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Senator Orrin Hatch: The Wall of Separation Between Church and State Must Come Down

November 30, 2015 (2015-11-30T07:00:31+00:00) by [Hemant Mehta](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/author/hemant-mehta/)

In an [essay for the Washington Times](#), [Senator Orrin Hatch](#) (R-UT) explains why the separation of church and state needs to end:



[↪](#)

”

Simply put, **the idea of a rigid separation between church and state is without any basis in our history or laws.**

...

The conventional wisdom peddled by advocates for stringent exclusion of religion from the public sphere is that aggressive enforcement of their vision of the establishment clause enhances religious freedom. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. **The erroneous wall-of-separation doctrine narrows the role of religion in public discourse, fueling the view that religion is a private matter rather than a**

fundamental precept of American civil society and leading many to fall prey to the disturbing claim that religious freedom doesn't extend much further than the church door.

“

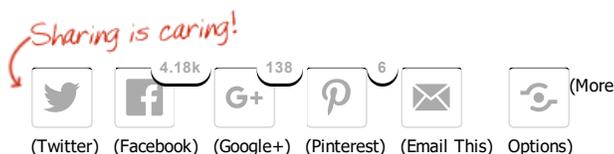
You would think a Mormon politician would understand the importance of the wall better than most.

Hatch argues that, under our current interpretation of the law, religious groups are put at a disadvantage, denied the “same opportunities afforded to secular counterparts.” Anyone who looks at the numbers knows that's not the case at all. Religious groups get incredible tax breaks, pastors get generous housing allowances, and church leaders have the ability to preach whatever their hearts desire. To get federal funding, however, the rule is that the group cannot proselytize with the money. It's not much to ask for — and yet Hatch still thinks the rules are too strict.

Even if church/state separation wasn't a founding principle of this nation, we would have had to adopt it anyway. With such a plurality of worldviews, it makes no sense to let the government choose one to promote, and religion has thrived as a result of that. In countries where there is a national religion, attendance is on the decline and most citizens don't take it very seriously. We're unique in our religiosity.

I would love to see Hatch's reaction if Christianity weren't in the majority. If the government promoted atheism or Islam instead of a religion close to his, I suspect he'd be saying something very different.

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About Hemant Mehta

Hemant Mehta is the editor of Friendly Atheist, appears on the [Atheist Voice](#)

[channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheAtheistVoice/) on YouTube, and co-hosts the uniquely-named [Friendly Atheist Podcast](#). You can read much [more about him here](#).

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EmmaDarian • 15 hours ago

Senator Hatch, please come stand with me before the statue of Mary Dyer at the Massachusetts State House. She is one the millions of victims of lack of separation between church and state. She and others were hanged on land that is now Boston Common by good Christians because she did not belong to the state religion. That sort of thing happens in any theocracy. Stand with me. I visit the statue often to remind myself how vitally important it is to protect the separation of church and state, which in turn protects us all, and protects YOUR religious freedom.

45 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Son of Obama → EmmaDarian • 10 hours ago

Judging by the chaos that followed the Pope's visit here, I highly doubt that Mormonism will be the "first choice" religion that will be backed by the US government. Then he will be crying, wanting things to go back to the way they were before the gov gets to tell everybody what their religion shall be

they were never the get get to see every body that their religion claim for.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Bruce Martin → Son of Obama • 4 hours ago

Exactly. In an open forum, the Mormon LDS church can compete with everyone else, including those of Satan and the Flying Spaghetti Monster. But if Hatch breaks the wall separating the state from religion, then Congress could pass a law that would allow that open forum only for "true" religions. Well, what fraction of Congress would want to say that after Jesus did his zombie act in Jerusalem, that he magically appeared to all the Jews in North America in 30 a.d. and told them that the Garden of Eden was in Missouri, and that he would be heading there soon himself. Congress would quickly ban Mormonism. So I don't think it's wise for Hatch to be pushing to make that an issue. I think most Mormons who live in any state other than Utah fully understand that they do NOT want religion put up for a vote.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



The Other Weirdo → EmmaDarian • 14 hours ago

That never happened, it's Communist Era propoganda, no real Christians would do that.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jared James → The Other Weirdo • 14 hours ago

Certainly no real Christians would break into a jail cell where, for example, some guy we'll call "Joe Smith" was being held, and extrajudicially execute him. That would never happen if we let Real Christians have a little more say in government.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



The Other Weirdo → Jared James • 13 hours ago

I think I saw this episode on Burn Notice.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Teto85 → Jared James • 2 hours ago

Joseph Smith was a con man and a pedophile.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jared James → Teto85 • an hour ago

Which has what to do with whether Orrin Hatch, the Senator from Salt Lake City, should have some passing familiarity with what happens when majority religion is given completely free rein over religious minorities?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Teto85 → Jared James • an hour ago

You're the one who brought up Joe Smith.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jared James → Teto85 • 8 minutes ago

Oh, I see the problem. You are way too dumb to understand politics, much less an argument by analogy.

My mistake.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Sotmone → The Other Weirdo • 10 hours ago

That's the "No True Scotsman" fallacy in all its glory, with an ad hominem thrown in.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



rascal barquecat → Sotmone · 8 hours ago

Helps to know the players, TOW is poe-ing.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



The Other Weirdo → Sotmone · 8 hours ago

And?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



MildJoe → The Other Weirdo · 8 hours ago

It's a logical fallacy. There are no 'real' Christians. It's a fallacious stupid argument. There are hundreds of sects of Christianity and most of them don't even consider each other 'real' Christians. Might as well just say anyone who gets a tattoo or shaves their face isn't a 'real' Christian.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



The Other Weirdo → MildJoe · 7 hours ago

I'm well aware of all that. Would it have helped to end each phrase with a period instead of a comma and add a TV to each?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Sotmone → The Other Weirdo · 5 hours ago

It renders the opinion moot.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



aergern → The Other Weirdo · 6 hours ago

Real christians lathered pig fat onto the feet of the leader of the Knights Templar and put them over and open fire as a way to torture information out of him and get him to admit to all kinds of things that were not true. So ... I firmly disagree that "real Christians" can and have been as sadistic as any other.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



The Other Weirdo → aergern · 5 hours ago

So ... I firmly disagree that "real Christians" can and have been as sadistic as any other.

This does not logically correspond to the rest of what you wrote. I think there is a missing period and an extraneous word in there somewhere.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



The_Wretched · 15 hours ago

Get back to me Orrin when the WhiteHouse has an "Office of Atheist Based Initiatives".

25 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



MildJoe → The_Wretched · 8 hours ago

Our whole government is basically atheist (secular) based via the first amendment. Or supposed to be. Despite what politicians say, if our government was a person and you asked if it believed in God, it would say "I see no reason to believe one exists or to base our laws on any establishment respecting that one does". Not that atheism can really have an initiative though, it's not a world view, but the lack of one.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



The_Wretched → MildJoe · 7 hours ago

Secular and atheist are rather different things.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



MildJoe → The_Wretched • 6 hours ago

They are different words yes, but they are essentially the same answer to the same question, just with accordance to different things. A secular government governs itself under the idea that a God or deity does not exist, as if religion is not true or should not rule. A secular government essentially has a lack of belief in a God's existence. The difference being one is a world view; atheism is simply the lack of believe in a god or religion, and secularism is the belief (or ideology) that a government should be run in such a manner. Although different, they are somewhat tied, and when aligned they are essentially the same thing in thought. One could however, be an atheist and not a secularist, while not believing in God they may feel religious ideology is what should be running the government for whatever the reasons. One could also be a theist and be an advocate for secularism. I'd say the former is pretty much non-existent, most atheists tend to be secularists for the most part, although I'd say there are a good deal of atheists who believe that we need religion for for stability's sake, because some people 'need it', they probably still don't want it making laws in government.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jared James → MildJoe • 5 hours ago

Not at all; secularism and atheism are the same answer to different questions.

The atheist hears "Do you know the One True God?" and answers "Who cares?"

The secular government hears "Do you govern by the rules of the One True God?" and answers "Who cares?"

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



MildJoe → Jared James • 2 hours ago

Which God is that? As far as I know every God has claimed to be the one true God, even the one's dead and gone. And I don't think an atheist would simply say "Who cares?" more like "Do we have any good reason to assume this God exists and that we should base our government on it?" And their answer is no.

I'm sure a lot of people would love to see their religion controlling the government, but pretty much no body would want a different religion controlling their government. That is the point of secularism, to respect no establishment of religion and to endorse no religion as being true, that way people can have freedom of religion, and freedom from it as well.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jackson Ayres → Jared James • 3 hours ago

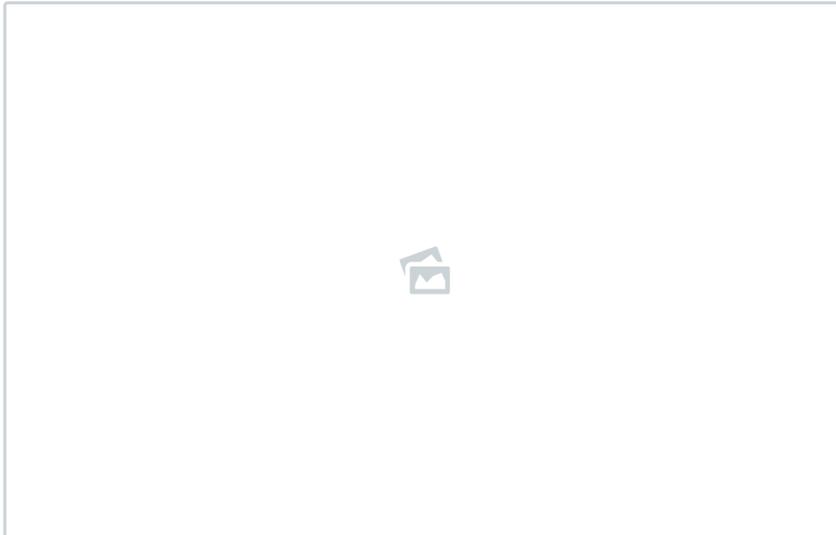
Very true, though secular governments tend to be atheistic in their practices, though I suppose you may be able to come up with a non-atheistic (perhaps deistic?) version of secularism if you twist things around enough. Regardless, they do tend to overlap.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Guest · 15 hours ago

A stale.....



...trying to save his delusion.

23 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



kelemi → Guest · 13 hours ago

These wingnuts make me miss Nixon and Goldwater.

8 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Artor → kelemi · 12 hours ago

Just work on your aim. With practice, you should be able to hit them 9 times out of 10.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



eirinnelson · 13 hours ago

Typical Republican. Decries the tyranny of ISIS as being a threat to democracy and freedom. Wants to institute Christian equivalent of Sharia law. All without so much as a twinge of their irony meter.

22 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Greg G. · 15 hours ago

We need a wall of separation between the government and Orrin Hatch.

20 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Tobias 27772 → Greg G. · 7 hours ago

A big ass wall !!

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Minh Dao · 14 hours ago

--



19 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Capt Dingleberry → Minh Dao · 10 hours ago

You know, he looked quite dapper in his Hitler Youth uniform...

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Alierias → Minh Dao · 4 hours ago

The resemblance between This cocoon and Emperor Belshazzar is chilling

 The resemblance between this ascrown and Emperor Trajan is chilling...

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jackson Ayres → Alerias • 3 hours ago

I'm not very good with photoshop, but an overlay of Sideous fits quite well.



1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jackson Ayres → Jackson Ayres • 2 hours ago

A s lightly better version.



^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Neil Carter • 14 hours ago

Wait, which church? His? I'd love to see him try to get the Latter Day Saints recognized as the official church of the United States.

18 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Doug105 → Neil Carter • 13 hours ago

Wouldn't make it off the senate floor.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Bruce Martin → Neil Carter • 4 hours ago

Neil, you're absolutely right. If Congress could say which religions are valid and which are not, how many Members of Congress would vote for the religion that says that God is an "exalted" human, and that we can all become Gods, with our own planets? Hatch would find the LDS Mormon church on the sidelines with the Festivus Pole. The Mormons are sincere that they believe their church is based on Jesus, but most Christians disagree with them. Good luck with that.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Bricabrac → Neil Carter • 5 hours ago

Well, to be fair, it's probably the first major church actually *founded* in the US, so it makes sense at least in that (and no, I can't believe I just used the term "makes sense" in conjunction with Mormonism)...

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jackson Ayres → Bricabrac • 3 hours ago

The pain will end eventually. Perhaps when you "enter one of the lower tiers of heaven".

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Ray Ingles • 14 hours ago

leading many to fall prey to the disturbing claim that religious freedom doesn't extend much further than the church door.

That's not the confusion. The issue is the way Hatch and others conflate *government power* with "public life". Business, entertainment, sexuality - people are free to have their religion inform their choices and actions in all these spheres, subject to a few limitations ensuring equal access for historically-disadvantaged groups. (Including minority religions, note.)

There's a hell of a lot more to "public life" than government action, and saying that limitations in that one area amount to major restrictions on religion in "public life" is disingenuous at best.

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



sornord • 15 hours ago

Just when you thought you'd heard every stupid thing these people could say they keep talking!

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Bricabrac → sornord • 5 hours ago

There will always be new stupid things.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jackson Ayres → Bricabrac • 2 hours ago

It's an endless font.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



NOGODZ20 • 13 hours ago

Fundie twerp advocating for the removal of the Establishment Clause.

And this is exactly why church and state are kept separate. Hatch is not much of a history aficionado, or he'd know that the varying xtian sects would persecute one another if that wall came down...just like they did in the past. His particular religious anthill would be a prime target.

12 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



abb3w → NOGODZ20 • 8 hours ago

Perhaps he's aware how much his anthill was a target even with the principle... precisely because of people who didn't accept it.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Esquilax • 14 hours ago

I would love to see Hatch's reaction if Christianity weren't in the majority.

The problem is that he and every other christian whinging about how this is a christian nation and advocating for theocratic government can't even envision such a possibility ever being real. They've lived so comfortably in their little privileged bubble that they've mistaken it for the only way things could ever be, but that time is coming to an end, and their majority is slowly diminishing.

This may be the last grab for power for them, but the sad truth is that if they actually got it, all they'd be doing is setting the stage for the next majority group to grab all the power for themselves and disadvantage the christians like Hatch in exactly the way they were seeking to disadvantage the rest of us.

12 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Ann Kah → Esquilax • 14 hours ago

YES! Well said. Now how can we explain that to Hatch and all his buddies?

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



andrea → Ann Kah • 10 hours ago

They are far too stupid to comprehend this. Pearls before swine. A complete, total waste of time.

Just flush their worthless asses out of our political sphere next cycle.

It's all we can do.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

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