The framers of American liberty understood that. They declared that "we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights".

Our rights to the pursuit of happiness, to property, to liberty, and to life itself are a gift from God, and it is the duty of civil government to safeguard those God-given rights.

Jefferson, Washington, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and George Mason disagreed on many things, theologically and politically, but they were united in acknowledging that we are God's creatures and that, as creatures, we owe a duty of stewardship to our Creator.

Civil government must always facilitate the fulfillment of that obligation of stewardship rather than pose obstacles to its fulfillment.

That is why they wrote in the Declaration that civil government derives "its just powers from the consent of the governed".

The Federal Union which they constructed and whose boundaries they established in our 1787 Constitution placed <u>all</u> control over a very limited Federal taxing power and <u>all</u> responsibility for policy determinations --- and the commitment of resources consistent with that power --- in a Congress of the United States.

Indeed, the very first sentence of the Constitution, following the Preamble, states that "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States". The two key words are "all" and "vested".

Let's be clear that Congress did not have all-encompassing legislative authority. It could legislate only in the context of the authority delegated to the Federal government and the powers explicitly enumerated in the Constitution.

Indeed, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution makes clear that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people".

Each of the states at the time of our founding had explicitly Christian legal systems --- rooted in the British common law and traceable to Holy Scripture.

Neither Congress nor any other component of the Federal government had any right to interfere with those Christian law systems.

That is why the First Amendment to the Constitution requires that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".