

Religion and Politics

Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments James Madison, 1785

The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.

Such a Government will be best supported by protecting every Citizen in the enjoyment of his Religion with the same equal hand which protects his person and his property; by neither invading the equal rights of any Sect, nor suffering any Sect to invade those of another.

Americans take pride in their rights and privileges, especially politics and religion. Citizens consider several factors before casting ballots for their preferred candidates. Both factors, no matter how controversial they can be, are ingrained in American secular society. To ignore politics or religion in the public sphere would cause more disagreement between religious and secular people. More often than not, they serve the common good in many ways in pursuit of a more perfect Union. At times they intersect, complement, and contradict each other. These ideologies are messy because the Founding Fathers of the Constitution designed our system of government to protect individual rights and beliefs.

They were educated men who understood the challenges to strike a balance between religion and government. Religious conflicts were a way of life during earlier times. Those conflicts involved wealth, inequality, and other discriminatory practices. Many devoutly religious people voiced their displeasure about the Constitution because they felt it slighted God by not recognizing His existence. Delegates were keenly aware that introducing religion into the Constitution would be politically controversial. James Madison argued against a national religion because he felt that the federal government should not favor one religion over another. In Federalist No. 68 he stated some men might prostitute their votes.

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; or the right of the people to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.