

Olivia

Student Essay Contest

31 July 2017

The Golden Triangle of Freedom

The Founders Intent for Religion and Government

In America today many people are attempting to remove Christianity from every aspect of the government including public schools in the name of "separation of church and state." Ironically they are replacing it with an atheistic belief called secular humanism, which is a religion both by definition and by Supreme Court ruling (Looy 49). This illogical and unconstitutional interpretation of the First Amendment clearly contradicts the Founding Fathers' intent for virtue, faith, and freedom in America. This principle, which Os Guinness calls "the golden triangle of freedom," was the Founders' secret to sustainable liberty, and it simply states that freedom requires virtue, which requires faith, which in turn requires freedom (99).

The first part of the golden triangle is that freedom requires virtue (Guinness 108). According to Benjamin Franklin, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom," and, "Laws without morals are in vain," (Quotes on Liberty and Virtue). James Madison wrote in a letter to his cousin Zabdiel, "The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure virtue," and asserted that without it the people could not obtain a lasting liberty (qtd. in Guinness 109). While no people can be governed and protected by virtue alone, a free people cannot be governed without it. John Adams recognized this when he avowed, "We have no government armed with powers capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition,

revenge or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net,” (qtd. in Guinness 117). The Founding Fathers realized that without virtue America could not remain both secure and free.

The second part of the golden triangle is that virtue requires faith (Guinness 117). In his farewell address George Washington declared, “Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles,” (qtd. in Metaxas 65). Religion, not regulation, the Founders understood, would make America virtuous and free. Why? The reason is simple. Unlike expedient compliance with regulations, religion is rooted in reverent submission and loving service. Love and reverence have the power to do what law and regulation cannot—they cause people to choose right over wrong regardless of external constraint. Religion, therefore, is the foundation of virtue.

The third part of the golden triangle is that faith requires freedom (Guinness 123). The First Amendment guarantees this right to all Americans when it states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” When the First Amendment is viewed through the Founders’ intent for virtue, faith, and freedom, it is clear that they were not attempting to remove religion from government, or from schools, or from anywhere, nor were they attempting to establish a particular religion or any religion at all. This is exactly what the First Amendment forbids. The Founding Fathers were not trying to separate church and state in that way. Rather than giving the government freedom from religion, they were giving us freedom for it, and we alone have the power and responsibility to keep that freedom alive for ourselves, for the world, and for future generations by living lives of virtue and faith.

Perhaps the greatest illustration of the golden triangle of freedom is found in the Pledge of Allegiance: "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The foundation of our republic and our promise to the world is liberty and justice for all, but liberty, justice, and equality cannot coexist in the absence of virtue. We also find in the Pledge of Allegiance the source of our virtue and our unity—we are one nation under God. That is the Founders' intent for religion, and that is the secret to keeping our republic.

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