

# Different beliefs make us a wonderful society

“What’s at risk in the current corrosive atmosphere is a long-standing covenant between believers and nonbelievers in which secularists live with public religious appeals and imagery in exchange for self-regulating moderation on the part of the faithful,” Jon Meacham recently wrote in Time magazine.

“It’s an ancient and wise accommodation that allows religion and politics to inform each other without prompting an eschatological war between church and state.”

There are only four ways people decide whether something is right. The emotive theory states good and bad are decided at the individual level.

Cultural relativism claims right and wrong simply reflect societal norms. Absolutism holds that good and bad are grounded in a reality outside the individual or the culture.

Objective relativism declares that right and wrong are determined by what provides the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

The challenge we face in this country is that we represent a blend of all these ideologies. We value the rugged individual. We also believe there is something deeply distinctive about our affinity for entrepreneurialism and democratic ideals.

A belief in, and reverence for, the Absolute has always been part of our heritage; even our money proudly displays “In God We Trust.”

Finally, our laws are firmly rooted in utilitarianism. Watch what happens when your house is sitting where we want to build the next interstate highway. Diversity – even in how we go about determining right and wrong – is one of our defining national strengths.

I believe in God, but I have no desire to live in a theocracy. There were very good reasons the framers sought to keep church and state separate. “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

Still good advice.

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