

Proud to be an American: The myth of separation

November 8th, 2020 by Kasey Crawford

Today's Passages: Ephesians 4:14

We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Ephesians 4:14 (NLT)

"The separation of Church and State", a famous phrase, is often used to shut down religion in the public sphere.

Where does the phrase come from?

It actually comes from a letter, in 1801, from recently elected president Thomas Jefferson to the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut. *"I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State."*

The "wall" Jefferson referred to was not to limit the free expression of religion in public, rather he was assuring the Danbury Baptists that the constitution formed a "wall", limiting the power of government to prohibit or interfere with their "free exercise of religion."

First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Quite simply this means the government cannot establish a state-sponsored, state run religion (like the Pilgrims had precisely fled from!).

"Separation of church and state" currently means almost exactly the opposite of what it originally meant.

Did the founding fathers operate with a "separation of church and state?"

At the First Continental Congress-1774

Before tackling any of the weighty issues at hand, local Anglican pastor Jacob Duche, was asked to open the session in prayer (and every day thereafter), thus becoming the 1st Congressional Chaplain.

In the Declaration of Independence-1776

"appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions"

The closing portion of the Declaration of Independence itself, reads like a prayer of appeal to God!

At The Constitutional Convention-1787

After weeks of ineffective wrangling, Ben Franklin challenged the founders: *"how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings?"*

At Washington's Inauguration-1789

"No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States." -G.W.

On a National Day of Thanksgiving-1789

"I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be..." -Washington

At the creation of the National Day of Prayer and fasting, 1798

"I HAVE therefore thought it fit to recommend, that Wednesday, the 9th day of May next be observed throughout the United States, as a day of Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer;" -President John Adams

In President Abraham Lincoln's proclamation to the nation in the middle of The Civil War: Come back to God!

"It is the duty of nations as well . . . to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord [Psalm 33:12]...But we have forgotten God..."

In adding "Under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance

"From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty ..." -President Dwight D. Eisenhower.