

Explore the meaning of the establishment clause, using the following information:

- The establishment clause of the First Amendment reads “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”

In 1777, Thomas Jefferson authored “A Bill For the Establishment of Religious Freedom.” It concludes: “We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall be in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

And though we well know that this assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies ... yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present or to narrow its operation, such act will in infringement of natural right.”

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- The establishment clause was supported by the framers because it supported the notions of freedom *from* government coercion in matters of religion and the freedom *of* religion for each individual. James Madison, drafting his preliminary proposals for a Bill of Rights, wrote in 1789: “The civil rights of none shall be abridged because of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner or in any pretext, infringed.”

- The Supreme Court has supported the concept of No Establishment of religion by government. In 1947 in *Everson v. Board of Education*, Justice Hugo Black, wrote that the Establishment clause “requires the state to be a neutral in its relations with groups of religious believers and non-believers; it does not require the state to be their adversary.” In 1962 Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark wrote: “The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the State is firmly committed to a position of neutrality.”