

Is Freedom of Religion Being Eclipsed in America?

Over the weekend, President Obama made some revealing comments about the freedom of religion. According to the Minneapolis [Star Tribune](#), President Obama said:

"We affirm that we cherish our religious freedom and are profoundly respectful of religious traditions, but we also have to say clearly that our religious freedom doesn't grant us the freedom to deny our fellow Americans their constitutional rights."

Reading this caused me to wonder: Is President Obama aware that the personal constitutional rights of Americans are largely delineated in the Bill of Rights, not the Constitution? And does he further realize that the first rights listed in that Bill are in regard to the freedom of religion? Such a prominent placement seems to signify the importance with which the Founders viewed religious freedom.

President Obama's statement, however, does not seem to place the same importance upon religion which the American Founders gave it. In fact, does it not seem that his words indicate that religious freedom can now be eclipsed by other rights?

When the Constitution was first being debated in the late 1700s, one of the prime objections to the document was the lack of a Bill of Rights. [Patrick Henry](#) in particular declared that the Constitution itself did not specify personal rights, and as such, was worthless. His opponents tried to pacify his fears by saying that logical reasoning would enable the public to retain its rights to religious liberty under the Constitution. Henry, however, felt that many men were unable to employ logical reasoning, and therefore, rights such as the freedom of religion needed to be spelled out in a separate

document. Because of his persistence, the Congress crafted the Bill of Rights, which was then ratified in December of 1791.

But judging by President Obama's recent speech, it seems that not even a Bill of Rights is enough to prevent the eclipse of religious freedom.