



# **So Help Me God: The Founding Fathers and the First Great Battle Over Church and State**

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Today's dispute over the line between church and state (or the lack thereof) is neither the first nor the fiercest in our history. In a revelatory look at our nation's birth, Forrest Church re-creates our first great culture war—a tumultuous, nearly forgotten conflict that raged from George Washington's presidency to James Monroe's.

Religion was the most divisive issue in the nation's early presidential elections. Battles raged over numerous issues while the bible and the Declaration of Independence competed for American affections. The religious political wars reached a vicious peak during the War of 1812; the American victory drove New England's Christian right to withdraw from electoral politics, thereby shaping our modern sense of church-state separation. No longer entangled, both church and state flourished.

Forrest Church has written a rich, page-turning history, a new vision of our earliest presidents' beliefs that stands as a reminder and a warning for America today.

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