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THE SEVEN PRAYER MOUNTAINS – LESSON 8  
RELIGION PART 2  
SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The idea of “separation of church and state” has been grossly misunderstood in our country, and often wrongly taught. What does it really mean?

First of all, there is no such language in the U.S. Constitution. What it actually says (Amendment I) is “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*” It had been a common practice in many European countries for the State (country) to formally make a particular church the lawfully established religion, the only recognized one for that country. In order for any person to hold a public office, it was required that they be a member of that church. Non-members were discriminated against, often even persecuted.

This was written into the constitution to make it illegal to establish any particular religious organization from being made the one and only official state church. It also implies prohibiting discrimination against any church or individual expression of religious faith, belief, or convictions.

The term “separation of church and state” was coined by Thomas Jefferson’s letters (circa 1802-1803) in which he advocated a “wall” of separation between the church and governmental interference. It was expressed as his personal opinion. Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1878 used Jefferson’s letter stating this to the Danbury Baptist Church almost as if it were law. A court opinion stated that his personal view “may be accepted as almost an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment.” Upon that premise, they ruled in Reynolds vs. United States that the Mormon Church (Utah) could not legalize polygamy as it was contrary to the public good.

In the Emerson vs. Board of Education (1947) case, Justice Hugo Black wrote “In the words of Thomas Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion was intended to erect a wall of separation between Church and State.” This actually affirms that no religion should dictate the affairs of government and that government would not interfere with church matters, which is true. Unfortunately, some have made an extreme and wrongful interpretation of this.

Clarification came in the 1952 Supreme Court case of Zorach vs. Clauson. The court upheld accommodationism holding that “institutions presuppose a Supreme Being” and that government recognition of God does not constitute the establishment of a state church, which is what the Constitution’s authors intended. It is officially acceptable for the government to acknowledge God and religious faith and expressions related to faith or symbols of it. A government official expressing personal faith or belief is legal and government entities (e.g., schools) may acknowledge religious faith or symbols (e.g., a nativity scene).

The liberal forces (and Satanic forces) have had a lot of success in convincing many people and government entities that any and all expressions relating to God or faith is prohibited by our constitution and court rulings. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Yet, radical groups like the non-profit atheist organization "Freedom From Religion" tries to take out any expression even acknowledging the existence of God. The ACLU, Southern Poverty Law, and others also infringe upon our religious rights and speech.

Religious faith is the moral and ethical backbone of any well-adjusted country. Take that away and the country will eventually self-destruct. Even the mighty Roman Empire of old fell because of the internal moral and ethical corruption which weakened it.

Prayer Points:

1. We need to pray that religious convictions are respected and rights to the exercise thereof are protected by the courts.
2. The government actually should be encouraging and supporting religious faith expression, although not making laws to establish and enforce it, but also not censoring or suppressing it.
3. We need to take back "faith" in this country.