

THREE VIEWS OF CHURCH AND STATE

- I. **ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION:** Practiced by the Anglicans and Congregationalists in early America, especially in Massachusetts and Virginia. It includes religious tests for public office, as well as laws opposing other denominations of Christianity. It also requires tax money to be funneled to the ‘state church.’ The State has dual responsibility with the Church for the oversight of the people on religious matters. At its best, it can offer “religious tolerance” to non-conforming groups which allows them to continue to live in the area, but under restrictions.

- II. **ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGION:** The view of the Founding Fathers is that there should be no establishment of a certain denomination of Christianity, nor laws requiring faith of the people. It did however teach that the Church and State should accommodate each other. The State may not legally require religious tests, taxation, and laws, but it is to create a positive atmosphere for the Faith to grow. *Thus, Jefferson says that the President is not to demand the Faith of the people, but to commend the Faith to the people.* As President, he had Congress publish Bibles to be used in literacy classes but also so that all should have a knowledge of the Bible. It is for this reason that school prayer, school Bible readings, school preaching, school posting of the 10 Commandments and other Bible verses became commonplace. In addition, because taxation equates to control, there is not taxation of the churches. Dozens of other things could be mentioned here including swearing in of the President on the Bible, etc. The State was accommodating Christianity. William Penn, one of the Fathers of Religious Liberty, made it even more clear in his *Frame of Government*: . Government has the responsibility to instruct in reading and writing so that every citizen might learn the Word of God for themselves by the age of 12. And the Church accommodates the state in that they promote patriotism, allow government use of facilities for things such as elections, disaster relief, etc. This position dominated America up until the Secularization movement of the 20th Century led by John Dewey and other Humanists.

- III. **STRICT SEPARATIONIST VIEW:** Using the language of Thomas Jefferson about a “wall of separation between church and state,” secularists have sought to drive Christianity from the public domain based on “equal rights” issues. The view had its origin with the Father of Modern Public Schools, John Dewey. The view was accepted by F.D. Roosevelt, who appointed strict separationists to the Supreme Court who struck down such practices as School Prayer, Bible Readings, Invocations, etc. However, the attempt to use this phrase by Jefferson is clearly an example of “Reconstructionist” history in that the same paragraph after this statement, Jefferson states that the President is to Commend the Faith to the people. He did more to promote the Accommodationist approach than even Washington.