

GREAT DEBATES

TOUGH QUESTIONS / SMART HISTORY

CHURCH & STATE

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SERIES OBJECTIVES

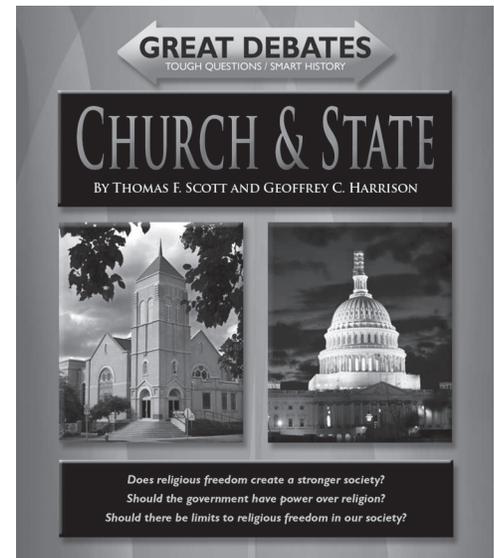
The **GREAT DEBATES** series was conceived, written and designed to offer educators a versatile, thought-provoking classroom tool. Each book focuses on a theme in contemporary American culture and follows it from the country's earliest days to the present.

This provides history and context to the issues they hear and read about today—at home, at school, and in the media. The authors have stopped at crucial moments along the cultural timeline to examine the discussions surrounding this topic. Many have a ring of familiarity to them—they echo the debates on these issues today!

Each title in the **GREAT DEBATES** series is structured along similar lines. The introductory chapter (**WE HAVE ISSUES**) supplies young readers with a jumping-off point for the issue addressed by the book. It also clarifies the meaning and ground rules of “debate” within an academic environment, and explains the purpose of the Make Your Case sidebars in **CHAPTERS 1** through **5**.

As much as possible, **CHAPTERS 1** through **5** are organized along chronological lines. Each chapter title is actually a “big question” that was being debated at that point in history. At the bottom of the opening spread for each chapter are the “big answers” to those questions—one assuming the **AFFIRMATIVE SIDE** and the other the **NEGATIVE SIDE**, as would be the case in an academic debate. These answers not only serve as examples of how a classroom debate (or discussion) might proceed. They send a critical message to students—that the heated arguments they hear on this issue today have actually been going on for centuries.

Each of the first five chapters features two **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. Each of these sidebars presents a quote on the subject matter by an opinion-maker of the day. The quote is followed by a brief analysis, which concludes with a question. This question is meant to stimulate class discussion or—if your class engages in some type of debate or forensics activity—serve as a possible topic. In most cases, students will be able to formulate good answers to these questions. If, as an educator, you feel they require additional context or



need guidance to stay on point, this Teacher’s Guide provides you with short responses that you can tailor to your own style or classroom environment.

Likewise, this Guide provides you with responses to the other questions posed in the book. At the end of **CHAPTERS 1** through **5**, a **NOW CONSIDER THIS** paragraph acts as a brief summation. It also presents a new aspect to the issue, and poses a question similar to those in the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. In **CHAPTER 7 (POINT – COUNTERPOINT)**, readers examine historic quotes on both sides of a theme covered earlier in the book. These quotes are accompanied by a brief analysis and historical context, and then followed by a question. As with the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars, you will find helpful answers in this Guide for the **NOW CONSIDER THIS** and **POINT – COUNTERPOINT** features.

CHAPTER 6 (FIND YOUR VOICE) provides students with questions and answers. The questions address 3 current-day debates, while the answers provide information and viewpoints designed to help readers form their own opinions. This Guide does not provide any further information or suggestions on these subjects; the authors feel that this is where you can encourage students to cut loose and take control of the conversation. As a moderator, however, you may want to read the conclusion of **CHAPTER 6** . If your students need a spark of encouragement, you will find it here!



CHAPTER 1

MAKE YOUR CASE

How might Americans in the 1790s have responded to Washington’s idea?

- Despite the lack of an official state religion, America in the 1790s was still a very religious country. In fact, many churchgoers of that time were annoyed by the overly rational approach to religion by the leading writers of the day. By the early 1800s, this groundswell had become a full-fledge revival movement, led by Protestant ministers, which historians call the Second Great Awakening. Their goal was to fix the evils in society before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Does having no “official” religion keep a country from suffering through religious wars?

- Throughout history, in countries around the world, the combination of religious diversity and a steady stream of immigrants has been a recipe for religious conflict, sometimes on a massive scale. One of the most remarkable aspects of the American experiment—which was built on these two dynamics—is that there is almost no record of major religious conflicts in the United States. The separation of church and state certainly played a role in this story.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

Why might some Muslims feel threatened by a country with no official religion?

- At various times in history, the relationship between Christianity and Islam has been a bloody one. Muslim armies have invaded European countries and Christian armies have invaded Islamic countries. Although these events took place centuries ago, the differences between these two religions are never far from the minds of their leaders. Although America has no state religion, it does have more Christians than any other country on earth.

CHAPTER 2

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should our government encourage religious values, even if it cannot endorse any one religion?

- Organized religions encourage the creation of a social fabric, which binds everyone within a religion—and also from religion to religion—with a fundamental understanding of right and wrong. In this respect, the Bible and other religious texts can be viewed as “How-To” books for living a decent and moral life. The fear of America’s 19th century leaders is that, without some sort of spiritual instruction, people might end up acting in indecent or immoral ways—and not understanding why this was wrong.

MAKE YOUR CASE

How might an official religion in the U.S. have taken advantage of its power?

- People who attend religious services tend to take what they hear very seriously, and often act upon those words. If America had an official religion, then its houses of worship would become places where the state’s viewpoints or commands could be spread under the guise of “God’s will.” In countries where the church has functioned as a mouthpiece for the state, there have been countless episodes of religious conflict and violence—often on a catastrophic scale.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

Why is it important for the Supreme Court to be able to “change its mind” as the times change?

- Social change can be very slow or come with incredible speed. In either case, in matters affected by the Constitution, the U.S. Supreme Court must have the flexibility to move the country forward in ways that reflect American ideals. One of the greatest challenges to the court is the development of technology and how it changes our culture. In its eyes, movies went from being a business to being a form of art, which gave it First Amendment protection. Rules are not made to be broken, as the old saying goes, but a responsible court should not be afraid to reverse its stance on issues when the facts clearly indicate it should consider doing so.

CHAPTER 3

MAKE YOUR CASE

In what ways might Hart’s remarks have influenced Catholic voters the next time he was up for election?

- This is a dilemma many politicians face when their constituents hold strong beliefs that are at odds with the rest of the country’s. Had Catholic voters felt Hart “abandoned” them, they could have voted him out of office. On the other hand, voters who were suspicious of Hart because he was a devout Catholic, might have been more inclined to vote for him. As it turned out, he won the next election easily, and remained in office until his death in 1976. Hart was so admired that, when the Senate’s new building opened in the 1980s, it was named in his honor.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Is Graham’s view that the majority is “punished” by the First Amendment a fair one?

- Not getting your way—even if your way benefits or responds to the needs of the most people—is different than being punished. Other issues must always be weighed before deciding what is good for the majority is fine for the minority, too. Democracy is not a popularity contest. It is a system of government designed to take into account the individual rights of every person.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

In which classes would it be appropriate to discuss belief systems such as Creationism?

- Creationism is a belief system, not a competing scientific theory to evolution. Therefore, discussions of Creationism are more appropriate for classrooms where cultural beliefs are examined. Creationism would be appropriate for subjects such as Social Studies, for example, because it reflects the views and beliefs of a significant percentage of individuals in American society.

CHAPTER 4

MAKE YOUR CASE

How might the American public have reacted had Kennedy gone against American interests on instructions from the Pope?

- The public would have been extremely upset, as would members of Kennedy’s own political party and administration. Because there is a system for opposing and even unseating a U.S. president, the likelihood is that Kennedy would have been dragged through impeachment proceedings.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should a politician's religious beliefs come into play during an election?

- Even though elected officials cannot make laws that favor their religion once they take office, they are within in their rights to discuss their religious beliefs on the campaign trail. This helps voters understand their values and concerns. Of course, once a candidate's religion is on the table, the candidate's opponent is also free to comment on it. Because of the sensitivity to religious issues in the U.S.—and because there is separation between church and state—most politicians prefer to keep religion out of the public debate, especially in state and national elections.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

If religions in America could officially endorse candidates, how might this change this nature of political campaigns?

- The greatest impact of a rules change like this probably would not be on political campaigns. It would be on organized religion in America. Religions in the U.S. are exempt from almost all taxes. Whatever money they make or collect, and property they own, is free from taxation. If they were allowed to use that money to influence elections, it would almost certainly be taxed, costing religions billions of dollars they now use to benefit their followers and help others in need.

CHAPTER 5

MAKE YOUR CASE

What might someone visiting the Kentucky courthouses find offensive about the framed Ten Commandments?

- The Ten Commandments may be a simple set of rules that everyone would want to live by, but they come from the Old Testament of the Bible, which is specific to particular religions and not to others. To post the Ten Commandments in a courthouse might offend or concern someone of a different faith who has come to that building for justice. Some have made the point that, had the founding fathers believed that the Ten Commandments belonged in a courthouse, they would have listed them in the Constitution.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should discussions of faith have a place in deciding issues such as funding of social programs or aid to foreign countries?

- The money America spends on social programs and aid to foreign countries comes out of the pockets of citizens in the form taxes. For the government to spend that money in ways that favor one recipient over another based on faith would be unconstitutional. Indeed, in many cases, the

government must look past religion and determine whether funding a program will serve the common good. Likewise, when America decides on aid packages to foreign governments, it must consider the effectiveness of its leaders and the welfare of its people—not the religions they follow. Needless to say, when religion becomes part of the discussion (which it often does) it can make these decisions incredibly complex.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

If this happened, would it be right to remove the word “God” and keep the song as our national anthem?

- In 2013, the Swiss government actually decided to do this! God and heaven are mentioned in Switzerland’s national anthem. The country held a contest to rewrite the lyrics and remove these references. So, it is entirely possible that this could happen in the United States—which, like Switzerland, is religiously neutral. Of course, when Americans sing the national anthem before public events, they almost never get to the third verse, so there is a little less urgency, and not as spirited a debate—yet. What would the debate look like, however, if our national anthem were changed from The Star Spangled Banner to God Bless America? as some people have suggested?

CHAPTER 7

How might Franklin’s dim view of religion have swayed others when it came time to approve the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

- Franklin believed in God, and that good deeds would be rewarded and bad deeds punished. However, he did not like organized religions because he felt that they did not always promote moral behavior, and that they created divisions between people that led to conflict and violence. Even so, he was careful not to criticize the faith of others. Franklin was perhaps the most famous and influential public figure of his time. His views on religion and religious tolerance were well known, and likely showed other founding fathers that a country guaranteeing freedom of religion could be smart and strong.

Is withholding tax dollars from schools that teach a specific religion a form of prejudice?

- Legally, it is not. In fact, an argument could be made that spending tax dollars on parochial schools might be a form of prejudice against students who don’t attend those schools. The U.S. government does not collect taxes from schools affiliated with religious organizations as it would from other businesses. Theoretically, the money these schools are allowed to withhold from the government replaces the funds they might otherwise receive, as public schools do. And that is money they are free to spend however they like.

How well has the position of the founding fathers on church and state held up since the 1700s?

- Some would say this bold experiment has worked out beautifully. They would point out that all these years later Americans are still free to worship as they please, but are still prevented from imposing their views on others. Those who feel that the separation of church and state has not worked out as planned might point to the fact that freedom of religion should include more freedom to promote their religion in public—and because they can't, they are being prevented from worshiping freely. Another viewpoint on the church and state debate concerns the potential for growth of religious extremism in the United States. Should the Constitution protect religious groups that accept or promote violence as a means of expressing their beliefs?