

English Language and Composition
Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes

Directions: The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Introduction

Many have claimed that the largest war ever fought by the western world is one that is eating away at the insides of the country – that between the church and the state. For over a century, the church has been excluded from the government, and even now officials attempt to remove every last trace of Christianity from politics. The question is simple, this never ending battle will continue. But in the end, which side will succeed in capturing the attention of the public of the West, and eventually the world?

Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that the separation of church and state is necessary for a sincere and objective government in order that it may operate unburdened by inherent prejudices.**

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

- Source A (Walker)
- Source B (Jefferson)
- Source C (Trever)
- Source D (Adams)
- Source E (Lilla)
- Source F (Robertson)

Source A

Walker, Jim. "The Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense founded on the Christian religion." <http://nobeliefs.com/Tripoli.htm>. 11 Apr. 1997

The following excerpt is from an online article denouncing the inclusion of religion in politics.

The United States Constitution serves as the law of the land for America and indicates the intent of our Founding Fathers. The Constitution forms a *secular* document, and nowhere does it appeal to God, Christianity, Jesus, or any supreme being. (For those who think the date of the Constitution contradicts the last sentence, see note 1 at the end.) The U.S. government derives from people (not God), as it clearly states in the preamble: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union..." The omission of God in the Constitution did not come out of forgetfulness, but rather out of the Founding Fathers purposeful intentions to keep government separate from religion...

Although many secular and atheist groups fight for the wall of separation, this does not mean that they wish to lawfully eliminate religion from society. On the contrary, you will find no secular or atheist group attempting to ban Christianity, or any other religion from American society. Keeping religion separate allows atheists and religionists alike, to practice their belief systems, regardless how ridiculous they may seem, without government intervention.

Source B

Jefferson, Thomas. January 1, 1802

Addressed To Messrs. Nehemiah Dodge and Others, a Committee of the Danbury Baptist Association, in the State of Connecticut

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof thus building a wall of separation between church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

Source C

Trever, John. 2007. Available online.

This cartoon was published after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against displaying the Ten Commandments on government property



Source D

John Adams.

The following is two letters written by John Adams, former president of the United States.

Letter to Zabdiel Adams, 21 June 1776:

Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People in a greater Measure, than they have it now, they may change their Rulers and the forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting liberty.

Address to the Military, 11 October 1798:

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

Source E

Lilla, Mark. "The Politics Of God." August 19, 2007.

The following is an excerpt from an article claiming to debunk many common myths that are said to violate the constitution.

Myth:

You have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.

Response:

This claim is common, but it rests on a misunderstanding of what real freedom of religion entails. The most important thing to remember is that freedom of religion, if it is going to apply to everyone, also requires freedom from religion. Why is that? You do not truly have the freedom to practice your religious beliefs if you are also required to adhere to any of the religious beliefs or rules of other religions.

As an obvious example, could we really say that Jews and Muslims would have freedom of religion if they were required to show same respect to images of Jesus that Christians have? Would Christians and Muslims really have freedom of their religion if they were required to wear yarmulkes? Would Christians and Jews have freedom of religion if they were required to adhere to Muslim dietary restrictions?

Simply pointing out that people have the freedom to pray however they wish is not enough.

Source F

Robertson, Pat. "The 700 Club," Jan. 22, 1995.

The following was obtained from a website that containing many quotes from many prominent Christian speakers and authors.

"There was no concept of separation between God and government in the New Testament or the Old Testament. The concept that was before us in the Bible is that rulers are ministers of God, that the sword that they wield is not in vain, but they've been placed in authority by God to make sure that law and order prevails in our land and there is no anarchy. Now when atheism came in under what used to be called the Soviet Union a new constitution was written, which said the state shall be separate from the church and the church from the school. In the United States of America people have tried to apply that phrase from the Soviet Constitution to the schooling of children in America. Both of these constitutions are wrong. There is nothing that should indicate that God Almighty should be separated from the government nor that Godly people should not hold office in government.... So there is nothing to indicate that there should be a separation."