

AVOIDANCE, ACCOMMODATION, & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Religious Liberty—God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it.

Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.

A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal.

The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion.

A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Relevant Scripture passages: Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19

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BY RICHARD LAND

<i>Position</i>	Separationist “Avoidance” Position	Accommodationist “Accommodation” Position	Neo-establishment “Acknowledgment” Position
<i>Definition</i>	Seeks “avoidance” of religious expression in government locales (courts, schools, etc.)	Seeks government “accommodation” of individuals’ rights to express religious beliefs in government locales	Seeks government “acknowledgment” for, and on behalf of, “the people” at government expense
<i>Applied to religious expression</i>	Would ban the wearing of Muslim headscarves, yarmulkes, or any other religious symbols by students or staff in public schools or employees in the workplace; would bar religious displays in such locales	Would accommodate but not require the wearing of any religious symbols in schools or in the workplace, according to the dictates of each person’s conscience; would also accommodate religious displays initiated by students in schools and by employees in the workplace	Would give preference to symbols of the majority religion and would allow government-sponsored religious displays of the majority faith in schools and employer-sponsored displays of the majority faith in the workplace
<i>Applied to public prayer at public school events</i>	Opposes government accommodated or acknowledged prayer in public schools, even by students	Would seek government accommodation of each student-initiated, student-led, and student-content-dictated prayer according to the dictates of individual consciences in public schools, protecting both religious majority and religious minority students’ right to pray as they so choose	Seeks government acknowledgment of student-initiated, student-led prayer in public schools, which could allow religious majority students to determine prayer and exclude religious minority students from participation
<i>Applied to public displays of religious monuments or symbols</i>	Opposes manger scenes or religious displays (e.g., the Ten Commandments) in government locales, such as courthouse lawns	Allows manger scenes or religious displays (e.g., the Ten Commandments) in government locales, such as courthouse lawns, as long as they are privately funded and no community religious group is excluded from displaying its symbols as well	Allows tax-funded religious displays in government locales determined by the majority either nationally or locally, county by county