

The Official Faith of the United States of America
by
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I'll bet you thought that the Constitution said the US wouldn't establish a religion. The Constitution says a lot of things and the Supreme Court decided what those words mean. We have a very conservative court right now and they usually say that they are strict in their interpretation of the document. They want to discern the original meaning of the framers. I have trouble with their reasoning at times and this is one of those times.

The court decided a little while back that sincerely held religious beliefs allow cake bakers to refuse to bake a cake for gay members of the public. The Constitution says we are all supposed to be treated the same, but it is okay to discriminate if you have a sincerely held religious belief. The court recently reinforced this thinking when it said that sincerely held religious belief means that a woman who designs websites can refuse to design a website for gay people. It can get a lot worse. There are pharmacists who won't fill some prescriptions because of their sincerely held religious beliefs. There is a drug called methotrexate which is used to treat various forms of rheumatoid arthritis and pharmacists have refused to fill that drug because it can be used to cause a recently pregnant woman to miscarry or abort that fetus. Just let that crippling arthritis do its thing. The pharmacist belongs to the church of sincerely held religious beliefs.

Maybe you don't know about the church of sincerely held religious beliefs. Maybe you remember the cartoon strip Peanuts. Maybe you remember Charles Schultz. I think most remember those. There was a book written called "The Gospel According to Peanuts." This gospel held that it didn't matter what you believed, just as long as you were sincere. Whether Schultz invented this theology or borrowed it is not my concern. He popularized it. For me, he founded it. In my youth, I thought he was just making a joke. That he didn't mean it. Now in my dotage, I find that this church is the official church of my country. It must be because the Supreme Court has ruled that this faith, a faith that is sincere, no matter the substance of that faith, can trump other previously held rights. The court has not required that your faith be reality-based or a faith that is widely held or practiced. It can be a fringe movement that must be protected under our right of freedom of religion and this freedom has been elevated to a status above our other freedoms. I know that others claim that we should have freedom from religion, but that isn't what the court says, and the court gets to interpret the words.

So, as we pause to celebrate the Fourth of July and the birth of our nation, we need to send up a few celebratory fireworks to mark the new national religion. The Gospel According to Peanuts. The dogma is remarkably simple. Just remember: It doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as it's sincere. If you have read that some folks are no longer in the mood to celebrate the Fourth, it may be they see that we have lost more than we have gained lately.

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