



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 16, 2018

No Separation of Satan and State? Satanic “Christmas” Displays Aren’t Progress

What would the Founding Fathers have said about satanic displays at Christmastime on government property? Would they have insisted their First Amendment mandates allowing such or that something has gone terribly wrong with their American experiment?

The Land of Lincoln is now more like the land of Satan, because in the Illinois Capitol Rotunda we now “find a nativity scene for Christmas; a menorah for Hanukkah; and, alongside these displays, an arm holding an apple, with a snake coiled around it [shown],” [reports](#) *American Thinker’s* E. Jeffrey Ludwig. “This snake sculpture is a gift from the Chicago branch of The Satanic Temple. Called ‘Snaketivity,’ the work also has a sign that reads, ‘Knowledge Is The Greatest Gift.’”



It certainly is a great one, but it’s also quite lacking in those supposing that the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause mandates such a “revolting travesty,” as Ludwig puts it. He asks rhetorically, “If a group of people incorporates as a non-for-profit religious organization to worship Medusa with her head covered with snakes, would those people be allowed to have a sculpture of Medusa in the Illinois Capitol?”

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Sadly, and shockingly to many, recent history indicates the answer is yes. Just consider, for example, that in the central rotunda of Florida’s Capitol Building, *Slate* [reported](#) in 2014, “an atheist group hung a [winter solstice banner](#) celebrating the Bill of Rights and freedom from religion. Inspired, another atheist built a [Festivus pole](#) made of beer cans, and the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster [added a small pile of holy noodles](#) to the capitol’s halls.” Moreover, a pentagram reading “May the children hail Satan” was [erected](#) in Boca Raton’s Sanborn Square last Christmas.

Perhaps this makes Boca Raton’s name — which means “rat’s mouth” — all the more fitting. Yet that the displays themselves generally seem like jokes is because most of their creators aren’t really serious about their new “religious” traditions — only about destroying our old ones. Engaging in a religious-realm [Cloward-Piven Strategy](#), they endeavor to get all displays eliminated, with Christian ones being the real targets, by overwhelming the system with unrealistic demands.

For certain, the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster could be followed by the Church of the Flightless Spaghetti Monster, and Festivus by a million other things from Pests-R-Us. Or imagine someone claims his “faith” states that Adolf Hitler is now a god in the hereafter and that he must be



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afforded a spot for a Nazi display. Is making such a mockery of our civilization what the Founders intended?

The state of Illinois clearly thinks so. It erected a sign next to the displays stating that it is “required by the First Amendment...to allow temporary, public displays in the state capitol.” It further (mis)informs that “state officials cannot legally censor the content of speech or displays” in public spaces.

Yet Ludwig makes an excellent point. The sign also states that the Supreme Court “has held that public officials may legally impose reasonable time, place and manner restrictions regarding displays and speeches,” but may not regulate content. So, he asks, “why did they not impose reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions?”

Ludwig points out that while Christians and Jews have long celebrated December Holy Days, other religions don't. This is especially true of “the Satanic Temple, which is not even celebrating an event lifted up in the tenets, practices, or texts of its beliefs,” he writes. “Therefore, the requirement that its ‘snake’ be displayed alongside a menorah or a crèche is wholly bogus.” He then continues:

The word “religion” comes from the Latin word *ligare*: to join or link, classically understood to mean the linking of human and divine. There is no linking of the human and divine for the Satanic Temple. There is no divine or supernatural appeal for the Satanic Temple. Instead, in its “Canon,” “Satan” is declared a “theological metaphor” for free inquiry. When they say, “Hail Satan,” they state that they are in effect hailing a metaphor, not a supernatural person.

In other words, whether or not these Satanists believe the above, their dogma precludes any credible claim to “religion” status; their beliefs constitute a (dark) philosophy, and “freedom of philosophy” isn't in the First Amendment.

Thus, their access to public spaces during Christmas, Ludwig's argument goes, is based on a freedom of speech claim (which covers philosophical ideas). This means it can be limited, as per SCOTUS, to a proper time — and Christmastime isn't it.

Yet I'd go even further. As I [pointed out](#) in 2017:

The Constitution guarantees only that the government won't trample our speech.

It does not guarantee that the government will *facilitate* our speech.

And this is precisely what exhibition on public property does.

... Consider the also common argument that everything from Puritanism to paganism must have a public-square place because of the “separation between church and state”; in reality, that phrase is not in our Constitution.

It is in the 1936 *Soviet Constitution*, however.

Our Constitution states merely that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” As “Congress” indicates, this constrains only the central government's legislative branch.

And what of Thomas Jefferson's “wall of separation”? Found in an 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, Jefferson made clear that his wall wasn't between government and religion, but the feds and the states — the latter of which had, in fact, established churches at our nation's founding.



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Of course, usurpative judges conjured up the “Theory of Incorporation,” a judicial rationalization applying the Bill of Rights to all levels of government despite the First Amendment, again, clearly specifying “Congress.” Yet even if we accept the theory and (unwarranted) judicial supremacy, it’s not relevant because mere religious expression in government is not religious establishment by government.

As I [wrote](#) [in 2016]: “History tells the tale. Prayers before government assemblies have been common since colonial times. Furthermore, Congress opened with prayer in 1789, beginning a tradition *that continues to this day*, and has an official chaplain. Even more significantly, every official chaplain has been Christian, and the prayers were exclusively Christian until very recently (and they generally still are Christian). And this is the point: The men who created *Congress* and the Establishment Clause — writing that *Congress* shall not establish religion — also consistently welcomed exclusively Christian prayers in Congress. So how does one make the case that such an action violates the clause’s true meaning?

“You’d have to claim that the Founding Fathers didn’t know what they meant when writing the First Amendment!”

Moreover, even the modern Supreme Court has acknowledged this. As I also reported, “In the case of *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, the Court found, [wrote USA Today](#), that even though the town had ‘mostly Christian clergy delivering frequently sectarian prayers before an audience that often included average citizens with business to conduct,’ these ‘facts didn’t make what the Greece Town Board did unconstitutional.’”

In other words, as with speech, our Constitution guarantees us the right to free exercise of religion.

It doesn’t guarantee us that the government will showcase our religion — or insulate snowflakes from religious expression of which they’re intolerant.

Unfortunately, we’re allowing oddballs, activists, and enabling judges to trample the rights of the majority and turn us into a laughingstock. If we can’t keep the Flying Spaghetti Monster and, most significantly, Satan from our public spaces, we’re simply no longer a serious civilization.

Photo of satanic display in the Illinois State Capitol Rotunda in Springfield: AP Images



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