

Separation of Church and State: Myths, Realities, and Results

Study Guide Questions

- 1. Q- What is the main myth surrounding the “Wall of Separation between Church and State?”**
- 2. Q – In what sense is a certain amount of separation between Church and State a good thing?**
- 3. Q – Who is most responsible for the creation of the Bill of Rights and why?**
- 4. Q – What were some of the formative influences upon young James Madison, especially during his time in school?**
- 5. Q – What were the fears of Congressmen Silvester and Huntington regarding the religion provision in what would become the First Amendment and were these fears well founded?**
- 6. Q – Who was most responsible for the current wording of the religion provision in the First Amendment?**
- 7. Q – What occasioned Jefferson using the misleading metaphor: “Wall of separation between Church and State?”**
- 8. Q – When the framers spoke of an “establishment of religion,” what did they mean?**
- 9. Q – What was the concern of the Danbury Baptists that prompted them to write President Jefferson?**
- 10. Q – What proof would you offer that Jefferson would not completely agree with the modern Court’s take on his “Wall of Separation” metaphor?**
- 11. Q – Why should Jefferson’s letter and “Wall” metaphor be dismissed from discussions of Original Intent regarding the religion clauses of the First Amendment?**
- 12. Q – What actions did the First Federal Congress take concurrently with the framing of the First Amendment that run counter to the modern Court’s understanding of Jefferson’s “Wall of Separation?”**
- 13. Q – What was the Supreme Court decision where the two-way “Wall of Separation” was erected between Church and State and who wrote the majority opinion?**
- 14. Q – What are some of the results of the Court’s misapplication of Jefferson’s “Wall of Separation” to Church/State Jurisprudence?**

Questions and Answers

1. **Q- What is the main myth surrounding the “Wall of Separation between Church and State?”**

A – People assume that the words “separation of church and state” are actually in the First Amendment.

2. **Q – In what sense is a certain amount of separation between Church and State a good thing?**

A – At the point of governance and authority of one over the other. The Church should not control the State and the State should not control the Church.

3. **Q – Who is most responsible for the creation of the Bill of Rights and why?**

A – James Madison is the Father of the Bill of Rights because he championed it in the First Federal Congress, by providing a draft of the rights and then persistently pursuing their consideration, debate, and passage.

4. **Q – What were some of the formative influences upon young Madison, especially at Princeton?**

A – Madison was at Princeton during the Great Awakening. Dr. John Witherspoon tutored Madison in the Hebrew principles of government.

5. **Q – What were the fears of Congressmen Sylvester and Huntington regarding the religion provision in what would become the First Amendment and were these fears well founded?**

A – That some might misinterpret the committee’s original intent and see it as an attempt to abolish religion altogether.

6. **Q – Who was most responsible for the current wording of the religion provision in the First Amendment?**

A – Fisher Ames, U.S. Representative from Massachusetts

7. **Q – When the framers spoke of an “establishment of religion,” what did they mean?**

A – A particular denomination of Christianity sanctioned by Congressional action as the official national religion, like the Church of England in Britain.

8. **Q – What occasioned Jefferson using the misleading metaphor: “Wall of separation between Church and State?”**

A – The letter from the Association of Baptist Churches in Danbury, CT.

- 9. Q – What was the concern of the Danbury Baptists that prompted them to write President Jefferson?**

A – That the federal government might treat their religious freedom as an alienable right, not an inalienable one, as had happened in states where they had an established denomination as the official church.

- 10. Q – What proof would you offer that Jefferson would not agree with the modern Court’s take on his “Wall of Separation?”**

A – Land grants for religious purposes. Funding of missionary endeavors. Monetary support of a Christian school. Official sanction of worship services in government buildings. Proposal for the Great Seal. Proposal of the Bible and Watts Hymnal as a textbooks for DC schools.

- 11. Q – Why should Jefferson’s letter and “Wall” metaphor be dismissed from discussions of Original Intent regarding the religion clauses of the First Amendment?**

A – Because Jefferson was in France during the debates and proceedings of the First Federal Congress, which was the group that framed and passed the wording of the First Amendment.

- 12. Q – What actions did the First Federal Congress take concurrently with the framing of the First Amendment that run counter to the modern Court’s understanding of Jefferson’s “Wall of Separation?”**

A – Establishment of Congressional Chaplains. Reenactment of the Northwest Ordinance with its religion in schools provision. Passage of a Thanksgiving Proclamation on the day after what became the First Amendment was approved.

- 13. Q – What was the Supreme Court decision where the two-way “Wall of Separation” was erected between Church and State and who wrote the majority opinion?**

A – 1947 Everson v. Board of Education and Justice Hugo Black (former member of the KKK) wrote the majority decision.

- 14. Q – What are some of the results of the Court’s misapplication of Jefferson’s “Wall of Separation” to Church/State Jurisprudence?**

A. Chilling effect on religious speech and symbols in the public square. Absence of religious principle, especially in public schools, has contributed to a decline in overall national morality.