

Answering Question #10

10. The phrase “*separation of Church and state*” is found in:
- a. The Declaration of Independence
 - b. The U.S. Constitution
 - c. The Bill of Rights
 - d. None of the above

Several years ago, I was shocked to learn that “separation of church and state” does not exist in *any* of our nation’s founding documents. So what does the “establishment clause” from the First Amendment say?

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”*²²

After recognizing the undeniable influence that Christianity had upon the founding of America and the unprecedented levels of freedom that resulted from it, we must conclude that the modern interpretation of the First Amendment is not what our founders had in mind when they penned the First Amendment. Reading the history makes it unimaginable that they intended to remove prayer and the Bible from government schools, the Ten Commandments from courthouse lawns, and to push many other anti-Christian actions in our courts.

Since the phrase, “separation of church and state” does not exist in the First Amendment, where did it come from? Let’s pay a historical visit to this issue.

In 1801, the Danbury Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson after hearing a distressing rumor that the Congregationalist denomination was about to be made the official nationally recognized Christian denomination. The Danbury Baptists’ concern was that one Christian denomination would be favored or respected by the federal government. This had been the case in England with the Catholic Church and then the Anglican Church. In both cases, these favored establishments of religion were powerful and ended up becoming corrupt and oppressive. In short, there was no freedom of religion and those who deviated from the views of the state church were severely persecuted.

On January 1, 1802, Jefferson replied to the Danbury Baptists, reassuring them and saying, “*The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state.*” This is the source of the phrase and shows that the First Amendment had nothing to do with keeping Christian values out of (or separated from) government and everything to do with keeping government from recognizing one Christian denomination above another.

However, the attempt to remove all influence of the church has been an ongoing battle. In 1853, a group petitioned Congress to separate Christian principles from government in much the same way we see it being played out today. They wanted to

scrub religion from government, so they petitioned Congress that chaplains be removed from the Congress, the military, etc. Their petition was reviewed by the House and the Senate Judiciary Committees, who deliberated for several months. Below are excerpts from their reports:

“Had the people, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle. At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, but not any one sect In this age, there can be no substitute for Christianity.... That was the religion of the founders of the republic, and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants.”

The historical evidence is abundant; the religion of the founders of the American republic was overwhelmingly Christianity. The religion being discussed in the First Amendment was Christianity and the objective was not to keep Christianity out of government but to prevent any one denomination of Christianity from being favored above another by the government.