

Does a cross on a city Christmas tree violate the first amendment?

Did you know the ACLU is currently suing an Indiana town over a cross that stands on top of the city's Christmas tree? Yes! The ACLU sued the city of Knightstown on behalf of resident Joseph Tompkins, alleging the cross on the tree violates his First Amendment rights guaranteeing "separation of church and state." The suit is demanding the cross's removal and payment of damages to Tompkins for being "forced to come into direct and unwelcome contact with the cross display."

This phrase "separation of church and state" has been repeated so many times that many actually believe it is part of the First Amendment. Those that use it want people to join them in removing God from everything in our lives today. They also want to remove our godly heritage from our history. The truth is, the words "separation of church and state" are nowhere in the First Amendment or the text of the U.S. Constitution.

The actual words "separation of church and state" are taken from a letter President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. President Jefferson was answering the concerns of the Danbury Baptist Association in the state of Connecticut in regards to the establishment of a State religion or denomination. Our third president assured them that their First Amendment rights would not be infringed, using these words:

"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 eternal separation between Church and State."

Jefferson's meaning was one that protected churches from state encroachment; not individuals from seeing municipal references to God.

Couple this with the following words of George Washington's Farewell Address:

"...Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens."

I have often wondered what type of words George Washington would exchange with groups like the ACLU? At the very least Washington would have publicly marked the ACLU as un-patriotic and therefore un-American. Using his own words, I believe our first president would have advised them that:

"The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them (religion and morality). A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice?"

Understanding the source of national morality, I will conclude my article with Washington's final exposition on the topic:

"And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

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