

Religious Freedom in America

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

-**First Amendment to the Constitution** (1791)

“The impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible [opinions] ...”

-**Thomas Jefferson**, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786)

“A religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the [nation]: but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it must secure the national councils against any danger from that source.”

-**James Madison**, Federalist Papers, number II (1788)

“[The] government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion ...”

-**John Adams**, Treaty of Tripoli (1796)

“For happily the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens...”

-**George Washington**, To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island (1790)

“I fully and conscientiously believe, that it is the will of the Almighty, that there should be diversity of religious opinions among us.”

-**Thomas Paine**, Common Sense (1776)

“We establish no religion in this country, nor will we ever. We command no worship. We mandate no belief. But we poison our society when we remove its theological underpinnings. We court corruption when we leave it bereft of belief. All are free to believe or not believe; all are free to practice a faith or not. But those who believe must be free to speak of and act on their belief, to apply moral teaching to public questions.”

-**Ronald Reagan**, Address to Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast, Dallas, TX (1984)