

The framers and the faithful by steven waldman

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The author presents the big cheese embedded with the words " Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God" and sent to Jefferson by evangelical ministers as evidence of how much church-state separation is deeply favored by both political and religious big-wigs (33). According to him, the Evangelical Christians placed a strong conviction " that the greatest flowering of Christianity occurs without government support." Madison and his influential paper on the issue " Memorial and Remonstrance" have also been cited by the author and how this received support from the Baptists and religious radicals (36). This faith-supported political advocacy on religious freedom was countered by John Adams and his followers who vied for an institutionalized American church and imposed mandatory church contributions on citizens (37). Finally, over the years, religious freedom and church-state separation have become vague in American society. Indeed, the once-radical evangelicals are now one of the most politically involved denominations. The author cites among others the surprising evangelical support for Bush and how it led to his victory in the presidential race as evidence of how church and state eventually converged because of moral erosions (37-38). Christians have been compelled to " dive aggressively into the public realm in order to promote Christian values" which declined after religious freedom was instituted (Falwell et al. qt. in Waldman 38).

The strengths of the article include extensive and somewhat accurate historical knowledge. These greatly help aid readers in visualizing the struggle between church and state. Furthermore, the article does not air out claims without citing statements from authoritative sources like Benjamin Franklin, Madison himself, Baptist minister Rev. Leland, and theorists such as Falwell and colleagues. One can also see that the article is more or less

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objective and not one-sided since it gives both the merits of church-state separation and the merits of a Christian nation (i. e. a well-funded church). The article's weaknesses lie in its indirect thesis statement. The reader has to lump the entire article together to get what the author is trying to say. In addition, the detailed recounting of religious historical events tends to divert people from the real issue at hand. There are also some points which the author is also unable to get across clearly: church-goers and their priests or ministers are unavoidably citizens of the country too so they are bound by the government as much as they are bound by their church. This explains the inevitable intersection of church and state functions. Yet instead, the author focuses on the need to protect and promote the values of Christianity as the primary factors propelling the church to use the government.