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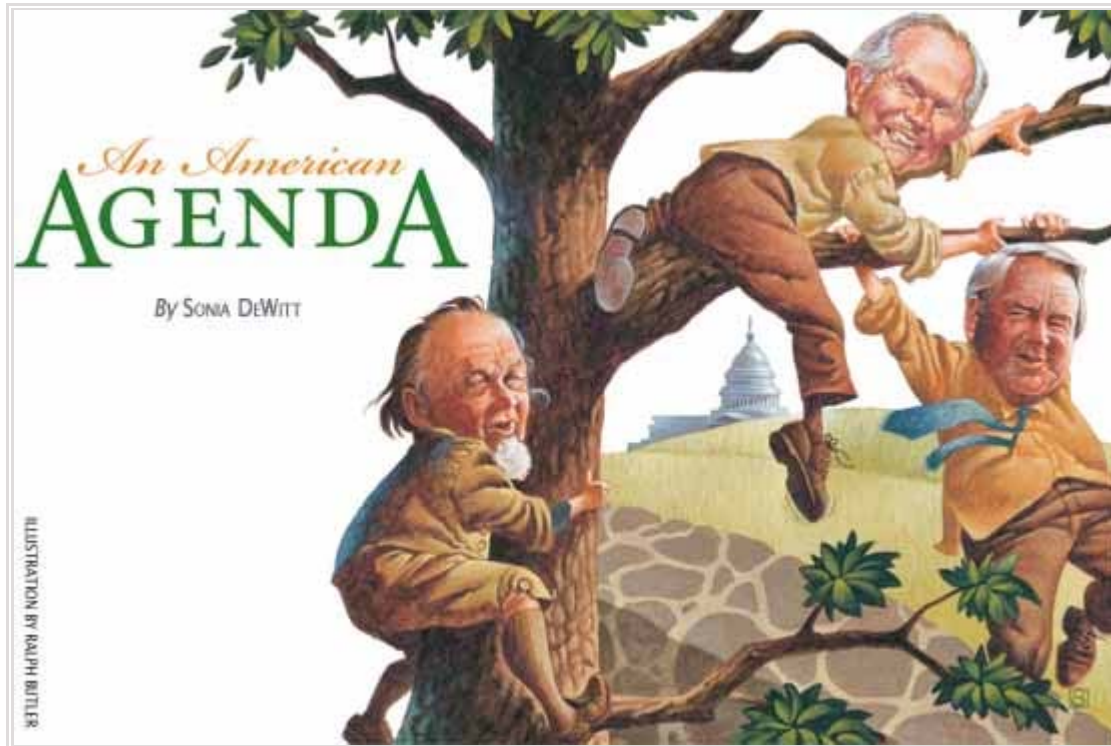


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An American Agenda

"Something There Is That Doesn't Love A Wall," Wrote The Famous New England Poet Robert Frost. Certainly That Is An Apt Description Of The Attitude Many Fundamentalist Christians Have Developed Toward The "Wall Of Separation" Between Church And State. Man

BY: SONJA DEWITT

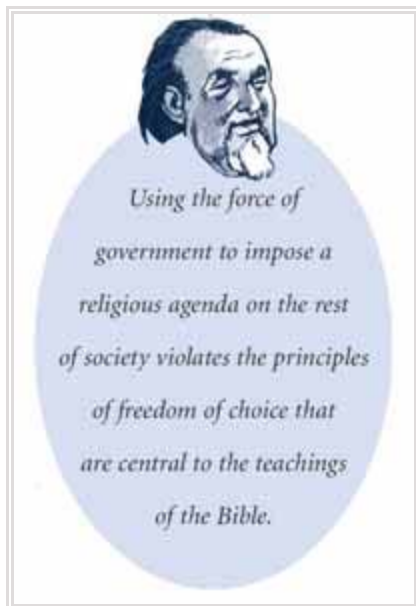


"Something there is that doesn't love a wall," wrote the famous New England poet Robert Frost. Certainly that is an apt description of the attitude many fundamentalist Christians have developed toward the "wall of separation" between church and state. Many Christian leaders and organizations have adopted the position that the concept of separation of church and state was never intended by the Founding Fathers and is an impediment to the righteous, godly society they are intending to create in America. As Jerry Falwell states on his Web site, "I can honestly say that I feel the leading of the Holy Spirit to answer that call and to once again mobilize people of faith to reclaim this great country as 'one nation under God.'"

Francis Schaeffer, a prominent conservative Christian activist, wrote, "Today the separation of church and state in America is used to silence the church The way the concept is used today is totally reversed from the original intent It is used today as a false political dictum in order to restrict the influence of Christian ideas To have suggested the state separated from religion and religious influence would have amazed the Founding Fathers" ("A Christian Manifesto," p. 36, 1981). Pat Robertson, in a speech in 1993, made the sweeping claim, "There is no such thing as separation of church and state in the Constitution. It is a lie of the Left and we are not going to take it anymore." In multiple, diverse areas from abortion to school prayer, from stem cell research to the war on terror, the Christian Right is attempting to use the law to impose its religious and moral agenda on all Americans.

Unfortunately, there are at least two major flaws in the Christian Right's agenda to create a righteous nation by removing the barriers against the entanglement of church and state. The first problem is that it won't work. Strict laws enforcing morality have never produced a just, righteous, or moral society. The second problem is that religious control of the state violates the principles of religious liberty that are central to the very Bible the Christian Right claims to be upholding with such zeal.

History is replete with examples of the failure of strict moral laws to create a righteous, or even a moral, society. One need look no



further than the story of ancient Israel in the Old Testament to confirm this. In its early years the biblical nation of Israel was ruled directly by God through prophets and judges. Its laws, which governed every minute aspect of civic and spiritual life, were given by God Himself. The people were witnesses to numerous miracles—the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and fire, the provision of manna for food. So certainly there were no flaws in the law itself, and the people had no reason to doubt the power and authority of the Lawgiver.

Yet one does not have to seek far for evidence that even such perfect laws did not make the people behave in a godly or moral manner. Indeed, within days after God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel and they eagerly promised to obey them, they were imitating Egyptian idol worship by lewd and drunken dancing around a golden calf that they intimidated Aaron, Moses' brother, into fashioning for them (Exodus 32). A short time later hundreds of the men of Israel were executed for indulging in blatant pagan worship and sexual orgies with the women of Moab (Numbers 25).

Things did not improve after the Israelites finally arrived in the land of Canaan. The story of how one of the sons of Gideon, the great hero, killed more than 300 of his male relatives (Judges 9), as well as the story of the Levite's concubine who was gang-raped to death by men of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19), is chilling evidence of the powerlessness of mere legal prohibitions to create morality in human behavior.

A monarchy did not improve Israelite morality, either. Isaiah 58 is only one of a number of passages from the prophets decrying the greed, violence, and hypocrisy of a people who couldn't understand why God did not approve of their strict religious observance. The prophet Ezekiel denounced the sexual, financial, and religious immorality of Israel in the most sweeping terms (see Ezekiel 22:8-12). But it was Jeremiah who created the most vivid image. "They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife" (Jeremiah 5:8). The entire Old Testament history of the nation of Israel is a series of brief periods of reformation and renewed morality and godliness, followed by the inevitable slide back into moral degeneration.

There are numerous other historical examples of the failure of moral legislation to create a good society. The extreme orthodoxy of medieval Spain produced the Inquisition. Puritanism in America led to the killing of Quakers and often of innocent people accused of being witches. Prohibition engendered speakeasies and organized crime. And in the modern world, the repressive laws of fundamentalist Islamic states create oppression, especially of women; persecution of dissenters; and terrorism. The record of history is irrefutable testimony to the inability of human law to create moral regeneration in any society.

To the extent that the Christian Right promotes individual and corporate repentance and reformation, its aims are admirable. Voluntary, individual moral change is the only avenue to genuine moral development in a society. But to the extent that its intent is to create a moral society through legislation, its efforts are doomed to failure. True justice and morality cannot be created by legislative fiat. The morality of a society is only as great as the aggregate of the morality of its individual citizens. And individual morality cannot and should not be induced by legal coercion. It can come only as the fruit of a free moral choice. That is why the Bible repeatedly urges that the law be written in the heart. Laws that are written in statute books but not in the hearts of people are not worth the paper they're written on. Of course, inherent in the freedom to make a moral choice is the freedom to make immoral choices. That is why social morality is always so precarious, and why freedom is so costly.

The second fatal flaw in the Christian Right's agenda is that using the force of government to impose a religious agenda on the rest of society violates the principles of freedom of choice that are central to the teachings of the Bible. From beginning to end, the Bible portrays God as a God of freedom: a God who wants us to be free more than He wants us to be good; to be loving even more than He wants us to be saved. It seems like a shocking idea, but here is ample support for it. If our freedom of choice were not more important to God than anything else, there would have been no tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden—no opportunity for human beings to sin. For that matter, there would have been no Lucifer/serpent to sit in the tree. He would have been vaporized the instant that he began questioning God. God constantly pleaded with ancient Israel, "Choose . . . whom you will serve." God values our freedom of choice even more than He valued the life of His Son. If we had not been given freedom of choice and therefore had not sinned, Jesus would not have had to die.

Freedom of choice is the fundamental principle of God's government. Why? Because God's government is based on love, and without freedom, genuine love is not possible. Love can be won, but it can never be coerced. God knows that only through freedom of choice can created beings make genuine moral decisions. Thus only through such freedom can any true righteousness and morality exist in individuals or in society.

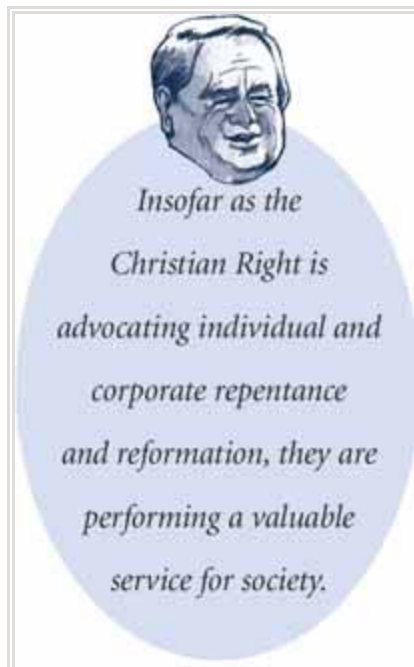
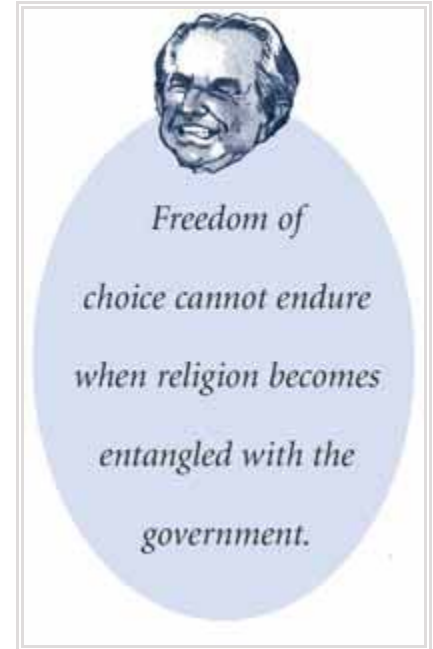
Freedom of choice cannot endure when religion becomes entangled with the government. Government power is inherently coercive. Coercive power is necessary for a government, because it is the role of government to restrain the evil tendencies of human nature

—crime, fraud, foreign aggression, and other threats to peace and social order. As Paul writes, the ruler "beareth not the sword in vain," but uses it to punish offenders against the law (Romans 13:4). But in the ideal government coercive power is strictly limited and is exercised only when necessary to achieve these goals. When the coercive power of government becomes entangled with intensely private and personal concerns such as religion, its power inevitably will tend to restrict individual freedom.

Therefore, freedoms essential to a healthy society, including freedom of religion, flourish only if they are outside the realm of government control. That is why the first 10 amendments to the Constitution (the Bill of Rights) are written in the negative: "Congress shall not . . ." The Founders of our country wisely realized that there are some essential areas of life, such as religion, free speech, one's home, etc., in which the government should meddle as little as possible. Because of the very nature of government, whenever it becomes involved in any way with religious belief or practice, it begins to apply coercive force, which is completely incompatible with liberty of conscience.

Jesus and the apostles clearly articulated this principle in their teachings and demonstrated it by their example. In Jesus' every dealing with civil government, He indicated that He supported earthly, governmental power and did not intend to supplant it with some sort of "spiritual" substitute. During the time of Jesus, Israel was a part of the Roman Empire. The Roman government was bloody, corrupt, and religiously oppressive. The Roman rulers had no respect for the Jewish religion or its services. Despite its knowledge of the Jewish prohibition on public nudity, the Romans built a gymnasium for nude sports in full view of the Jewish temple. This was extremely offensive to the Jews.

Moreover, the Roman government had very little respect for human life. King Herod was a psychopath who killed his own wife and several of his sons, not to mention all the young boys in Bethlehem after Jesus' birth. Jesus refers in Luke 13:1 to a group of Jewish worshippers who were slaughtered by Pilate, the Roman governor, while they were sacrificing in the temple. Rome oppressed the people in other ways as well. It allowed its tax collectors unlimited power to extort money above and beyond the required taxes, and allowed Roman soldiers the right to force any civilian to walk a mile with him and carry his gear.



In short, this was the kind of government calculated to make good Fundamentalists throw up their hands in horror and pray for its overthrow. Good Jewish believers in Jesus' time were doing more than pray. Numerous leaders arose before, during, and after Jesus' lifetime claiming to be the Messiah and promising to free the Jews from the Romans by a bloody revolution. One of Jesus' own disciples had been a Zealot, a member of a political party advocating the violent overthrow of the Roman government. There were numerous uprisings during this period, in which thousands of Jews were slaughtered by the Roman army.

The Jewish people were expecting that the Messiah would overthrow Roman rule and reestablish the traditional Jewish theocracy. But Jesus disappointed them. Far from seeking to overthrow Rome, Jesus respected Roman law and rule and urged His followers to do likewise. On several occasions Jesus evaded attempts by the religious leaders and others to trap Him into advocating defiance of Roman law. When He was asked if the Jews should pay tribute to Caesar, instead of denying the Roman right to levy taxes, He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

The woman caught in adultery, whom the Pharisees presented to Jesus, was yet another attempt to trap Him into expressing disrespect for Roman law (see John 8). Jewish law commanded that anyone caught committing adultery should be stoned to death. The Roman government, however, did not allow the Jews to perform executions and would not impose the death penalty for infractions of Jewish law. Once again Jesus refused to give them the

answer they were hoping for.

When Jesus' overzealous followers attempted to make Him king by force after the feeding of the 5,000, He quickly removed Himself and sent His disciples away. Some of the last words of Jesus' life affirmed that He had no intent to establish an earthly government to challenge Rome. When He was asked by Pilate what He had done, He said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight . . ." (John 18:36, NIV). Even Jesus' worst enemies, using false witnesses, could not present convincing evidence to the Roman authorities that Jesus had ever attempted to rebel against Rome. Pilate, most definitely not a ruler known for his mercy or leniency, found Him innocent of all such charges.

After Jesus' death, His followers were confronted with a Roman government that was even more hostile to them than it was to the Jews. In the early days of the Christian church, believers were persecuted and martyred by the thousands. Still, the apostles did not teach rebellion against government but, like Jesus, counseled obedience to civil law. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, "The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1, 2, NIV).

Peter was more concise, "Fear God. Honour the King" (1 Peter 2:17).

Thus Jesus and the apostles articulated a fundamental principle regarding the Christian's relationship to government. Human government, however unsavory, has a legitimate right to maintain order, establish civil laws, and regulate worldly and social affairs. Christians are obligated to obey the governmental authority, except when it comes into conflict with one's duty to God. Christians are not authorized to rebel against government under other circumstances, even when the government is unrighteous and corrupt. Thus seeking to control the power of civil government for the purpose of forcefully imposing one's view of religion or morality on society is not a legitimate mission for Christians.

Furthermore, the God who grants us freedom of conscience expects us to extend it to others as well. Thus true Christians are obligated to do whatever they can, not only to maintain their own freedom to believe and practice their beliefs, but to protect the freedom of others to do the same, even those whose beliefs they see as wrong, heretical, or even dangerous to society. The freedom to be "right" is meaningless without the corresponding freedom to be "wrong."

A recent decision of the Supreme Court clearly illustrates this type of Christian obligation. On May 31, 2005, the Court handed down a decision upholding a federal statute that provides for religious accommodation for prisoners. The Boston Globe reported, "The Supreme Court yesterday unanimously upheld a law requiring prisons to provide worship time and ceremonial materials for a wide range of inmate religious practices, in a case that saw evangelical Christians and Orthodox Jews passionately back the rights of a Satanist, a witch, and members of a white-supremacist sect."

Despite the strange and distinctly unsavory character (from a Christian point of view) of the religions represented in this case, people of many faiths supported the rights of the plaintiffs because they know that diminishing the rights of one group will eventually diminish the rights of everyone. The result of this passionate support was a unanimous decision upholding the law from a Supreme Court that is deeply divided and rarely issues unanimous decisions. This decision is a great step forward for the legal right to religious accommodation, which is a right the Court has generally not viewed favorably over the past several years.

This recent incident vividly illustrates the immense power of conviction when it is channeled into preserving freedom rather than limiting it. If the people and organizations that are working so tirelessly to tear down the "wall" and impose their version of religion and morality on the country would instead devote their immense energy, resources, and combined political clout to make sure that the rights of everyone to practice (or not to practice) their beliefs were protected and not obstructed by the law, we would be much closer to having the kind of government that Jesus would approve. Insofar as the Christian Right is advocating individual and corporate repentance and reformation, they are performing a valuable service for society. But to the extent that they attempt to use the power of the law and of government to impose their moral agenda on those with different moral and social beliefs, they are violating the principles of the God they desire to serve.



Sonja DeWitt is a civil rights attorney living in Stoneham, Massachusetts.

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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

Save Our Constitution

Since The Presidential Election Of 2000 There Have Been Many More Controversial Issues And Cases Around The Country That Have, In One Way Or Another, Involved Either The Supreme Court Or The Constitution Of The United States.

BY: ROBERT SANDLER

Since the presidential election of 2000 there have been many more controversial issues and cases around the country that have, in one way or another, involved either the Supreme Court or the Constitution of the United States.

The unfortunate fact of the matter is, however, that many people in our country do not really know very much about the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, or the workings of the Supreme Court.

I suspect that tens of thousands, if not millions, of American citizens would consider it to be a very good idea if high school and college students were required to take courses in the Constitution of the United States and the Supreme Court. And many adults, as well, could benefit from courses in the Constitution and the Supreme Court.

For example, the issue of the separation of church and state has become, in recent years, a very controversial issue. This in spite of the fact that in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights the issue of separation of church and state is very clearly stated several times. In recent years, however, some people, including highly placed members of the government, have blatantly violated the Constitution on this issue, as if it didn't even exist! The Supreme Court has banned some separation of church and state violations here and there, but even the Supreme Court appears to be reluctant to make a clear national ruling that will uphold the clearly intended words of the writers of the Constitution—a Constitution that the present sitting justices swore to uphold.

From the time the United States Constitution was written, in the summer of 1787 in Philadelphia, to the present time, there have been two attempts to add explicit wording to it that would nullify the words of the writers of the Constitution with regard to religious matters.

During the long hot summer of 1787, when the delegates were working painstakingly to write the Constitution, a group of religious people asked the president of the convention if they could express their views to the delegates. The elected president of the Constitutional Convention was a man named George Washington. He agreed to hear the clergy, and he presented their appeal to the delegates. The appeal of the religious group was that an "explicit acknowledgment of the only true God and Jesus Christ be included in the Constitution." After deliberation the delegates denied the request.

Thomas Jefferson, who in 1776 had written the Declaration of Independence, was in France at the time the Constitution was written. He knew most of the delegates. Upon his return he made it a point to contact as many delegates as he could. He had, of course, met and worked with most of them before. Thomas Jefferson, a fine writer, had been keeping a journal of these important days, and he was interested in writing about the appeal of the religious group. He wrote the following description of the delegates' response to the clergy: "The insertion [the only true God . . . Jesus Christ, etc.] was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they [the delegates] meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its [the Constitution's] protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo, and infidel of every denomination." Those are the words that the writers of our Constitution gave to Thomas Jefferson for his journal (The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. I, p. 45).

Much later, on February 18, 1874, another group of clergy appealed to the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives to add to the Constitution the words that had been requested by the religious group in 1787.

The reply to the clergy was as follows: "As this country [the U.S.A.], the foundation of whose government they were then laying, was to be the home of the oppressed of all nations of the earth, whether Christian or pagan, and in full realization of the dangers which the union between church and state has imposed upon so many nations of the Old World, with great unanimity, they agreed that it was inexpedient to put anything in the Constitution or frame of government which might be construed to be a reference to any religious creed or doctrine." (The report that the House Judiciary Committee gave to the clergy, rejecting their appeal, is available from the Library of Congress, U.S. House Reports, 43rd Congress, No. 143, Washington, D.C.)

Is it not crystal clear that the writers of the United States Constitution intended to create a nation of people of different races and religions? Is it not clear as can be that the writers of the Constitution did not intend to create an exclusive Christian nation?

With regard to the separation of church and state, we know that many of the writers of the Constitution had heard their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles tell stories about how people who did not adhere to the Anglican Church of England, to the letter, were persecuted, jailed, and physically injured. Many writers of the Constitution had read books about the long and bloody religious wars in England, in France, in Germany, and all over Europe for centuries: some against other countries—some within their own countries—all at a time when religion and government were "one."

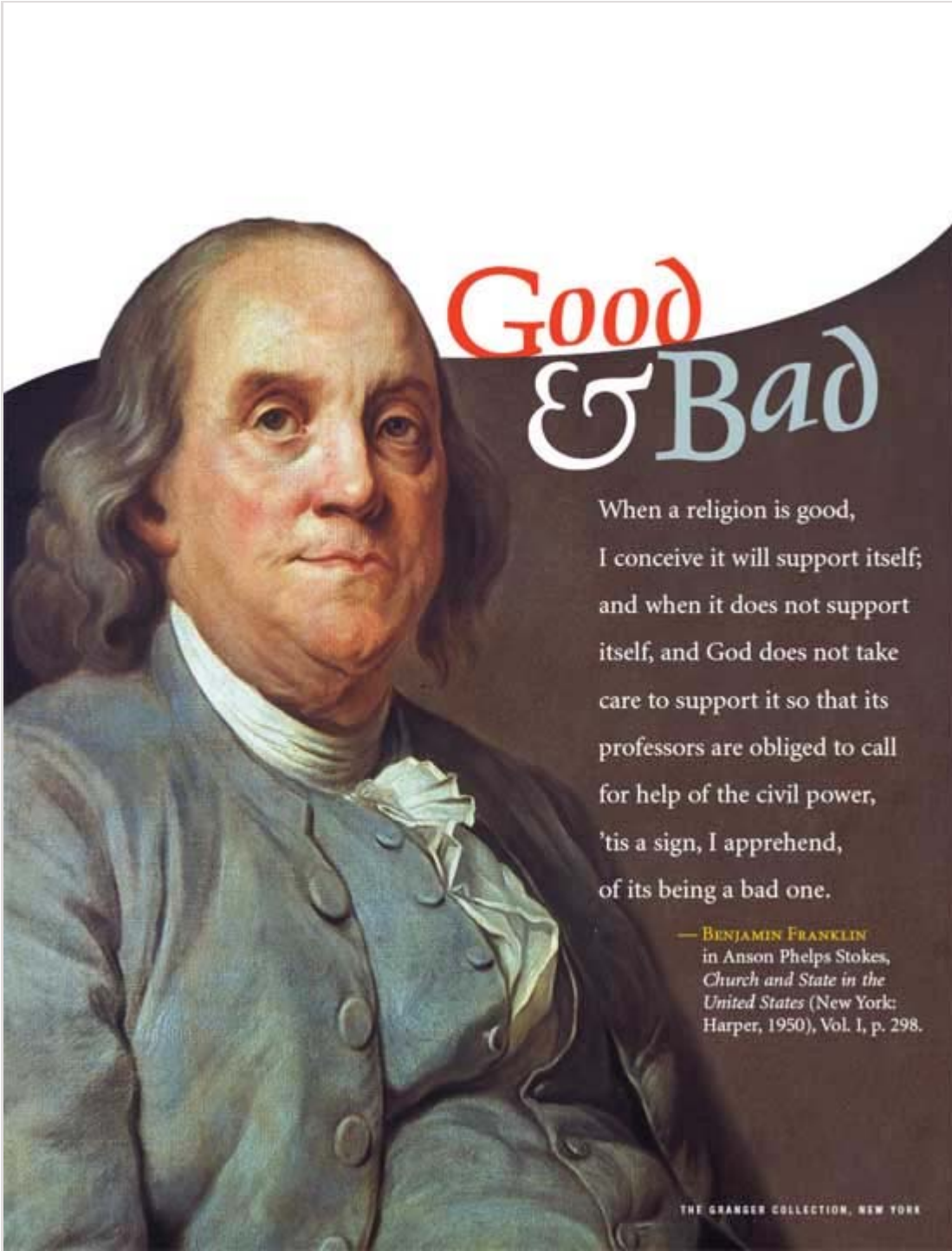
The writers of our Constitution bravely established the concept of separation of church and state. People are free to espouse any religion or no religion in the United States: in their homes, in their churches, in their schools, etc. When people entangle their religion with the government, however, a divisive situation is created. And indeed, our country at the present time is clearly more divided on the topic of religion than at any other time that people can remember.



Robert Sandler is professor emeritus of history, University of Miami. He writes from Miami, Florida.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

Good & Bad



Good
& **Bad**

When a religion is good,
I conceive it will support itself;
and when it does not support
itself, and God does not take
care to support it so that its
professors are obliged to call
for help of the civil power,
'tis a sign, I apprehend,
of its being a bad one.

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
in Anson Phelps Stokes,
*Church and State in the
United States* (New York:
Harper, 1950), Vol. I, p. 298.

THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

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Bringing In The Kingdom With 51%

My Hometown Newspaper Recently Published A Letter Entitled "Christians Will Retake The Nation." The Writer Made Statements Such As: "Once Again The Voice Of The Christian Is Heard In The Land, And It Frightens Those Whose Letters Drip With Hate. They Are

BY: ANN GAYLIA O'BARR



My hometown newspaper recently published a letter entitled "Christians Will Retake the Nation." The writer made statements such as: "Once again the voice of the Christian is heard in the land, and it frightens those whose letters drip with hate. They are frightened of us . . . Christians have once again found their voices and have begun to assert their right as the majority to govern themselves."

The media has gone into overtime discussing the "value voter." Letters and essays have flooded our national and local periodicals, many, of course, expressing views quite different from those in the quoted letter. Many claim they are appalled at the manner in which "red state" values are put to the fore.

The battle to be "in the majority" appears joined, but what do we mean by that phrase? Further, if, as the writer of the letter maintains, we Christians now have political power, what should be our attitude toward this paradigm?

By saying "majority status," we are immediately talking about power. How much do we agree with Lord Acton's oft-quoted statement that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely"? Is not power a two-edged sword, offering both opportunity and danger? And just how do we wield it without being corrupted by it?

I think we can answer these questions only if we first make a distinction between our civil institutions, rightly cherished as they should be, and our biblical calling. The U.S. Constitution is, of course, not the Ten Commandments, nor is representative government to be equated with the kingdom of God. Representative government (popularly known in the U.S. as democracy), like any worldly system, is flawed. In the perfect world to come, God will be absolute ruler. Democracy will not be needed.

Democracy is a form of government developed over centuries. It provides a mechanism for the average person to deal with an imperfect,

self-centered, and at times cruel world. It helps ensure that power is not wielded by one person or an elite group. Power, however, is still power, with all its temptations. Majority rule can disperse power, but who is to guarantee that the majority is always right?

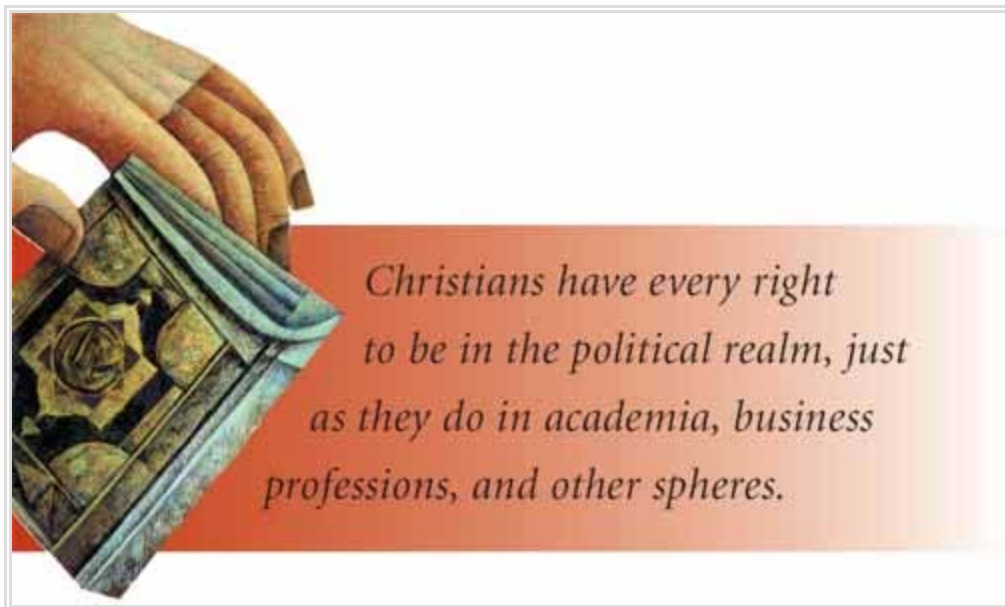
As democracy or the promise of it has spread far from its roots in the West, others are asking this question: What does the majority do with its power, especially in terms of religious practice?

What shall Muslims in Kosovo do? Iraqi Shiites? Indian Hindus? If American Christians can mold their country to their liking, cannot Hindus make Hindu religious practice the norm for India, perhaps causing discomfort for minorities such as Indian Christians?

Some countries have for centuries been guided by Koranic law and practice, and the majority of the citizens seem happy with the arrangement. As more representative forms of government take hold in some of these countries, do we expect this satisfied majority to allow more freedom for Christian minorities?

Some values that have become embedded in the fabric of Western nations are not the result of majority rule. For example, slavery was abolished in the U.S. only after Southern states had seceded and a Civil War had begun. Prior to that war, the U.S. Supreme Court appeared to condone slavery. The Dred Scott case of 1857 treated slaves as mere property—permitting slavery in any of the country's territories. This decision angered those who believed slavery a terrible evil, and the anger helped fuel the Civil War.

In his book *For the Glory of God*, Rodney Stark argues for the decisive influence of Christianity on the abolition of slavery. According to him, only in Christian regions did the idea eventually develop that slavery was wrong. However, the disappearance of slavery was an even slower process of several centuries in countries ruled by kings and nobles, not by democratic institutions.



Jesus' call to radical living has exerted a profound influence on this world. Over the centuries Christianity has been an unprecedented force for good. Christians have not traversed history's road in a straight line, however. They have known a number of detours and holding patterns.

When Christianity was adopted by Constantine and the Byzantine Empire, beginning in the fourth century, the church became a partner with the government. As the Byzantine Empire became theocratic, groups with views different from those deemed orthodox by the state were hounded, even persecuted. Thus when Islam appeared in the seventh century, some Christians welcomed Islamic rulers as more tolerant than Christian ones.

As Christianity in Europe became Christendom, kings and popes sparred with each other. Though most gave lip service to Jesus, the Christian religion for the average man and woman was a mere cultural appendage, saints replacing pagan religious figures. Popes, playing power games with secular kings, often became as corrupt as the kings. Along the way the religion whose Founder forbade His followers to take up the sword for Him witnessed "Christian" military crusades in His name. These so-called Christian Crusaders left us with the bitter legacy we still deal with.

However, even in those times small Christian groups took Christ's teachings to heart. These movements bore different fruit. The influence of John Wycliffe, John Huss, and others reached far beyond their numbers and times.

Compare the legacy of these Christians with the legacy of the Crusaders. The prophet Muhammad had a genuine desire to rid the

Arabian Peninsula of polytheism, of the many gods worshipped instead of Allah, whom Muhammad worshipped as the one true God. Muhammad himself led armies and killed people in an effort to carry out Allah's will, as he saw it. Aren't those Christians who would use force today showing themselves the inheritors of Muhammad and medieval Crusaders, both Muslim and Christian, rather than of Jesus? If we have a theocratic government, with no separation of church and state, how will we be following the pattern Jesus laid down? Jesus forbade His followers to use the sword in His defense, and went to the cross rather than ask His Father to send down legions of angels to save Him.

We Christians would do well to remember that we are called to be in the world but not of it. Thus, we are to coexist with Caesar. Neither Jesus nor Paul called for military revolution against Caesar. In fact, on occasion Paul used his Roman citizenship to advantage in his missionary travels. We are to use the opportunities the world offers us when they serve the cause of Christ. However, we should be as wary of allying with this democratic Caesar as with any other.

We Christians should enter every realm open to us. Not only should we enter every profession; we should strive to be the best that we can. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). We will be respected not just because we are Christians, but also because we perform well.

Christian athletes have served as wonderful examples for the sports-minded. It does not serve the cause of Christ, however, if Christians try to excel in sports without talent and training. They gain no respect because they are Christians if they are not first good athletes.

We may rest easier if we know that the pilot of our plane is a Christian, but we should be concerned first that he or she is adequately trained. It is the same with our doctor and our lawyer. Yes, we prefer that those who serve us be Christians—but first, let them be skilled in their professions.

We should look at the values held by political candidates. Those values will be a part of what we want in a leader. However, simply being a professing Christian is not in itself a guide as to how well he or she will do in office. Will this person have the skill and experience to advance these values as well as to effectively govern in this pluralistic society?

Christians have every right to be in the political realm, just as they do in academia, business professions, and other spheres. We become guilty of the world's turf fighting, however, if we vote candidates into office solely because they agree with our religious persuasion. Such practice smacks of tribalism.

Should we not "vote our values"? Vote for candidates who are pro-life and pro-family? Certainly, we Christians have every right and, indeed, the obligation to become active politically, to vote, and to act according to our Christian convictions when elected. The problem comes when we believe we can bring in God's kingdom solely by the ballot box or by "stacking" the Supreme Court to reinterpret things the way we want them.

Remember the Eighteenth Amendment? Ratified in 1919, it prohibited intoxicating beverages. A backlash against it, however, led to its repeal in 1933.

Lesson: When a significant percentage of a population does not agree with a law, the law tends to be ignored. Simply coming up with a temporary majority to pass laws can be counterproductive. Christian values must percolate through a society's culture for its laws to be both moral and effective.

We should not be misled by polls showing that a high percentage of Americans believe in God or even in the Christian way of life. Some of the same people who profess these views tune in to television shows hardly in harmony with the Christian way of life. They may tell the pollster that they do not believe in abortion or gay marriage, but they engage in orgies of consumerism just like their pagan neighbors.

Christians will not succeed in bringing in God's kingdom by using democracy or any other form of government. They will succeed by living lives that evince love, compassion, mercy, self-discipline, and responsibility. The world must see Christians as offering both reasoned persuasion and a radical, breathtakingly different way of living.

I was once in a Bible study class in which a young man vigorously assailed the apostle Paul for not condemning slavery in his letter to Philemon. The young man was unhappy because Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, presumably with the master/slave relationship intact.

In fact, the letter to Philemon contains seeds for the destruction of slavery, much more potent than a simple condemnation. How can slavery endure if master and slave are brothers in Christ? No laws are then needed to abolish slavery. It withers on the vine under such a new relationship.

In that time of power wielded by emperors and armies, the lives and values of Christians were nothing short of a revolution, but it was a revolution opposed to violence. Democracy may offer opportunities not enjoyed by the early Christians, but the call to radical living for the Christian remains as revolutionary and as necessary today as it was in Paul's time.

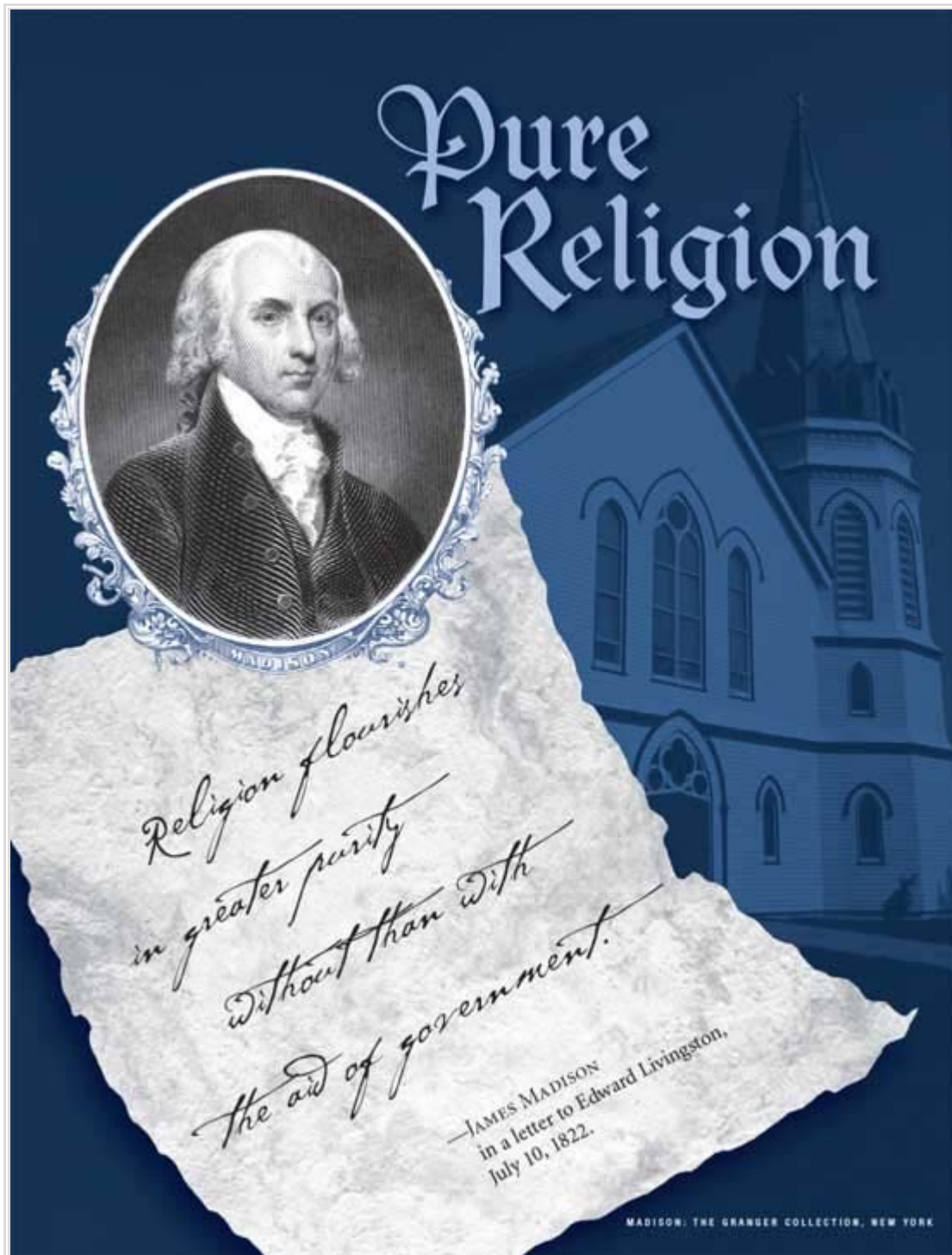
Early Christians lived in a world of appalling cruelty and inequality. They did not change that world by forcing their neighbors to live as they lived. They changed that world by having something that their neighbors saw and wanted—shown by powerful example and persuasive argument.



Ann Gaylia O'Barr was a foreign service officer with the U.S. State Department for 14 years, serving in such places as Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, Canada, and the United States—giving her a firsthand look at how various countries relate to religion. She writes from Langley, Washington.

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Pure Religion

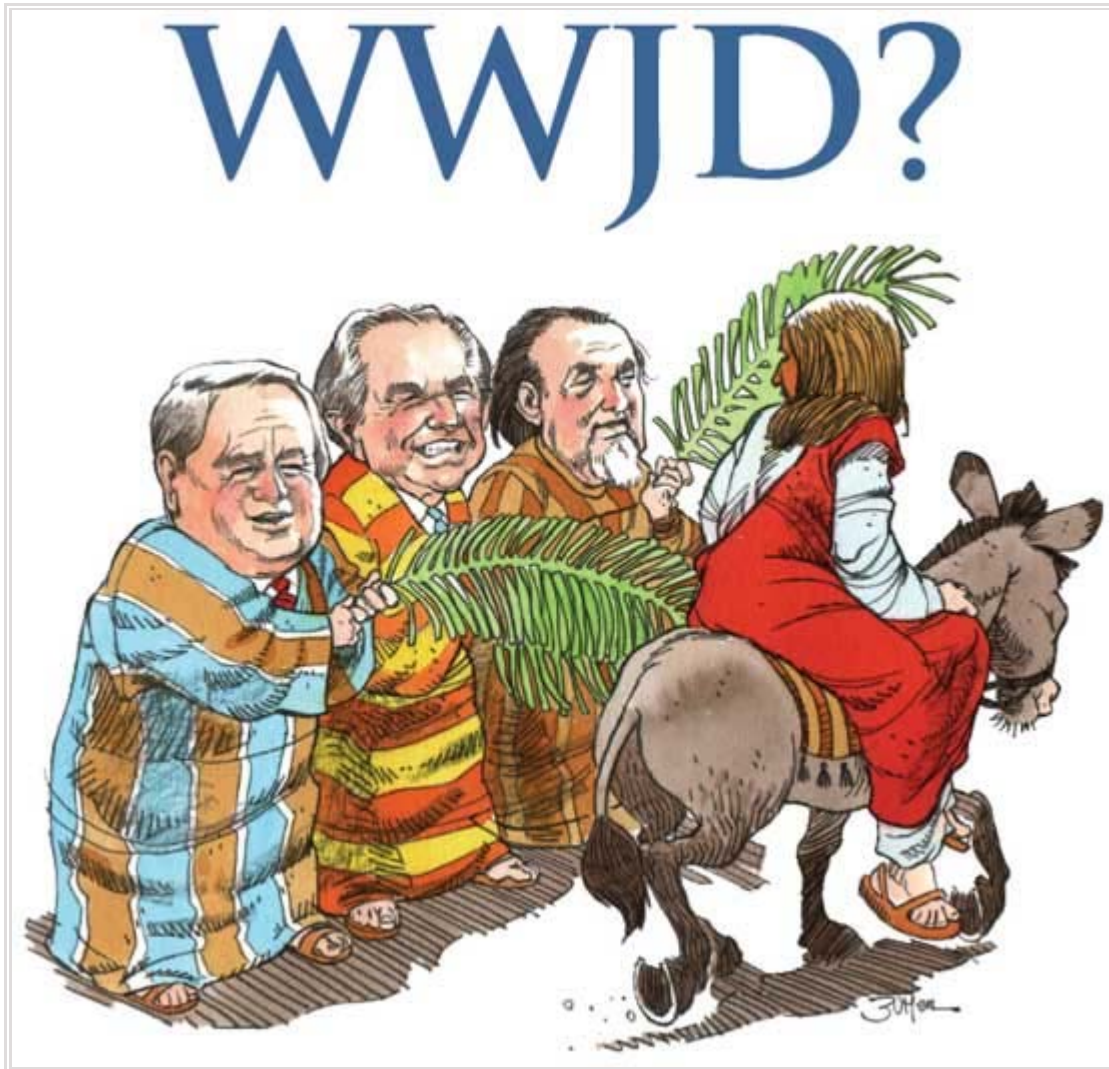


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WWJD?

I Know That Many Christians Were Startled Recently To Hear Televangelist Pat Robertson Call For The Elimination/assassination Of President Chavez Of Venezuela. Astute Political Observers Know That Such An Idea Is Not Exactly Off The Table: Indeed; It Was

BY: LINCOLN E. STEED



I know that many Christians were startled recently to hear televangelist Pat Robertson call for the elimination/assassination of President Chavez of Venezuela. Astute political observers know that such an idea is not exactly off the table: indeed; it was a failed U.S.-backed coup against Chavez that fed his paranoia. But official U.S. policy forbids such an action. And what about the "gospel of peace"—the Christian imperative to respect life? One would have to look to the mind-set of "Christians" such as Torquemada the Inquisitor to find a rationale to justify calling for the death of another human.

Are we dangerously desensitized to the morality, or lack of it, in language? There is a modern irony in the fact that with the proliferation of acronyms the meaning behind them is often diminished. WMD is a case in point—overuse of the term has trivialized this invocation of unimaginable destruction to a sort of "Where's Waldo?" game for Senate hearings.

And then there's WWJD. An election cycle or two ago Americans at large got to learn about the WWJD acronym—which stands for What

Would Jesus Do? I'm afraid it began the trivialization of a necessary internal process that all true Christians follow in living out their faith. Perhaps it is telling that some are more concerned about posting a set of religious regulations in public places than in honoring the spirit of Jesus Christ Himself—both the Creator and a model for human behavior.

Jesus came at a time when the religion of the true God was restricted by an oppressive secular power. He ministered to a people with religious aspirations. He never deviated from His call to join the kingdom of God. He never confused that kingdom with the secular one. He never sought secular power.

At the conclusion of His earthly ministry Jesus quite consciously staged a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He entered the city seated on a colt—a traditional sign of kingship. And the crowd honored Him in the manner that they would a king assuming power.

Many who waved palm fronds along the way assumed that He was coming into secular power. Many of the simple people who had seen the miracles imagined that He was about to perform a political miracle. Indeed, some of His own disciples, notably Judas, were led by the same expectation.

They should have understood the transcendent nature of that coming to power. They should have listened to Jesus speak sadly of the great city rejecting the prophets. They should have paid attention to His warning of the collapse of their secular hopes in the destruction of Jerusalem. They should have noted that even at this moment of triumphal entry, Jesus was directed toward reforming the behavior of those at the Temple—as He cleansed it of commerce.

Only later did they note that Jesus told Pilate "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight" (John 18:36).

So what would Jesus do in America today?

I think many Christians and others of faith would expect Him to weep over the moral state of affairs. It is proper for someone who has learned of the Christ to anguish over the troubles of society.

It would seem obvious that were He among us today, Christ would still be calling for inner renewal and a commitment to the kingdom of heaven.

And if He were here today, by what logic could we expect Him to seek political power to advance a Christian agenda? The Bible record and the life of Christ are all too clear on this. "My kingdom is not of this world." And to Peter He said, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

I believe that many of my fellow Christians in the United States are in danger of reaching for the sword to solve a spiritual problem. And while the misstatement of Pat Robertson has been apologized for, it does stand as a sort of Freudian slip concerning a larger tendency that has overtaken many of the politically active Christian groups, which have grown in number and following way beyond the Moral Majority movement begun by Pat's fellow televangelist Jerry Falwell.

So often in putting this magazine together and in discussing the issues with others, we use the term the religious right, and usually criticize what the group is doing on church-state issues. This is unfortunate for several reasons.

First: there is no truly monolithic religious right. There is an array of groups and issues they wish to address. What we are trying to identify and address is the now patently self-evident general tendency of some groups to seek solutions through gaining political power. And in the process they have become dismissive of the constitutional construct of a separation of church and state. And forgetful of the similar call from our Lord Jesus.

Second: while these politically active groups have come to pose a very real threat to true religious freedom, I recognize that most of their specific concerns are ones I share. Issues of public immorality, abortion, euthanasia, and family breakdown concern me. But I must recognize that the most effective way to counter these is by public witness and a change in spiritual values.

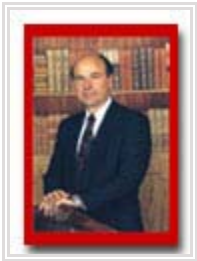
Third: critiquing the movement composed of these groups can imply that we are blind to the very real threat to faith posed by radical secularists. We cannot afford to ignore this, of course. But the reason Liberty speaks more often to the issue of right wing religious fundamentalism is precisely that, good intentions aside, it does pose a far greater constitutional threat to religious liberty. Radical secularists are attempting to use the Constitution to minimize or remove religion from public life. But they have no power over religion itself. However, many in the politically active religious right are dismissive of the First Amendment; want government funding of religion (something the Framers discussed and rejected); seem intent on gaining power through extraordinary means; and have confused the historic Christian cast to American society with their plan to support a "Christian America" by government patronage.

What would Jesus do? must become an inner compass for all of us who claim to follow Him. Jesus was a revolutionary precisely because He took the battle for change into the inner, spiritual dimension. There were plenty of Zealots in His day ready to take on the

political structure. Jesus was not of their party. He spoke about power on occasion. In fact, His comment about Herod was amazingly direct. But when He met Herod, there were no miracles for the secular "fox" (see Luke 13:32).

Shortly before the American Revolution there was a broad-based revival of religion in the Colonies. From the 1730s through the 1770s the Great Awakening stirred the populace. It became a dynamic for change under the exhortation of religious luminaries such as Jonathan Edwards and visiting superstar George Whitefield. That such a society could knowingly frame a Constitution that kept faith and political power in their proper spheres is admirable and evidence that the religious revival was a true one.

So often I have heard religious conservatives pray the prayer that God will "heal our country." In the post-Katrina shock many years for that healing. If more of us pray that way and apply it in our lives the true WWJD way, I believe that powerful things will happen in America.



Liberty Magazine



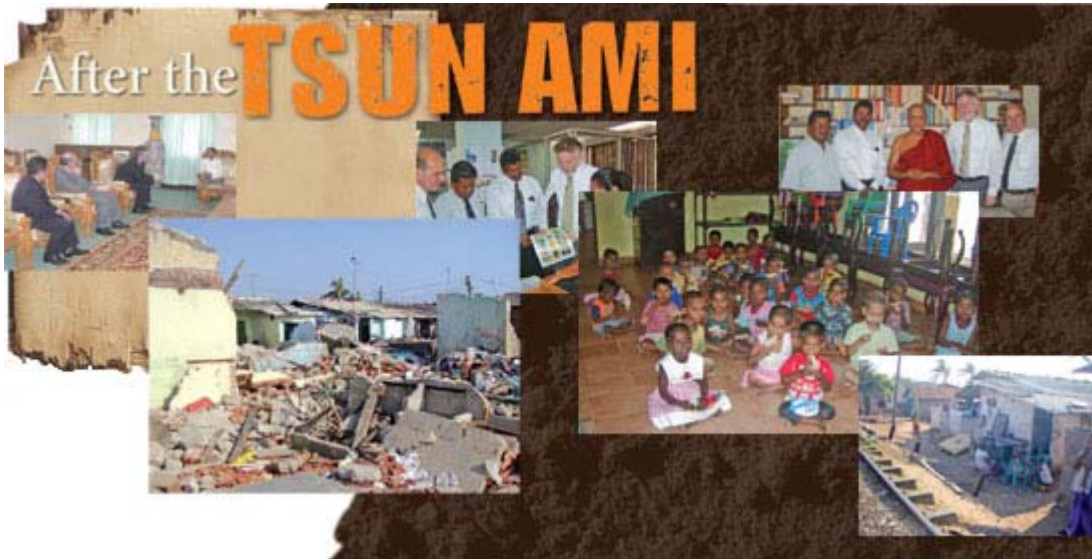
Lincoln E. Steed

Editor,

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After The Tsunami

Only Weeks After The Ravages Of The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Liberty Editor Lincoln Steed Visited Myanmar, Thailand, And Sri Lanka, Countries With Significant Damage And Loss Of Life. While He Did See Some Of The Devastation Firsthand, And Heard Eyewitn



From left to right: The IRLA/Liberty team met with the minister of religion for Myanmar. - Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka. - Editor Steed and Dr John Graz meet with the woman who directs the Bible Society in Sri Lanka. - Children at an orphanage in Colombo, Sri Lanka, run by a Buddhist monk. Some of them recently orphaned by the tsunami. - The team met with this senior Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka. An advisor to the government, he is a vigorous proponent of the anti-conversion law. - For many the tsunami changed nothing. This scene just beyond the waters in Columbo remains untouched and desperate.

Only weeks after the ravages of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Liberty editor Lincoln Steed visited Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, countries with significant damage and loss of life. While he did see some of the devastation firsthand, and heard eyewitness reports of running from a wall of water, the trip was more concerned with projecting religious freedom values to Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Myanmar is ruled by a repressive and secretive military regime that looks with disfavor on all outside influence—including religion. The indigenous Buddhist faith is naturally strongly supported by the state. All religious activity is held to a standard of supporting the state and its rejection of outside influences.



Editor Steed addressing the first ever meeting of leaders of all the major Christian groups in Myanmar. To his left are Drs Graz and Missah.

Remarkably, the visit of editor Lincoln Steed; John Graz, executive director of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA); and Hiskiah Missah, a regional IRLA director from the Philippines, proved to be the catalyst for a historic meeting of all the major Christian leadership in Myanmar. The Christian leaders met with the visitors and local Seventh-day Adventist leadership at the Nangoon Panda Hotel to discuss ways to act cooperatively in the future. It was a wonderful time of Christian fellowship sealed by prayer together and spirited singing of the hymn "In Christ There Is No East or West."

A few days later in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Lincoln Steed and the team heard troubling details of a proposed anticonversion law that has since become a near certainty. Sri Lanka, while a more open society than Myanmar, has been wracked by a long-running civil war and disrupted by the tsunami. The result is a sense of threat to Sri Lankan society that has easily converted into a sense of siege by the state-supported Buddhist leadership. Buddhists want the law to stop what they claim is improper activity by Christian aid organizations in the wake of the tsunami. Against the claim of coercion or bribery to obtain conversion, the aid organizations were professing to have no agenda to convert Sri Lankans to Christianity. Again it was obvious to Editor Steed that religious liberty must be protected and that silence is not a good strategy in the

face of challenge and persecution.

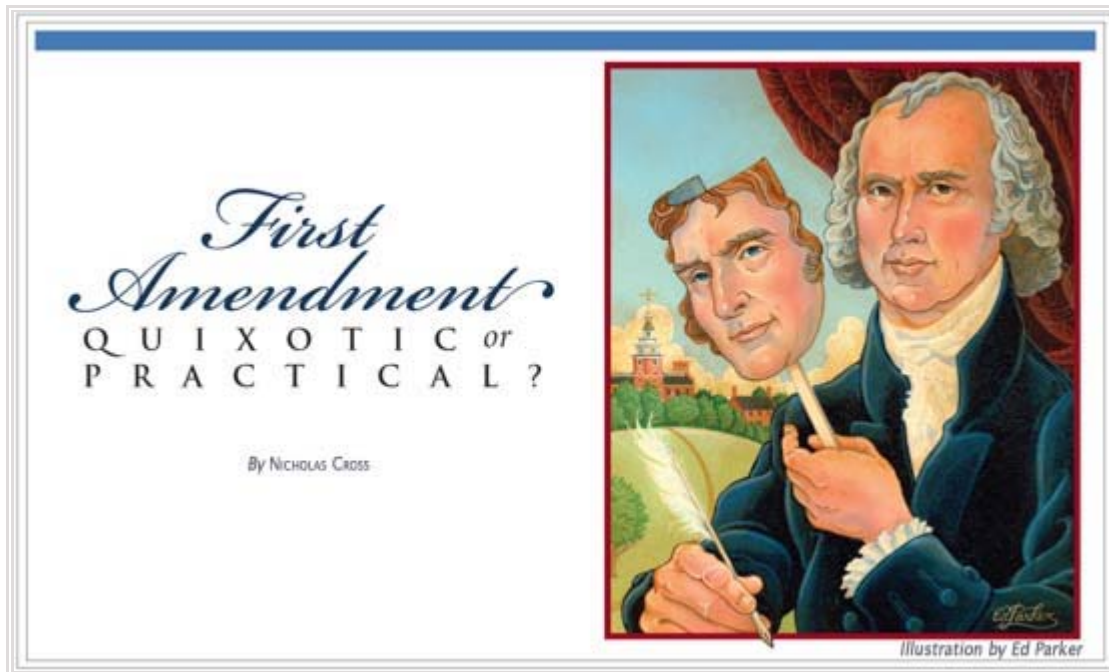
L.S.

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First Amendment Quixotic Or Practical?

Take A Cursory Walk Through Any Bookstore Today And You Can't Help Noticing The Antithetical Positions That The Bill Of Rights Was Either A Concoction Of Missionaries Posing As Politicians Or That It Was The Development Of Rationalists Seeking To Eliminat

BY: NICOLAS CROSS



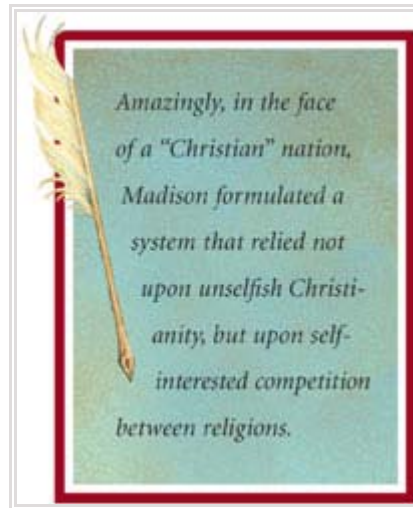
Take a cursory walk through any bookstore today and you can't help noticing the antithetical positions that the Bill of Rights was either a concoction of missionaries posing as politicians or that it was the development of rationalists seeking to eliminate religion from public life altogether.

Was the Bill of Rights, specifically the First Amendment, the creation of James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, or someone else of equal, or lesser, popularity and stature? As Garry Wills points out in *James Madison*, Jefferson would put religious freedom on his tombstone as one of his three greatest achievements, but it was really a Madisonian victory. A careful perusal of the *Annals of Congress*—instead of Madison's own notes on the Constitutional Convention or the subsequent state ratification documents—will reveal that religious freedom, as it is known today, was primarily the inception of James Madison.

However, the hardball of politics delayed this inception, for Madison himself was not always an advocate of amendments. What caused Madison's conversion to what has become a cornerstone of democracy? What was its function? Was this decision to compose and hail the Bill of Rights a quixotic reality or a practical dream?

The Personage of the Bill

In 1774 the 23-year-old James Madison observed the imprisonment of Baptist preachers by the established church in Virginia. This image of unjust confinement would be forever seared into Madison's altruistic conscience and made a profound impact upon his ensuing politics.



Religious freedom was the desire of the earliest settlers from the Old World, but clemency was not always extended in the New. The pioneers of Colonial Virginia imported in their hearts the Church of England as they established a government. The official religion of Virginia—a variation of their transported English faith—was Anglicanism. It soon became all too reminiscent of the Mother Church. Specific taxes were levied on all citizens—Anglican or not—to maintain the state churches as well as the College of William and Mary. According to William Lee Miller, "only Anglican clergymen, by law, could perform marriages." It was considered the duty of a landowner of pre-Revolutionary Virginia to be a leader in the local Anglican congregation. The Anglican Church, not surprisingly, was lacking in religious fervor. Religion

was a social status indicator more than an expression of faith. Madison saw a Laodicea that occasionally had to resort to the whip to engender loyalty.

This stance may in part have been because of the religious revivals of the 1730s and 1740s that wreaked havoc on the social order of Virginia. Dissenters exhumed themselves from the lethargy of Anglicanism by the enthusiasm of the Baptists and Presbyterians. Hordes began to gather for Bible reading and preaching rather than social recognition. The leaders of these new denominations were no longer influential nabobs but itinerant preachers—shaking a town from its religious stupor, only to ride away to another town, leaving the neophyte elders and deacons to organize themselves. By the 1760s there were a number of Baptist congregations throughout Virginia. Although the Baptists were law-abiding, they faced much violent opposition because of inveterate prejudice. Society was agitated, and the Anglican government was determined to put a stop to the disturbance. By the early 1770s Baptists were petitioning the British government for licenses to preach and were repeatedly rejected while their persecution continued. Madison wrote to Bradford that he was "very doubtful of their [Baptists] succeeding in the attempt." It was during this period, 1774 precisely, that Madison was so infuriated by the imprisonment of the ministers.

But the pre-Revolutionary colonies did experience comparative religious freedom. Outside of Virginia non-Anglican sects abounded. Cecil Calvert settled Maryland as a Catholic; Roger Williams of Rhode Island was a Puritan; and the famous Quaker William Penn founded Pennsylvania. The colonies had never experienced the wrath of the Inquisition or the chaos of a Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, yet the incarceration of unlicensed preachers caused Madison to decry it as the "diabolical Hell conceived principle of persecution." Perhaps, coming away from this incident, Madison became concerned lest the imprisonment of preachers would lead to another Tower of London for nonconformists? And at the tender age of 23 he found and engaged in his first sociopolitical issue: the danger of an ecclesiastical government. Religious liberty was an issue for Madison well before he ever met Jefferson. The persecuted of Virginia would find their benefactor in this small, bookish fellow and, eventually, the world would feel the reverberations.

In 1776—the year of Independence—Madison truly joined the battle for religious liberty. In this pivotal year, during the drafting of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, the future Constitutionalist battled with the lofty George Mason to have the wording of religious "toleration" changed to "all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience." This semantic victory was all the more remarkable in that it flew in the face of Lockean toleration. Madison, again, before he had even met Jefferson, considered the freedom of religion a "natural right."

This dogma of Madison's continued its expression throughout the pre-1787 years. In July 1785 Madison wrote the cogent Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments to counter the inimitable Patrick Henry. The latter, a powerful orator and supporter of state-sponsored religion, proposed a General Assessment bill to collect tax money for established churches. Henry was so persuasive that the bill would likely have passed had it not been for the impassioned and penetrating retorts of Madison's Memorial. Madison appealed to history, common sense, fear of judgment, and anything that might convince Virginians that "established religion" harms rather than helps society. The success of the Memorial would be seen in January of the next year when Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" passed, while Henry's "General Assessment Bill" was defeated.

The Forgotten Bill

In 1787 it might have seemed that Madison would welcome the codicil of a Bill of Rights to the Constitution. Yet this was not the case. Jefferson, watching from his Paris post, was pleased with all the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention's work, except for Madison's opposition to amendments. Only the purpose of the Constitution as a unifying document can explain Madison's capriciousness.

The government—the Articles of Confederation—had failed on a number of fronts: particularly economically and organizationally. Shay's Rebellion in New England had confirmed for Madison the utter futility of confederations. (Madison had spent the previous two years researching annulled confederacies.) Even John Jay feared that Americans were "incapable of governing themselves after all." At Annapolis Alexander Hamilton—coauthor of *The Federalist Papers* with Madison and Jay—suggested, and it was agreed upon, that the states ought to send delegates to Philadelphia "to take into consideration the situation of the United States, to devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union."

The iconoclastic minds of Philadelphia were seeking to tear down the articles and build "a more perfect union." Through the summer of 1787 these giants did just that. However, before the convention closed, George Mason—who proposed the "toleration" language in the 1776 Virginia Bill of Rights—proposed a bill of rights. It was disregarded by delegates worn down by a laborious summer heat. Mason's rejection turned out to be a rallying cry for anti-federalists: the Constitution lacks a bill of rights! This demand would prove dangerous to ratification, as we shall see.

Who could list all the rights a person is entitled to? Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts complained that for a bill to be effective it would have to declare "that a man should have a right to wear his hat if he pleased, that he might get up when he pleased, and go to bed when he thought proper." The debate began to revolve around, according to James Wilson of Pennsylvania, whether in the Constitution "everything which is not given is reserved" or whether "everything which is not reserved is given." Hamilton pointed out in *Federalist* 84 that there were already numerous guarantees of rights contained in the Constitution. "The Constitution is itself," writes the *New Yorker*, "a Bill of Rights." Madison would tell Virginia that a bill of rights was "unnecessary," since "everything not granted is reserved."

How could this quiet legislator, who fought for religious freedom in the Virginia Assembly and wrote so eloquently against state-sponsored religion, now be against a bill of rights? John F. Wilson argues that it was more than the heat of summer that kept it out of the Constitutional Convention. Madison wanted to neutralize religion that could possibly flare into divisions. "He recognized that religion provided one basis for a factionalism that could destroy a regime." The amending power might wreak mischief before the Constitution was ratified. The primary aim of the framers was to develop a viable document with a system of checks and balances that would restrict displaced zeal and mob rule.

Madison and the other Founders charted this course not from antipathy to religion but a desire to protect its purity, lest it fall into disrepute. This is typical Madison. Previously, with the Virginia Bill for Religious Liberty, he had blocked the insertion of "Jesus Christ" into the preamble. His reasoning was that "the better proof of reverence for that holy name would be not to profane it by making it a topic of legislative discussion." Madison attempted to protect not only citizens and religion, but even the reputation of God. "His animating principle," writes Loconte, "was not freedom from religion, but freedom for religion."

Others—mostly anti-federalists—thought religion to be primarily a state issue rather than a federal matter. High religious denominations considered Christianity to be superior to the government and did not require the support of political authorities. To the pragmatic-minded Founders, religion was excluded because of the pluralistic nature of America that made it impossible, as well as destructive, to include the topic.

The Purpose of the Bill

It appears that Madison is intransigent in the exclusion of a bill of rights. What brought his conversion to its necessity? He was already unquestionably devoted to the idea of rights. Immediately after the Philadelphia convention, Madison dashed to New York to ease passage of the Constitution. While there he (with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton) took up the pseudonym "Publius" to write *The Federalist Papers*. All of Madison's mental calisthenics would be revealed in the 29 numbers that he would contribute to the work. Madison would cram into these papers all of his research and findings he had shared and learned while behind the closed doors in Philadelphia. The work is often considered to be the finest political work written during the country's founding. Yet *The Federalist*, like the Constitution, is virtually all but silent on the issue of religion. A bill is far from Madison's thoughts at this time.

He finished his last number (63) and then dashed to Virginia to see ratification through. Any numbers regarding a bill of rights would be

left for Hamilton's pen. In Madison's absence from Virginia, Patrick Henry (a relative of Madison's) had already aroused contempt for the new governing document. As early as January 30, 1788, Madison received a letter from his father warning him of the anti-federalist position in Virginia, adding that even "the Baptists are now generally opposed to it."

It was imperative that states the size of New York and Virginia ratified the Constitution. If they eschewed the document, then smaller states would likely be influenced in the same direction. Madison would have to do some politicking to salvage the majesty of the law of the land. The revolving debate in the Virginia Convention of 1788 was whether there should be amendments prior to ratification (the anti-federalists' position) or ratification prior to amendments (the Federalists' position). Patrick Henry had the "power to persuade," wrote the future Chief Justice John Marshall, whereas Madison had the "power to convince." After listening to Madison's arguments, Marshall, a future interpreter of the Constitution, proposed only amending the Constitution after experience and time deemed it necessary. This was precisely what Madison needed to turn the tide toward Federalism. The debate shifted from whether there would be a bill of rights to when there would be a bill of rights. Virginia would ratify the Constitution, but a bill of rights was expected to be forthcoming.

Because of gerrymandering by Henry's henchmen, Madison barely found a home in the first Congressional session. In order to counter Henry's tactics and secure his seat, he would have to promise that he would introduce amendments. Thus, once elected, he became a politician who kept his campaign promise. So it was that on June 8, 1789, Congressman Madison crossed the Rubicon, stood in front of the chamber, and delivered his great speech calling for a bill of rights:

"It cannot be a secret to the gentlemen in this House, that, notwithstanding the ratification of this system of Government. . . yet still there is a great number of our constituents who are dissatisfied with it. . . . We ought not to disregard their inclination, but on principles of amity and moderation, conform to their wishes and expressly declare the great rights of mankind."

The battle with Henry was so distasteful to Madison that many believed he was palled into proposing the bill of rights. "Poor Madison got so cursedly frightened in Virginia," wrote Robert Morris of Pennsylvania to Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey, "that I believe he has dreamed of amendments ever since." In reality, he was overly chary of amendments that might destroy the "foundation of the fabric" of our nation.

The opponent of amendments came to see them as vital for unity. Madison wrote Jefferson that "a bill of rights will be a good ground for an appeal to the sense of the community." Yet he stubbornly held that he had "never seen in the Constitution as it now stands those serious dangers which have alarmed many respectable citizens. . . . Circumstances are now changed: The Constitution is established. . . and amendments, if pursued with a proper moderation and in a proper mode, will not only be safe, but may serve the double purpose of satisfying the minds of well-meaning opponents and of providing additional guards in favor of liberty."

Madison was an impassioned politician with the ability to see cause and effect. He would not allow private prejudice or personal dogma to jeopardize the greater good of stability and unity. If this could be accomplished with a bill or without was all the same to him. However, once he set his face to the task of amendments at the beginning of the 1789 congressional session, there was nothing deterring him. After months of deliberation in both houses, Madison was inexorable about bringing the issue to fruition.

Apparently Madison's final role in the passage of the Bill of Rights was the wording of the establishment and free exercise clauses of the First Amendment. Madison biographer Irving Brant comments that this was "the thing he was aiming at—absolute separation of church and state and total exclusion of government aid to religion." Whether this was Madison's ultimate intention or not, it was certainly a fitting conclusion to his role in the formation of the Bill of Rights. It is suitable because this clause has guided the nation to maturity.

Although the leaders of the Great Awakening promulgated the belief that only religion can make a moral citizen, Madison, on the basis of history, disagreed. Amazingly, in the face of a "Christian" nation, Madison formulated a system that relied not upon unselfish Christianity, but upon self-interested competition between religions. Individual citizens were entrusted with religious freedom, while churches were furnished with "the right to worship freely and to use all legal means of persuasion to maintain themselves and woo new members."

Madison feared the dangers of state-sponsored Christianity and the abuses of religion. "Human opinions [are]," he wrote to a fellow Virginian, "as various and irreconcilable concerning theories of government, as doctrines of religion." Yet he never seems to have lost his faith or desired to steal anyone else's. Rather he sought to protect religion from its own possible abuses. State-sponsored religion would harm people through persecution, society by disruption, religion through a loss of esteem and reverence, and even God Himself by tarnishing His reputation through the actions of His servants. Perhaps, then, for James Madison, the First Amendment was both a quixotic reality as well as a practical dream.



Nicolas Cross is a ministerial graduate who has begun doctoral studies in American history. He teaches English in Seoul, Korea.

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- 5 James Madison, quoted in Leonard Williams Levy, *The Origins of the Bill of Rights* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 2.
- 6 James Madison, cited by Garnett Ryland in *The Baptists of Virginia: 1699-1926* (Richmond, Va.: Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955), p. 94.
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- 8 Henry P. Johnson, ed., *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 4 vols. (New York: 1890-1893), pp. 221, 222.
- 9 Harold Coffin and Jacob Ernest Cooke, eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (Syrett, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1961-), vol. 3, p. 689.
- 10 Helen E. Veit, Kenneth R. Bowling, and Charlene Bangs Bickford, eds., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America*, 10 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972-1986), p. 159.
- 11 James Wilson, in John P. Kaminski and Gaspare J. Saladino, eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, 18 vols. (Madison, Wis.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976-1986), volume 13, pp. 339, 340.
- 12 Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 438.
- 13 John F. Wilson, "Religion, Government, and Power in the New American Nation," in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 84, 85.
- 14 Detached Memoranda in Robert S. Alley, ed., *James Madison on Religious Liberty* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1985), p. 90.
- 15 Joseph Loconte, "Faith and the Founding: The Influence of Religion on the Politics of James Madison," *Journal of Church & State*, 45/4 (Autumn 2003), p. 715.
- 16 Boyd, Julian P., ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 30 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950-), vol. 14, p. 188. Jefferson, writing from Paris after receiving his copy, wrote that the work of the "Triumvirate" is "the best commentary on the principles of government which ever was written" and cherished even over works of classic antiquity.
- 17 Hutchinson, vol. 10, p. 446. At this time Madison was hearing criticism from evangelicals as well as rationalists, such as Jefferson.
- 18 William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence, and Speeches*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 233.
- 19 For a popular yet complete description of John Marshall's part in the Virginia Ratification Convention and its influence on his future life see Jean Edward Smith, *John Marshall: Definer of a Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998), pp. 119-142.
- 20 Quoted in Schwartz, *The Great Rights of Mankind: A History of the American Bill of Rights* (Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1992), p. viii.
- 21 Veit, p. 278.
- 22 Hutchinson, vol. 11, pp. 297-300, 331.
- 23 Leonard Levy argues that Madison's change of mind on the amendments was purely political in *Origins of the Bill of Rights* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 12. Garry Wills argues that it was first a religious decision in *James Madison*, p. 18.
- 24 Hutchinson, Vol. II, pp. 297-300.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 404, 405.
- 26 Irving Brant, *James Madison: Father of the Constitution* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941-1961), p. 272.
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- 28 Hutchinson, p. 356.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

The Meaning Of America

A Famous Historian Once Said That If Washington Had Been Resurrected In Lincoln's Time, He Would Not Have Found It Very Different From His Own Day. Clothing Styles Might Have Changed A Little; Some Of The Laws And Customs Might Be New, But In The Main, Th

A famous historian once said that if Washington had been resurrected in Lincoln's time, he would not have found it very different from his own day. Clothing styles might have changed a little; some of the laws and customs might be new, but in the main, there would be no real divergence of culture and way of life. But if Washington or Lincoln were resurrected in our day and placed in our culture, either one would probably collapse from sheer inability to keep up with us. America is breeding a hearty people; we must be hearty to keep up with this amazing pace.

*In an age of
unity, a rabbi
speaks in defense
of diversity. In
the aftermath
of Katrina, his
words remind us
of the source of
our strength as
a nation.*

And there are benefits to be gained by this speed: mass production, greater volume of goods at cheaper prices, more things in less time, and the world shrinks in size. Long-distance telephones cut space into seconds. We move around faster and can have breakfast in London, lunch in New York, and dinner in San Francisco. Soon we shall beat the sun around the earth and arrive at our destination a few hours prior to having taken off. Highways are better and faster with fewer turns, and those that must be there are banked gently so as to permit sustained maximum speeds.

Manufacturers vie with one another to produce a car with greater horsepower so as to permit quicker starts and help the driver achieve the dubious distinction of being first to reach the next red light. All of this may be considered good and often is beneficial.

But there are negative considerations associated with all of this. There tends to be a loss of individuality, a transference of mass-production thinking associated with and related to things, to material objects, into a relationship between man and man. Vanishing is the uniqueness of the individual. Vanishing is the right to be different, the right to be yourself. Equality is being replaced by "sameness." We are tempted to adhere to contentment and conventionality; to do the right thing rather than the right.

We forget that the growth of our culture and society has come about through the pooling of ideas of independent people, people who think differently, who come from different backgrounds and are willing to share, being capable of giving and receiving on an equal level. America today is the product of its immigrants, and a product that is the envy of the world. America is far more than a continent bounded by two oceans. It is more than the pride of military power, glory in war, or success and victory. It means more than vast expanses of farms, of great factories or mines, magnificent cities, or millions of automobiles, radios, and TVs.

America is the intangible we cannot describe.
It is a soul.

The soul of a free man, the spirit of a free thought.

The dream of an alert mind.

The simple and honest dignity of a human being.

The respect for the feelings, thoughts, and concerns of a fellow citizen,

This is the essence of the soul of democracy: e pluribus unum, "out of many one," a concept that affords an extraordinarily vital and flexible unity consisting in the teamwork of the different and embodied in their mutual respect and acceptance.

One nation composed of individuals.

Individuals in religion and beliefs.

A host of people trusting one another, without anxiety, fear, and insecurity.

A trust based on knowledge and understanding.

A life removed from hate and fear, the causes of cultural and national rot and decay.

An inclusive brotherhood that has come to be known as cultural pluralism, which recognizes equality of nationalities, races, and religions as an essential of full human liberty and true democracy. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "If there is any principle of the constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other, it is the principle of free thought . . . not free thought for those who agree with us, but freedom for the thoughts we do not share."

Rather than being separated by individuality and independence, men are united in full liberty. For the genius of each man's independence is secure for that man only as it is secure for all other men. Each must have the right to think as an individual and freely. To disregard that vision of unity through individual freedom is to destroy the body and soul of democracy. Our late President John F. Kennedy said: "An open society grows or withers according to the power of its ideas and to the vitality of its interior dialogue. If ever the United States should reach a point where the clash of ideas comes to an end, where debate disappears, where everybody agrees with everybody else on everything, then we are finished as a nation . . . and the ideal of freedom, to which our nation has been dedicated since the time of Washington and Adams, Jefferson and Hamilton, perishes."

Political freedom is of little worth except as it springs from, expresses, and invigorates spiritual freedom. Compulsive uniformity is tyrannical in that it breaks and tames the spirits, sinks man in his own eyes, takes away vigor of thought and action, substitutes an outward rule for a conscience, and makes man abject, cowardly, a parasite, and a cringing slave. It wars with the soul and thus wars with God. Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.



I have heard that there is a young man in San Francisco who marches in any picket line, no matter what the cause. He carries a big placard that reads simply, "Shame!" "I figure that covers anything," he explains, "and it gives me a feeling of belonging." In this day of conformity, too many Americans have rewritten the ancient motto as "I came, I saw, I concurred."

Rather than to employ the melting-pot concept, America is obliged to preserve the good in each tradition and help to develop the individual to the best of which he is capable. In differentiation, not in uniformity, lies the path of progress. Each religious sect, each ethnic group, is a fellowship with its own group individuality, orchestrating itself into the symphonic concert of American democracy, playing its part in nourishing the spirit of our land, enriching the national achievement by its unique contribution.

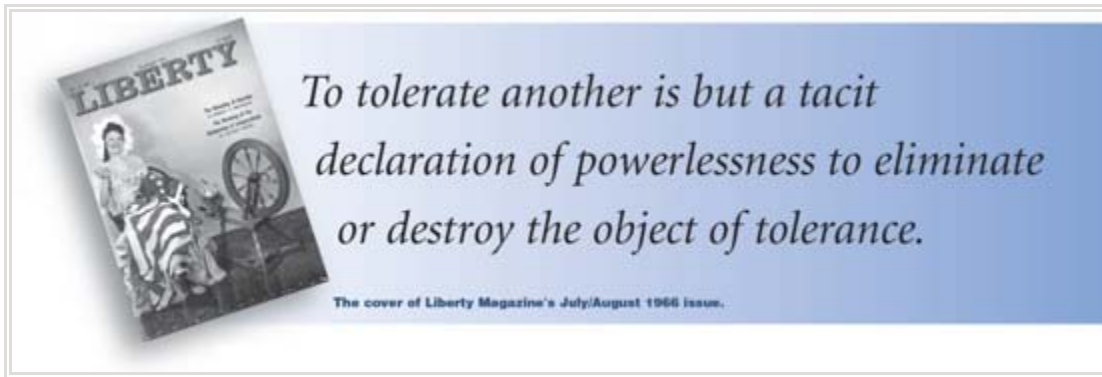
The makers of the Constitution undertook to secure conditions favorable to the pursuit of happiness. They recognized the significance of man's spiritual nature, of his feelings, and of his intellect. They knew that only a part of the pain, pleasure, and satisfactions of life ought to be found in material things. They sought to protect Americans in their beliefs, their thoughts, their emotions and sensations. They conferred upon the American citizen the right to be left alone; the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized man. They recognized, as do we, that just as gold and silver to be made more durable and practical must be mixed with alloys, so, too, must a nation, if it is to prosper and reach its visualized goals and aspirations, be a composite of many peoples, each contributing its peculiar and unique share to the common good.

But recognition of individuality is not enough. To tolerate is not enough. Goethe has said: "To tolerate is to insult. Tolerance must only be a preparatory sentiment to open the way to mutual acceptance. True liberalism is recognition and understanding." To tolerate another is but a tacit declaration of powerlessness to eliminate or destroy the object of tolerance. It is not tolerance that is asked of us through our religious heritage, but rather that, with the psalmist, we "judge . . . the people with equity."

The irony, the paradox, of these last years is that in a totalitarian state such as Russia, the individual is crushed by the force of the state. In our free society the individual often freely sells his individuality for a mess of acceptance by the multitude.

Being an individual is not easy. It involves freedom, and man is often afraid of freedom. By being a part of a crowd, man justifies much that his personal conscience would not permit. He goes along with the mob. By so doing he is relieved of his personal responsibility, for what the majority says must be right. It offers rationalization and security that often eliminate thought and reason. Although Moses commanded the children of Israel, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2), the rule today seems to be "Be what others expect and want you to be!"

There is a beautiful story in Jewish tradition that tells of a Rabbi Joshua who was on his deathbed. As he lay there his disciples noticed tears furrowing his cheeks, and asked him why. Was he afraid of death? Was he afraid of what he would meet when he stood before the



throne on high? "No," said Rabbi Joshua, he was afraid that when he did get to heaven he would not be asked, "Why were you not like Moses," but "Why were you not like Rabbi Joshua?"

This trend toward conformity on every level of our society violates a basic principle of almost every

ethical religious group—the sacredness of independence. Conformity is a denial of that uniqueness. To follow the multitude, to disregard a single person or particular group in favor of the mass, is degrading to the very best in man. A religious person does not sell his soul for success and popularity, nor does he give away that soul to any party, club, or movement just for the sake of being on the inside.

It is Psalm 133 that teaches us: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (verse 1). And we should add, while retaining their own characteristic individuality and sharing their personal interests as equals and freely.

This has been the American credo—the blueprint for perspective and action on the part of all thinking Americans. The inspiration for life and thought. Unity coupled with individuality. Equality joined to uniqueness. Union recognizing personality. Nation dedicated to citizenry.

With the truths of our heritage firmly implanted in our hearts, let us serve our fellow men with gladness, doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God in the path of our daily lives. Thus we shall build an America strong in its own soul, and able to face the world's tyranny in the combined strength of its minorities.



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The Flushing Remonstrance

BY: MICHAEL PEABODY



The steel-and-glass skyline of Manhattan still soars toward the heavens with the confidence of a people born free. But the cradle of this freedom is not found in the luxury of Wall Street or the neon sparkle of Times Square. Instead, it rests in a simple farmhouse located near the No. 7 train.

A short distance away, generations of New Yorkers have jokingly warned of the shadowy figure of an old man with a peg leg seen pacing back and forth near the Bowery at St. Mark's, the place where his bones lie buried.

With a silver-tipped peg leg, a long sword, and a heavy mustache, Peter Stuyvesant had, in the words of Washington Irving's Knickerbocker, a "countenance sufficient to petrify a millstone" when he arrived to govern the raucous city of New Amsterdam in May of 1647. Word had traveled of Stuyvesant's bravery in a battle with the Spanish during which his leg had been blown off by a cannonball, and when his ship finally sailed into the harbor, the townspeople used almost all of their gunpowder in salute.

Although the Flushing patent of 1645 had promised "the right to have and enjoy liberty of conscience, according to the custom and manner of Holland, without molestation or disturbance from any magistrates, or any other ecclesiastical minister," Stuyvesant felt that this freedom had permitted the moral license of this "disobedient community."

Governor Stuyvesant told the colonists, "I shall govern you as a father his children." And govern he did, with a relentless, authoritarian confidence generally tending toward the good, but exhibiting a myopic understanding of the more delicate issue of religious tolerance. He closed the brothels, enforced rigid observance of Sunday, and prohibited the sale of liquor and firearms to the Indians. He established standards for housing and taverns, developed a market, and took steps toward founding a public school.

In spite of Stuyvesant's reforms, the frontier folks resented his silver-legged dictatorial style. When they tried to complain, he dismissed them, saying, "We derive our authority from God and the West India Company, not from the pleasure of a few ignorant subjects."

In step with the mores of the time, Stuyvesant could not understand why his fragile colony should suffer the existence of "damnable heresies" that ran contrary to his own Dutch Reformed view. As a matter of policy Stuyvesant drove a moderate Lutheran minister from the colony when he requested a meeting house, but Stuyvesant reserved his most fervent indignation for the Society of Friends.

Established in England in 1652, the Friends, first called Quakers by their detractors, later came to embrace the name, and quickly distinguished themselves from the prevailing culture through their appreciation of simplicity, honesty, and equality. Filled with missionary zeal, these Children of Light, as they called themselves, sought to share their knowledge in the New World.

The Friends believed that God's grace did not filter through the hierarchy of the religious elite, but reached each person directly. In taking this theological approach, the Quakers bypassed the authority of clergy and rulers, and recognized that the common person could be elevated to the "priesthood of all believers." This rendered the current cultural order obsolete and formed the core ideal of the American republic that would arise more than a century later.

The number of Quakers increased rapidly, and the ruling classes in both Europe and the New World feared their influence. In 1656 Boston's Governor Endicott, in contrast to the mythical tolerance of his Pilgrim forebears, threatened them with the death penalty. "Take heed," he said, "ye break not our ecclesiastical laws, for then ye are sure to stretch by a halter."

The people of Boston thought the death penalty a bit extreme, and in an abundance of equanimity later changed the law to allow that both male and female Quakers were to "be stripped naked from the middle upward and tied to a cart's tail, and whipped through the town," where the constables would brand them with the letter R on their left shoulder. The Bostonians congratulated themselves on the degree of their Christian mercy.

In 1657 a group of Quakers who had been exiled from Boston to England returned to America to spread the message of religious liberty that "the Spirit of God, dwelling in man, is the supreme authority." Upon their arrival many settled in Flushing, where a respected member of the community, Henry Townsend, opened his home to their meetings. When Stuyvesant found out, he summarily fined Townsend and banished him to Holland.

On December 27, 1657, the citizens of Flushing responded to the banishment by drafting a remonstrance against the governor. The document, signed by 30 citizens, followed Quakerism's egalitarian approach to the relationship between believers and God when it declared, "For if God justifie who can condemn and if God condemn there is none can justifie And because our Saviour sayeth it is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him by whom they cometh, our desire is not to offend one of his little ones, in whatsoever form, name or title he appears in, whether Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or Quaker, but shall be glad to see anything of God in any of them, desiring to do unto all men as we desire all men should do unto us, which is the true law both of church and state."

When Stuyvesant received the Flushing Remonstrance, he retaliated by proclaiming March 13, 1658, a Day of Prayer for the purpose of repenting from the sin of religious tolerance. Stuyvesant declared that the community's troubles had resulted from the "rigorous justice" of God for tolerating the Quakers, and promised that God would bring about "severe punishment" if they did not change their ways.

Stuyvesant's intolerant policies continued unabated for the next couple of years until challenged by one John Bowne, who refused to acknowledge the ban. On a September afternoon in 1662, John Bowne, a 34-year-old whose wife had converted to Quakerism, was arrested at his home and charged with aiding and abetting the Quaker "abomination" by conducting worship services in his home. When he refused to renounce his faith, Stuyvesant locked Bowne in a dungeon for three months and then deported him to Holland to await trial.

The Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch West India Company was reluctant to interfere in a colonial matter, and suggested that Bowne remedy the situation himself by bringing his wife and child to live with him in more tolerant Holland. However, Bowne refused and appealed to the town's patent and the Flushing Remonstrance. The chamber then recommended that Bowne return and agree to abide by the ban on the Quakers, but he refused to deny his faith. The next day the chamber acquitted Bowne and ordered Stuyvesant to be tolerant of faiths not his own, in line with the patent and the remonstrance.

The acquittal and subsequent return of John Bowne in 1664, nearly 19 months after his deportation, brought an end to the religious persecution in the New Amsterdam colony. Later that year Stuyvesant lost a border dispute with the British, and the name of the city was changed to New York. The British continued the tradition of religious tolerance in the colony, and the Flushing Remonstrance served as an inspiration for the First Amendment to the Constitution more than a century later. After Bowne's death in 1695, his home continued his legacy of service. In the 1800s it was a key stop along the Underground Railroad, sheltering escaped slaves on their path to freedom. The house still stands on Bowne Street in Flushing, Queens, as a beacon of America's heritage of religious freedom.

And while Peter Stuyvesant's literal ghost may be the product of overactive imaginations, wise children may discern something similar shuffling toward us again.

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- 1 *Theodore Roosevelt describes this legend in his book New York, which he published in 1906.*
 - 2 *Washington Irving, Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York (New York: The Heritage Press, 1940).*
 - 3 *Between 1660 and 1664 in Boston, three Quakers were hanged, three had their right ears cut off, one had the letter H branded on a hand, 31 were whipped through the town, and three were sent to Barbados as slaves.*
 - 4 *Original document is currently housed in the archives of New York State.*