

# Should there be separation of church and state?

[Religion](#), [Catholic](#)



Ancient Greek civilization and culture continues to be one of the landmarks of world history because of the invaluable contribution that the Greeks have made in virtually all areas of human endeavor. However, civilization is not static and Greek society was swept into the same historical process that led all societies to the modern world of capitalism.

What is distinct about Greek society today is the direct role that the church plays in the realm of politics, where most other countries have developed forms of government that excluded the direct participation of religious entities. What is the church's role in the Greek state of affairs? Should there be a separation of powers of church and state in the context of Greece?

#### The Orthodox Church in Greek Society

The Orthodox Church traces its roots to the Orthodox Church based in Constantinople. It is the most dominant religion in Greece, claiming influence over 90% of the country's population, a very wide political base that could determine the winner in national elections. The subsequent nationalization of the Church further institutionalized its political power and created a culture/national identity where traditional church values are the core (Geographic 2004).

Like most church hierarchies, the Greek Orthodox Church has always played as a conservative political force. It supported the monarchy and also aligned itself with the right wing military junta in the 1960's in order to wage a common battle against a common threat - communism (Maniatis 2002). It also perceives pluralism and other liberal ideas as a challenge to its monopoly in the cultural sphere and has vigorously opposed such influences.

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It's involvement in politics resulted in factionalism but nevertheless, it has undeniable influence over government policies and programs (Geographic 2004). Currently, Orthodox Church officials are actually employed by the government through the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs which incidentally, also manages the properties of the church (BBC 2005). Recently, scandals rocked the Orthodox Church with allegations of embezzlement, smuggling and bribing of judges.

### On the Separation of Church and State

From the perspective of a person outside looking in, I believe that there should be a separation of church and state. This position is based on the premises that the Church (or religion in general), especially if it is conservative promotes an ideology that preserves the traditional way of life and the status quo in society. If the church is part of governance, naturally it ensures the consistency of laws, policies and programs with the tenets of the church.

For instance, because homosexuality and divorce is contrary to Church teachings, it leaves out the agenda of women and gay's rights. Because the Orthodox Church opposes multi-culturalism, it promotes religious and cultural discrimination to governance. Because science is contrary to church teachings, how then can scientific study be actively promoted by government institutions?

As such, government can not effectively respond to the breadth of social issues first through objective study followed by the institution of measures

appropriate with empirical evidence if there is no actual separation of church and state.

Finally, if the church also functions as part of Civil Society, or as a check and balance to government, it can not do so if it is employed by that institution with its officials actually receiving salary from it. It would be a case of conflict of interest and undermines the interest of the public.

#### List of References

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