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A secular government is the only fair government for all.

To deviate from it, is to start down a path toward misery and oppression.

History has taught us this, again and again.

And those who do not remember history are doomed to repeat it.

The reason the Founding Fathers wrote into the constitution, a ban on religious tests for office, and a ban on congress passing laws favoring any religion over another, and a guarantee of the right of every individual citizen to their own religious liberty, is that the Founding Fathers had just seen hundreds of years of wars and crimes caused by governments favoring religion. Europe had been wracked with sectarian wars and theocratic state atrocities. Europe looked like the Middle East.

Our Founding Fathers saw what it was like to live under sharia law. And they banned it.

The irony today is that the state legislatures who are banning sharia law now? ... are doing so while attempting to install and enforce, sharia law.

In their ignorance, they don't know that the word "sharia" simply means any law derived from revelation rather than human legislation. The law in the Bible is also *literally called* sharia law. The word by itself actually does not distinguish Islamic law from Biblical law. All revealed law is sharia law.

So anyone who seeks to enforce biblical law at the state level, is enforcing sharia law.

And in fact, there really isn't much that is in *Islamic* sharia law, that isn't in the *biblical* law, including stoning as a form of death penalty, and the death penalty for homosexuality, the death penalty for blasphemy, the death penalty for a woman having sex before marriage, the death penalty for picking up a stick on Saturday.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" comes from the Bible, not the Koran.

So when Christians in America legislate laws against selling alcohol, on certain days or in certain counties, as they still do to this very day, they are enacting... sharia law. In fact, alcohol is illegal under *Islamic* sharia law. Yet there is no law against it in the Bible. So Christians who back blue laws, are actually enforcing not just sharia law, but *Islamic* sharia law!

All other Christian attempts to use the state, as a weapon, to violate the human rights and religious liberty of American citizens, are likewise enacting sharia law.

Christians have repeatedly tried to outlaw cursing and erotica and blasphemy. Guess what that is? Islamic sharia law. They have tried outlawing homosexuality and gay marriage. Guess what that is? Islamic sharia law. They have tried outlawing women's choices, based on the Christians' own peculiar superstitions. Guess what that is? Islamic sharia law.

The fact that Christians don't realize that they are actually *promoting* the legislation of sharia law while claiming to oppose it, is chilling to see.

In accordance with Islamic sharia law, Christians want public state prayer services. Yet when legislators in a state that sponsors legislative prayer walk out of a *Hindu* prayer, or

a Satanist's prayer, or a Muslim prayer, *then* they understand why it is wrong to start a legislative session with a prayer.

Remove the plank from your own eye before removing the splinter from another's: if you can see why it is *wrong* to be leading our state governments in Hindu or Muslim prayer, you should realize that leading our state governments in Christian prayer is no better. It's just another kind of sharia law.

If the state were to outlaw bacon, because eating bacon is immoral on both Islam and Judaism, and it is, everyone would agree that that would be violating people's religious liberty, and entangling the government in religious oppression.

But that means no *other* religious sharia law, biblical or otherwise, should be legislated, for the same reason.

You have the religious liberty, the right, to follow your own religious law. You can refuse to eat bacon.

You can expel people who eat bacon from your churches, synagogues, or mosques if you please.

But the moment you use the weapons of the state to force someone *else* to not eat bacon, even though they do not practice your religion? ... you have just become an enforcer of sharia law. You have just created a theocracy. You are now a tyrant. And the enemy of liberty.

This means laws against serving alcohol on Sunday, are tyranny. They are forcing *other* people to follow *your* religion. That is a violation of human rights. That is a destruction of religious liberty. That is theocracy.

You have the right not to drink alcohol on Sunday, or even to not sell alcohol in your *own* stores on Sunday. That's *your* religious liberty. But you do *not* have the right to force others to obey your religion's sharia law. That's *their* religious liberty.

For this reason, a secular government is the only government that is fair and just.

This is why *outlawing gay marriage* is sharia law. And a violation of religious liberty, not a protection of it. If someone's religion recognizes gay marriages (and many churches today do), then by taking away *their* right to carry out such marriages, you are depriving them of their religious liberty. You are forcing *other people* to obey your religion.

The Golden Rule should forbid you even contemplating that. If your Lord and Savior commanded you to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, then you should agree, it is as wrong of you to force others to obey your religion, as it is of others to force you to obey theirs.

Muslims don't get the right to force Christians never to eat bacon. Christians don't get the right to force Unitarians never to marry gay people.

That's equality. That's fairness. That's Justice.

That's secularism.

Our lessons from the past, all the evils once inflicted on people by state theocracies in England and France and Italy and Germany and beyond, teach us that we must have a state that guarantees equal protection and equal rights to all citizens, a state that guarantees no citizen will fear discrimination, simply because they have a different religion than those who happen to be in office.

Thomas Jefferson denied the existence of miracles. He knew he was a heretic by the standards of most churches. So he fought to create a nation in which he would be free

to believe as he wished. He thus coined the idea of our needing a wall of separation between church and state, so that his rights would be protected, his liberty would be protected, and he knew he could not count on that remaining the case, unless he wrote into the constitution, a guarantee that *everyone's* rights would be protected, *everyone's* liberty would be protected.

And that meant a government that was *neutral* with regard to all religious rules and declarations.

That is why in the articles of the constitution it says no religious test may ever be required for holding office in our government.

That meant even an atheist, even a Muslim, had the same rights to be elected or appointed to offices as any other citizen. No one had ever done that before. It was the first time in history.

That is the only kind of state that is free. Anything else is a theocracy, anything else, is being subject to sharia law.

This is why Jefferson wrote, and I quote:

"...it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. ... "

This is why even John Adams himself praised the participation of atheists in the Revolutionary armies, as equals pursuing a state where they would be treated as equals.

But, it is often now being asked, what about the claim that a secular government, that treats all religions equally, should not be allowed to compel a Christian business to

serve a gay customer, that doing so violates the religious liberty of the Christian business owner?

In 1878, the Supreme Court held that, I quote:

"Laws are made for the government of *actions*, and while they *cannot* interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices. Suppose one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship, would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which he lived could not interfere to prevent a sacrifice? Can a man excuse his practices [that are contrary to law] because of his religious belief? To permit this would be to make the professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land, and in effect to permit every citizen to become a law unto himself."

And we the people, have decided, that equality under the law, means equality in public commerce. If you choose to engage in public commerce, you must obey the secular laws of that secular sphere. You must be licensed. You must follow safety regulations. And you must cater to all citizens equally.

You have the choice not to serve anyone, to disengage from public commerce. But once you have chosen to engage in public commerce, you do not have the right to disobey civil law. Civil law, supersedes sharia law.

But a non-commercial, religious service, you *can* provide according to your own sharia law. A minister in a particular church *can* refuse to marry a gay couple, just as a minister in a particular church can expel any member for eating bacon. Indeed, barely ten years ago, a church in Ohio was still refusing to marry *interracial* couples. Legally!

But the moment you start *selling* your service to the *public*, and not *providing* your service to your congregation or faith community, you become a business, and subject to the laws governing public commerce.

What gets overlooked in all this is that if marriage were *not* a state sponsored and therefore secular contract, this would not even be an issue. No church could tell other churches who they can or can't marry, and any church could marry anyone they wanted.

And there wouldn't even be any legal consequences to being married, so the state wouldn't even have to be involved at all. This is the case even now: anyone can marry anyone in a church. Or any thing. Yes, you can even marry a tree in your garden. Or a tea pot. It's totally legal. And you have total religious freedom to do that, or not.

It's just that, nothing results from that. You gain no new rights or privileges from it. Just a piece of paper that says you are married now. So you can marry a sex toy if you want to.

But no one cares about that. What they care about, are all the rights and privileges we the people have voted the *state*, *not* the church, to have power to grant to those who are married. And that makes marriage a *secular* institution, not a religious one.

Once you empower the state to grant rights and privileges to people, the state must be neutral. It cannot prohibit those rights and privileges to citizens of one religion, but allow them for another. It must grant the same rights and privileges, on the same terms, to all citizens, of *all* religions. Equally.

That's what it means to have a secular government.

A government that is *not* like Iran, assigning special rights and privileges only to people of the *favored* religions, and denying those rights and privileges to people of other religions.

We are not a theocracy. We are not a tyranny. We believe in religious liberty. And that requires the state to treat all religions equally. Including religions that believe in marrying gay couples.

If the state must confer secular rights and privileges on a person married by one church, it must confront those same rights and privileges on a person married by another church.

What about a church that marries people to their tea pots! Someone will say. Will the state be required to confer those rights and privileges upon tea pots!

Obviously not. Because marriage is a contract. Contracts are by definition between persons. And by common law, only consenting persons. So the secular contract that we call marriage does not attach to marrying your pets or furniture. Or children or the insane for that matter.

What about marrying *lots of people*? Someone will then ask.

But we the people have only decided to create a civil marriage contract for two persons.

If the voters ever decided to create contracts for more than two, then there will be marriage contracts for more than two. Welcome to democracy.

The same principles apply to prayer. The government must be neutral. It can't pick winners and losers in religion. It can't favor one religion over another. And this protects everyone, all citizens are then equal.

The same principles apply to abortion. The government can't base its laws on religious beliefs that can't be demonstrated with secular evidence. And there is no secular evidence that persons can exist without minds, or that minds can exist without brains.

Therefore, the belief that fetal cells are persons is purely religious. It therefore cannot dictate civil law.

You are free not to have an abortion on religious grounds, just as a Hindu is free not to murder a cow on religious grounds.

And again, just as Christians would never allow a Hindu to force the United States government not to serve burgers to its soldiers, because the Hindu "objects" to his tax dollars being used to support the murder of cows,

... So Christians should *also* not claim the special right to force the United States government not to pay for the *abortions* of its soldiers, because the Christian objects to his tax dollars being used to support the murder of fetal cells.

If the Christian gets to do that, then justice entails, the Hindu gets to do that, and then *everyone* gets to force the government to obey its religious dictates. Then it's sharia law all around.

Then someone will say, but doesn't government neutrality mean the state should fund religious schools? To the contrary, it can only fund neutral schools, not religious schools. It can fund a comparative religions course. But not a course teaching a single religion. Public schools have to treat all equally, just as the courts have to treat all equally, and the military has to treat all equally, and public hospitals have to treat all equally.

You can vehemently denounce as profoundly immoral, the eating of bacon, the drinking of beer, abortions, interracial marriages, the teaching of birth control, girls sleeping with girls, using your god's name in vain, drawing pictures of your saints. You can denounce all of those things, and never do them yourself. That's your protected right. That is your religious liberty.

You can also cajole and persuade and harangue your neighbors to follow your sharia law, all you want to, if they want to listen.

But you can't use the weapons of the state to compel your neighbors to *obey* your sharia law.

And that's what it means to live in a secular state.

So if you think using the state to enact sharia law is an abomination, you have to agree, all sharia laws must be rejected. The state must be neutral in matters of religious faith and religious law.

That is the only way we have ended the horrors and wars that tore our world apart centuries ago, and that continue to tear apart the Middle East today. Our founding fathers saw the light. They knew that if we allowed the state to enact whatever sharia law was favored by whichever sect gained power in any given year, soon it would not be the sharia law they agreed with. Soon it would be the horrors that once ruined their world. Soon it would bring back every evil they sought to escape.

We should understand the genius of what they wrought. And seek to keep it safe.

If you don't want to be subject to sharia law, then you have only one way to ensure that: a secular state.

Accept no substitute.