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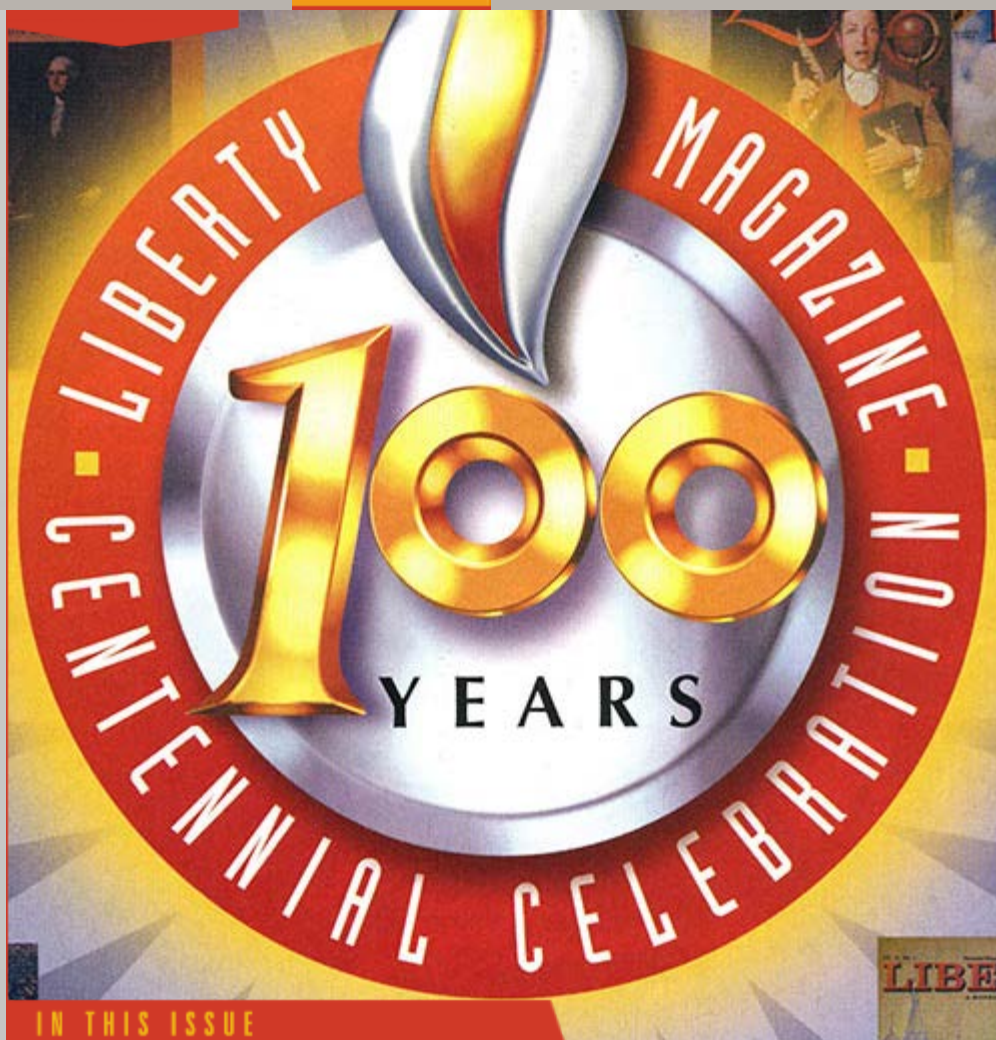
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[IN THE MEDIA](#)

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2005

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IN THIS ISSUE

Parousia or Politics?

The Need for Eternal Vigilance

Moral Values

A Christian Looks at the American Republic

Fragile Religious Freedom

Religious Territorialism

The Evil of Religious Persecution

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School prayer has been a matter of serious contention for decades. In 1962 the ...[Read More](#)



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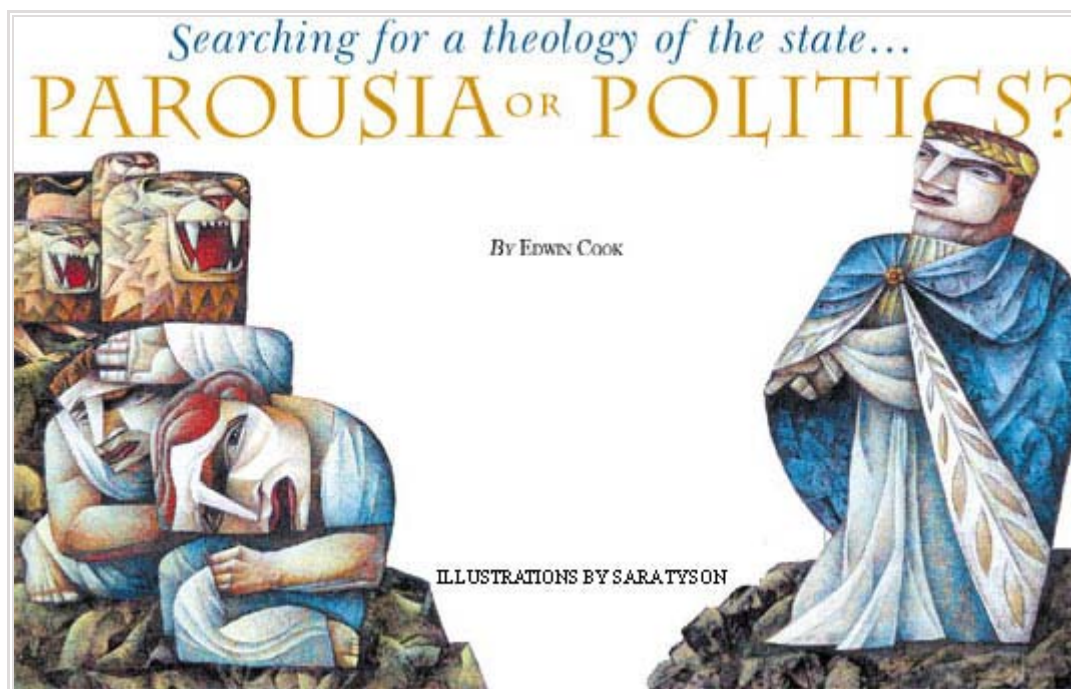
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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

Parousia Or Politics?



"As a statement of general principle Romans 13:1-7 has for centuries provided biblical validation for a theology of the state—as the secular arm of the one divinely ordered commonwealth (Corpus Christianum), or as an essential expression of the order of creation or of natural law in the overall scheme of things." It has also been used to justify the spiritual theocracy of the Papacy in the Middle Ages. However, in modern times the rise of the totalitarian state, with its consequent abuse of power, has led theologians to reexamine this passage in attempts to understand how Christians should face such a political regime. More specifically, misinterpretations and misapplications of this passage have resulted in Christian support of such regimes as the Third Reich, and Christian advocacy of such political ideologies as apartheid in South Africa.

In view of such diverse approaches to politics within Christianity in modern times, the question naturally arises: "What emphasis, if any, did primitive Christians place upon politics?" Related questions are "What was the political climate of first-century Christianity?" and "What relationship was sustained between Christianity and the Roman government?" A question worthy of equal consideration is "How did belief in the Parousia (the second advent of Christ) affect relations between early Christians and the Roman government?" A brief historical review of existing conditions during the emergence of Christianity and its existence from the first through the fourth centuries provide answers to these questions.

The Roman Religions

Although the state (Roman Empire) fulfilled the role of common guardian to all religions, it was more partial to polytheistic religions because they did not pose a threat to the gods of Rome. Additionally, two primary "divinities," Rome and Augustus, were universally worshipped and, as such, sanctioned the official side of religion. These two deities were so integrally associated with the other gods of Rome that to deny their worship caused one to be viewed as "outside the national religion," and thus considered to be an atheist. Furthermore, it was commonly held that these two deities incarnated all state officials, eventually leading to the development of emperor worship. Moreover, their worship may rightly be identified as a fitting representation of the religion of the state, of "loyalty to the Empire," and the one common element uniting the whole empire.

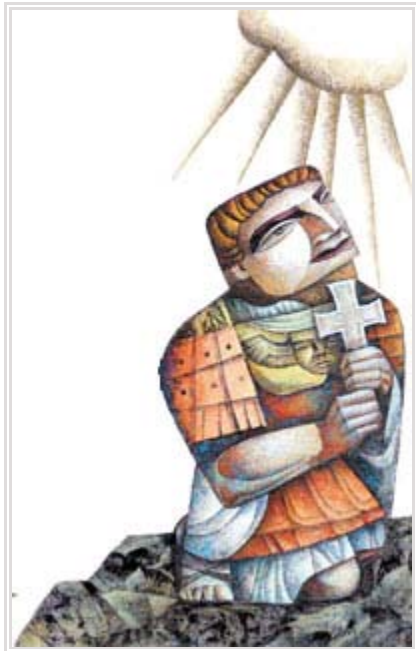
In antiquity, citizens of each state owed allegiance to the gods of that state. By policy, foreigners who were domiciled in lands other than their patria were allowed to worship the gods of their native land. As the Roman Empire expanded, this policy was implemented more frequently and was facilitated by foreign religions, all of which were nonexclusive toward other religions. When Rome granted citizenship to inhabitants of conquered lands, the result was a fusing of religions. Such persons were required to render allegiance to Rome through emperor worship and were allowed to worship their native gods. *Thus, when emperor worship was associated with allegiance to Rome and therefore viewed as a symbol of political conduct, it posed grave consequences for Judaism and Christianity, both of which were monotheistic.*

When Rome conquered the Jews, the Jews showed charters granted them that allowed them to observe their particular religious rites, which the Romans acknowledged. In places where Jewish colonies existed without charters, particularly in Rome, they were granted alien rites. After the destruction of the Jewish Temple, the Emperor Vespasian redirected the payment of the didrachma for the Jewish

Temple to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The Jews had no complaints of this god, or the state under his guardianship, since they were allowed to retain their former privileges. Thus, Judaism remained an authorized religion (*religio licita*), in contrast to Christianity, which became a proscribed religion (*religio illicita*), especially once the Romans distinguished the differences between the two.

Since they were identified as a *religio illicita*, Christians, if denounced and condemned, faced the death penalty; conversely, if they abjured Christianity by sacrificing to the gods, such repentance secured pardon. The only plausible grounds for their persecution was that they bore the name Christian, since upon examination they were found to be blameless of any purported crimes. Under such circumstances most Roman emperors slackly administered the law, even placing some restraint upon municipal magistrates and provincial governors. Nonetheless, the law was part of state policy and was upheld at times. Thus, while providing no security to Christians, the practices of second-century emperors were vastly distanced from the policy of extermination followed by Decius and Diocletian in later years.

The Relationship Between Jews and Christians



In defining the relationship between Jews and Christians, Reicke notes that from A.D. 33 through 54 Christians were the victims of the Jewish establishment. During this time the Jewish community strongly advocated nationalism and zealotism. From fear of further attacks many Jewish Christians were influenced to adopt an emphasis upon the law and its observances. This resulting movement manifested itself within Christianity from A.D. 54 through 61 and resulted in Paul's warning to the Christian community in Rome in A.D. 58 (Romans 13:1-7), in which he admonishes them to be subject to the powers that be. Thus, Christianity was influenced *theologically* by a renewed Jewish emphasis upon the law, but was not influenced with its corresponding *political sentiments* of nationalism and zealotism. With one exception, historical records do not document any instances of Christians being involved in either of these Jewish movements. This historical record indicates that the intent of Paul's letter to the Romans was achieved.

The Status Between Christians and the Roman Government

As a general rule the Roman government was tolerant toward all religions. It was more concerned with preserving public order than with the petty disputes among religions. However, it did not follow a policy of toleration when a religious practice threatened the stability or morality of the empire.

Apart from those occasions when it persecuted Christians, and apart from its blatant idolatry, Christians regarded it in a positive light. From the first-century Christian worldview, they believed it would endure until the second advent of Christ and thus serve as a barrier to the terrors of the last days. Christians interpreted it as the power that "restrained" the anti christ and held in check the mobs that would otherwise destroy them. Christians saw the obvious benefits of the empire that helped promulgate Christianity, such as "[the Pax Romana], uniformity of language and ideas, and rapid and safe communication."

Christianity, in relation to the Roman Empire, gradually came to be viewed as a "state within a state" because it established its own system of handling legal disputes, developed its own organizational structure, and had its own system of electing local church leaders. While there were interrelations between the church and the Roman Empire, each was exclusive in its own sphere until the fourth century. As belief in the imminence of Christ's return began to wane, believers began to focus on two primary concerns: the church, and the state as the sphere of the church's life. Church leaders and apologists were generally supportive of the Roman government through the of the fourth century, with the exception of those emperors who instigated widespread persecution of Christians, came to interpret Romans 13 and Revelation 13 as dialectical counsel that on the one hand, presented the state as the instrument of God to establish order and peace, and on the other hand, described the state as the agent of demonic power that would persecute Christians.

Eusebius was the individual who played the most important part theologically in the union of church and state in the fourth century. The source for this union was a shift in theological focus by Eusebius. Hornus states, "Thus it was Eusebius who marked the *departure of Christian thought—in its conception of the state* as well as in numerous other areas—from the dialectical approach which until then had been its strength."

He continues explaining: "Eusebius had completely lost the apocalyptic perspective: for him there remained only Romans 13 and a *near deification—at least by proxy—of the power* which, because it existed, had necessarily been appointed by God. As a result, 'empire and state were in fact the ultimate realities. The theology of history had become useless and had been completely *transformed into a political theology*. It had once and for all become static."

In addition to Eusebius' influence, the conversion of Emperor Constantine had a great impact upon his reign over the Roman Empire. E. Glenn Hinson states, "From his conversion until about 324, when he took up the fight against Licinius, Constantine extended tolerance to other religions and displayed limited favoritism to Christianity. From 324 to 330, he adopted a harsher attitude toward paganism and leaned ever more heavily on the churches. After 330, he dropped all pretense of toleration and did all he could to *eliminate paganism as well as divergent forms of Christianity*."

Summary

In summary, consideration must be given to the abundance of factors that contribute to an overall understanding of the relationship sustained between Christianity and the government of the Roman Empire. Such factors as the growth of Christianity until it was considered a "state" within the empire; the perception of Christianity toward the state; the perception of the state toward Christianity, from both a religious and political perspective; and the relation between Judaism and Christianity—all contribute to an enlightened understanding of Romans 13:1-7 as it defines the role of the state.

To begin, the "power" (state) that Paul referred to in Romans 13 was not a Christian state. To the contrary, the Roman government was not only polytheistic but was even opposed to Christianity. The Roman government maintained a broad policy of toleration for other religions, but reserved the right to control and even prohibit such religions if they threatened the unity of the empire. The government allowed foreign worship practices for those religions designated as *religio licita*, thus implying that the government had also the prerogative of reviewing, examining, and determining the claims of each religion and its right to exist. The one "national religion" (if such it could be called), promoted by the Roman government, was emperor worship, which was mandatory for citizenship status.



From another religious perspective, Judaism enjoyed the privileged status of *religio licita*. Since Christianity had its birth from within Judaism, it too enjoyed the protection afforded this status until roughly after A.D. 60, when it was distinguished from Judaism. Judaism was the primary antagonist to Christianity in its beginnings because of inherent doctrinal differences between the religions. Additionally, Judaism strongly influenced Christianity primarily through Jewish converts to Christianity who had concern over Jewish legalistic and sacrificial practices. Although not directly influenced by Jewish nationalism and zealotism, enough danger from these influences was present at the time of the writing of Romans so that Paul expressed his concerns to Christians in that letter by admonishing them to submit to Roman rule.

Once distinguished from Judaism, Christianity was labeled as *religio illicita*. It suffered persecution from the Roman government for a variety of reasons. Politically, it was viewed as a threat to the Roman government because of its internal structure of governance and its unity that was independent of Rome. From this perspective it could be classified as a "state within a state." Socially, it was viewed as advocating strange customs and causing familial divisions. Religiously, it was viewed as hostile to the Roman pantheon, and especially because of its monotheistic nature, its adherents were labeled as "atheists" because they would not render allegiance to Rome and its gods through emperor worship. Patriotically, it was viewed as in opposition to the well-being of Rome and its citizenry because its followers would not fight in wars, nor would they offer supreme allegiance to Rome through emperor worship. Mystically, it was viewed as the curse upon the empire and the cause of the wrath of the gods, because of famine, pestilence, and wars that began to plague the empire during the second century.

What allowed Christianity to survive in the face of such opposition? Its primary strength was its focus upon the imminence of God's kingdom to be established at the second advent of His Son. Such a focus enabled Christians to face the fiercest persecution with peace, knowing that this world was temporary and its kingdoms were soon to end at the ushering in of God's eternal kingdom. *Such a future focus did not include political considerations or aspirations*. Additionally, the dialectic between Romans 13 and Revelation 13 gave Christianity a solid bulwark; the first passage guided it in its relations with the state; the second passage prepared it for persecution by the state. With the passage of time Christianity lost its dialectical understanding of these two passages. Rather than maintaining this dialectical relationship, it nearly deified Romans 13 by exalting the temporal sovereignty of the state. Additionally, as Christianity lost its belief in the imminence of Christ's return, and was faced with the increase of its adherents by the fourth century, it shifted its focus to its own existence and its relations with the state. *This shift in focus resulted in Christianity losing its unique status as a nonpolitical entity that had distinguished it from the state*. Consequently, it became enmeshed in the politics of the state, and the



end product was the temporal union of both groups.

Learning from the historical record, it is obvious that when politics and religion are blended, some group inevitably faces persecution. Rome associated emperor worship with citizenship status, which resulted in the persecution of Christians. By the fourth century Rome had adopted Christianity as its official religion, resulting in the persecution of pagan worshippers. Should our government adopt the same *principle* and require that all who are Americans must also be Christians? Clearly, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians in

America, if they wish to avoid persecuting practices similar to those of Roman Catholicism during the time of Constantine and during the Dark Ages, should refocus their efforts in preaching the nearness of Christ's second advent as the best means of ushering in His long-expected kingdom, rather than filling the pulpit with the politics of the kingdoms of this world.



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1 James D. G. Dunn, "Romans 13:1-7— A Charter for Political Quietism?" *Ex Auditu* 2 (1986): 55; Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 354.

2 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), vol. 6, pp. 25-29.

3 Kasemann, p. 351.

4 "Among theological ethicists there is now a consensus about the impossibility of seeing Romans 13 as an entire doctrine of the state which can be used for almost all occasions concerning the state of our time. Without any hermeneutical reflection the Pauline text can easily be misinterpreted and misused in ethical situations vastly different from that of the Roman Empire in the middle of the first century." Torleiv Austad, "Attitudes Towards the State in Western Theological Thinking," *Themelios* 16, no. 1 (Oct./Nov. 1990): 19.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 20. See also Ronald W. Johnson, "The Christian and the State: Romans 13:1-7," *Review and Expositor* 97, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 93; and Jeffrey Shearier, "The Ethics of Obedience: A Lutheran Development," *Concordia Journal* 12, no. 2 (Mar. 1986): 55.

6 Winsome Munro, "Romans 13:1-7; Apartheid's Last Biblical Refuge," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 161-164.

7 The Roman government reserved to itself the right to decide which foreign cults and gods would be officially adopted, and thus sanctioned for worship (F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church: From the Earliest Times to A.D. 461* [New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930], p. 45; W. R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* [New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1970], p. 21). Additionally, it maintained the right to control all religions and to suppress those that threatened the unity of the empire (Halliday, pp. 22, 23). One example of this is notable, the case of the religion of the Druids, which Rome expressly forbade (W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912], p. 354). Rome's decision was predominantly based on political considerations rather than religious, since the Druidic religion was used as an instrument for nationalist agitation against Roman rule (Ramsay, p. 354; Halliday, p. 23).

8 Harold Mattingly describes polytheism as being more tolerant toward other religions because by nature it tends toward inclusiveness (Harold Mattingly, *Christianity in the Roman Empire* [New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967], pp. 18, 19, 22). Additionally, Walter Hyde defines the Roman religion itself as being "a formal polytheism characterized by ritual ceremonies" (Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1946], p. 11).

9 Louis Duchesne, *The Early History of the Church*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1947), p. 76.

10 Jean-Michel Hornus (p. 23) notes, "The practice of emperor worship had evolved over several centuries. In 29 B.C., at the initiative of the local inhabitants, the first temple to Augustus was built at Pergamum. From that place the new cult of Caesar spread throughout Asia and then across the whole empire." He further notes (p. 25) that although this form of worship must have been a source of conflict for Christians since the birth of Christianity, it did not take official, final form until A.D. 291 when the emperors officially proclaimed themselves as "gods and sons of gods" (Jean-Michel Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful for Me to Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence, and the State* [Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1980]).

11 Duchesne, pp. 6, 7; Hornus, pp. 24, 25; Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church, volume 1, The Beginnings of the Christian Church* (New York: The World Publishing Company, first published 1937, translation revised 1949, 1953), p. 168.

12 Mattingly, p. 27; Halliday, p. 24.

13 Hornus, p. 24; Lietzmann, p. 167; Hyde (p. 10) describes the Roman religion as more adapted to public life than to the individual. It is precisely for this reason that its "priests were always State officials, temples and altars were supported by State monies, ceremonies were supervised by the State and religious law administered in State courts." He concludes by stating, "Thus Roman religion remained to the end the formal faith of the State rather than the expression of individual belief."

14 Duchesne, pp. 73-75.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78. Both Halliday (p. 23) and Ramsay (p. 354) note that confusion in distinguishing between Christians and Jews existed for some time among the Roman rulers. This accounts for the protection granted to Christians under the Jewish *religio licita* status. It was not until late in the first century that Christians became the focal point of intentional persecution, since they were by then distinguished from Judaism. Ramsay (pp. 356, 357) further notes that as Christianity grew, it continued to maintain a unity that was distinct from and contrary to that of the empire. The formation and maintenance of such an organization was contrary to Roman policy and thus led to Christianity being identified as a *religio illicita*. It was upon this ground, primarily political rather than religious, that Christians suffered persecution.

16 Duchesne, p. 81.

17 Duchesne, p. 83. Halliday (pp. 24-27) mentions that persecution of Christians during the second century was because of: (1) Christianity's outright opposition to idolatry, (2) disturbance of family life by the conversion of one of its members, (3) the extreme forms of Christian reaction against the sexual laxity of the day, (4) "the anxious wars upon the frontier, the famine and pestilence in the land, seemed to portend celestial punishment," the cause of which was that Christians were "atheists" who did not support the gods of the empire, and (5) the fact that during a time of increasing wars Christians were conscientious objectors.

18 Duchesne, pp. 83, 84.

19 B. Reicke, "Judaean-Christianity and the Jewish Establishment, A.D. 33-66," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 145-152.

20 "In the capital of the empire the danger of zealotism was especially great, as was later confirmed by Clement of Rome when he found zeal to have been the reason for the persecution of several Christians as well as for the catastrophe of Israel (1 Clem. 5:1 to 6:4)." *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 152.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 149-152.

22 Even Church Fathers as late as the third century, such as Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165), Athenagoras (in the second century), and Tertullian (A.D. 160-240) indicate by their written prayers support for government officials (R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness From Heaven* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991], p. 245).

23 Mattingly, pp. 30, 31.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 33; Duchesne, p. 6.

25 Hornus, p. 27.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 49; Mattingly, p. 16; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 248.

27 Hornus, p. 48.

28 Duchesne, pp. 7, 8.

29 Robert M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 36-42. Halliday (p. 28) also defines Christianity in relation to the Roman Empire as "a state within a state."

30 Grant, pp. 20, 21.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-36; Hornus, pp. 43-50.

32 Hornus, pp. 28-29; Foakes-Jackson, pp. 50, 51; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 234. For the dialectical relationship between Romans 13:1-7 and Revelation 13, see J. L. Garrett, Jr., "The Dialectic of Romans 13:1-7 and Revelation 13: Part One," *Journal of Church and State* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1976): 442; and "The Dialectic of Romans 13:1-7 and Revelation 13: Part Two," *Journal of Church and State* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 19, 20.

33 Hornus, p. 43. Jacob Burckhardt further identifies Constantine's role in the union of church and state: "Hence we have lost the picture of a genius in stature, [Constantine], who knew no moral scruple in politics and regarded the religious question exclusively from the point of view of political expediency. We shall see that he found it advisable to attach himself more closely to the Christians after this war, and that the elevation of Christianity to the position of state religion was thus consummated (Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* [Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1949], p. 283).

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48. (*Italics mine.*)

35 *Ibid.*, p. 50. (*Italics mine.*) Michael Grant contends (pp. 156-186) that it was Constantine's political desire of unity within the empire that motivated his actions of favoring Christianity as the state religion. He more specifically (p. 159) describes Constantine's supremacy over the church as Caesaropapism: "True the emperor completely controlled the bishops himself. His dominance over them, embodied in the statement 'my will must be considered binding'—which some earlier Christians would never have accepted—was a prime example of that monarchical control of the church described as Caesaropapism" (Michael Grant, *Constantine the Great* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons/Macmillan Publishing Co., 1994]).

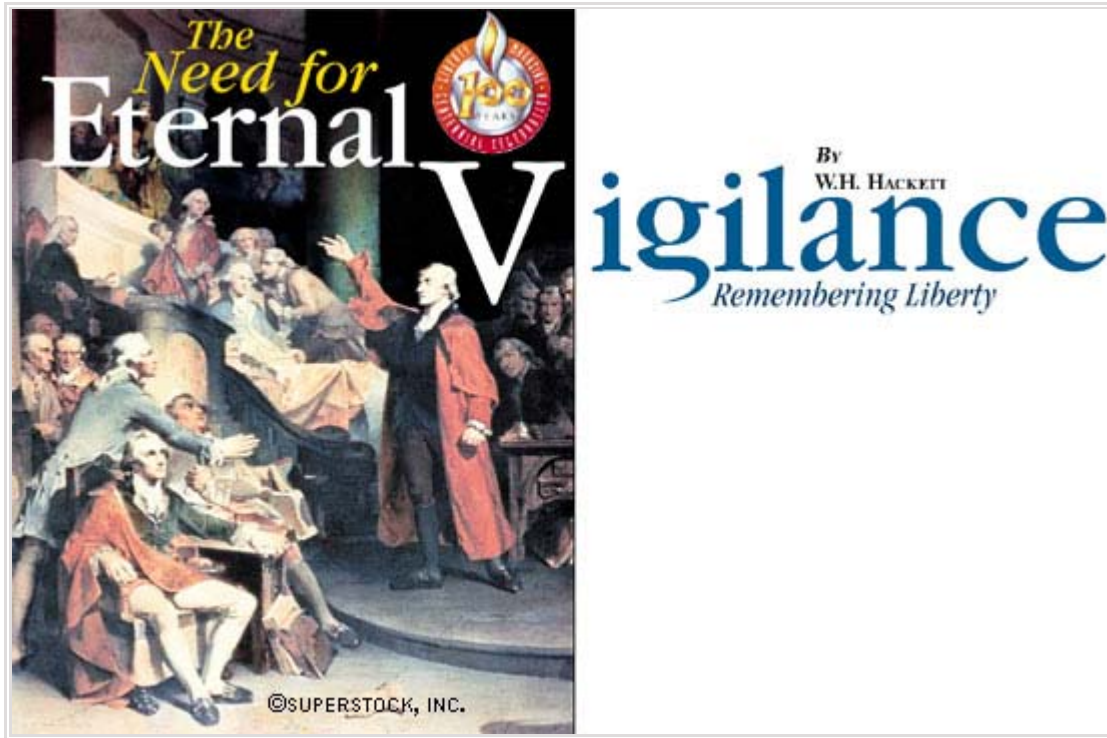
36 E. Glenn Hinson, *The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 198.

(*Italics mine.*) For a detailed account of how state monies were used during this time to support Christian churches and how the state violated the rights of its citizens who held beliefs other than those of Christianity, see Chapter VII, "Temples, Churches, and Endowments," Robert Grant (*Early Christianity and Society*, pp. 146-163); Chapter III, "The Churches of Constantine and Helena," pp. 55-64, and "Were the Pagans Persecuted?" pages 79-85, in Diana Bowder, *The Age of Constantine and Julian*, (USA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978; first edition published in London: Paul Elek, Ltd., 1978); Christopher Bush Coleman, *Constantine the Great and Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), pp. 63-67. In reference to Christians persecuting other Christians under the auspices of the Roman government, Williston Walker states, "The Donatists [a group of Christians in north Africa who claimed "to be the only true church possessed of a clergy free from 'deadly sins' and of the only valid sacraments"] appealed to the Emperor, who once more decided against them, in 316, and as they refused to yield, now proceeded to close their churches and banish their

bishops. The unenviable spectacle of the persecution of Christians by Christians was exhibited" (Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970], p. 106. [Italics mine.]); Coleman, pp. 68, 69.

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

The Need For Eternal Vigilance



Liberty is not offered on the bargain counters—even in the United States, where too many people take it for granted.

Too often we give lip service to the saying "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and then turn our backs and give attention to our own private affairs, falsely believing some imaginary police officer is standing guard over those principles for us.

But the police officer is not there.

Liberty will be preserved only by that eternal vigilance.

The seven words so often quoted in this country in connection with our freedoms are wholly inadequate in themselves and should never be separated from the complete statement that was uttered by John Philpot Curran in his "Speech Upon The Right of Election of the Lord Mayor of Dublin."

What he said was: "It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."—*Speeches of John Philpot Curran*, vol. 2, pp. 235, 236.

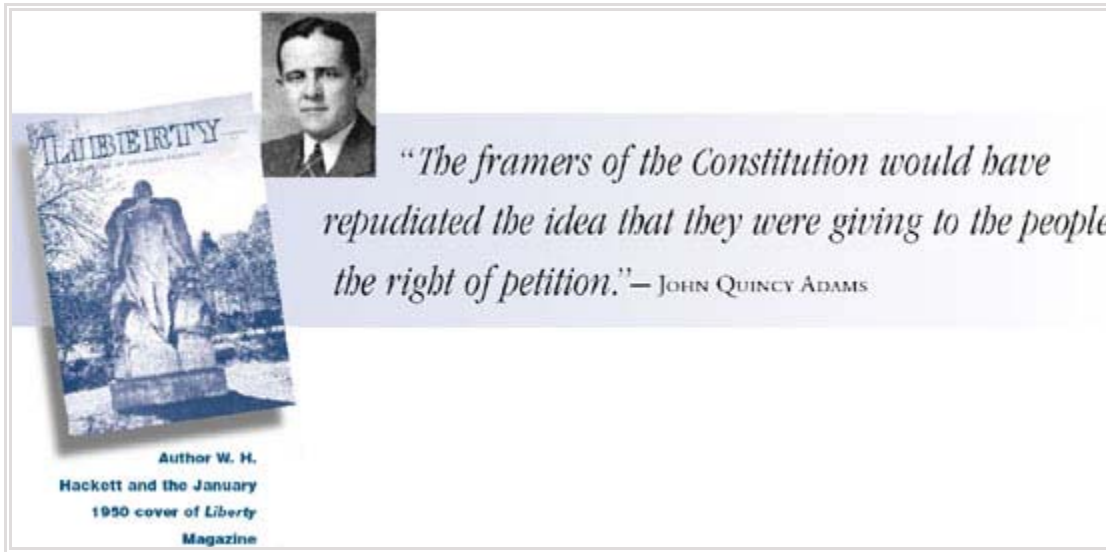
Around the world today we find people manacled to some ideology or ism to which they are opposed and which robbed them of their once-cherished liberties—all because, in many instances, they were indolent and became a prey to the active. Religious liberties have been lost under just such conditions.

Here in this country we have been lulled into a semislumber in this respect by the importance we have placed on our great Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

As the result of two of our freedoms, press and speech, our people are today better informed on affairs of government than ever before. Yet they are not vigilant.

We cannot maintain our relationship to government at a pony express rate in an atomic age. Things move rapidly today on land, in the air, on the seas—and in government. Pressure groups and lobbyists take advantage of this condition. In many instances groups will feel

that certain legislation is needed to correct some condition or circumstance irritating to them or beneficial to them, and sponsor a congressional bill covering the subject. In their zeal they may, and often do, go beyond the scope of the subject intended to be covered. Then, too, in their anxiety they may overstep the bounds and encroach upon the rights of others. It is here that eternal vigilance is needed.



Today there are more groups looking after legislative interests of others in Washington than ever before. Sometimes it becomes a battle of the pressure groups. Sometimes the indolent slumber and become the prey.

Some years ago a bill was presented and endorsed by many well-meaning groups. It was reported favorably by a subcommittee and was well on its way to being presented to the whole

Congress for consideration when belated "vigilance" appeared on the scene and held up passage of the legislation.

Although nearly too late, representatives of several religious organizations pointed out that the proposal, under strict interpretation, might even bar the transportation of the Holy Bible in the mails of the United States. Designed to keep defamatory writings out of the mail, the legislation was so written, however, that even general discussion of religious beliefs in printed tracts might be prohibited.

Every citizen of the United States has a right to speak up on such occasions. And that is not confined to speaking up as related to free speech.

The citizen may resort to his right to petition. The First Amendment provides that insofar as the national legislature is concerned, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

This merely says that Congress shall make no law abridging the right of people to petition their government.

In a federal court case the court said, "[This amendment] assumes the existence of the right of the people to assemble for lawful purposes, and protects it against encroachments by Congress. The right was not created by the amendment; neither was its continuance guaranteed, except as against congressional interference. For their protection, in its enjoyment, therefore, the people must look to the States. The power for that purpose was originally placed there, and it has never been surrendered to the United States."

Forty-five of the 48 [at the time] states were prompt to take action to protect their citizens in their right to petition government for redress of grievances. This protection appears in the form of constitutional amendments.

These 45 states have specific provisions in this respect. The constitutions of two states omit specific reference to right of petition but have sections saying in substance, "The rights enumerated in this bill of rights shall not be construed to limit other rights of the people not herein expressed." One state constitution makes no reference to right of petition and has no provision blanketing other "rights" similar to the one just quoted.

A few examples of provisions of state constitutions guaranteeing the right of petition follow:

Article I, Section 10, of the Constitution of California says, "The people shall have the right to freely assemble together to consult for the common good, to instruct their representatives, and to petition the Legislature for redress of grievances."

In nearly every instance the state constitution links the right of assembly with the right of petition. The Constitution of Connecticut, Article I, Section 16, says in part that the citizens have a right "to apply to those invested with the powers of government, for redress of grievances, or other proper purposes, by petition, address or remonstrance."

The Constitution of Illinois, Article II, Section 17, says in part that the people have a right "to make known their opinions to their representatives, and to apply for redress of grievances."

Writers of the Constitution of Louisiana provided that the state's citizens should have the right to "apply to those vested with the powers of government for a redress of grievances by petition or remonstrance."—Article I, Section 5.

Maine has been very liberal, even including the word *instruction*. Article I, Section 15, of that state's constitution says in part that the people shall have a right at all times "to give instructions to their representatives, and to request, of either department of the government by petition or remonstrance, redress of their wrongs and grievances."

The Constitution of Maryland, Article 13, declares that "every man hath a right to petition the Legislature for the redress of grievances in a peaceful and orderly manner."

The Constitution of Wyoming, Article I, Section 21, emphasizes the right of the citizens "to make known their opinions."

The most popular wording of this subject in the various constitutions is the guarantee of the right of the citizens "to apply to those invested with the powers of government, for redress of grievances, or for other proper purposes, by petition, address, or remonstrance."

Congress has, during the years, been very careful to guard the matter of petition. Members of Congress recognize this as a forceful means of expression on behalf of their constituents.

There are very few occasions in the history of this country when any attempt has been made to curb the right of petition. An outstanding instance occurred during the hectic days of congressional debate over the slavery issue.

It began early in 1837 when his colleagues in Congress attempted officially to censure John Quincy Adams, then a representative in Congress, in connection with the question of right of petition on the slavery issue. Referring to Mr. Adams' letters to "the inhabitants of the 12th Congressional District of Massachusetts," which he represented, one writer has said, "It will be seen that, in the great struggle for and against the right of petition. . . the author [Mr. Adams] stood, in a great measure, alone and unsupported by his northern colleagues. . . He stood alone—beating back, with his aged and single arm, the tide which would have borne down and overwhelmed a less sturdy and determined spirit."

Early that year the House of Representatives had voted to eliminate the reading of petitions on the question of slavery. They would merely be received and "laid on the table." On January 23, 1837, Mr. Adams presented 21 petitions. He was denied the privilege of reading them, and lost each appeal he made from the ruling of the chair. A few days later he received 30 other petitions. Among them was one purporting to be from slaves and imploring representatives from the North to cease offering petitions for emancipation of the slaves. Mr. Adams raised the question on the floor of Congress of whether slaves had the right of petition, under the action taken earlier that year with respect to petitions. This brought cries of "Expel him" from many of his colleagues, and a flow of resolutions of censure against him. Many heated words were hurled against Adams. His arguments were forceful, and his opponents, realizing they were losing ground, began to water down their resolutions, couching them in milder terms.

On February 9, 1837, Mr. Adams gave a historic speech on the right of petition. His remarks quoted here were reported by the editor of the *Boston Daily Advocate*.

"The framers of the Constitution would have repudiated the idea that they were giving to the people the right of petition. That right God gave to the whole human race when he made them men—the right of prayer by asking a favor of another. My doctrine is, that this right belongs to humanity—that the right of petition is the right of prayer, not depending on the conditions of the petitioner; and I say, if you attempt to fix any limit to it, you lay the foundation for restriction to any extent that the madness of party spirit may carry it. . . The right of petition contests no power; it admits the power. It is supplication; it is prayer; it is the cry of distress, asking for relief."

It was a forceful speech in defense of the right of petition, and after its conclusion less than two dozen votes could be mustered in support of a resolution for even the most indirect censure. All resolutions directed against Mr. Adams were rejected.

The fight over right of petition did not end there. On January 18, 1840, Representative William Slade, of Vermont, also made an effective speech, and a section of his speech is so important that it is worth repeating. He said, "The rule before us may seem to some a very small affair; but smaller encroachments on popular rights than this have grown to a fearful magnitude. The history of all usurpations shows that the disposition for encroachment uniformly increases with its acquisitions of power." Therein lies an important thought.

There are many supporters of religious liberty who refuse to arouse themselves at the first alarm of encroachment—or the second, or the third. The call seems "a small affair." However, as Representative Slade added, "The voraciousness of appetite is augmented by the aliment on which it feeds." Any whittling away of religious freedom will lead only to a greater slicing away of that liberty.

The right of petition is an important and a fundamental liberty and was recognized as such by those who drafted our federal and state constitutions. It should not be looked upon lightly when questions of religious freedom are before national and state legislative bodies.



This article appeared in the January 1950 issue of Liberty—some topics are always relevant! With this present January issue Liberty embarks upon volume 100. There is no other religious liberty journal that can approach its record length of publication and wide distribution—almost 200,000 copies each issue to federal, state, and local legislators, judiciary, lawyers, and thousands of others who value religious liberty. During this centennial year we will regularly "sample" the Liberty heritage. Editor.

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

Moral Values

Can It Really Be So Long Since The U.S. Presidential Elections? What, All Of Two Months! The Attack Rhetoric Is All Gone Now And, Uninterrupted By Paid Political Ads, Television Programming Is Back To The Usual Numbing Flicker. It's Jingle Bells And Auld

BY: LINCOLN E. STEED



Can it really be so long since the U.S. presidential elections? What, all of two months! The attack rhetoric is all gone now and, uninterrupted by paid political ads, television programming is back to the usual numbing flicker. It's jingle bells and Auld Lang Syne and elections in Iraq for us.

But the political landscape has been rearranged in ways that go way beyond political structure and electoral votes. We seem to have discovered something big and previously unnoted. We have decided that **moral values** determined the outcome of the last election more than any other factor.

On the face of it that is an extraordinary conclusion to make of an election marked by more outright lies and malice than any in recent, or not so recent, memory. Character was often presented as a virtue—however it was more described in the negative; as both sides cast the other candidates as mean, dishonest, traitors—well, you remember.

I have to think hard to list many issues that could be called moral values. Let's allow character of the candidates right up front—and then put our thinking caps on. Well there was a lot of talk about same-sex marriage. (Those who read our September 2004 issue of *Liberty* know how seriously we view that challenge to religious prerogatives and society at large.) But both sides danced around that issue in public debate. The Republicans seemed to want it both ways by backing a federal constitutional amendment and allowing part of the ticket to almost defend the gay reality. And the Democratic candidate knew better than publicly espouse this issue. Still, on election day eleven states gave a resounding mandate for state constitutional amendments. . . so it was clearly a moral issue in play for the election.

Abortion was no doubt a big background issue, as it has been for several elections now. But it has never been determinative before; and the politicians showed little relish for making it *the* issue of the election. What was clearly on the voters' minds was stem cell research and the implications it holds for even more aggressive embryo manipulation. It is in many ways a puzzling line to draw in the sand. Still, it is a line, and I am heartened to see it as a sign that our society is interested in protecting life—and presumably in many cases this awareness arises from a sense of the Divine Creator.

Moral values. . . mmm!! Oh, yes, both candidates spoke warmly of their personal faith. No doubt one was more believed than the other. Still the distinction between the two is surely pale enough to disqualify as *the* moral issue of the election. After all, we are not electing a Pastor in Chief—else there might be too many disqualifications. No, while we have every right to expect moral integrity in our candidates and every reason to hope that they be men of effective personal piety, I didn't see the election as between Saint George and the Dragon.



So what were the truly significant moral issues at work here? It is indeed self evident that most have cast it that way, and it becomes an axiom to take forward with us—but I hold that other than the same sex/marriage issue it is not what it appears to be.

Certainly the preachers among us would accede readily enough that the United States is not in the midst of a Great Awakening. Spirituality is something too many Americans find to be unnecessary.

I think what is stirring is not so much an "enthusiasm" of the Spirit as it is a reawakening of a sense of national religious identity. Much the same way as the Islamic world, feeling under threat, is more and more defining itself in arbitrary religious ways. And they are headed for disaster in so doing. We too, in the "Christian" west, risk disaster if we allow an unthinking morals agenda to function as a substitute for spiritual revival and a true sense of self.

What are some of the present contradictions to a true values culture? After trying to tie down the often less than clear-cut moral issues in the election, this second quest is sadly a lot

easier to conduct.

In many and myriad ways in the past several years, by government policy and public acceidance we have thumbed our noses at concern for the environment. I am no "greenie" to say this—just an observer of events: a Christian well aware that my Bible says that God will punish those who destroy the earth. I think it inconsistent that we should be developing a moral agenda even as we lay waste to the earth and flout our right to do so, above the concerns of other, less blessed, nations.

We daily note the ravages of big business and capital let loose to plunder and grow. Even as the poor are cast as socially irresponsible. The day should be past when we could dismiss government help for the poor as socialist and communistic. It reflects a hardening of public morality that we allow the diminishment of such an obligation.

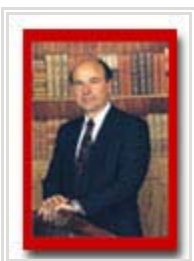
Our proclamation of moral values has an increasingly surreal cast to the rest of the world. A world shocked by the brutality and immorality of Abu Graib. A world long lectured by us on the rights and dignity of man—and now at a loss to know why we are so dismissive of things like the Geneva Conventions and of the rights of our own citizens to public disagreement and demonstration.

It has often been a rude charge of our enemies that we act as we do in the Middle East because of uncritical favoritism. How must they think now to hear, as I did recently, a congressman say that he will support a certain state in that area because of his interpretation of prophecy—and would continue to do all in his power to support it even if it became despotic. And of course his comments were mild compared to some of the public voicing of religious leaders here who are politically ascendant.

For much of the past century the United States shamed the rest of the Western world by its vibrant religious life—even as others descended into formalism and demythologizing. But now they must look askance at too many churchmen hungering for political power more than for true charity. They must wonder at the long term commitment to religious freedom from those all too ready to use the arm of the law and the public purse to advance their religious agenda. This in degree is a new paradigm for the United States.

The term "Moral Values" surely must take on a proper context or it could act as the empowerment for the most immoral and antidemocratic tendencies. It is always worth remembering that the most problematic regimes in the last century—ones like the Third Reich, Pol Pot's Cambodia and the Soviet system—traded and grew on the mantra of moral values alone. Without a consistent spiritual vision, without the love for others that all true faith engenders, the most startling inhibitions of humanity are possible; indeed likely.

"Religion Without Freedom" is a reality for much of our world. Let it never be the case for the United States of America. We seem to have launched morality without spirituality. Let us not allow that to stand.



Lincoln E. Steed

Editor,
Liberty Magazine

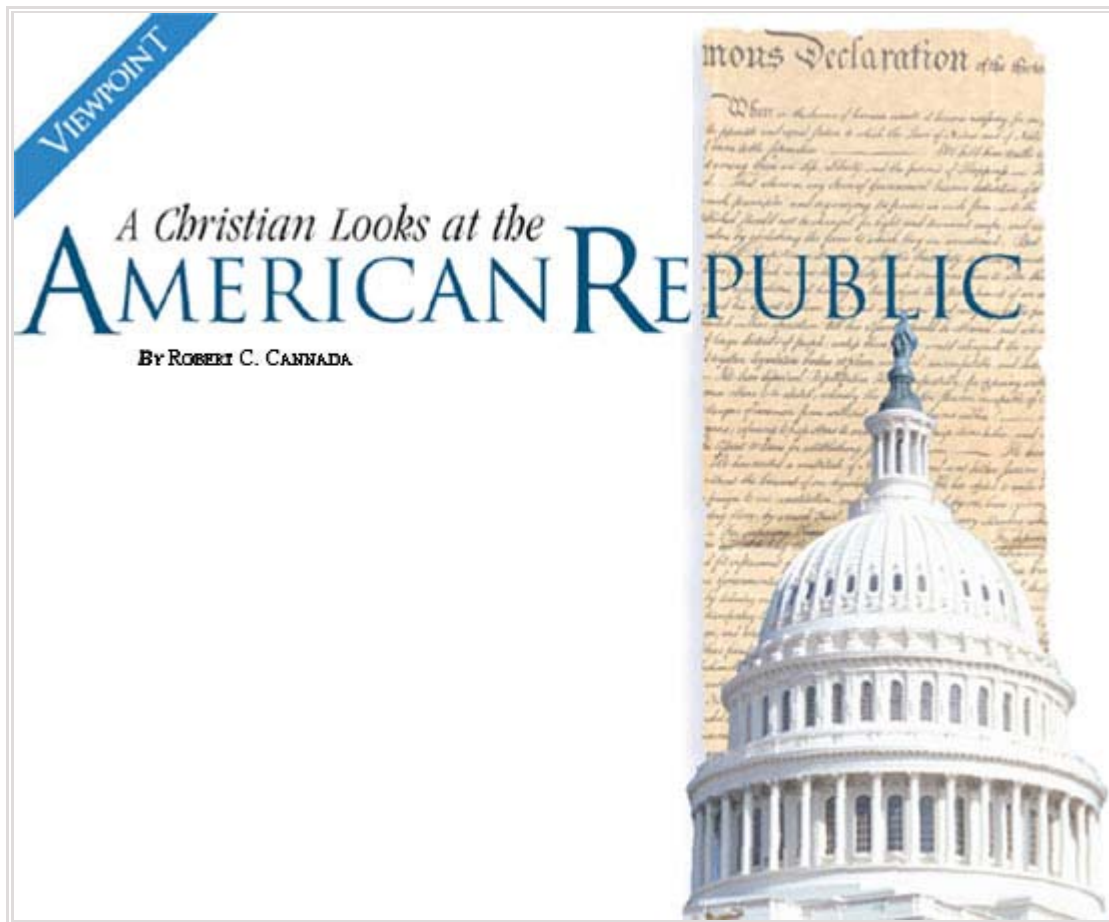
This is a big year for *Liberty* magazine. We are filling out our One Hundredth Year of continuous publication! You will have noted that our cover carries memories of some of the issues over that time; and the designation "Volume 100, Number 1." Come along with us for a landmark year. More in upcoming issues.

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

A Christian Looks At The American Republic

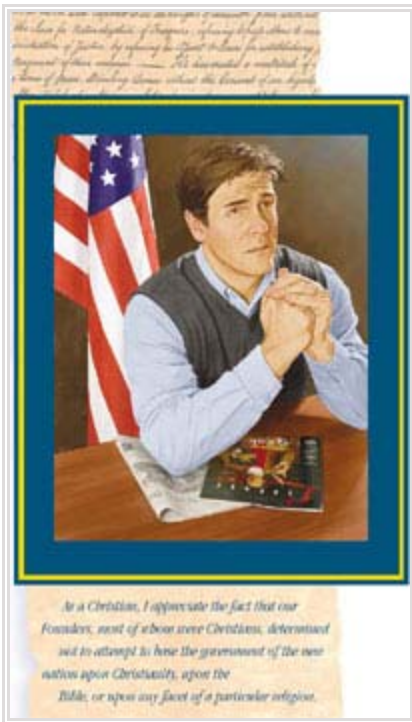
I Know Of No Form Of Government That Can Guarantee My Freedom To Practice My Religious Faith ("Freedom Of Religion") Except A Government That Recognizes And Honors "Transcendent Moral Truths" These Truths Must Come From A Source Other Than "The People,"

BY: ROBERT C. CANNADA



I know of no form of government that can guarantee my freedom to practice my religious faith ("freedom of religion") except a government that recognizes and honors "transcendent moral truths" These truths must come from a source other than "the people," but must not incorporate any particular religion into the government nor favor or be drawn from any particular religion. A government that does not recognize and honor any transcendent truths cannot be expected to secure or protect the "rights" of individuals, which rights are based upon transcendent moral truths. Nor can a government into which a particular religion has been injected be expected to secure or protect the individual freedom of religion.

The officeholders in a government charged with the responsibility of protecting or securing the freedom of religion of the people must make a distinction between their personal obligation under their religion and their obligation to the people as an officeholder. As a religious person, he or she, as a Christian, for an illustration, can look to the Bible, and officeholders of other faiths can look to the tenets of their religion for guidance and direction. As an officeholder, however, they are, regardless of their religious convictions, to look to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution for guidance and direction in the performance of their official duties. In effect, these two documents that were written by humans are to constitute their "bible" in the performance of their official duties of serving all of



the people. This distinction is essential if my freedom of religion to practice my Christianity is to be preserved. Nothing is to be added to and nothing is to be taken from these two documents until and unless the people make a change in one of these documents.

As a Christian, I believe that I should do all that I can to elect as officeholders in the government people who are people of integrity. As a Christian, I desire to see officeholders who will abide by their oath and conduct the official business of the government for which they are responsible in accordance with the principles and truths set forth in the documents that created this nation and organized the powers of its government. I do not desire that the officeholders advance my particular religion in the government or use the powers of their office to advance my particular religion. Accordingly, as a Christian, I wholeheartedly support the form of government established by our Founders as reflected by the Declaration of Independence and implemented by the Constitution. That government is based upon a foundation of moral truths and principles that the officeholders in the government are obligated to recognize and honor, but does not include or advance any particular religion, including Christianity.

There are many Christians who have formed organizations for the purpose of using the civil court to "protect" or to "secure" the rights of individuals. Unfortunately, however, these organizations are not pointing the judges in those courts to the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence. It is those principles that protect our "Christian rights," our unalienable human rights, and to ignore those principles means that these Christian organizations are battling on the battlefield of "moral relativism" rather than on the battlefield of the transcendent moral principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence. The

Constitution provides expressly that "judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution." Thus, our judges are bound by their oath to support the Constitution, which means that they are obligated by this oath to do all they can to secure the unalienable rights with which each person is endowed by their Creator.

I urge those Christians, in their litigation, to shift to the battlefield consisting of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. I urge them to make use of the tool provided by the organic laws of the government—the principles of the Declaration—and to shift from moral relativism to transcendent moral truths in their court presentations.

Some Christians are seeking to inject their Christian religion into the government. Various approaches are used. One of these approaches, while ignoring the Declaration, is to the effect that our nation cannot survive unless our government recognizes and honors moral truths, that all moral truths came from the Bible, and that therefore officeholders in the government should look to the Bible to identify the transcendent moral truths that they are to recognize and honor.

Another approach, while ignoring the Declaration, is to the effect that since most of the Founders were confessing Christians who looked to the Bible for their personal moral guidance and direction, officeholders should do likewise.

Still another approach is to the effect that the Declaration is clearly a part of the organic laws of our government, and since the principles of the Declaration are in accord with the teaching of the Bible, for this reason, or for some other similar or related reason, officeholders should look to the Bible to identify the transcendent moral truths that they are to recognize and honor in the performance of their official duties.

When these approaches are resisted by the government, the claim is made that the government is discriminating against Christianity. Under the form of government established by our Founders the government has the obligation to resist all efforts to inject any particular religion into the fabric of the government. I urge those Christians to cease their efforts to inject the Christian religion into the government.

Some Christian leaders, while not seeking or even threatening civil litigation, are advising other Christians as to their "Constitutional rights" without any reference to or mention of the principles of the Declaration. Thus, as an illustration, these Christians are being advised that their right to exercise freedom of religion, an unalienable right, depends upon such things as reason, common sense, court decisions, Judeo-Christian principles, natural law, or the First Amendment to the Constitution, rather than upon the "principles of the Declaration." These Christian leaders are not advising that attempts be made to inject or intermingle the Christian religion into the government. They are, however, making a fatal mistake by advising that these individual unalienable rights can be secured or protected by the use of relativistic approaches as distinguished from transcendent moral truths. They are not advising the use of the tool provided by the Declaration for the protection of their unalienable rights. That tool is the



principles of the Declaration of Independence. They are being advised to take a position based upon the wrong foundation. I urge these Christian leaders to advise the use of this tool, the principles of the Declaration, in defense of their actions even though there is no desire to initiate an action in the civil courts.

Some Christians are calling for our nation, as a nation, to look to and abide by the principles of the Declaration of Independence. They are not attempting to inject the Christian religion, or any religion, into the government. They are emphasizing the fact that the basic problem facing Americans today is the deterioration of morals in our society, and they are pointing to the principles of the Declaration as the cure to that problem. What they are doing is good and great for our nation; *however*, they are making a fatal mistake. They are applying the principles of the Declaration to all of the inhabitants that make up the people and are making no distinction between obligations and responsibilities of the inhabitants that make up the people on the one hand, and the officeholders in the government on the other hand.

It is essential, in my judgment, that this distinction be recognized and honored if this movement is to have any real success. While it may be argued that the principles of the Declaration are applicable to all of the inhabitants that make up the people, there is nothing in that document that assigns any responsibility, as such, to the inhabitants. The Declaration addresses the government and officeholders, and clearly obligates the government of the United States of America to secure the unalienable rights with which each inhabitant making up the people has been endowed by their Creator. In addition to providing specifically that the government is to secure the unalienable rights with which each one of the people is endowed, the Declaration identifies some of those unalienable rights. Nowhere does the Declaration deal with what the inhabitants who make up the people are to believe, nor does it set forth any duty for those inhabitants.

While the officeholders in the government have a specific duty to secure the unalienable rights of the people, each person is free to believe as they see fit and to, within reason, exercise their unalienable rights. Christians, as part of the people, are free to attempt to establish a Christian society or culture and in that sense establish a "Christian nation." *This is to be distinguished, however, from attempting to establish a Christian government.* Others are free to attempt to establish a culture based upon their religious faith or to oppose the establishing of any culture based upon a particular religion. This is the liberty, or freedom, that is to be protected by the government.

The judicial branch of our government is completely overreacting and is wrong in equating the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence with a particular religion—with the word "religion" as used in the First Amendment. The judiciary is, in effect, holding that the principles set forth in the Declaration violate the provisions of the First Amendment to the Constitution. It is submitted that there is simply no basis for such a conclusion. As a Christian, as a citizen, and as a lawyer, I seek to be a person of integrity. Accordingly, I feel that I must insist that our government, and this includes the officeholders in the judicial branch of the government, recognize the form of government established by our Founders.

There is no conflict between the Declaration and the Constitution, and, to the contrary, the Constitution is to be interpreted in the light of the principles set forth in the Declaration. This form of government is designed to secure or protect my freedom of religion—an unalienable right. I urge the members of the judicial branch of our government to recognize and honor the fact that they are obligated to secure the unalienable rights with which all of the people have been endowed by the Creator God as set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

As a Christian, I appreciate the fact that our Founders, most of whom were Christians, determined not to attempt to base the government of the new nation upon Christianity, upon the Bible, or upon any facet of a particular religion. If the word "Christianity" had been used in the Declaration, then confusion would be rampant. There would be disagreement and confusion within the government even as to the basic tenets of Christianity, to put it mildly. A reference to the Bible would have had a similar result. A determination would have to be made by the government as to whether the reference to the Bible was to the Bible used by Protestants, the Bible used by Catholics, or the Bible used by Jews, together with a determination as to whether it was the Bible in its original language or the Bible as appearing in some translation. The question of the inerrancy of the Bible would also have to be addressed. The insurmountable problems that would be presented by intermingling into the government the Christian religion or the Bible are obvious, and it is understandable why our Founders, although most of them were Christians, elected to found this government upon the universal moral truths reflected in the "laws of nature and of nature's God," and not to involve any particular religion. The language of the Declaration makes it clear that the "unalienable rights," which are sometimes now referred to as "human rights," come from the Creator God and not from the people or from the government, yet no particular religion is referenced or even mentioned.



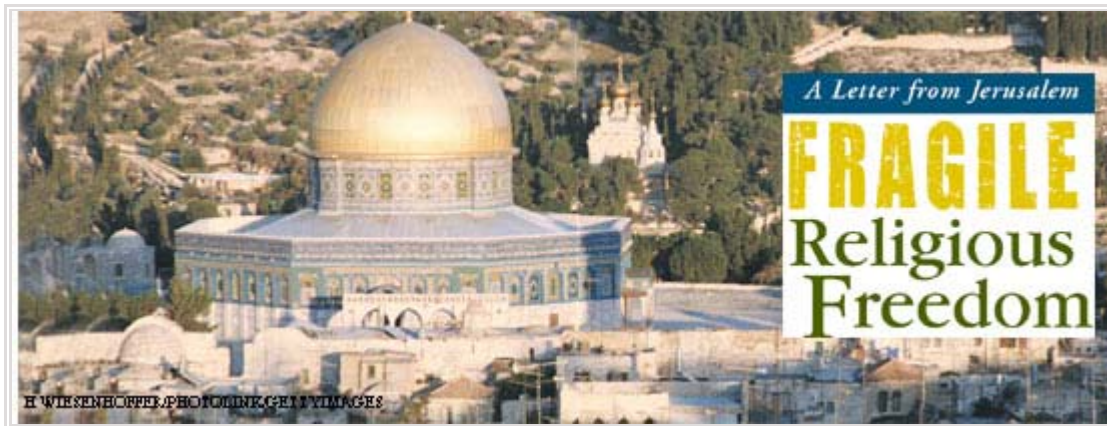
Attorney Robert C. Cannada was a founder and managing partner for 25 years of the largest Mississippi-based law firm, Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens, and Cannada. He was a founder of, and for 25 years chair of the board of trustees of, the Reformed Theological Seminary, with campuses throughout the United States and overseas. A member of the Presbyterian Church in America, he has taken leadership roles with the Christian Legal Society and the National Lawyers Association. He has written a book entitled America's Rule of Law, which enlarges on themes in this article.

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

Fragile Religious Freedom

Jerusalem. It Is Refreshing – Yet Unsettling – To Be A Sabbathkeeper In The Capital Of Israel, Clearly One Of The Most Sabbath-observant Nations On Earth. As These Words Are Written, I'm Wrapping Up A Week In The Land That Is Sacred To Judais

BY: MARK A. KELLNER



Jerusalem. It is refreshing – yet unsettling – to be a Sabbathkeeper in the capital of Israel, clearly one of the most Sabbath-observant nations on earth. As these words are written, I'm wrapping up a week in the land that is sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although my main assignment was to see and write about religious tourism possibilities, of which there are many, I also picked up on several contrasting and interesting religious liberty tensions in this still-young country, just 57 years old.

It's certainly impressive to see a city essentially shut down on Friday evening, if not before. As the sun slipped down toward the western horizon, shoppers (myself included) scurried to a local grocery store to get last-minute provisions. As I left, a security guard at the front door (almost all Israeli businesses of any size, and all hotels, have such guards) waved off another customer, saying the store was closing.

At about 7:00 p.m. Friday night, while sitting in a small worship service, I heard a loud siren. "Do you know what that is?" my host asked. "The signal that the Sabbath has officially begun?" I ventured, and I was right.

Back at my hotel the "automatic" Sabbath elevator had begun running. In this lift no buttons need to be pressed (a task considered work by highly observant Jews) to select a floor. Instead, the lift takes its passengers from the lobby to the top and then starts working its way down, pausing at each floor with the doors open for about 90 seconds, to allow folks on and off. The technology is fascinating, unless you're a less ultraobservant Sabbathkeeper and perhaps need to get to your room faster. For those people – and others – there are regular elevators.

Such dichotomies extend to many aspects of life in Israel, which has long advertised itself as the "Jewish State," even if many of its Jews are essentially secular (a legacy of Israel's socialist founders), and even if one quarter of its citizens, or about 1.6 million people, are Arabs, more than 90 percent of them Muslim, who enjoy the full rights of citizenship, including religious freedom. (There are, after all, quite a few more mosques in Tel Aviv than there are Christian churches in Saudi Arabia.) Outside my hotel on Sabbath morning, I found a taxi driver anxious to have my business. When I told him I had only a short stroll to the worship service I would attend (I called it "an appointment" to avoid debate), he asked if I wouldn't want to see some of the sights nonetheless.

Sunday, as I discovered on landing here, is a normal business day in Israel. Employees are expected to show up at work; school is in session; government agencies and banks happily transact business on the first day of the week. That could cause problems for dedicated Sundaykeeping Christian employees who wish to worship on that day. A businessman who closes on Sunday, just as with a Muslim shop owner who shuts his store on Friday (though few in the Old City of Jerusalem seemed to do so), will send a signal to his neighbors that might endanger business. As to the bravery of those opening on Saturday, I can't report, since I rested that day. However, there are stories of discotheques and restaurants open on Friday night, particularly in Tel Aviv, the nation's commercial capital.

Such signs are also signals of the tensions underneath the surface of the country's religious life. The majority of the Israeli Jewish population is probably best defined as nonobservant: they may generally keep kosher, observing Levitical dietary laws, but this is not a nation totally at prayer on the Sabbath. It's much more a nation at the beach, at one of the country's two golf clubs, or otherwise taking a break from the workweek.

One of my hosts, who, like others in this article, will remain nameless to spare them any problems, was married in a "traditional" Jewish ceremony, performed by an orthodox rabbi. Next month, however, my Israeli friend and their spouse will go to Turkey for the wedding of another pair of friends.

This isn't because they have a desire to travel, even if Israelis insist that they are the world's most prolific tourists. Rather, it's because once one is married in a religious



ceremony in Israel—the only kind allowed—one has to obtain a religious divorce before remarrying. For Jewish women, such a divorce, called a *get*, can be issued only with the husband's permission. If it's not granted, the woman remains in legal limbo, sometimes for years.

Israel's government has struggled for years with a form of civil marriage that is already common and widely accepted in the United States, Canada, Britain, and many other nations: a trip to the city clerk's office for a marriage license and, presto, you're married. Ending such unions can be done at the courthouse, or by proxy if you're Britney Spears at the end of a 50-hour marriage in Las Vegas.

Such easy outs aren't to be found here, unless you have a civil marriage from abroad, hence the boom in Turkish marriages and marriages elsewhere. The strictures on marriage are pleasing to the Orthodox Jewish community, which believes its brand of fervency is the only correct one. But if you're not Orthodox—or if you are and you really, really want out of a bad relationship—limbo becomes not just a party dance but also a state of existence.

Christians, though certainly free to worship, have their own difficulties in Israel. Many churches are allowed to operate, but getting visas for overseas workers or volunteers has been tricky at times. In the second half of 2003 there was a clampdown on such visas, and it required the intervention of several members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, to change things. The restrictions were understandable, but as one expatriate evangelical Christian told me, "We have no standing here." Yet another paradox emerges!

On the one hand, many evangelicals are fervent in their desire to support Israel, and a Zionist Israel at that. They raise money for Israel's poor, its new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and other nations, and they bring Christian tourists and conventions here. American evangelical (and onetime presidential candidate) the Reverend Pat Robertson was to headline a "Feast of Tabernacles" assembly of 4,000 Christians from around the world in fall 2004.

Israel, which has been shunned by many of its former friends in Europe (even, ironically, the countries that felt deserved shame over their treatment of Jewish populations during the Nazi Holocaust), not to mention by many so-called mainline Christian churches (the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has voted to "divest" its stock holdings of companies that do business with Israel, a move sharply criticized by many within its ranks and beyond), is happy to have the friendship of other Christian believers.

Yet Israel's leaders—again, largely secular in outlook—seem to be nervously glancing over their shoulder in two directions. In one corner are the ultra-Orthodox, whose patronage and coalition support in parliament are usually vital for either a Labor or Likud government. These parties, and the constituencies they represent, want to keep Israel as close to traditional Jewish practices as possible. Liberalizing Jewish religious practices, such as marriage rules, would bring down their wrath; allowing active Christian evangelism might

well touch off a political apocalypse.

In the other corner is the bitter memory of a Jewish society in Europe that saw assimilation with the dominant cultures of France, Germany, Austria, and other lands as the highest goal. Such assimilation, many argue, led to disbelief in Zionism and ignorance of the warning signs of Hitler's rise and his evil plans.

Such pressures restrict the abilities of Christians in the land to breathe as freely as they might wish. A man standing on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem offering an alfresco sermon about Yeshua (the Jewish name for Jesus) will likely find an Orthodox woman standing in front of him with a black handkerchief raised to block his face.

The Jerusalem Post, Israel's oldest English-language daily, and one of its most conservative, offers numerous examples of the dichotomies encountered in Israel's religious culture: One day the paper assails government leaders for foot-dragging on civil marriage, stating that hundreds of thousands of Israelis are in marital limbo. Then, in the paper's weekly In Jerusalem supplement, the cover story details a supposedly "illegal" missionary outreach to Jewish young people. Called The Jamm, the group, run by a former Jerusalem police detective who is a proud "Jewish believer in Yeshua," offers music lessons and practice sessions to establish friendships with teenagers. According to critics, the missionaries then swoop in and try to pressure teens into conversion to messianic Jewish faith, something that is anathema to most Israelis. One 15-year-old, who went to the center in part to cope with his parents' divorce, said he was pressured to be baptized, despite a law forbidding the evangelization of minors.

The messianic former detective contends—and local police confirmed—that no youngster is offered religious information without their parents' consent. So-called antimissionary organizations want local law officers to dig deeper.

Here's the irony, however: A few pages over from the article attacking Christian monotheists for reaching out to Jewish monotheists to believe in a Jewish messiah named Yeshua, the same newspaper that decried—in a news story, no less—such efforts printed announcements for yoga and meditation practices, despite the lack of any evidence that the Israelites practiced Kapotasana, or the Pigeon Pose, while en route to the Promised Land during their 40 years in the desert.

It's easy to dismiss such contradictions as a form of societal schizophrenia, but that would sell short what truly may be at work here. A young nation born and reared in military conflict and surrounded by hostile enemies is growing up, and finding its way. The age of 56 might not seem like a time of adolescence, but when it comes to religious freedom, it might well be. Those who love Israel and want to see it thrive can only hope the choices its people and leaders make will be sound ones that bring credit to a land that has accomplished so much, and so quickly.

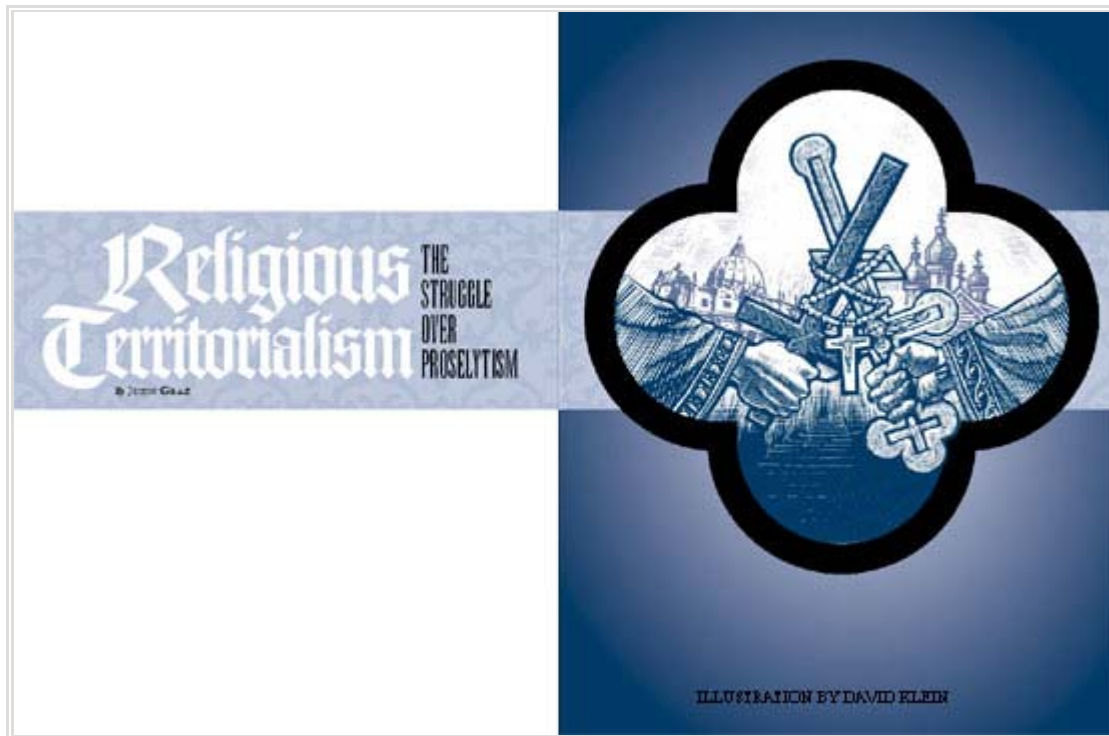


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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

Religious Territorialism

BY: JOHN GRAZ



A remarkable conflict is under way between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church over the issue of *proselytism*. It is remarkable because both are branches of Christianity, and therefore, both adhere to the injunction of Christ to spread the gospel into all the world. Indeed, not only have both adhered to the injunction, but, as evidenced by the number of adherents, both have been very successful in the process. So why all the fuss now?

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the ability for churches to operate freely in Russia became a sudden reality. Along with this freedom came efforts to reestablish the Roman Catholic Church, which had been brutally suppressed by the Communists. The Russian Orthodox Church, still recovering from decades of suppression itself, was also in a struggle to reassert its historic influence. Maybe it was inevitable that these two entities driven apart by schism so many centuries earlier would find themselves at odds in such emotive and volatile circumstances. And that eventually elbows would fly as both maneuvered to secure their place in society.

In letters to the Vatican the Moscow Patriarchate stated that the "Catholic hierarchs insist on the right of their Church 'to preach the Gospel to all the people.' This position is unacceptable for the Russian Orthodox Church." Further, in July of 2002 it was reported that "the Russian Orthodox Church has denied the Catholic Church the right 'to preach the Gospel to all people,' particularly in territories under the Moscow Patriarchate."



Added to the rejection of the Roman Catholic Church's right to preach the gospel in Russia is the charge that the Roman Catholic Church is engaged in "proselytism." For many people proselytism, evangelism, and missionary activity are one and the same. But in fact, proselytism has, at least in some contexts, been given a very different meaning. In 1961 the World Council of Churches defined it as "a corruption of Christian witness" that uses "cajolery, bribery, undue pressure, or intimidation, subtly or openly, to bring about seeming conversion." After Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church defined proselytism as "a manner of behaving contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, which makes use of dishonest methods to attract [persons] to a community—for example, by exploiting their ignorance and poverty."

Even if minority faiths are engaging in proselytism in Russia, which they deny strenuously, is that reason enough for the government to suppress religious minorities?

The Best Way to Protect People

The rationale for the limitations on religious freedom for minorities is that these limitations are necessary to protect the public from immoral proselytizing. This assumes that there are no less-restrictive means—that do not violate basic human rights—of accomplishing the goals of protecting society from exploitation. Of course, this is not true. Here are the best ways to protect people from "destructive and extremist movements":

1. Give honest information about these groups by having an open dialogue, including giving them the opportunity to explain openly their beliefs through the mass media.
2. Prosecute those who violate laws against extortion, bodily harm, crimes against property, and other laws designed to protect the legitimate rights and interests of society, irrespective of whether those being prosecuted are part of a religious organization or not.
3. Ensure that peaceful minority faiths are not discriminated against and that they are protected against false charges against them.

"Nontraditional" confessions or religions are not threatening the integrity and traditions of older, better established religions. Indeed, whether the Orthodox Church in Russia, the Catholic Church in Italy, or Lutheranism in Sweden, for example, the established religions are still very much a part of the established life of the nation. Not only are they thriving in their historic home; they are also thriving overseas. For example, Orthodox immigrants are building new churches in primarily Protestant and Catholic countries. Orthodox schools operate freely in these nations, and there is little, if any, fuss about Protestants or Catholics who decide to join the Orthodox Church in the United States or Western Europe. Orthodox communities in these nations are not persecuted or marginalized.

In light of the freedom the Orthodox Church enjoys in majority Catholic and Protestant nations, it does not seem at all too much to expect that the Orthodox Church in the nations in which it forms the majority would work toward ensuring the same respect for Catholics and Protestants within those countries' borders.

Avoiding Wild Competition

The European Union nations, like the United States, have signed on to the principle that human rights—including religious freedom—are essential values and therefore nonnegotiable. What would happen if every country, under the influence of dominant religion or culture, imposed its values on all its citizens? We would have many different interpretations of the meaning of human rights. We would have secular human rights, Catholic human rights, Protestant human rights, Islamic human rights, and Orthodox human rights. In other words, we would not have *human rights* at all, but rather, a series of nationally created rights determined not by principle but by place and politics.

Of course, traditions have to be respected and promoted. But you don't preserve tradition by discriminating against different religious views. Appreciation for culture is an organic thing that grows out of a genuine appreciation for the aspects that make up the national culture. As the Soviets found, efforts to coerce a false appreciation for an imposed culture lead, in the long run, to widespread rejection

of a culture that is perceived as a force for suppression. The British example amply testifies that freedom is no enemy of tradition and stability of culture.

Religious freedom does not create the conditions for a "wild competition." Quite the contrary. It creates the conditions for the fair expression of various faiths and beliefs in a pluralistic society. Religion is, before all else, a matter of conviction, and a matter of conscience. Do we want to go back to the Dark Ages when the Inquisition made sure that people followed the state religion? We should never forget that every time the church has used the power of the state and the power of legislation to protect itself from competition, the result was good neither for the church nor for the state. And the human costs of such efforts were catastrophic. Religion is best expressed when it is a genuine expression of the authentic beliefs of the adherent, not the coerced expression of the suppressed.

A Code of Good Conduct

Having clearly supported the right to choose and the independence of church from the state, we should admit that a code of good conduct should prevail among believers. After all, there have been documented instances in which believers' zeal outstripped their morality, resulting in dishonest, insensitive, and untoward efforts to convert. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., writes, "The cultural and ecclesial insensitivity of some contemporary groups has been extremely disturbing to Orthodox and other Christians who paid a severe price for their faithfulness in the midst of Communist oppression. Such insensitivity needs to be challenged. [Even if it] appears that the Orthodox, who admittedly are ill prepared to rush into a fully democratic societal pluralism, have overreacted."

We should not ignore the concerns of the Orthodox Church. There are ways to share beliefs that are not offensive and that contribute to a better understanding between people. Aware of the necessity to promote and to protect religious freedom in respecting others, the experts of the International Religious Liberty Association published "Guiding Principles for the Responsible Dissemination of Religion or Belief," a list of 14 principles.

After establishing the right of religious freedom (principle 1), the document underlines the responsibility of all in the disseminating of religion or belief: "Aware of their common responsibilities, religious communities should build relationships through contacts and conversations, manifesting convictions with humility, respect, and honesty. Dialogue should replace confrontation. In witnessing to others or in planning missionary activity, the inviolable dignity of the addressed persons requires considerations of their history, convictions, way of life, and cultural expressions.

At the end of the day, we will always have people of different faiths and beliefs, and we have to learn to live together in peace. As the apostle Paul recommended, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18, NIV).*

Conclusion

The friction between Moscow and Rome highlights the complex reality often faced when the principles of religious freedom are applied in a volatile environment. The difficulties brought on by freedom of religion, however, pale in comparison to the catastrophic costs of suppression. Indeed, if we are to have human rights, they must be applied to all of humanity, regardless of the location and situation. It is incumbent on all faiths to approach the situation in Russia with sensitivity. Expressing mutual respect both through consideration and through efforts to support one another's freedom may well lead to not only stronger religious minorities in Russia but also a stronger Orthodox Church.



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*1 Zenit.org, July 31, 2002. To read: John Witte, Jr., and Michael Bourdeaux, *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls* (New York: Maryknoll, 1999).*

2 Ibid. Relations have been improving since 2002.

*3 John Wilson, "Proselytizers," *Books & Culture, a Christian Review*, May/June 2000, p. 3.*

*4 "Mission and the Issue of Proselytism," *International Bulletin* 20, no. 1 (1996): 2.*

*5 *Fides et Libertas*, 2000, pp. 96-98.*

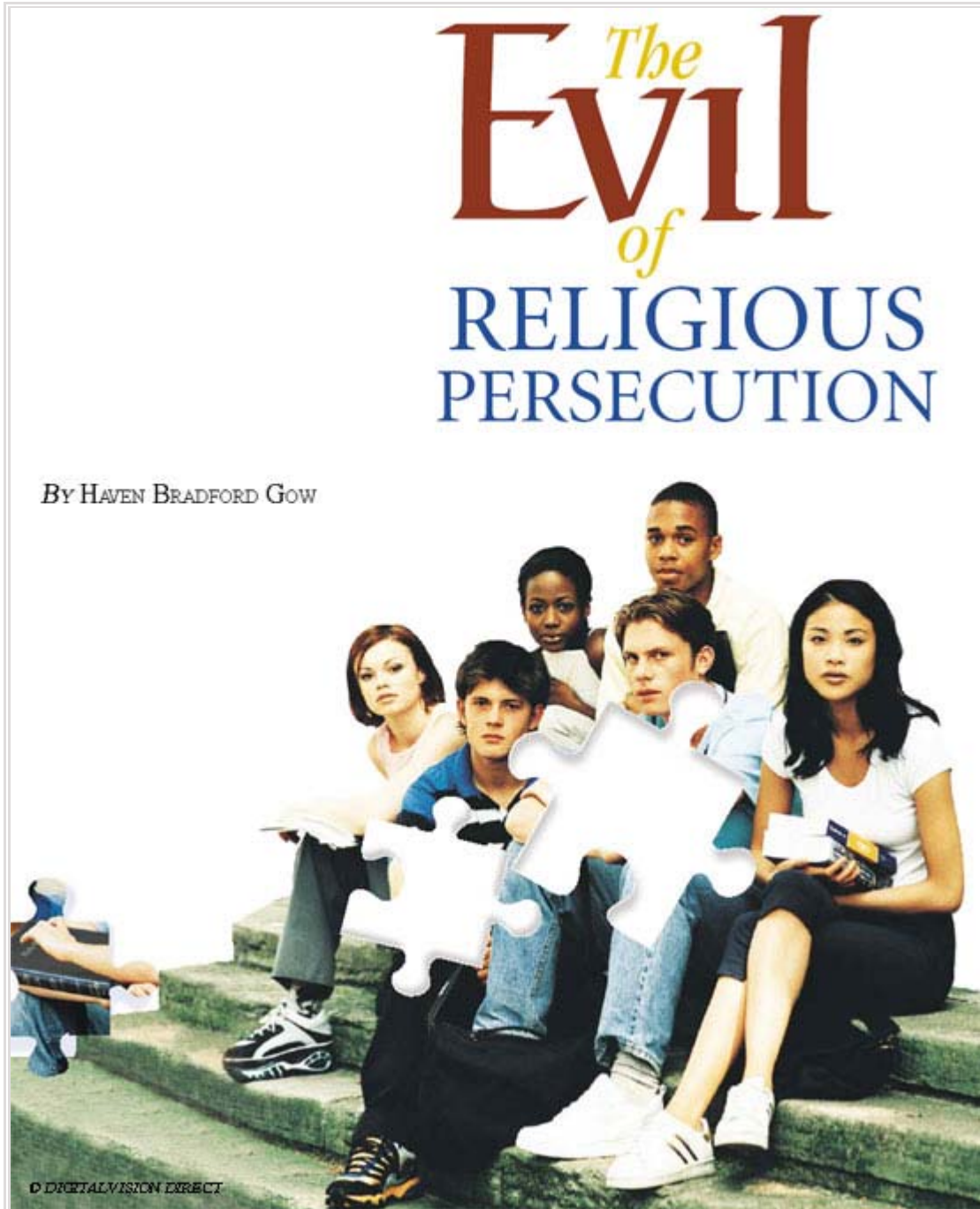
6 Ibid., p. 97.

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The Evil Of Religious Persecution

BY: HAVEN BRADFORD GOW



A new report from the U.S. State Department reveals that religious persecution around the world is alive and well. The report says Christians routinely are kidnapped, imprisoned, raped, tortured, and even murdered in such nations as China, Cuba, and North Korea.

As articles in the February 15-21, 2004, *National Catholic Register* pointed out, government officials and agents in Vietnam persecute, jail, and murder Christians. The same kind of religious persecution happens in China, Cuba, and North Korea, as well as in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran.



According to the *National Catholic Register* news story, some governments "have laws that favor certain religions and place others at a disadvantage. . . . In Belarus, respect for religious freedom worsened during the period covered by the [U.S. State Department] report. Eritrea also comes in for mention for its harassment of Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses and adherents of the Bahai faith. And in Russia, some federal agencies and many local authorities continued to restrict the rights of religious minorities."

Moreover, "Israel came in for criticism for discrimination against non-Jews in education, housing, employment and social services. Christians and even conservative Jews were victims of harassment, threats and vandalism directed against their buildings and other facilities."

Back in the United States religious persecution also is alive and well. Although this nation was founded upon Judeo-Christian moral and religious values and standards, many now insist that Christians today are being treated as second-class citizens.

In their work *Christianity on Trial* (Encounter Books), Vincent Carroll, editor of the editorial pages of *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, Colorado, and David Shiflett, a freelance writer, observe that "Christianity inhabits a strange place in American life. It is by far the predominant religion in the most religious country in the industrialized world, with more than 90 percent of its citizens professing belief in God and a large majority claiming allegiance to a Christian denomination or sect." At the same time, though, "Christians are regularly targeted for ridicule and vilification by a significant portion of America's cultural elite, a situation all the more striking in view of the prevailing hypersensitivity toward other religious, ethnic and lifestyle groups."

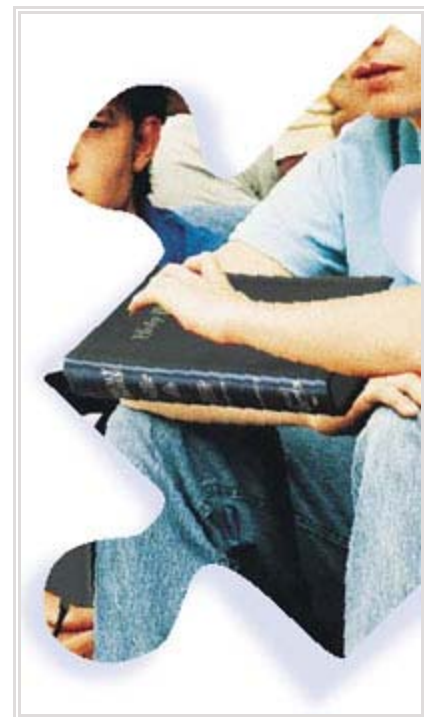
Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, provides these examples of anti-Christian bigotry that threaten our religious freedom: "In Kentucky, the ACLU filed challenges to Ten Commandments displays in Mercy and McCreary counties. In Utah, the ACLU launched a [search] for more than a dozen Ten Commandments displays across the state, . . . and [then] took legal action to have them all removed." In Tennessee, the ACLU pressured government officials in Hamilton County to remove three Ten Commandments displays from public property.

According to an editorial in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* that was reprinted in the December 18, 2003, *News-Star*, Monroe, Louisiana, the religious freedom rights of an 8-year-old public school student in Zachary, Louisiana, also have come under attack. A teacher at Northwestern Elementary School had assigned some "quiet time reading" to her second-grade students, and 8-year-old Harrison Kravat decided to read the New Testament; however, the teacher, thinking she was upholding the principle of separation of church and state, told the boy he could not read the Bible in public school.

Harrison's parents contacted the Alliance Defense Fund, a coalition of attorneys dedicated to defending the religious freedom rights of Americans, which in turn wrote to the superintendent of schools. The school superintendent ordered that Harrison be allowed to resume reading the Bible.

Is there a place for God, religion, prayer, and Bible-reading in the public schools? This has become a hot topic because of outbreaks of school crime, violence, and disorder. Supporters of school prayer insist that when God, religion, prayer, and Bible reading were removed from the schools, the doors were left wide open for drugs, crime, violence, vandalism, and immoral sexual activity to enter.

According to the American Center for Law and Justice, Americans, including school-age children, need to know they possess God-given constitutional rights to religious freedom and religious activity and speech. Indeed, speaking for the majority in the 1981 *Widmar v. Vincent* U.S. Supreme Court case, the late Justice Lewis Powell pointed out that religious speech by



students is a form of freedom of speech. For example:

- Religious students have the right to share their faith on school premises by distributing literature and telling others about their faith while at school.
- Religious students have the right to wear T-shirts with religious messages, buttons, and other symbols on school property.
- Religious students have the right to have Bible clubs on campus.
- Religious students have the right to participate in voluntary prayer at school and to offer prayers as valedictorians, salutatorians, and class presidents during graduation exercises.
- Religious students have the right to participate in community-, church-, or school-sponsored baccalaureate services.
- Religious students have the right to present homework, artwork, and other school projects from a faith-based perspective.
- Religious students have the right to study and observe Christmas and Easter holidays on school premises.

The Founders intended the First Amendment not to insulate society or the state from the influence of religion, but, rather, to preserve and protect religious freedom from transgressions by the state. They understood that a society's public morality depends upon a religious foundation, and that the wholesome influence of religion on private and public morality is essential to the survival of a free and civilized society. Consequently, they wanted government to champion and defend religion and religious freedom.



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