

Myth of a “Christian Nation”

The Constitution Party of Montana and other theocrats who espouse the notion of a “Christian America” have based their beliefs on a flawed understanding of history. The mythology that our Founding Fathers built America on Christian principles begins with the notion that they were all devout Christians. The fact is that many of our country’s founders were Deists. They believed in a creator, but not the divinity of Jesus Christ. Deists professed that people were equipped with rationality and were charged with solving society’s problems through reason alone. It was not an accident that the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution make no reference to Christianity. In fact, James Madison stated, “The Constitution of the U.S. forbids everything like an establishment of a national religion.”

The Founding Fathers supported separation of church and state. They believed it protected the right of every citizen to worship, or not worship, in the manner by which they choose. Separation of church and state protects the minority from the majority. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I do not believe it is for the interest of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct its exercises, its disciplines, or its doctrines; nor of the religious societies that the general government should be invested with the power of affecting any uniformity of time or matter among them.” Author Frederick Clarkson summarizes the motivations behind America’s founding like this:

“...the framers of the U.S. Constitution explicitly rejected the idea of a Christian nation. The framers, seeking to inoculate the new nation against the religious persecution and warfare that had wracked Europe for a millennium, made America the first nation in the history of the world founded without the blessing of an official god, church or religion. They were leaving behind local theocracies that had governed the colonies for the previous 150 years in which only white propertied men who were members of the correct, established sect were able to vote and hold public office.”

The framers of our democracy knew that, for our society to survive, the rights of the minority had to be valued equally with the rights of the majority.

Sources: James Madison’s *Detached Memoranda*, Thomas Jefferson’s January 23, 1808 letter, and Political Research Associates’ Winter 2005 *Public Eye*.

attorney told the protestors they were creating a traffic hazard because of rubbernecking drivers. The attorney said he finally took action against the group because of an increasing number of complaints filed over the signs. Incidents included one car accident and claims that the protestors were stepping in front of cars and yelling at drivers and Planned Parenthood patients. The city attorney told Pro-Life Great Falls it could keep protesting in front of the clinic, if it used signs without the photographs.³³⁸

Jonathan Martin responded that the City of Great Falls was “trampling on our First Amendment and constitutional right.”³³⁹ He admitted the placards were upsetting, but maintained they were necessary to show the results of abortion. Martin also claimed that signs featuring only text would be more dangerous, because drivers would be trying to read the placards instead of concentrating on driving. Pro-Life Great Falls received support from the national clinic-blockade movement, which flooded city officials with e-mails from across the country.³⁴⁰

The City of Great Falls withdrew the ban on the placards, after Pro-Life Great Falls threatened legal action.³⁴¹ However, Martin and members of Pro-Life Great Falls went ahead with a lawsuit against the city. The lawsuit sought to declare the protestors’ rights had been violated and asked for compensatory and punitive damages. “Our rights were violated, even if it’s now past tense,” Martin told the media. “Their [city officials] First Amendment violation pales when compared to the millions of little babies killed through abortion.”³⁴²

Representing Martin and the other Pro-Life Great Falls members was the Thomas More Law Center.³⁴³ The Law Center, founded by Domino Pizza magnate Tom Monaghan, frequently represents the interests of Religious Right organizations.³⁴⁴ Law Center Attorney Robert Muise said the lawsuit was filed to make it clear that protestors could “speak out against killing the unborn by showing people that abortion is truly an act of violence that results in the death of a child.”³⁴⁵ In 2002,