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Modern Misconceptions on the Wall of Separation:

An Analysis on the Influence and Misinterpretation of Jefferson's Separation of Church and State

Abstract

The relationship between government and religion has become defined by the concept of separation of church and state. While the phrase originates from Roger Williams, President Thomas Jefferson promoted the philosophy of a wall of separation between church and state in his letter to the Danbury Baptists in 1802. Later paraphrased "separation of church and state," this political concept has been misconstrued from Jefferson's original meaning. Recent Supreme Court interpretations have misinterpreted the concept as freedom from religion, instead of freedom of religion; while others have labelled Jefferson's separationist policies as anti-religious. By examining Jefferson's original intent behind the concept of a wall of separation, a proper interpretation of this philosophy will demonstrate appropriate protection for both religion and government.