

# Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence

Alan Dershowitz

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# BLASPHEMY



HOW THE  
RELIGIOUS RIGHT  
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Alan Dershowitz : Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Luis R FabreAs expected.14 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Why Can't Everyone Just Get long Together?By Frederick S. GoethelAlan Dershowitz has written a short, yet powerful book detailing the attempted hijacking of the American form of government (secular) by the Religious Right. That this is happening is hardly debatable, however the question remains as to how it's being accomplished and why people are obviously falling prey to incorrect historical statements.Dershowitz starts by evaluating the writings of the author and a number of signers of the Declaration of Independence to point out what their world view was at the time the document was created. Were they Christians, or not? Did they believe they were creating a country that was Christian in origin or secular? By examining the writings of Jefferson, Adams, Paine and others, he comes to the conclusion that they were deists with no intention of forming a "Christian" nation.The second section deals with the way the Religious Right is attempting to prove that the founders, were in fact, creating a Christian nation and then proceeds to debunk their arguments and point out the trickery being used to try to convince the public of the appropriateness of their views.The third section is a discussion of "Nature's Law", what it means and whether it is applicable or not.While I found the book to be excellent, it is written in a ponderous and verbose style (the author is however a lawyer, so this should be expected), making it more difficult to read than is needed. That, however, is his style of writing and just means the reader needs to more time when reading the book. The only other complaint (if you wish to call it that) is the failure by the author to explain why the Religious Right is trying to take control of the country and turn it into a Christian Nation. He nibbled at the edges, but never really fully gave his opinion on this important part of the debate.I fully enjoyed the book, will keep it in my bookcase and read it again shortly. I think much knowledge can be gained from reading this book and it should be read by every voter before the next election. It would also be a wonderful addition to a reading club for discussion.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Spirited Defense of Our Nation's Secular UnderpinningsBy Skippy the SkepticAlan Dershowitz has written a marvelous evisceration of the shrill claims of so-called Christian Dominionists who want to revise history and turn the United States into a Protestant Theocracy. He accomplishes this goal by examining the text of the Declaration of Independence, which the Religious Right has recently turned to in the hopes of finding support for their unhistorical view of the early United States. Dershowitz painstakingly examines Thomas Jefferson's (He was, after all, the drafter of the Declaration) deist faith and cynicism towards organized religion and clearly explains to the reader that the "God" of the Declaration is not Yahweh but rather the watchmaker God of the Enlightenment deists.Indeed, much of this book focuses of Jefferson's deist beliefs, though Dershowitz also examines the various beliefs of the other Founding Fathers (though none of them are discussed at the same length as Jefferson). He wryly notes that Jefferson himself, rather than being a fearsome Christian lion who intended to found a nation under Jesus, was derided as an atheist and heretic in his own time and would almost certainly fail any political litmus test that the modern political Right might administer to him. He further notes that many of the historical passages that are sometimes quoted to back up Dominionist claims are often presented woefully out of context and, indeed, sometimes cynically twisted in order to present a meaning wholly opposite of their original intent.Later on in the book Dershowitz examines modern strategies that the Dominionists use to try and foist their propaganda on the public, including the dissemination of patently inaccurate curriculum materials in public schools. He further quotes some of the boldest of modern Dominionists, such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, to lay bare their own narrow interpretation of "religious freedom" - an interpretation under which all citizens are free to worship under any form of Protestant Christianity they choose.Throughout the entire work Dershowitz attempts to maintain a delicate balance of standing firmly against the Dominionist revisers of history while not presenting the Founding Fathers as fearsome atheists. Indeed, he notes that Jefferson and many of the other Founders were profoundly spiritual men, and that Jefferson's vision of a wall of separation between church and state was originally intended to also protect the sanctity of religion from the machinations of politicians. Indeed, one should come away from this book with the understanding that the Founders didn't see matters of spirituality and conscience as trifling or trivial, but rather that they saw them as so intensely important on a personal level that they sought to secure and defend the right to freedom of conscience for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation. Part of that defense meant separating religion from the coercive power of the state, for their experience with the Church of England left them keenly aware that any country with an officially established church is neither well-equipped nor well-disposed to protect the rights of members of other faiths.If this book leaves anything to be desired, it is that the author occasionally relies too much on quotations. I suppose he does so for the sake of repeating key ideals, but it is sometimes a bit distracting. For example, he repeatedly notes Jefferson's contention that the Bible was written by "ignorant, unlettered men". Now, this is an important statement regarding Jefferson's sentiments on the subject, but it is repeated, in quotations, at least half a dozen times. I'm all for reinforcing the key points of one's argument, but looking down at a page an catching sight of a veritable sea of quotation marks virtually guarantees a jagged read. Nonetheless, this book is of great value to anyone seeking a clearer understanding of our Founder's views on religion and the state. I recommend reading this book along the also excellent work by Kramnick and Moore entitled The Godless Constitution: A Moral Defense of the Secular State

In Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence, author Alan Dershowitz proves

that no relation exists between the Declaration of Independence Creator and Nature's God, on the one hand, and the Judeo-Christian God of the Old and New Testaments, on the other hand. Learn about the religious rights goal to Christianize America by using the Declaration of Independence and arguing that this document proves that the United States was founded on Biblical law. Understand everything from the argument to the documentation that Dershowitz uses to disprove this historical distortion.

From Booklist This author, if it needs explaining, is a renowned lawyer and Harvard law professor, author of several best-selling books, and an abiding advocate and defender of personal rights and freedoms. Although he never shies away from taking controversial positions, he supports those stands in clear prose. All these aspects hold true in his new book, which begins boldly: "The Religious Right is engaged in a crusade to convert the United States into a Christian theocracy based on the Bible and, more specifically, on the divine authority of Jesus Christ." Dershowitz accuses the Religious Right of using words and phrases found in the Declaration of Independence as indications that the founding of the nation--the intentions of our Founding Fathers, that is--was based on Christian precepts. The major step he takes in refuting this idea, which he finds dangerous, is to negate the concept that the Declaration, despite such language as "Creator" and "Divine Providence," is a document of equal legal state to the Constitution. The Declaration is indeed a vital document but one for all freedom-loving people who cherish the separation of church and state. This book will prompt intense dialogue--surely the author's intention. Brad Hooper Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "This is an engaging refutation of an insidious form of 'political correctness' of the right - the nonsensical idea that our country was founded on Christian principles. Anyone, left or right, who admires the foundations of American democracy will enjoy this spirited reminder of the Founding Fathers' true genius." - Steven Pinker, Johnstone Professor, Harvard University, author of *The Language Instinct*, *The Blank Slate*, and *The Stuff of Thought* "The wall of separation between church and state is one of the great barriers to religious tyranny. Among the wall's most articulate defenders is Dershowitz, who shows in this readable book why the authors of our Declaration feared theocracy and favored democracy." - Nadine Strossen, Professor of Law at New York Law School and President of the American Civil Liberties Union "Blasphemy proves that many Christians are as deliberately bewildered about the history of our nation as they are about the evolution of life on this planet. Dershowitz has done a great service in rescuing Jefferson, Adams, and the other founding fathers from the religious delusions of the Christian Right. This book will strike a great blow to the forces of theocracy in the United States." - Sam Harris author of the New York Times Best-Sellers, *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation* "Blasphemy is a brilliant, well-researched critique of the Religious Right's 'Christian Nation' mythology and its misuse of the American historical record. Just as significant, Professor Dershowitz illuminates the open hostility and vitriol this movement routinely exhibits toward all, religious or secular, who dare to challenge its faulty conclusions." - Barry W. Lynn, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State *From the Inside Flap* Why would some of America's best-known religious and political leaders launch a campaign to knowingly distort the history, nature, and intent of one of our most precious national documents the Declaration of Independence? Why would they seek to convert our Declaration into a baptismal certificate? How can they claim that Thomas Jefferson, who expressly rejected the divinity of Jesus and the notion that the Bible is the word of God, was the author of a Christian proclamation that, far from establishing the people as the ultimate source of political power, forms a bridge between the Bible and the Constitution? In *Blasphemy*, the #1 New York Times bestselling author Alan Dershowitz proves that the Religious Right is misusing the Declaration of Independence in its drive to Christianize America. He demonstrates that repeated claims by Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Alan Keyes, and others alleging the Declaration to be a Christian document are both easily disproved and deliberately aimed to mislead. Dershowitz also reveals the motive behind this mendacity: if the Religious Right can convince enough gullible Americans that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, they can require religious control of public schools, federal funding of churches and church-based programs, religious tests for elected and appointed officials, and much more. Using the Religious Right's own public statements as evidence, Dershowitz shows conclusively that Falwell and Robertson and their followers are fervently opposed to such fundamental American values as tolerance, religious freedom, personal choice, and even democracy itself. Quoting freely from Jefferson's many writings on religion and citing his public stances on issues such as school prayer and public funding of religious activities, Dershowitz deftly demonstrates that Jefferson was a strong advocate of church/state separation. He reveals why President John Adams, a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration, signed a treaty flatly stating that the United States was not in any way a Christian nation. In addition, he explains why even devoutly Christian delegates to the Continental Congress, having experienced firsthand the tyrannical nature of state-sponsored religion, willingly approved the Declaration's unequivocal establishment of a government based on separation of church and state. It is more than ironic that the Declaration which was intended to free us from the yoke of "monkish ignorance" should be invoked in favor of a Christian America. Providing expert arguments and copious documentation to disprove this grave distortion, Alan Dershowitz is as commanding and compelling as ever on the front lines in the defense of the American system of government and individual liberties.