

Christians have always struggled with the issue of the separation of Church and State. It was the lack of a proper separation that led the pilgrims and others like them to come to America seeking religious freedom.

Unfortunately, they often meant freedom for themselves, and not for others who disagreed with them. Roger Williams, for example, was banished from Massachusetts when he became a Baptist. He used his banishment to establish Rhode Island Colony. This colony became the first state to recognize religious liberty for all.

The Founding Fathers wrestled with this issue when they met in Philadelphia to write the Constitution. Many Americans were concerned about the new government, and insisted that a Bill of Rights be added to the Constitution (the first 10 amendments).

The first of these states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

This article seems clear. It prohibits Congress (the legislative branch of the government) from establishing a State religion or church.

But since its ratification, this amendment has been the subject of many debates and decisions by the Courts.

The Foundation

In 1796, the U.S. Supreme Court stated, *“By our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religious and all denominations of Christians are placed upon the same equal footing.”*

Ruggles v. Winmiller

In 1811, the Court stated, *“What ever strikes at the root of Christianity tends manifestly to the dissolution of civil government..”*

People v. Ruggles

In 1844 the Court asked, *“Why may not the Bible and especially the New Testament, be read and taught as divine revelation in the schools? Where can the purest form of principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the New Testament?”*

Vital v. Giard

In 1892, the Court declared, *“No purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation, state or national, because this is a religious people. . . . This is a Christian nation.”*

US v Holy Trinity Church

The Court reached this conclusion after reviewing volumes of primary sources, ranging in diversity from the commission of Christopher Columbus to the charters and constitutions of several states, the words of the Declaration of Independence, the celebration of Christian holidays, and the many public demonstrations of faith in public life (such as opening Congressional sessions with prayer).

In 1931, Supreme Court Justice reviewed the Holy Trinity Case, and reaffirmed that **“Americans are a Christian people.”**

The Falling Away

Thomas Jefferson was one of our greatest Presidents, but he was not a Bible-believing Christian. Some Baptists in New England were concerned about their religious freedom if he were elected president. He wrote them a letter of assurance in 1802, stating:

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between a man and his God; that he owes no account to none other for his worship...[I affirm] the decision of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting thereof thus

building a wall of separation between church and state.”

This statement was intended to show that Baptists (and all other Christian denominations) had nothing to fear from a Jefferson Presidency. The First Amendment created a wall to keep the State out of the Church. He affirmed **“freedom of religion”** but the Courts have turned this around to mean **“freedom from religion.”**

In 1947, the Court stated, *“The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state. This wall must be kept high and impregnable.”*

Everson v. Board of Education

The Court applied the First Amendment to the States, and has since that date regularly ruled on religious issues in direct violation of the First Amendment.

In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court using this “wall of separation” concept, ruled against the use of a written prayer in public schools, stating:

“We think that by using its public school system to encourage recitation of the Regents' prayer, the State of New York has adopted a practice wholly inconsistent with the Establishment Clause. There can, of course, be no doubt that New York's program of daily classroom invocation of God's blessings as prescribed in the Regents' prayer is a religious activity.”

Engel v. Vitale

The prayer in question stated: *“Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessing upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.”*

In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Bible reading in the public school, agreeing with atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair that *“If portions of the New Testament were read without explanation, they could be and had been, psychologically harmful to the child.”*

Abington v. Shemp / Murray v. Cudet

In 1982, the Court ruled that Kentucky could not force the posting of the 10 Commandments in public school classrooms. The Court feared that, *"If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all, it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments."*

Stone v. Graham

This attitude is far different than that of our founding fathers. Consider the words of President John Quincy Adams, for example:

"The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code... laws essential to the existence of men in society and most of which have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any code of laws."

Where has the current doctrine of "the separation of church and state" brought us? Let's let one of our founding fathers answer:

"All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible." – Noah Webster

The Future: Ruin or Revival

For the first 350 years of America, **Christianity** was the dominant religion: Christians believe: that there is a God; that this God created us; that He has given us laws to guide our lives; that He has given us unalienable rights including the right to life, and that one day all of us will give an account of our lives to Him (Final Judgment).

All these biblical principles are being replaced by the religion of **secular humanism**, which teaches: Man is the center of his universe (there is no God); that

we evolved; that there are no absolutes (no right or wrong); and life ends with death (no final judgment).

Christians have allowed this to happen! We have been sleeping, when we need to be working. My friend, it is time to *"awake out of sleep"* (Romans 13:11). It is my prayer that we do so before it is too late.

"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee." Psalm 85:6

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THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE



"There is a time for all things, a time to preach and a time to pray, but those times have passed away. There is a time to fight, and that time has now come."

–Rev. Peter Muhlenberg announcing his decision to fight for America's Freedom

By Tom Stiles

