith into logos to relieve the contradictions they face in their lives. John Max Morell agrees with Armstrong and writes,

The big mistake of the Fundamentalists is to read the sacred poetic literature found in the earliest part of the Bible as historic rather than symbolic. In addition they believe that they and they alone can be the interpreters of the Scriptures. They tell us that the only true meaning of Bible passages is a literal one. (23)

The stories of the Bible have value in our society because of the messages they present. However, a literal interpretation of the Bible could be disastrous for society if this way of thinking is fused with the ability to form public policy.

Armstrong continues by saying that secular attitudes were prevalent in the mid-twentieth century and it was presumed that as society developed, religion would play fewer roles in the world. Religion would be confined to private affairs, if needed at all. However, fundamentalists in the late 1970s made a resurgence, rebelling against the secular predominance in an effort to move religion back to relevance in society. In the US, Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority and urged fellow fundamentalists to get involved in politics. He wanted them to challenge the state and federal legislation that was pushing a secular agenda. The Moral Majority was a base from which
fundamentalists could unify in this effort. Similarly, Pat Robertson tried to encourage the political participation of his followers by claiming that Christians in the US were being persecuted by “liberals” and that they and the media are targeting the “true Christians.” Morell writes, “What [Robertson] is referring to is the effort by thoughtful Americans to prevent the Fundamentalist Christians from taking over the country” (108). Falwell and others felt slighted, oppressed, and persecuted by what they deemed as a secular government. Traditionally, the fundamentalists would have withdrawn from society to create a safe space for their faith. But this time they felt that their faith was in danger and their ideology was designed to mobilize the faithful in a battle for survival. They saw the way that society marginalized or excluded God altogether. Their mobilization was an effort to re-sacralize the world. The fundamentalist movement mobilized on issues such as family values, abortion, and religious education when it decided to engage society rather than withdraw. They believed that they had a chance to make an impact and put the US back on what they had determined to be the right path.

The Christian fundamentalist movement’s motivation to engage in the political realm came about from a combination of religious argumentation as well as disagreements with the political ethos of the time. Their religious faith told them to save souls from the onslaught of the many “evils” that plagued the country. Their political motivation was from their desire to exert Christian faith-based influence on society. Their political reform entailed electing moral and trustworthy Christians to political office in a “bad-ones-out-good-ones-in” strategy (Smith 193-94).
Recall that the feelings of oppression, persecution, and the trivialization of faith are what Stephen Carter had also discussed in his book, *The Culture of Disbelief*. He stated that society thought of religion as unimportant and that people ought to act rationally. Religion was trivialized and it was the goal of his book to find a solution wherein religion would have a space in society where it was not marginalized and could take its rightful place as a safeguard against the tyranny of state authority.

Carter also cautioned against religion getting too close to state authority and abandoning its position as the moral critic. Could the fundamentalist movement maintain its integrity? Armstrong writes,

> A revolution against tyranny could become tyrannical in its turn; a campaign to abolish the separations of modernity in order to achieve an integrated, holistic state could become totalitarian; the translation of the mythical, messianic, or mystical visions of the fundamentalists into political *logoi* was dangerous. (279)

The Moral Majority is a great example of revived fundamentalism. It was inspired by three right-wing men, Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips, and Paul Weyrich, who created several political action committees. Frustrated with the Republican Party, they wanted to build a new conservative majority to oppose the moral and social liberalism that had entered both the public and private lives of the people of the US in the 1960s. According to Armstrong, they noticed the strength of evangelicals and thought that Jerry Falwell was a perfect leader with a built-in
constituency due to his congregation, Liberty College, and his TV audience. Combining with other fundamentalists who shared similar views on political and ethical issues, the Moral Majority was created as a forum for all Christian and Jewish conservatives.

**The Christian Fundamentalist Message**

The Moral Majority’s message was not new. It was declaring war on the liberal establishment and was fighting for the future of the US. Members were convinced that the US must be a religious nation and its policy ought to be dictated by the Bible. They felt that since the end of World War II, secular elitists had dominated politics and culture and the members of the Moral Majority must fight to preserve traditional values. Fueling their passion was a premillennial pessimism that the world was doomed and that the fundamentalists had the obligation to evangelize the world before the turn of the millennium and the resulting rapture.

Politically, fundamentalists became known as the New Christian Right and their agenda was rejectionist in nature because they opposed more than what they were for. It was a crusade against the impending evil that threatened the US in the form of abortion, gay rights, drugs, judicial activism, and Communism. They are adamantly for prayer in schools, the promotion of creationism over evolution, and socially conservative policies such as tax cuts and abortion bans. They focused heavily on sexuality, particularly opposition to homosexuality and feminism. Homosexuality was an epidemic and a cause for the social decline. Associated with pedophilia,
fundamentalists saw homosexuality as the result of failed homes that had fallen prey to secular humanism. It was referred to as a perversion and several bible verses were used in a literal sense to show that it was an affront to God (Armstrong 312).

Feminism was referred to as a disease and the cause of all the world’s ills. The fundamentalists claimed that the Equal Rights Amendment was a government plot to create higher taxes and a federalization of all the remaining aspects of life. It was up to Christian women to take active steps to place men at the center of the family unit while women reintroduce themselves to feminine self-sacrifice. Interestingly, it appeared as though the fundamentalists had reservations about promoting Christianity as a religion that valued forgiveness, mercy, and tenderness. They thought that these were feminine values and emasculated Christianity. They thought Jesus was masculine, so Christians ought to be aggressive and politically active. This militant manliness seems to explain the hostility to gun-control legislation, guns being another part to the revival of combative manhood (Armstrong 312).

The fundamentalist’s activism sprang from their fear. They felt that Christianity was constrained and undermined. Similar to political campaigns, they spent considerable effort urging members to vote, how to vote “correctly,” holding rallies, and taught how to influence the media. The President of the Christian Coalition, Roberta Combs writes,

Our hallmark work lies in voter education. Each election year, Christian Coalition distributes tens of millions of voter guides throughout all fifty states, (up to seventy million in 2000 alone!). These
guides help give voters a clear understanding of where candidates stand on important pro-family issues - *before they go to the polls on Election Day*. Our efforts do not stop with voter guides. We actively lobby Congress and the White House on numerous issues and hold grassroots training seminars and events all around the country that draw thousands of pro-family supporters and help organize activists on critical issues facing our country. (cc.org)

Members were advised to run for offices on low and local levels such as school boards and city leadership positions. They also targeted politicians who voted “incorrectly” on gun laws, abortion funding, the Equal Rights Amendment, and so on. Holding wrong views on defense, school prayer, and gay rights meant that a politician was anti-family, anti-America, and anti-God.

The Moral Majority and other fundamentalist groups managed to block the Equal Rights Amendment although no other significant changes to state or federal legislation were successful. The lack of success did not worry many fundamentalists because their long-term goal was to build an ultraconservative majority in both houses of Congress. Having achieved this, they could enact any reforms they wished. Their influence in modern politics is significant, however. Since the religious revolution of the 1970s, religious faith now plays a greater role in the political life of the US because fundamentalists have effectively used religion as a way to protest against policies and conduct of the liberal establishment, such as with Proposition 8 in
California, Fred Phelp’s protests at military funerals, or politician’s need to include a reference to God blessing the United States at the conclusion of major speeches.

Fundamentalist momentum seemed to wane after a few scandals in the 1980s. However, fundamentalism came back at the end of the decade in a more extreme manner by various fundamentalist groups. Some groups, such as Randall Terry’s Operation Rescue, blockaded abortion clinics, lectured fellow fundamentalists on the evils of feminism and liberal government, and committed acts of “biblical disobedience.” Their goal was to create a nation where Judeo-Christian ethics were the foundation of politics, the judicial system, and public morality. Other groups also declared war on secular humanism, worked to establish a Christian nation to combat Satan, and usher in the Jesus’ kingdom after the millennium.

The Christian fundamentalists are certainly within their rights to espouse their conservative perspectives. They are also within their rights to encourage voters to get out and vote and to vote according to their consciences. They can also support religious officials. The fundamentalists are wrong, however, when the officials they support choose to enact policies that are based on the fundamentalist’s religious beliefs. This is different than taking a political position based on a religious belief. Recall Kent Greenawalt’s position that legislation must be justified in secular terms because it allows for a shared understanding of the premises upon which the policy is based. Political policies with premises based on fundamentalist beliefs are not shared by all people in any given city, state, or the whole US. Additionally, a secular justification of political policy supports religious liberty and church/state separation.
and promotes tolerance because it does not validate any particular religious faith in its premises. As described in chapter two, influential founders of the US intended for the country to maintain Church/state separation and religious liberty, intentions that Christian fundamentalists do not seem to support in their quest for political power.

We must also look back at what Stephen Carter warned about in his book. He writes, “The religions enjoy no special immunity from the tendency of power to corrupt—and of absolute power to corrupt absolutely” (83). Religion is responsible for a long list of horrors enacted upon people of the world and it is its potential for these horrors that explains the distrust of it and the uneasiness felt by many when any religious sect gains political power. This is a key point to my argument as to why fundamentalism is misguided in their actions. Religion by itself may have a potential for evil, but it is the alliance with government that actualizes that evil. It appears that Christian fundamentalism is aiming to use its privileges granted by the First Amendment to gain access to government power which could lead to oppression of others. Certainly, government is capable on its own for horrendous actions because it has the power to do so. Combined with religious faith, atrocities can occur because religion has abandoned its place as the moral intermediary between government and the citizenry. Carter writes, “…one must distinguish between the religious motivation for a moral position that is otherwise within the power of the state to pursue and the religious motivation for a moral position that simply involves the oppression of members of other, less politically powerful faiths” (91). Thus religion ought to avoid the need to grasp for political power to preserve the autonomy of religious faith as a
moral intermediary, avoid potential atrocity, and maintain the religious liberty of all other faiths.

Fundamentalism will not soon disappear. It appears to wax and wane depending on what social issues are at the forefront of US political and cultural debates. Religion has often shaped opposition to the government and it could easily be used to articulate helplessness, disappointment, and discontent for the future. In some circles, fundamentalism is becoming more militant than before. Fundamentalists have reacted angrily to privatizing or suppressing religion and they believe that they need to rescue religion from oblivion. Fundamentalism is now part of the modern world, representing disappointment, alienation, anxiety, and rage that the US government cannot ignore. Their policies are socially conservative and the implementation of those policies would be a disaster to people who do not subscribe to the fundamentalist’s beliefs. But is their desire to influence government consistent with what such founders as Williams, Madison, and Jefferson had intended?

Certainly, it is important for the US government to listen to the will of its people. But their drive to influence public policy is in direct violation of Nussbaum’s principles. Moreover, they are destroying the autonomy that Stephen Carter suggests is essential for religious liberty and for the actualization of religion’s role as critic of secular institutions.
Chapter 5 - Conclusion

I began chapter two of my thesis stating that the history behind the on-going debate about the separation of Church and State is vital to my argument. I then presented the writings and perspectives of three founding fathers, Roger Williams, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson, who were instrumental in shaping church/state relations in the US. The founders provided the blueprint for how the country should proceed in regards to the separation of church and state. Additionally, I presented a contemporary female philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, who is the culmination of the three aforementioned founders. The purpose of the presentation was twofold. First, I presented six principles from Nussbaum’s book, Liberty of Conscience. These principles were prevalent in the ideas of the people that were responsible for laying the foundation of religious liberty in the US. Second, I presented the selected works from Williams, Madison, and Jefferson in order to illustrate their commitment to the principles identified by Nussbaum. Upon doing so, I interpreted that the founders thought that the separation of church and state was necessary and was made to be a part of the foundation of the United States.

Martha Nussbaum is concerned with the tradition of religious liberty in the US and the attacks upon it. The purpose of her book is to clarify the tradition and warn of the problems that could result if religious liberty is not defended from those who wish to establish religious orthodoxy in the US. The tradition, she noted, was filled with ideas and concepts from the founders about liberty, conscience, respect, equality, neutrality, separation, protection of minorities, accommodation, and establishment.
Nussbaum derived six key principles. The first is the Equality principle which states that all citizens have equal rights and deserve equal treatment. The second principle, the Respect-Conscience principle, states that respect for people requires the public square to acknowledge people having differing religious commitments and that these commitments are a significant part of their lives. The public square must also provide a safe space for people to act as their religious consciences dictate. Third, the Liberty principle states that other people’s commitments require substantial liberty and should be provided. Fourth, the Accommodation principle states that minority religions ought to be exempt from applicable laws for reasons of their faith. The fifth principle, the Nonestablishment principle, states that the government cannot make an endorsement of religion that would signify orthodoxy. Lastly, the Separation principle states the previous five principles can only be implemented if there are separate spheres of jurisdiction for religion and government. These are distinctly American principles that are found in the US tradition of the separation of church and state.

Roger Williams was used as an example of the founding fathers because of his early rebuking of religious orthodoxy, and his influence on late founders such as Jefferson. His work, the “Bloody Tenet of Persecution,” was a response to John Cotton’s call for religious orthodoxy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His response, I had shown, included many of Nussbaum’s principles, including the Respect-Conscience, the Nonestablishment, and Separation principles.

James Madison, in his work, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” objects to a bill proposed by Patrick Henry that would provide legal
support and funding for the Anglican religion. Madison’s words reflect the objections of Williams 150 years earlier about religious orthodoxy. Madison argued that the power of the state to choose one religion over another could easily become the power to choose one particular religious sect over another. Madison also portrayed several of Nussbaum’s principles in his work.

Thomas Jefferson’s “Letter to Dansbury Baptists” contained the phrase, “wall of separation between church and state.” Although he was in philosophically in favor of complete separation, Jefferson did not have intentions to build a wall that meant a complete separation of church and state. Jefferson’s brief letter illustrated the Respect-Conscience principle and the Separation principle.

I began chapter three comparing the ideas of political philosopher Kent Greenawalt and legal scholar Stephen Carter to show how contemporary thinkers are debating the issue of separation of church and state. Where the founders provided the blueprint, Greenawalt and Carter are following the blueprint and reaching different conclusions. Greenawalt acknowledges that religion is useful but concludes that rationality is better for underpinning US policy. Carter argues that the nation has trivialized religion and looks to restore it to a role as moral critic opposite the state. While seeking this role for religion, he warns of proceeding too far and intertwining religion and government, ultimately corrupting both.

Greenawalt’s book, Convictions and Political Choice, is a discussion about Greenawalt’s concern for the use of religious convictions in deciding political action and policy. He acknowledges that relying on one’s religious faith for adopting a
political position is not against the law, but he wonders if it is appropriate to base a political standard on moral premises from one’s own religious faith. He comes to the conclusion that legislative policy must be justified in secular terms because only then can the premises underlying the policy come close to being shared among all people. Religious justifications would be subject to disagreements because not all aspects of any given religion are shared throughout the country. Greenawalt also illustrates Nussbaum’s principles when he presents his argument, showing that it is in accordance to founders’ intentions.

Stephen Carter’s book, The Culture of Disbelief, is concerned with the attitudes that liberal society has toward religion. He argues that religion has been trivialized because it is seen as a hobby to be entertained on a part time basis. Additionally, he points out how politicians are trivializing religion by expressing faintly religious platitudes in political speeches in order to reaffirm their religious faith to their religious constituents. He also warns of using religion as justification of political beliefs. He says that religious belief ought to be held first prior to holding a political stance. If not, religious belief is polluted by politics and is trivialized.

Carter believes that religion has an important role in society. He is not trying to impose oppressive religion upon anyone nor is he trying to tear down the wall of separation between church and state. Carter’s goal is to revive religion to its role as moral critic, which elevates religion to a social status where it is no longer trivialized. In a liberal democracy, religion ought to be given autonomy. When religions are autonomous, they are independent centers of power in society that can act as
counterweights to the state’s authority. Carter warns of religion becoming too close to
government though. The closer religions get to the government’s center of power, the
less likely they will be autonomous and able to discover the moral truths needed for
being a counterweight to the state’s authority.

I began chapter four introducing The Fundamentalist Project and presented its
analysis of fundamentalism. I also presented two books that are critical of the
Christian fundamentalist movement in the US. Karen Armstrong (The Battle for God)
and John Max Morell (It’s Religious Fundamentalism, Stupid) discuss the causes of
the fundamentalist emergence, the social issues and policies they are against, and the
social changes that they are proposing if they were to gain significant power in the US
political system. Where chapter two discussed the founders laying out the blueprint
for the country and chapter three presented the contemporary debate within the
confines of the blueprint, chapter four is about the Christian fundamentalists, their
belief that the original blueprint is not conducive to their beliefs and their offering a
new blueprint for the country. My intention was to show that Christian
fundamentalism is a threat to US liberal democracy and is in opposition to the
intentions of the nation’s founders.

Armstrong says that Christian fundamentalists distinguish themselves from
other Christian groups because they believe that those other faiths are distorting the
Christian faith. They are engaged in a campaign that they believe is a campaign
against evil and it is their duty as Christians to oppose the secular policies that are
hostile to their religion.
Armstrong characterized the problem of Christian fundamentalism as one in which the religious are trying to deal with their anxiety about the modern world and its incongruence with their faith by trying to turn the mythos of their faith into the logos. In other words, they are taking something that may not necessarily be factual and concrete and trying to advocate it as such. Morell agrees with Armstrong on this point by stating, more diplomatically than I, that the fundamentalists are reading the poetic language of the Bible “as historic rather than symbolic.”

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, fundamentalism surged on the notion of rebelling against secular social dominance in an effort to move religion back into relevance in society. This is similar to the endeavor the Stephen Carter was involved with in chapter 3. Groups like Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition went beyond Carter, urging fundamentalist Christians of all denominations to rise up against the secularism that left them feeling marginalized, trivialized, and anxious. Their message was based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and they were against liberal policies such as abortion rights, gay rights, judicial activism, feminism and Communism. If they thought that a policy would be a threat to their faith, they were against it. Conversely, they were for abortion bans, teaching creationism, and other socially conservative policies, such as tax breaks and pro-family issues.

The fundamentalist agenda was not just to gain relevance in society. They were after a social transformation of the likes where they needed to gain control of most or all of the US political system, starting on the lowest local levels. Additionally,
they targeted politicians who did not hold their same political and religious positions. Their success in blocking liberal social policies and gaining political seats was minimal but their impact was felt in the US political system nonetheless. Politicians on the political left and right felt the need to pander to the religious during each election cycle and continue to do so to this day.

The newest form of religious fundamentalism seems to be taking form within the Tea Party movement. While the Tea Party is considered to be mostly Libertarian, it does contain elements of Christian fundamentalist movements of the late 1970s and 1980s. This may be due to the Tea Party’s drawing supporters from the same end of the political spectrum as the fundamentalists. I believe that if the Tea Party can last beyond the current election cycle, we may see the Christian fundamentalist arm of the party rise up in an effort to promote their socially conservative policies, particularly if Tea Party candidates are elected to office. However, since it is a relatively new movement and does not necessarily have leadership, it is difficult to say what direction the movement will take in the future. I believe that it is subject matter for future research.

Christian fundamentalism is a threat to US liberal democracy because it is promoting an agenda that is in opposition to the intentions of the nation’s founders. Having laid out the position of the founders as well as the Christian fundamentalists, I believe that we must maintain the tradition of religious liberty and church/state separation that the founders bestowed upon the nation. Allowing the Christian fundamentalists to espouse their beliefs without penalty is granted to them by the
traditions of the founders. The fundamentalists’ desire to gain political power, however, is beyond the intentions of the founders and jeopardizes the liberties of other people, their faith, and the traditions that are the bedrock of the country. It is because of the likely violation of the rights of people who are not Christian fundamentalists that we ought to continue with the traditions of the founding fathers regardless of the best of intentions that Christian fundamentalists may have when seeking political power and influence in political policy.

I believe the solution to the problem of religious influence in politics can be found within the modern debate of the tradition of separation and religious liberty. I propose an amalgamation of the positions of Kent Greenawalt and Stephen Carter where religion ought to have relevancy in society and ought to play the role of moral critic of the government but it also must be limited in its ability to influence public policy because it is such that its premises are not shared by everyone in society. Thus, I believe that religious influence in government ought to be limited to informing the government about its moral positions on public policy rather than determining public policy. This is a key distinction. Informing politicians of its position allows religion to be relevant and keep its position as the moral critic while simultaneously allowing for religious liberty of all religious groups. The role of moral critic requires religious autonomy and a separation from the government would allow for this. The Christian fundamentalist plan for religious involvement likely would restrict any autonomy of religious faiths outside of it and would likely lose its own autonomy as well.
My proposed solution would also preserve the secular basis for public policy in which the premises of said policy can be agreed upon and debated by everyone within society, regardless of religious affiliation and belief. The preservation of the secular basis for public policy would mean that government would not be promoting any particular religion, thus it would be preserving religious liberty. According to Greenawalt, this preserves the tradition of tolerance and separation that was given to the people of the US by the founders.

The necessity for the distinction of the limit of religious influence on public policy is important. I feel that the reason there has been so much debate about religious influence in government is because the boundaries between government and religion have not adequately been made apparent. The efforts of the courts have helped to define the boundaries but there still seems to be some debate about the role of religion in society, particularly when it comes to its influence on public policy. I believe that my solution defines the boundary enough to ensure the preservation of the separation of church and state while outlining the unique role of religion in society. The limit of influence on public policy to informing government of the religious position will provide protection to the citizenry from religious tyranny. Being prevented from overreaching its influence, religion cannot abandon its position as moral critic despite a religious figure’s quest for power.

The limit of religious influence also means that public policy will not be determined by religious doctrine. As Greenawalt suggests, the basis of public policy will be based on secular premises that can be shared and understood by all people. All
of humanity’s faculties will be necessary for determining what determines public policy. This does not mean that a religious person cannot use his/her own faith for guidance in determining public policy. It means that the person’s faith is not the sole basis for determining public policy.

An objection to my conclusion is that in trying to give religion relevance in society I have perpetuated the trivialization of religion by not allowing it to have equal status with rationalism in society. I agree wholeheartedly but I believe that religion cannot have equal status with rationality in society because each occupies their own separate spheres of influence. This is similar to the arguments posed by Armstrong and Morell of taking the mythos and turning it into logos or the sacred poetry of the Bible and making it historical. Rationality occupies the sphere of the logos or the historical and that sphere also happens to be the realm where political decisions are made for the welfare of all people in a society regardless of political or religious orientation. Religion occupies the sphere of the mythos or the sacred poetic language of the Bible where premises are not concrete and are debatable not only to people who do not subscribe to a particular faith but those within a particular faith as well. While the faithful and non-faithful alike may wish to argue that morality is concrete, because it is part of the religious sphere it is not and cannot be on equal grounding as rationality in the rational sphere of life.

I chose to focus my thesis on the necessary limit of religious influence on public policy because it is a pressing issue in the recent history of the US and is a matter that affects the beliefs and liberty of millions of people in the US. The
problem with excessive influence is that the policies that Christian fundamentalists are
promoting are not necessarily found in the political center of US politics and are
founded on premises that cannot be argued against. Additionally, their influence on
public policy may be detrimental to other minority groups and faiths in the US. Not
only have I shown that the policies of Christian fundamentalism are detrimental to
other people not identified as fundamentalists, but I have shown that those very
policies are anathema to the historical religious liberty provided by the nation’s
founders and the role of religion as moral critic of the secular government to prevent
tyranny. I have proposed a limit which religion generally ought not to cross in order
to preserve the role of moral critic, the tradition of religious liberty, and the protection
of liberties of those who do not subscribe to any particular religion that may try to
determine public policy. In the end, if this limit of influence is ensured and followed
up by the impartiality of the judicial system, the threat of theocracy will be alleviated.
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<http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations>.


