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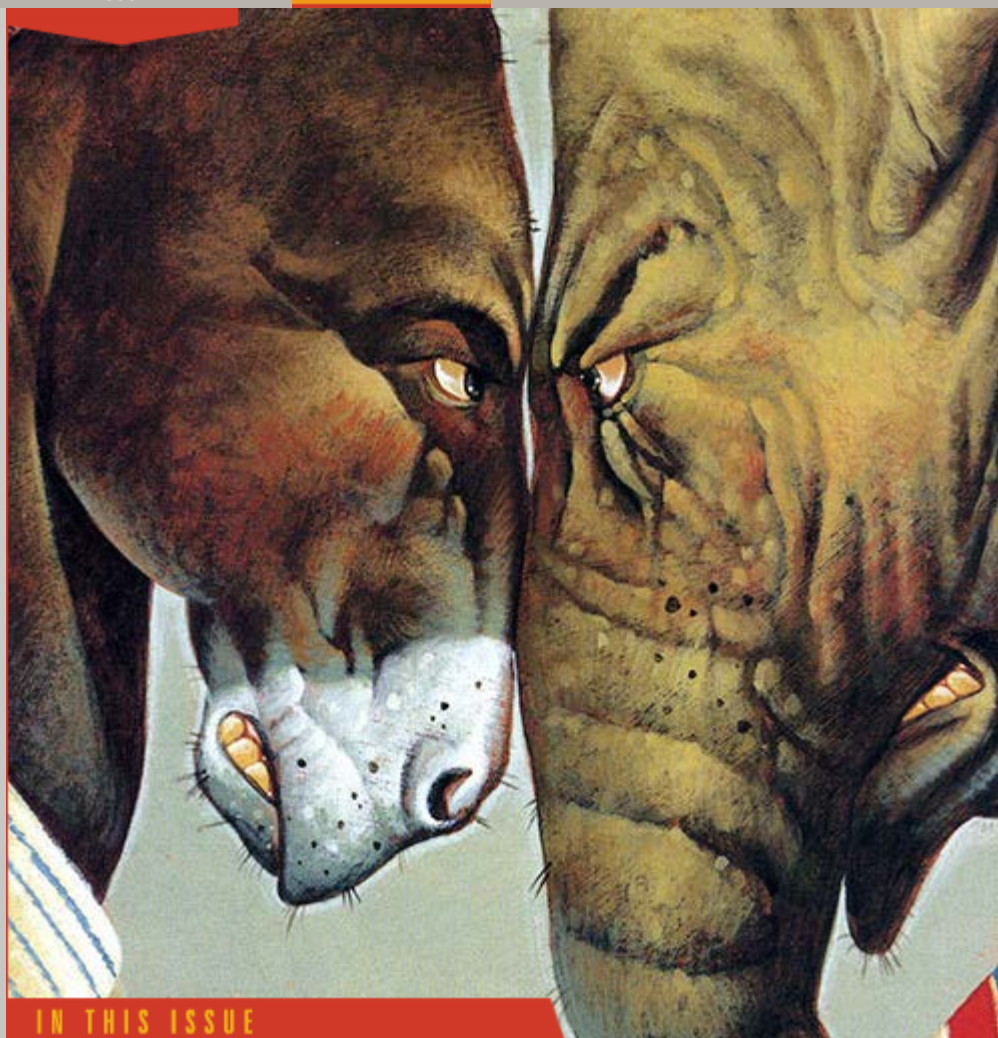
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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2006

The New Bible Wars



Over the past year, new fights have broken out in states across the nation about Bible courses in public schools. Competing "Bible bills" have popped up in various state legislatures, with Republicans and Democrats vying to see who can thump the Bible the loudest.

First prize goes to Georgia Republicans. In March 2006 the Georgia legislature voted 151-7 in the House and 50-1 in the Senate for the first-in-the-nation "Bible bill," calling for Bible electives to be taught in Georgia's high schools.

Although Georgia schools were already free to offer Bible electives, the bill provides state funding and curriculum to encourage widespread adoption of Bible courses. Similar legislation has been proposed in Alabama, Tennessee, and Missouri; proponents promise more states to come.

If these efforts were only about Bible literacy, this flurry of Bible bills might pass unnoticed. After all, there is no constitutional barrier to teaching *about* the Bible in public schools. The Supreme Court has ruled against state-sponsored devotional Bible reading, but the Court has never banned the Bible from the curriculum. In *Abington v. Schempp* (1963), Justice Tom C. Clark wrote for the Court: "It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment."



As any educator will tell you, study about the Bible in courses such as literature and history is an essential part of a good education. Without some knowledge of the Bible, students can't grasp much of what they see in museums, read in literature, or encounter in history and current events. Moreover, without biblical literacy students will have little understanding of the great religious and ethical ideas that have shaped much of Western civilization.

Unfortunately, however, the spate of Bible bills in Georgia and other states appear to be less about education and more about partisan politics and stealth attempts to promote one religious view of the Bible in public schools.

Playing Politics With the Bible

The first of these Bible bills appeared in Alabama, where Democrats in the legislature proposed electives that would use a textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*, published by the Bible Literacy Project in 2005. Because the textbook has broad support from Jews and Christians, was reviewed by 41 scholars (disclosure: I was among the reviewers), and successfully field-tested, the Democrats saw this as a golden opportunity to do something both religion-friendly and constitutional.



Not surprisingly, Alabama Republicans were not about to let Democrats steal their biblical thunder. Although in the minority, GOP lawmakers have thus far managed to block passage of the Democrats' bill.

Georgia was a different story. Once again, Democrats went first, proposing Bible electives using *The Bible and Its Influence*. Once again, Republicans fought back, accusing Democrats of "trying to put a wolf in sheep's clothing." Since the GOP controls both houses, they scuttled the Democratic bill and passed their alternative.

Beyond the fact that they were put forward by Democrats, why did Republicans in Alabama and Georgia reject the original Bible

bills? It turns out that the dispute is about much more than partisan jockeying over which party is more on God's side. It's really about how public schools should treat the Bible in the classroom.

Democrats in both states had no sooner proposed *The Bible and Its Influence* when supporters of an alternative approach from a group called the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools mobilized to defeat it with a political two-step: First, discredit the textbook in the Democratic bill. Then, get Republicans to endorse an alternative approach that just happens to reflect the National Council's own curriculum.

National Council advisory board member and prominent evangelical minister D. James Kennedy labeled the textbook "anti-biblical" and claimed that it was supported by the American Civil Liberties Union (kiss of death) and the Council on Islamic Education. In truth, *The Bible and Its Influence* has been praised by many Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant leaders, including evangelicals such as Chuck Colson. Neither the ACLU nor the CIE has endorsed it. But the smear campaign worked.

Competing Approaches to Bible Electives

What many religious leaders and scholars like about *The Bible and Its Influence* is that it puts the Bible in historical context, exposes students to how Jews and Christians understand the Bible in various ways, and illustrates how the Bible has shaped history, literature, and the arts. Contrary to the false claims made by the National Council, students using the textbook are required to read the Bible itself. But teachers and students are given sound scholarship and historical context for understanding the Bible.

If any textbook can provide a safe approach for public schools seeking to create a Bible elective, this may be it. Why? Because it is written to conform to constitutional and educational standards laid out in "The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide," written and endorsed by a wide range of national organizations ranging from the National Association of Evangelicals and the Christian Legal Society to People for the American Way Foundation and the American Jewish Congress. (The guide is available at www.firstamendmentcenter.org)

The National Council's curriculum, by contrast, doesn't have a student textbook (the Bible, they say, is the textbook). It is instead a lengthy workbook for the teacher that, in places, treats the Bible like a history book. The vast majority of secondary resources recommended for classroom use are from an evangelical Christian perspective.

According to a report issued by the Texas Freedom Network, written by biblical scholar Mark Chancey of Southern Methodist University, the National Council's curriculum "advocates a narrow sectarian perspective taught with materials plagued by shoddy research, blatant errors and discredited or poorly cited sources." (The full report is available at www.tfn.org)

The Georgia legislation doesn't mention the National Council by name, but GOP lawmakers have cited the Council's "successful approach." And the language of the bill reflects the National Council's materials by mandating the Bible as the textbook, calling for teaching "the history recorded there," and listing topics to be studied that are consistent with the Council's curriculum. Although the National Council claims that its materials have been successfully adopted in hundreds of school districts (they won't reveal where), I have gotten calls from communities in several states where the approach taken in the Council's curriculum has sparked controversy and threats of lawsuits.

Beyond the Conflict

The political fight over Bible electives is just the latest chapter in a long history of conflict over the Bible in public education. No sooner had "common schools" opened their doors in the nineteenth century than a bitter struggle broke out between Protestants and Catholics over whose version of the Bible would be read each morning. Lawsuits in the mid-twentieth century led to Supreme Court decisions

striking down devotional Bible-reading by school officials. And now in the twenty-first century, school officials are faced with new battles over Bible courses.

Getting beyond the confusion and conflict about the Bible and public schools would be good for education, but it won't be easy. According to a study commissioned by the Bible Literacy Project (BLP) in 2005, most students in public schools don't know much about the Bible—and most teachers are hesitant to teach about it.

True, most students polled could identify Moses correctly (72 percent) and knew about Adam and Eve (90 percent). But when probed for a more substantive knowledge of the Bible, such as David's actions in the books of Samuel or what happened at the wedding of Cana as described in the New Testament, a large majority didn't know.

But does this matter? Apart from religious arguments for knowing the Bible (which aren't the business of public schools), what are the educational reasons for taking the Bible more seriously in the curriculum?

If you ask the nation's top English teachers, they will tell you. Forty of the 41 teachers surveyed for the BLP study believe that knowledge of the Bible is essential. "It's impossible to understand Western literature without it," said one teacher. Not to mention much of Western art, music, and history.

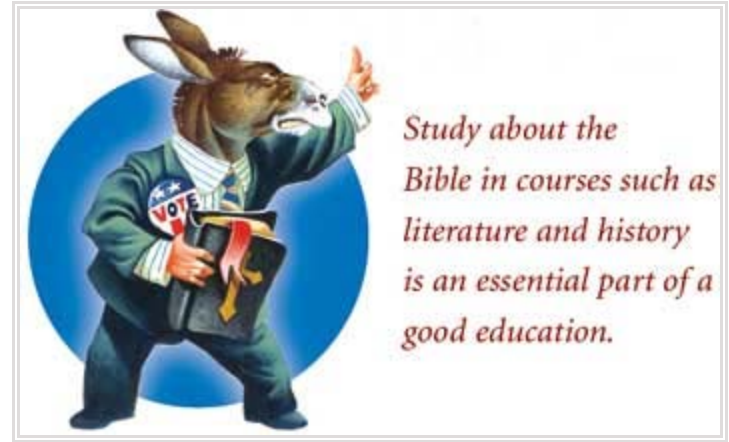
The teachers agreed that lack of biblical literacy puts students at a distinct academic disadvantage. Consider this: One preparation guide for the advanced-placement literature and composition exam lists more than 100 allusions students should know—and more than 60 percent of them are biblical references. The list includes everything from Abraham and Isaac to "through a glass darkly."

In spite of the clear academic need, most high schools (58 percent) have little or no teaching about Bible literature in their English courses. As for actual Bible literature courses, all four private schools surveyed have such courses, but only two of the public schools have electives in the Bible as literature. (For more information about the survey and the Bible Literacy Project, see www.bibleliteracy.org)

To bridge this literacy gap, we don't need legislation, especially when inspired by religious agendas. What we do need are high academic standards for classroom materials and adequate teacher preparation for anyone assigned to teach about the Bible in a public school.

The Bible Literacy Project is good news for schools that want to include more study about the Bible without violating the First Amendment. *The Bible and Its Influence*, with the teacher guide and online university-based teacher training program, is designed to be one way to provide a constitutional and academic safe harbor for teaching about the Bible in a public school classroom.

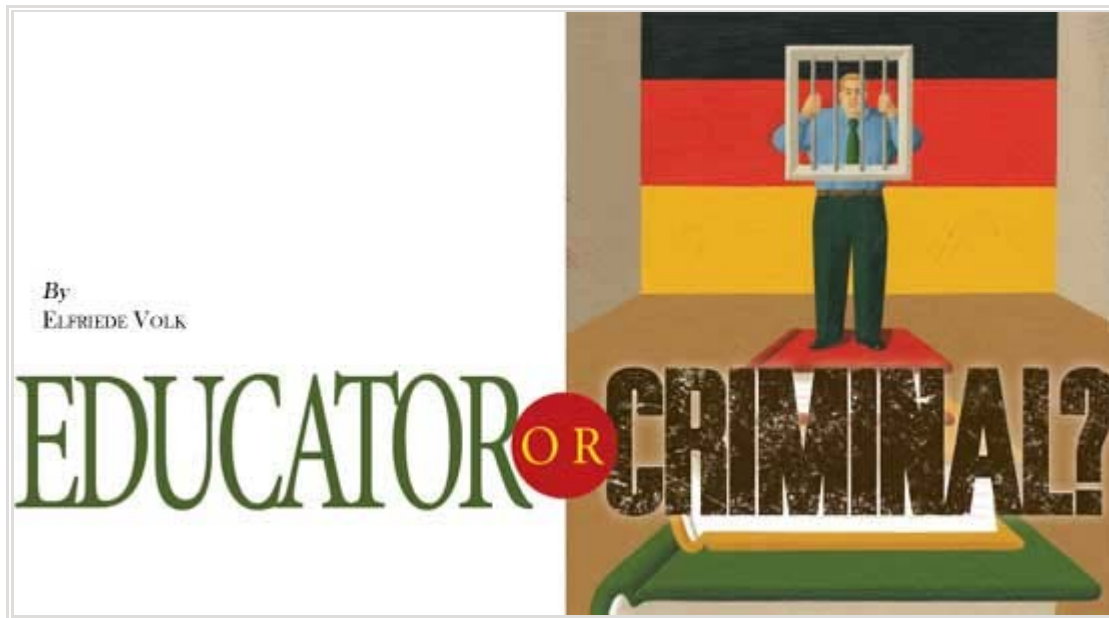
Whether or not it's a good idea to offer a Bible elective and just how much students need to learn about the Bible in literature and history are issues for educators and school boards to decide. But any school district that contemplates adding a Bible course—in Georgia or anywhere else—can avoid a fight only by first understanding and applying the religious liberty principles of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2006

Educator Or Criminal?

BY: ELFRIEDE VOLK



On March 28, 2006, a court in Hamburg, Germany, sentenced a 43-year-old father to a week in jail because his three older children, aged 10, 12, and 14, have not attended school for four years. Instead, he has taught them at home. If, despite the jail term, he still boycotts the state school, his wife also faces incarceration and the threat of having their six children apprehended and made wards of the state.

It is not that Andre R. and his wife, Frauke, do not believe in education. After all, Andre is a licensed teacher who substitutes regularly once a week at a public school. But as fundamentalist Christians, the couple was concerned about the negative influences their children were exposed to in the school system. They saw marital breakups and the erosion of families. They believed that the sex education offered in schools encouraged students in sexual experimentation, and they wanted to protect their daughters from that. So Andre decided to take charge of their education at home. He claims that one does not have to be particularly skilled to do a better job than the public school system.

There is only one problem. While the judge agreed that the school system is flawed, nine to ten years of public schooling is compulsory in Germany, and noncompliance is punishable by law. Yet it is estimated that 3,000 German children do not attend school but receive their education at home from parents anxious to instill biblical standards of morality in their offspring. For this they face hefty fines. Andre himself was fined 1,500 Euros in February when he first appeared before the court. Unable to pay, he accepted his subsequent prison sentence stoically.

"Even Paul was imprisoned for his beliefs," he commented, deeming the time in prison a small sacrifice to make for his children.

If the same education laws applied in Canada, my daughter and son-in-law could also face jail, because my daughter, an award-winning humanities teacher, educates their three children herself. But fortunately the Canadian government recognizes home schooling as a viable option. In the United States this system of education has become so popular that 2 million children now receive their instruction at home. Many claim that home schooling, which allows for individual attention and flexibility, produces superior scholastic results as well as giving the opportunity to instill higher moral values. When tested at the end of grade 2, my grandson's scores were what would have been expected for students finishing grade 6. In addition, all three youngsters are enrolled in and excel in music, sports, and gymnastics programs that they would not have time for if they attended regular school.



Home schooling can offer other benefits, allowing children to experience history-making events firsthand, rather than reading about

them or watching them on TV. When Canada's governor-general Michaëlle Jean visited Vancouver recently, my daughter took her children and a vanload of other homeschooled youngsters to city hall, where they could sit in on her meeting with Vancouver's mayor Sam Sullivan. Afterward, Michaëlle Jean delighted the children by coming over and shaking hands with them. This is something they will never forget.

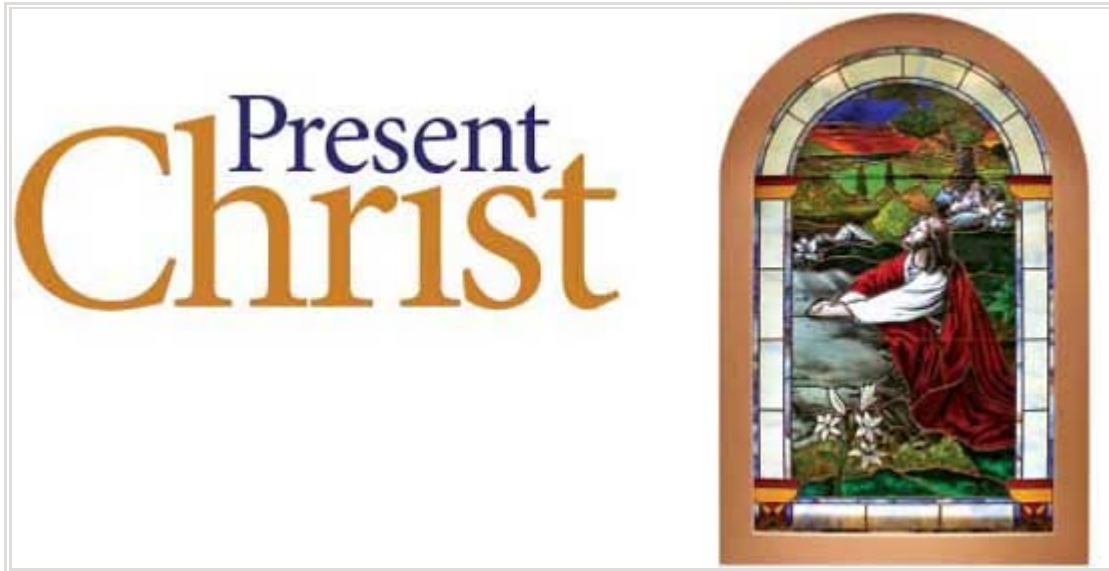
In Hamburg, Andre R. also provided educational enrichment for his children in addition to teaching them the three R's and practical life skills. Once a week he took his older daughters to didactic lectures at the local university. For this he has been rewarded with a jail term and a criminal record.



Elfriede Volk is a freelance writer living in Summerland, British Columbia, Canada.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2000

Present Christ



Behind the lectern and the platform seating area of the little Seventh-day Adventist church in Debary, Florida, is a quite striking stained glass window. I had seen it once or twice before, but had never really looked at it till that afternoon memorial service four days after my father's death.

My task was to present a family summary of his life. What can you say about a lifetime that will fit nicely into a few minutes?

I kept turning back toward the window behind me, and each time it spoke to me of my father and his life. After all, it had not been so many months since he had shown me through the new church, the construction of which had consumed so much of his energy. There were many details of the structure that bore the very personal imprint of his direction.

The church sign facing the street shows three angels, designed to remind all passersby of the messages in Revelation, chapter 14. I knew that my father was not backward about explaining their significance. Proof of that was in the wonderful article the editors of the local paper put together on his death, without any reference to the family. The article told how in his regular visits to the editors my father had explained the meaning of the angels and the Advent hope that they proclaimed.

Inside, the church is airy and light. Hanging from the ceiling are a number of Tiffany shades. My father pointed them out as his special choice—in fact he had donated them to the church. And in spite of his red/green colorblind vision they are a feature of the interior.

But the stained-glass window was what he spent the most time talking about. He told about discovering the artisan who crafted it. He explained why they had chosen the scene portrayed. He waxed eloquent on the effect when the light shines through it.

And as I paused momentarily in my presentation, I thought about the drama of the past few days.

Only a few weeks have passed since I wrote the last editorial and this one. Some readers might remember that last time I used as an opening illustration my father's remembrance of international contacts which included many from the Muslim world. I was able to take a proof of that last editorial to the hospital and share it with him the day before he died. It surprised me how engaged he was as I read it. He made several suggestions for change and I was able to incorporate them into the final version.

But he wanted a bit more. It was good, he said. But maybe it didn't go far enough. "You need to present Christ," he said.

I did give him the standard view of how Liberty is defending the right of all to believe or disbelieve, and that we need to be careful not to offend and impose a particular view. I can't say he was over-convicted. "You need to present Christ," he said.

Many decades ago I discovered a book by Stanley Jones, a pioneer Christian missionary to India. For years Jones endured ridicule and,

worse, silence as he attempted to introduce Hindus and some Muslims to Christianity. His efforts seemed futile and at one point he suffered a nervous breakdown and returned for a time to England. He persisted and back in India continued to hold public discussions of faith.

The turning point came in a discussion with a Brahman leader. "I don't care for your faith," the man said. "I don't care for the Christ of your creeds and doctrines. He has no relevance here." Stanley Jones then proceeded to present the Christ of the Indian Road, as his book was titled. He sketched in the figure dressed as a holy man, wandering the dusty roads of India, caring for the poor, bringing comfort, healing, and hope.

"Ah," said the Brahman, "I think I could love and serve the Christ of the Indian Road." It was the beginning of a powerful witness to Christ in India.

Our last issue of Liberty contained some very graphic images of civil strife that derive from religious antagonism. The Western world is ready to react violently to what it sees as a global threat from, variously, Islamofascism, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic extremism or global jihad. Within the United States Christian activism is ready to storm society and purge schools, government, judiciary of infidels. Oh, what violence has been done in the name of religion in the past, and what readiness we see in our world today to repeat the past!

Again I looked back to the stained-glass window in that little church. I knew the scene from an illustration in a book my father loved to read. It was *The Desire of Ages*—a narrative history of the life of Jesus Christ. On occasion it moved him to tears as he read it to our family. The illustration was Christ on His knees in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before religious men, including one of His own followers, declared Him heretic and worthy of death. In the garden He prayed that God's will would be done among men; and that He would be able to see the moment through. He was wrestling through the very establishment of His kingdom—the one He could tell the Roman governor Pontius Pilate was "not of this world."

"Present Christ" seems to me to contain an antidote for most of the religious violence that lurks so often in our present state. We surely need doctrines and facts and the other trappings of faith—but these are not faith. I believe that Christianity would better flourish and less offend other belief systems if there were more Christ in what we shared. Christ did not impose—He was. Perhaps we need to look into the pictures of our various faith figures more often and work more to exemplify them. I write that as one who believes Jesus to be the Son of God—but I am convinced that a Buddhist who seeks to find the man Buddha among the added trappings of tradition will find a good beginning to true enlightenment, and that a Muslim who is similarly willing to peel away the sharia and accretation within the ummah will likely find a Muhammad truly seeking the will of Allah. I am not into comparative religions at all; but we all have spiritual yearnings, and they are all too easily turned aside to religiosity. We need faith and charity.

There are some of my colleagues in the religious liberty work who think it a denial of religious liberty principles to pre-sent faith. I hope they are wrong. Because I know that we are seeing what the poet Matthew Arnold, in "Dover Beach," called the sea of faith receding to "a dull retreating roar." Defending religious liberty must involve seeking the return of faith—for all; and without compulsion by individual, church, or state power.

Correction: Last month's editorial referred to the coming of the Fifth Imam. It should have been the Twelfth Imam.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

Oliver Cromwell

BY: D. J. B. TRIM

The middle years of this decade, 2005-2007, see the 350th anniversary of three very significant episodes in the history of political and religious liberty:

- The English intervention in the Principality of Savoy-Piedmont (the forerunner of modern Italy) to halt persecution of the Waldenses—arguably the first humanitarian intervention in history;
- The readmission of the Jews into England after nearly four centuries in which their presence had been illegal; and
- The rule of the Major-Generals in England—the only time in history that an English-speaking people has been governed by an out-and-out military dictatorship.



These episodes are of more than merely historical interest, for they illustrate a tendency that is still alive and well today.

All three not only roughly coincided; they also are linked by one man whose life both well illustrates this tendency and helped to shape its legacy in North America: Oliver Cromwell, still British history's most controversial figure. Logically, it might seem that the same man should not be responsible both for two of the outstanding examples of state intervention on behalf of religious liberty and for the imposition of an authoritarian government that aimed as much at moral as political reform. But there is no contradiction or schizophrenia involved here—Cromwell's actions were entirely consistent for someone with his worldview. And that view, repressed in England after Cromwell's death, survives and influences American politics and debates over religious liberty today.

The first part of this article examines the first two of these significant episodes—those of the Waldenses and the Jews—and highlights the significant points. The second part considers the third episode—that of the Major-Generals—and shows how Cromwell's authoritarian and libertarian sides can be reconciled. Cromwell combined conflicting aims: freeing all people who believed in God as revealed in the

Bible to worship Him as they saw fit, and freeing all the people of his country from arbitrary government, but also imposing on all the people godly standards of living. These aims were in tension and led both to toleration and to something at times approaching tyranny; but his concept of how polity, society, and church should function was transmitted after his death to the British colonies in North America and continues to be a force in American politics.

What was Cromwell's situation in the mid- to late-1650s? His outstanding skills as a leader of men and a military commander had been instrumental in the success of Parliament over King Charles I in the English Civil Wars (1642-1648). When the wars were over, the fervently Puritan Cromwell forged an alliance between the army and radical members of the House of Commons, which in 1649 abolished both the House of Lords and the monarchy, executed the king, and established a republic—the Commonwealth. Yes, a lifetime before the American Republican experiment England briefly became a republic! Four years later, after commanding the army in a series of military campaigns that extended the republic over the whole of the British Isles, and having become the dominant figure in the government of the Commonwealth, Cromwell became dissatisfied by the reluctance of the House of Commons to introduce a series of constitutional, religious, and legal reforms aimed at creating what he regarded as a more just and more godly society. So, in April 1653, with the army's support, he forcibly dissolved the House of Commons, replacing it with an assembly whose members were nominated by "godly" congregations across the country: "the parliament of saints," as it was known. But its members could not agree, and so, in late 1653 it too was dissolved, and the Commonwealth became a "Protectorate," taking its title from the installation of the commander-in-chief of the army, Cromwell, as head of state with the title "Lord Protector." Cromwell was moved throughout not by personal ambition but by his firm conviction that Providence had chosen him to do the Lord's work in England and the world.

Two of the key episodes in the history of liberty in which he was about to take part are easy for us to admire today. The first has a particular resonance for evangelical Protestants: Cromwell's intervention in the domestic politics of Savoy-Piedmont to save the Waldenses.

The Waldenses originated in the late twelfth century, named after a French merchant, Peter Waldo (or Valdes), who began to read the

Bible for himself and, appalled by the corruption that he perceived in the medieval church, renounced his wealth and began a movement of reform. Persecution drove the followers of Waldo/Valdes into the remote Alpine mountain valleys of what today is southeastern France/northwestern Italy. Here, the Waldenses (the name by which they were and still are most frequently known in England) or Vaudois (as the name evolved in local usage) found shelter and made their permanent home. They continued in existence, despite periodic persecutions, into the sixteenth century, when they were discovered by the Protestant Reformers.

By this time, while some Vaudois were to be found in southern France, most lived in the lands ruled by the Duke of Savoy, whose small sovereign principality, spanning parts of modern-day Italy, France, and Switzerland, included the region of Piedmont, by which name the duchy was sometimes called. The House of Savoy was gradually able to extend its territories until, by the nineteenth century, it was the leading independent Italian state, and thus the descendants of the early-modern Dukes of Savoy became the first Kings of modern, unified Italy. The Dukes were firmly Roman Catholic, but as rulers of a small state perched precariously between larger, warring neighbors, were rarely able to mount internal campaigns against dissidents.

The Waldenses gradually adopted the doctrines, and merged into the mainstream, of the Protestant Reformation; indeed, those living in the south of France were absorbed into the Calvinist French Huguenots, but those in Savoy remained separate and, as one historian comments, evolved into "the modern Waldensian Church."

It is impossible to overstate the admiration the Protestant Reformers felt for the Vaudois, who had courageously (and almost uniquely) maintained the primacy of Scripture (studied by all believers, in their own tongue) over canon law and tradition for four centuries. Protestants regarded the medieval Vaudois as an alternative tradition to that of Rome, potentially connecting the early church and Luther. The primacy ascribed to the Waldenses made the latter iconic figures for Protestants, whether of Lutheran, Calvinist, or other persuasion, and this Protestant veneration of the Vaudois was to be crucial in their survival.



Dignitaries lay the wreath and heather at the foot of the Cromwell's statue outside the Houses of Parliament.



In 1561 they had been formally granted free exercise of religion in certain districts of Piedmont, but in practice many Waldenses lived outside these, their presence accepted partly for fear of the strength of the Huguenots across the border. A century later, however, the Huguenots had lost their political power and with the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War the House of Savoy was free to wage war inside its territories. In 1655 all those living outside those mountain valleys granted freedom of worship in 1561 were ordered to move to those valleys on pain of death. But little time was given for this major movement to take place, and that April thousands of the Vaudois were massacred in what became known as "Bloody Easter." Further, it became clear that the troops would move next against the valleys previously excepted under the terms of the 1561 edict.

Wreath-laying dignitaries with the wreath and heather from the Waldensian valleys.

England was shocked when the news from Savoy-Piedmont arrived, foreshadowing as it did the final extermination of the Waldenses. Such a fate could not be allowed to befall those who had been, as it was thought, Protestants before the Reformation. Cromwell promptly declared May 30 a day of "national humiliation," prayer, and fasting, and launched a public appeal for funds to aid the decimated Waldensian communities, to which he donated £2,000 from his own purse (more than US\$260,000 in current values). But he did not merely act to help the survivors of the massacres, for he was well aware that they, too, might be put to the sword in due course.

He therefore also took political action. Cromwell appealed to all the Protestant states, urging them to intervene. His foreign secretary, the great poet John Milton, drafted the official letters and then composed his own personal, passionate rejection of religious massacre and plea for divine justice, in language that is still extraordinarily moving:

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold, . . .
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks."

Cromwell meanwhile set an example to Protestant Christendom (and, dare it be said, to later generations of Western statesmen confronted with "ethnic [or religious] cleansing," whether in Bosnia or the Sudan). He dispatched an extraordinary ambassador to the

Savoyard court at Turin and ordered the English fleet then in the Mediterranean to act against the commerce and coast of Savoy if the embassy was rebuffed. The dispatch of the fleet also had implications for the government of France—a Catholic state, but which at this time still permitted (very limited) liberty of worship to its Huguenot minority and which exercised considerable influence over its much smaller neighbor. France desired an alliance with Britain against Spain, but Cromwell's ambassador, Samuel Morland, stopped in Paris *en route* to Turin and made it plain that no British military aid would be forthcoming unless the persecution of the Vaudois was halted. He hinted that if it were not, the English fleet might act against French maritime trade. France duly swung its weight behind the British demands, and when Morland arrived in Turin, the government capitulated to Cromwell's demands.



A delegation of Waldensian church members, some in traditional dress, travelled especially from Italy.

The House of Savoy not only halted the massacres; it was also compelled to conclude a formal treaty between Duke and Protector that guaranteed to Savoy's "heretical" minority the free exercise of their faith. Morland then distributed to the poorest of the Vaudois the money raised by popular donation in response to Cromwell's appeal; it totaled a remarkable £39,000—equal at today's prices to more than US\$5,000,000. The Waldenses had been spared and provided with a basis for rebuilding their lives. Across Europe, Cromwell was regarded as the savior of the Vaudois, a point of view shared by the modern Waldense community, which regards his intervention as one of the most significant events of their long history. It was not, alas, the last time the Vaudois were to be vigorously persecuted, but at no other time was there such danger that they might be entirely exterminated.

The 350th anniversary of Cromwell's intervention was marked by a special service of thanksgiving in London, organized jointly by the modern Waldense community in Italy, the English Committee of the Waldensian Church Mission, and the Cromwell Association. The prayers were led by Pastor Claudio Pasquet, traditional hymns were sung by the Youth Choir of the churches of Val Pellice (one of the traditional Vaudois valleys), and the Italian state, the successor to Savoy-Piedmont, was represented by Senator Lucio Malan—appropriately himself a Waldense and, like Pastor Pasquet, descended from those slaughtered in the "Bloody Easter" of 1655. It was fitting that the service concluded with them laying bouquets of heather, picked on the slopes of Val Pellice, underneath the statue of Cromwell outside the British Houses of Parliament.

What is there to learn from the events of 1655? I put this question to Senator Malan after the service of commemoration, and he felt it showed that "the precious and fragile values of our open, tolerant democratic society must never be taken for granted." But what do the events tell us about Cromwell and *his* values?

Cromwellian Britain intervened in Savoy even though special foreign embassies were expensive to mount, and fleets expensive to maintain in foreign waters. Although force was not ultimately used, Cromwell seriously contemplated ordering the bombardment of Nice (then part of Savoy, not France). He had no economic incentives to act, for British commerce with Savoy was of minimal importance; the region was also strategically unimportant, for Cromwell's foreign policy objectives focused on the Low Countries and the West Indies. He put preserving the Vaudois ahead of the valuable prospect of an alliance with France. And he was to do so again, for when a treaty was concluded with France, soon after, the price for British military aid against Spain was much greater rights for the Huguenots.

There were no benefits for Cromwell's government or for Britain more generally to be gained by Cromwell's actions on behalf of endangered minorities. His intervention in Savoy was altruistic and motivated by genuine concern for those who, in Milton's vision, "kept

thy truth so pure of old, when all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones."

It was arguably the first humanitarian intervention. It certainly demonstrates the depth of Cromwell's concern for the preservation of religious liberty.

However, given that this was the seventeenth century, we would be justified in asking, liberty for whom? Was it only for Protestants threatened by Catholics, such as the Vaudois and Huguenots? Soon after, Cromwell was to demonstrate a much more generous spirit.

In 1290 King Edward I, distraught with grief at the death of his beloved wife and believing malicious stories that Jews had helped encompass her death, had expelled all of England's Jews and made it a crime for any Jew thereafter to live in England. From the late sixteenth century there were Jews living in London, but they were careful to hide their identity.

In September 1655 a group of Jews from Amsterdam, led by a Portuguese émigré rabbi, printer and scholar, Menasseh Ben Israel, applied to the Council of State for readmission to England. They had good grounds to hope they would be successful. The merchants of the city of London, looking to exploit more effectively trade with North America and Asia, were keen to allow English residence to members of the Jewish community of Amsterdam, for they had unparalleled contacts, skills, and experience of doing business in both the West and East Indies. In addition, they could provide access to the immensely wealthy Dutch commercial networks, which could finance larger and therefore more profitable mercantile ventures.

In addition to these economic factors, however, there were also eschatological considerations. Many Baptists and Puritans interpreted biblical prophecies to mean that the conversion of the Jews must precede the millennium, which would itself precede the second coming of Christ. It was widely believed that to readmit the Jews into England would expedite their reconversion; there were even some English exegetes who felt biblical prophecies identified 1656 as the year the Jews would be won to Christ. The Jews had end-time prophecies of their own, of an era of universal peace in which the Jews were restored to Palestine, ruling a renewed kingdom of Israel: a Jewish parallel to the Christian millennium. But, it was believed, before this could happen, the Jews must be scattered "to the end of the earth," as prophesied by Moses (Deuteronomy 28:64)—and Menasseh Ben Israel had identified England as "the end of the earth."

There were thus various currents, within both England and the Jewish community in the Netherlands, which came together in 1655; they were incorporated into a formal petition, requesting citizenship, freedom of worship, discrete burial grounds, freedom to do business, and repeal of all laws against Jews. However, there was still a deep and ingrained anti-Semitic prejudice in England to overcome.

Cromwell himself met with Jewish representatives—a significant gesture—and called a "conference" of clergymen and lawyers at which all the arguments for and against the Jewish petition would be debated. The general tenor of the conference, held in December 1655, was negative, but Cromwell's secretary of state so steered the meetings that no formal refusal was issued, and Cromwell himself chaired the final session, in which he voiced his dissatisfaction with the arguments against readmission. This was partly because he hoped that readmitting the Jews would expose them to the gospel—not an example of genuinely pluralist views! But he also attacked the prejudice of some participants, mocking the characterization of Jews as "the meanest and most despised of all people [. . .] contemptible and despised."

Observing that he and the council would have to steer their own course, he then called the proceedings to a halt.

Legal opinion had meanwhile been received that, because the law prohibiting a Jewish presence in England had been imposed by a king and England was now a republic, there was actually no existing legal impediment to Jews residing in England. And on this basis, Jews indeed began once more to emigrate and to live openly in England.

Thus, although there was never actually a *de jure* decision formally readmitting the Jews, there was a clear *de facto* decision to accept a Jewish presence. Historians debate the nature and significance of Cromwell's role in this process, but it is important to note that it was his government that decided not to prosecute (or persecute!) any Jews who did return, and even if he merely accepted the suggestions of others, nothing could have happened had he himself been unwilling to accept a change in the status quo.

In any case, Cromwell went further. He intervened personally to protect Jewish merchants from legal harassment on religious grounds.



In addition, although the council had opposed allowing public worship, in 1656 the Protector expressly permitted them to "meet in [their] private houses for devotion," putting the informal practice of recent years on a formal basis and allowing London's Jews as much as they were permitted in Amsterdam. Moreover, by the end of the 1650s a synagogue and cemetery were allowed to the Jewish community, and it is surely significant that this followed a direct appeal to the Lord Protector. He may not have taken the initiative in this notable step, but he could have prevented it and did not.

All in all, then, while some scholars have overstated Cromwell's significance in readmitting Jews to England (and others have understated it) and while Cromwell's actions stemmed partly from the hope that the Jews would become Protestants, they nevertheless were very significant in the history of relations between different ethnicities as well as different faiths. They demonstrate openness to people significantly different from himself that remains far from common among zealous Christians.

These two episodes demonstrate superbly Cromwell's belief in religious liberty and his willingness to accept minority groups, in an age when Protestant and Catholic alike believed that, without ethnic and confessional uniformity, communities would collapse into chaos. As will be seen in the second part of this article, Cromwell's clear-cut commitment to liberty—liberty of conscience and liberty of worship—was one of the chief themes of his government as Lord Protector. However, the third of the episodes, whose 350th anniversary has recently been marked, is less attractive to the twenty-first-century mind—and, given what we seem to have established about Cromwell's character, not a little perplexing. For it involved the imposition of authoritarian, military government on the British Isles.

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Part 2 will continue in the Jan./Feb. issue.

1 Peter Biller, "Medieval Waldensians' Construction of the Past," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 25 (1989-95): p. 41.

2 John Milton, "On the Late Massacre in Piemont [sic]" (1655), lines 1-2, 5-8.

3 *Ibid.*, lines 3, 4.

4 Quoted in Edgar Samuel, "Oliver Cromwell and the Readmission of the Jews to England in 1656," in *At the End of the Earth: Essays on the History of the Jews in England and Portugal* (London: Jewish Historical Society, 2004), p. 187.

5 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1655-6*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longmans, 1882), p. 16 (vol. ci no. 118), 294 (vol. cxxvi no. 105).

6 *Ibid.*, p. 237 (vol. cxxv no. 58).

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2000

Editorial - Faith And Law

The Woman Sitting To My Left At The May 2 CARE Act Rally In The Hart Senate Building Turned Out To Be From A Christian Community Aid Program In Phoenix, Arizona. By Her Wide-eyed Intensity I Had Picked Her To Be Of The Mind-set I'd Observed Before In Vari



Illustration By James Mellett

The woman sitting to my left at the May 2 CARE Act Rally in the Hart Senate building turned out to be from a Christian community aid program in Phoenix, Arizona. By her wide-eyed intensity I had picked her to be of the mind-set I'd observed before in various multilevel marketing recruitment situations. But I figured we could talk anyway, so I began to ease up on the question of separation of church and state. Sure, there are many ways of looking at the topic, but I thought to at least encounter a little deference to the concept. Wrong!

"Separation of church and state," she sneered. "Where does it say that in the Constitution?" When I tried to point out the obvious historical reality of the term coming directly from Thomas Jefferson, explaining what he and the other framers of the Constitution intended, I was shouted down. "Are you going to let me speak?" she almost yelled, and resumed the brassy claim that we should demolish any such false wall.

I was at the Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment Act, S. 1924, Rally to observe how the president's bold plan to fund church-operated social programs had changed since introduced into the House last year as HR 7. And it has changed—been diluted, actually, in the very real-world need to get bipartisan support—in particular that of Senator Lieberman, cosponsor of the Senate bill. And I must say that in itself the bill barely presents a threat to a workable and healthy separation of church and state. Largely gone is the bold move to openly fund faith programs.

But the intent remains and was actually celebrated at the rally. As a Christian I exult that people of faith, and so many of my faith, are active in good works and compassion. But I shudder to see an intent to encamp these "Armies of Compassion" within the confines of government and under its banner. It is not decorous for any church to seek to exchange its white garb for the party dress and common-law marriage with the by nature fickle state.

The most curious dynamic of this and other developments in the church-state religious liberty issue is that they take place against no upsurge in piety, but actually in the context of spiritual declension and a growing assortment of activists, revolutionaries and revisionists, who would hijack religion for their own calculating ends.

Later that same day I attended the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the *Washington Times*.

Before we heard a keynote address by owner the "Reverend" Sun Myung Moon, we were treated to testimonials from the likes of George Bush, Sr. (via video), and a truly inclusive prayer by the Reverend Fauntleroy, a preacher cum politician. And then we heard the truth as propounded by the owner of the capital's second largest daily. But before that I was again shouted down by a hater of the wall of separation.

The conversation began innocently enough. I discovered that the man sitting next to me at the banquet table is a regular columnist for

the *Times*. He asked about *Liberty*, and soon I was speaking generally about the separation of church and state principle, and how it had done so much to guarantee continued religious freedom in the United States.

The voice was deeper, and thickly accented by its European origins, but I got much the same response as earlier in the day. "Where does it say that in the Constitution?" he demanded in the tone of a commissar. "Ridiculous!" I had noted how the chief editor of the *Times* made a point of distancing the paper from the founder, claiming complete religious neutrality. I had also noted a tendency at the event toward the triumphalist language of those religionists who are currently seeking to extract a holy Christian state from the mists of an avowedly secular establishment and project it on our times. I made the mistake of saying as much to my columnist interrogator, saying that such views were revisionist. He almost literally recoiled at the word. "That is a Communist word," he bellowed. "You are a Communist," he continued to bellow in spite of my attempt to get him to dry ground. That was pretty much the end of the conversation.

In his speech the "Reverend" Moon struck on the themes so often aback of the yearning to "tear down that wall." He spoke repeatedly of "America, a Christian country representing the second Israel." And he spun a construct that moved from a war on Communism to a U. S. role in "these last days" to establish world peace and spiritual harmony. Moon is entitled to his views in a free country, but I wonder if we are ready to enlist the armies of Christian compassion to this message from the spirit world (Moon made that claim). And any such melding of church and state will lead directly to this confusion. And might by comparison make the world of militant Islam seem one-dimensional in its simplicity.

I guess good judgment is as much a matter of timing as correct evaluation. And on that basis the June 26 ruling by the 9th Circuit Court in California might be called bad judgment. The religious culture war has been heating up of late, and the subtext of the war on terrorism is of a moral and religious world vision. "God bless America" is no empty term; it is functioning to conjure up the spiritual unity seen in such past crises as the long, cold war against godless Communism.



And here is the rub to the furor over the pledge. As institutionalized as it seems, the Pledge was actually written in 1892 by Baptist minister Francis Bellamy to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing. He intended it to be an international peace pledge. In 1923-1924, as part of a push by the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution to have the Pledge made mandatory in schools the words "my flag" were changed to "to the flag of the United States of America." And then the big change; in 1954, after a two-year campaign begun by the Knights of Columbus, the words "under God" were added by Congress. The history makes it obvious: the Pledge is not the ancient and sacred text many imagine, and the added words came at a point not dissimilar to today. America felt threatened in its very spirituality, and after intense lobbying by religious factions adopted with high motives what first the Supreme Court and then this 9th Circuit recognized as something by its very nature a step in the wrong direction for a state.

I watched a C-SPAN replay of the June 26 Senate debate and came away very troubled at the implications.

Before passing an essentially unanimous resolution condemning the 9th Circuit decision, various Senate heavy hitters weighed in. Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, in particular, caught my attention. Often touted as the Senate expert on constitutional matters, Byrd launched into a tirade that began with the amazing non sequitur claim that under the court's logic the Declaration of Independence would be unconstitutional. Of course it predated the Constitution and made no claims beyond a statement of revolutionary action.

After some rather pejorative language to describe the judge (I assumed he meant Judge Goodwin, the author of the majority opinion, and rather curiously a Nixon/Republican appointee), he said the judge is "blackballed," "black-listed," and that he would never get the approval of the Senate for any future appointment. He then elaborated on the need to purge the system of these secular judges.

I wince at the prospect that this might be more than rhetoric.

Back in the fifties, the period when the Pledge was updated for faith, we suffered through the McCarthy witch-hunt against Communists and secularists within. And while there were a few legitimate "Commie" sympathizers, the main victims were civility and tolerance.

It's been fashionable of late for both parties to agitate the masses by desperate talk of winning federal elections in order to plant the

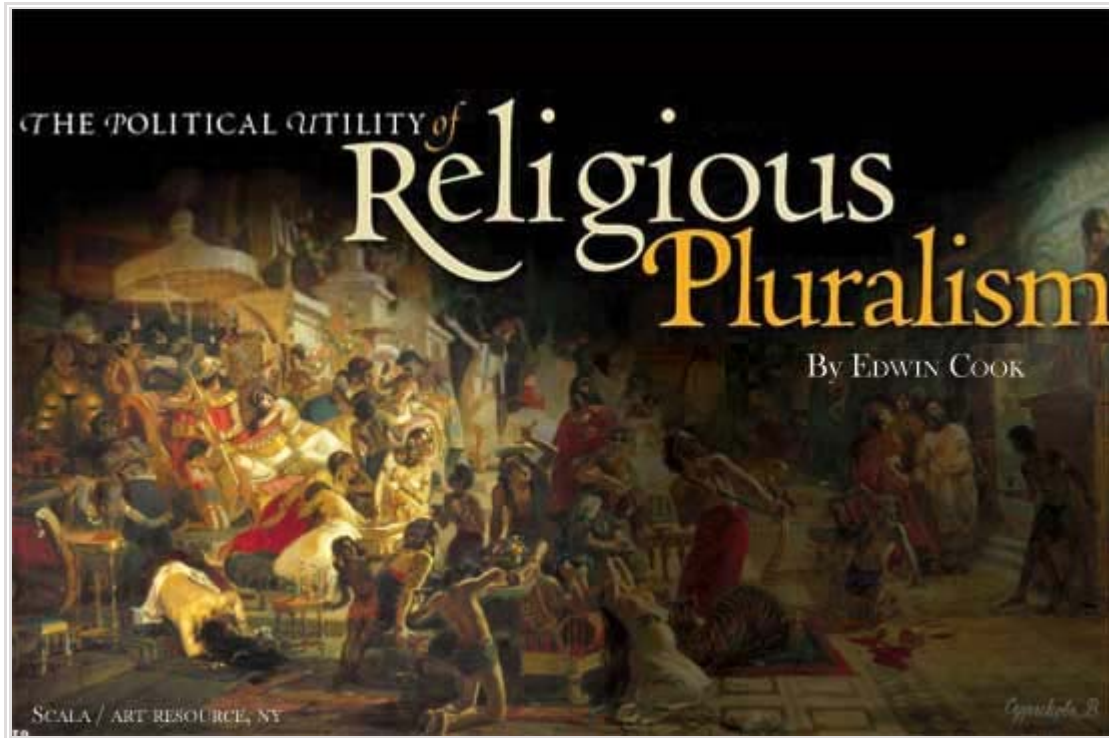
right judges on the Supreme Court. It's troubling logic, because it ignores the protective value of judicial tenure and the recurring history of such appointees who somehow betray their appointive intent and vote otherwise (maybe by law and conscience!). I have argued against such a view that presupposes a corrupt judiciary.

Regardless of any judicial outcome to an appeal of the 9th Circuit action we seem to have crossed a certain Rubicon after the Senate hissy fit. The next day Judge Alfred T. Goodwin issued a stay on his own Court's decision. I guess we will shortly get the judges we want.



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

The Political Utility Of Religious Pluralism



On the eve of October 12, 539 B.C. (Tishri 16), the inhabitants of Babylon rested in ease and security. It was a grand city not far down the river Euphrates from the site of present-day Baghdad. In the festal hall of King Nabonidus' summer palace, his son, Belshazzar, who had been appointed as prince regent, passed the early hours of the night with gaiety, laughter, and mirth.¹ Although under siege by the Medo-Persian forces, Babylon's inhabitants trusted in the impregnable series of walls that surrounded the city.²

Amid the nightlong festivities, however, other individuals, discontented with King Nabonidus' religious policies, were conspiring his overthrow. On learning of the coalition of Median and Persian forces, King Nabonidus commanded that all idols of local deities be brought from throughout the empire and placed in Babylon. By so doing, he hoped to secure the blessings of the gods and to ensure their intervention for the overthrow of the Medo-Persian forces. However, he did not find ready allies in the priests at Babylon, who felt he had acted with impunity regarding local cultic practices. In addition, they felt he was introducing heretical practices by elevating the moon god, Sin, above the traditional Babylonian deity, Marduk. By disregarding his subjects' wishes, especially those of their religious leaders, Nabonidus aroused their discontent and paved the way for the precipitous fall of Babylon that night to Medo-Persian forces. As the book of Daniel in the Bible says, "That very night Balshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom" (Daniel 5: 30, 31, NKJV).

Against this historical backdrop, the Persian ruler Cyrus drew favor among conquered peoples by his practice of allowing religious pluralism to thrive within the empire. But who was this Cyrus, the Persian king who was instrumental in the fall of Babylon? What political and religious policies did he espouse and advocate that contributed to his success as a ruler? To fully appreciate his then-novel concepts, it helps to take a brief historical review of Cyrus and the Medo-Persian Empire he ruled.

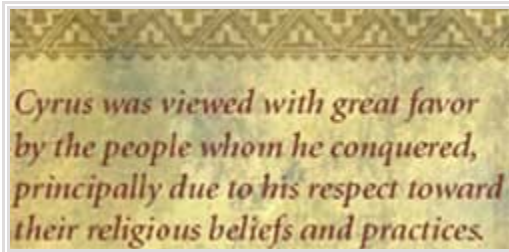
The Origins of Cyrus, the Shepherd of the Lord

The Holy Bible says that the Lord God designated Cyrus as His appointed agent to release His people from Babylonian captivity and to restore the Jewish temple at Jerusalem. He declared through the prophet Isaiah, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid."³ H.W. F. Saggs provides a brief historical account of the beginning of the Persian tribes from which Cyrus came: "The Persians were originally one of the migratory Indo-Aryan tribes, who had ultimately settled in Elam. Their royal family was founded in the middle of the seventh century, after Ashurbanipal had knocked out the old Elamite dynasty, by Achaemenes (Hahmanish), whose son took the title of 'King of Anshan': Anshan was originally one of the principdoms of the kingdom of Elam, and the new title connoted kingship over that ancient land. The rising power of the kingdom of Persia led the Median king Astyages to give a daughter in marriage to Cambyses I, the third king of

Anshan, and from this marriage Cyrus was born."⁴

The Rule of Cyrus

Once Cyrus had overthrown the Median ruler Astyages, he was able to unite the Median and Persian peoples through tactful diplomatic policies that were noted for religious toleration.⁵ Ironically, it was the united efforts of Nabonidus and Cyrus in 553 B.C. that defeated the Medes.⁶ Cyrus rapidly became a powerful force among the peoples of Mesopotamia.⁷ After defeating three principal armies, he marched to Babylon and easily conquered it.⁸



Interestingly, one of the central factors that aided Cyrus in the overthrow of Babylon was his pro-Persian propaganda.⁹ He "repeatedly insisted that Nabonidus tried to alter traditional religious beliefs by replacing Marduk with Sin, who now became the supreme god of Babylonia."¹⁰ As a solution to this "heresy" of Nabonidus,¹¹ Cyrus claimed that he had been sent to Babylon to restore the worship of Marduk,¹² an act that gained him much favor and support of Babylonian citizens.¹³ Other actions of Cyrus, such as his policy of clemency toward Croesus of Lydia and his policy of religious toleration toward the Greek oracles in Asia Minor, gained him even greater popularity and earned him the willing submission of those people that he

conquered.¹⁴ Of significant note to religion-state relations, one of the first acts that Cyrus did as the new ruler over Babylon was to send back to their respective cities each of the statues that Nabonidus had brought to the temple at Babylon.¹⁵ Thus, Cyrus was viewed with great favor by the people whom he conquered, principally due to his respect toward their religious beliefs and practices.

Even more significant was the fact that Cyrus not only granted religious toleration, but he "protected and encouraged religious diversity."¹⁶ He even went as far as to pay from the state treasury for the rebuilding of temples and the restoration of religious services.¹⁷

In addition to his policy of religious toleration, Cyrus was noted for qualities of cooperation and accommodation in his diplomatic decisions, even those that were nonreligious.¹⁸ For such reasons, the Persian government was referred to as "tolerant." Another innovation of Cyrus's government was to adopt the religious customs and practices of the people whom he had conquered. For example, in Babylon, Cyrus proclaimed himself king as the chosen of Marduk.¹⁹ Moreover, Cyrus even allowed this policy of toleration to guide in his treatment of the deposed rulers that he conquered, such as sparing the life of Nabonidus at the fall of Babylon.²⁰

Of significant note to religion-state relations, no mention is made "of terrorizing massacres, enslavement, or relocation of the population of the conquered territories; nor do we encounter any cases of religious persecution."²¹ Masroori argues that Cyrus's religious policy²² was an attempt "to rule by propaganda," rather than by terror as the Assyrian kings had done, and that it was "a calculated design based on political goals." Thus, Paul-Alain Beaulieu correctly states: "*The policy of religious toleration employed by Cyrus may correctly be identified as a political tool that he used to facilitate the unification of a diverse body of people located within the boundaries of his empire.*"²³

From the perspective of religion-state relations, Cyrus Masroori makes the most significant statement regarding the reign of King Cyrus: "With regard to Lydia, it has been suggested that indeed Cyrus may have established some contact with the priests of the temples of Apollo in Miletus and Delphi, and obtained their support for his rule over the Greek city-states of Asia Minor. There is also some evidence that Cyrus capitalized on religious conflicts in Babylon, united himself with the priests of Marduk, and with their support, conquered the city. In addition, it has been argued that prior to his invasion of the city, Cyrus had sent some of his agents to the Jewish community of Babylon to acquire their support."²⁴ Thus, this information helps to clearly establish *the political motivation that prompted Cyrus to utilize religious practices and theological beliefs* to achieve his ambitious goals.

The Rule of Cambyses

Cambyses II was the son and successor of Cyrus. In general, his reign can be described as that of his father. He sought the favor of the Egyptians by sacrificing to their gods and even taking an Egyptian title as their king. He granted authority to the Egyptian priest Uzahor to restore the temple revenues and thus sanctioned their native religion.²⁵

Later in his reign, he demonstrated a policy of intolerance and even destruction of Egyptian temples.²⁶ Gray offers this explanation for such rare action by Cyrus's son: "Herodotus attributes this later conduct to a mental breakdown of Cambyses, and some, accepting this, have traced the madness to the hardships and ill-successes of the Ethiopian campaign. Possibly it was due to political plots in which priests and officials of the temples were conspicuously involved."²⁷

After Cambyses' death, an impostor, claiming to have been the brother of Cambyses, reigned for a few months. During his short reign, he destroyed several temples, which were later restored. He was later killed by Darius, who became the next Medo-Persian ruler.²⁸ One of the first acts that Darius I ordered to be done was the restoration of these temples.²⁹

Darius's reign is slightly different from that of Cyrus and Cambyses. While he continued the policy of religious toleration initiated by

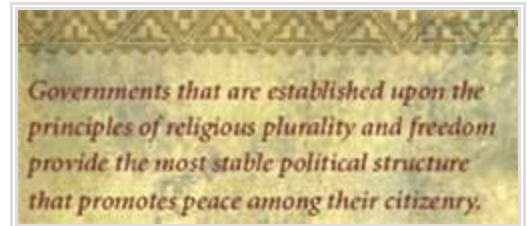
Cyrus, he was barbaric in dealing with kings of those countries that revolted against Medo-Persian rule.³⁰ As Cyrus had done, Darius also engaged in the rebuilding of temples. He also provided for the cost of sacrifices offered daily for the lifetime of the king and his sons.

Tolerance and Plurality

From a political perspective, the religious policy initiated by Cyrus was, with the exception of Esarhaddon's example,³¹ an innovative method of securing the support of conquered lands and of uniting them together. This policy of toleration that he initiated was generally followed by his successors.

From a religious perspective, Cyrus introduced the novel concept of religious tolerance and plurality³² among societies and nations where religious intolerance was an accepted norm. Although motivated by political reasons, these concepts formed the guiding principles that marked the Medo-Persian Empire in its relation to the nations it conquered. Through such far-sighted wisdom, Cyrus achieved political unity of diverse people groups that established his empire upon enduring foundations. By recognizing and respecting an area cherished by most groups of people—their religious beliefs—Cyrus demonstrated a political approach characterized by historians as unique and innovative.

Furthermore, the historical record of his reign, especially in relation to the Jewish nation, affords profitable lessons to modern religion-state scholars. The Jewish prophet Isaiah recorded how the Lord (Jehovah or YHWH) regarded Cyrus—"he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure" (Isaiah 44:28)—including not only the deliverance of the Jewish nation from Babylonian captivity, but also the restoration of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. From this perspective, several challenging conclusions are posited toward a narrow Judeo-Christian political stance. To begin, Cyrus was a heathen king (from the perspective of not being Jewish) who did not acknowledge the Lord as his god, yet the Lord used him to accomplish His purposes for His people. One must conclude that the Lord is not limited to a Judeo-Christian politic to achieve His sovereign will on earth. He works through the political structures of nations, whether Judeo-Christian, heathen, or secularly neutral to fulfill His objectives. While this conclusion does not militate against a Judeo-Christian politic, it certainly argues against the singular view of an established one. Thus, the view that political structures must be Judeo-Christian in order to honor the Lord and facilitate the accomplishment of His purposes is untenable. To the contrary, Cyrus's historical record of religio-political views and actions strongly supports the principle of a pluralistic society being the most peaceful type of body politic for all religious groups.



Second, since the Lord designated Cyrus as "My shepherd," and since history records Cyrus as practicing religious toleration and fostering religious plurality, this seems to indicate how the Lord regards such practices. In religious matters, He does not coerce the consciences of subjects through their rulers, nor of citizens through their duly elected civic representatives. This view is reiterated in the New Testament in Romans 13:1-8, where the apostle Paul admonishes Christians to be subject to "the powers that be" because the civil rulers have been ordained by God to maintain order in society, without involving themselves in the religious sphere of their subjects.³³

Third, based on Cyrus's policy of accommodating the religious beliefs of each people group he conquered by promoting their religious practices, the question is raised: To what extent should government be involved in religion? Some of Cyrus's actions of using state/government funds to promote various religious groups through building and restoring temples seem to parallel the arguments of those advocating "positive neutrality" (also known as "equal treatment," or government support of all religions) in American society today. What validation, if any, is there in this approach to religion-state relations? From the historical record, it becomes evident that Cyrus used "equal treatment" strictly as a political tool to further his own ambitious ends. Taking into consideration that the Medo-Persian Empire had no constitutional guidelines forbidding such practices, this policy served to bring political cohesion to his empire. The conclusion one seems to draw on this point is that the Lord allowed this policy of government support of religion ("equal treatment") solely for the sake of reestablishing His people, the Jewish nation, in their homeland, but He does not advocate this policy as His preferred method since New Testament teachings do not validate government support of a Judeo-Christian body politic. Thus, we must enquire into the motivation of political or religious groups advocating "equal treatment" today in American society. Since Cyrus used this method strictly for political reasons, do those who advocate its use today probably have the same political motivations?

In summary, since the Lord endorsed Cyrus as His shepherd, the biblical and historical record indicates:

1. The Lord is not limited to a Judeo-Christian political structure to accomplish His purposes on earth. He works through secular and heathen governments to achieve His sovereign will among earth's inhabitants.
2. The Lord is well-pleased and supportive of those governments that allow for freedom from religious persecution, even if they don't acknowledge Him.
3. Those governments granting religious freedom should not misconstrue the Lord's endorsement of Cyrus as His intention that

government should proactively aid and support religion. Both the biblical and historical record indicate that the Lord designated Cyrus as His shepherd for the sake of freeing Israel from Babylonian captivity, of allowing them to reestablish the city of Jerusalem, and of aiding them in rebuilding the temple. Cyrus did this for the Israelites, as well as for numerous other religious groups, strictly for political reasons. To misinterpret his actions as endorsement of religion as such is to err from the historical and biblical record.

4. Those governments that are established upon the principles of religious plurality and freedom provide the most stable political structure that promotes peace among their citizenry.



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1 *The book of Daniel, chapter 5, in the Holy Bible.*

2 *Herodotus claimed the walls were 56 miles long, 80 feet thick, and 320 feet high. Modern excavations, however, have shown the exaggeration of such claims, indicating a more accurate figure of walls that were 10 miles in length. The outer wall consisted of three separate walls, the first and second of which were about 22 feet thick and the third of which was about 10 feet thick. Although less extensive than Herodotus' claim, these proportions were nonetheless formidable and impregnable for military equipment of that day.*

3 *Isaiah 44:28.*

4 *H.W.F. Saggs, The Greatness That Was Babylon (New York: The New American Library, 1962), pp. 151, 152.*

5 *Morris Jastrow, Jr., The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1915), pp. 184, 185; Saggs, p. 156.*

6 *Saggs, p. 153.*

7 *George Stephen Goodspeed, A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 369, 373.*

8 *Saggs, p. 152.*

9 *Ronald H. Sack, "Nabonidus of Babylon," in Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday, eds. Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, Richard E. Averbeck (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1997), p. 461; Saggs, p. 152.*

10 *Sack, p. 470.*

11 *A cuneiform document describes the statue of the moon god, Sin, that Nabonidus set up in the temple at Babylon as "an heretical image" (Babylonian Historical Texts, by Sidney Smith [1924]: p. 87, quoted by Saggs, p. 156).*

12 *Jastrow, p. 220.*

13 *Cyrus Cylinder, p. 11ff, quoted in Goodspeed, p. 375; Sack, p. 466.*

14 *Saggs, p. 155; G. Buchanan Gray, "The Foundation and Extension of the Persian Empire," in The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume 4: The Persian Empire and the West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 12.*

15 *Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "An Episode in the Fall of Babylon to the Persians," Journal of Near Eastern Studies 52 no. 4 (October 1993): p. 242; Gray, p. 13; Cyrus Masroori, "Cyrus II and the Political Utility of Religious Toleration," in Religious Toleration: "'The 'Variety of Rites' From Cyrus to Defoe, ed. John Christian Laursen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 17.*

16 *Masroori, p. 15.*

17 *Gray, p. 187.*

18 *Masroori (pp. 18-20) cites numerous examples from sources such as Persian Wars and Cyropaedia, of how Cyrus demonstrated toleration in all diplomatic relations, whether religious or nonreligious.*

19 *Gray, pp. 186, 187.*

20 *Ibid, p. 187.*

21 *Masroori, p. 24.*

22 *Ibid., pp. 26-28.*

23 *Beaulieu, p. 243.*

24 *Masroori, pp. 30, 31.*

25 *Gray, pp. 22, 23.*

26 *Ibid., p. 22. These facts are attested by records from among a neutral group, the Jews of Elephantine.*

27 *Ibid., p. 23.*

28 *Masroori, p. 21.*

29 *Ibid., p. 24.*

30 *G. B. Gray and M. Cary, "The Reign of Darius," in The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume 4: The Persian Empire and the West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 187.*

31 *Barbara Nevling Porter, "God's Statues as a Tool of Assyrian Political Policy: Esarhaddon's Return of Marduk to Babylon," in Religious Transformations and Socio-political Change: Eastern Europe and Latin America, ed. Luther Martin (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), passim.*

32 *Perhaps the best analysis of Cyrus's contributions to religion-state relations is that offered by Cyrus Masroori: (1) "First, the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Medians in general relied on a policy of terror to rule their subjects, setting a high cost for disobedience. In contrast, Cyrus relied on peaceful policies such as religious accommodation, obtaining his subjects' support largely through providing incentives for their loyalty. (2) Although some ancient religions in the Middle East did not include dogmatic beliefs toward*

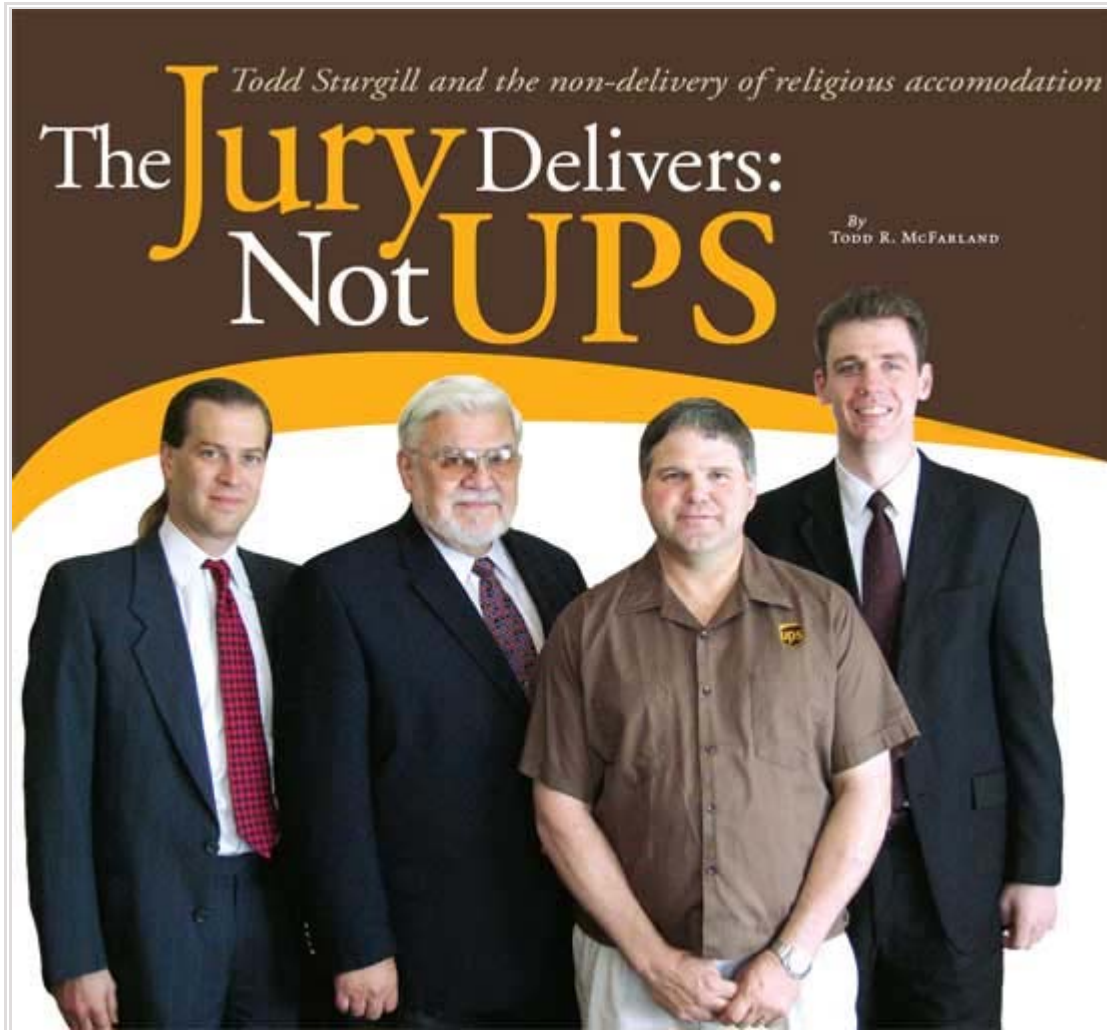
other religions, this did not mean that religious toleration was typically exercised in those ancient societies. (3) In addition, Cyrus's toleration policy was much more comprehensive than Esarhaddon's. To appreciate this point, one must remember that at the end of his reign, Cyrus's empire was composed of a variety of religions, none of which was persecuted" (Masroori, pp. 23, 24).

33 For a detailed historical analysis of Romans 13:1-8, please see the article "Parousia or Politics?" in the January-February 2005 issue of Liberty.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2006

The Jury Delivers: Not UPS

BY: TODD R. MCFARLAND



As a trial lawyer, there is nothing quite like the sheer panic of the interval between getting the call from the judge's chambers that the jury has a verdict and then hearing it read aloud in court. Friday, June 30, 2006, was no exception. The jury had been deliberating on the case since early Thursday afternoon. Todd Sturgill had sued UPS under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because UPS had failed to accommodate his religious beliefs as a Seventh-day Adventist and had fired him when he refused to work on Friday evening, his Sabbath. Now five days of trial and deliberations and nearly a year and a half of litigation was about to be decided.

The events leading up to this verdict started back on December 17, 2004, when Sturgill was fired after returning to the warehouse with 35 packages; an hour's worth of work. Todd had converted to Adventism the prior May. Since July he had been telling UPS that he could not work past sundown on Friday. Despite this, the Monday following his returning the 35 packages he was fired for "job abandonment"—after 19 years with the company.

Todd had first started studying about Adventists and the Sabbath in April of 2004 when he attended an evangelistic seminar at the Springdale Seventh-day Adventist Church in northwest Arkansas. After church doctrinal studies he and his family were baptized on May 20 of that year. As a Seventh-day Adventist, one of the central tenets of his faith is observance of the biblical Sabbath, which includes cessation of work (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath is celebrated from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday (Leviticus 23:32).

In July of 2004 Todd first realized that there might be a conflict between his job as a package car driver for UPS (the delivery drivers you

see driving the trucks around town) and his faith. He realized that as summer turned to fall and winter and the sun set earlier, he would not have as long to deliver his packages on Friday. Further, the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is UPS's "peak season," when UPS's volume increases.

Todd's wife was employed by Wal-Mart, and initially she had problems getting off work for Sabbath. The evangelist who studied with them gave her a form letter to send to Wal-Mart asking for accommodation, and Wal-Mart granted her request. Encouraged by this, Todd modified her letter to fit his situation and sent it to UPS.

He did not hear anything for several weeks. In September he followed up with another letter, but still did not get a response. The sun was starting to set sooner, and peak season was approaching. Todd asked his boss about the status of his request, and he was told he would check and get back to him. Later he called Todd into his office and asked the union steward to come also. The manager told Todd he had received a fax from UPS human resources and then read from it. It said the only accommodation UPS would give him was for Todd to wait for another job opening at UPS that did not pose a conflict and then bid on that job: in the meantime Todd would be expected to work the hours UPS wanted him to. When Todd asked for a copy of the fax his manager was reading from, he responded, "UPS does not pay me to make copies."

Despite the hostile response from the UPS corporate office and the manager, Todd's immediate supervisor worked with him so he could get off by sundown up until December 17. Todd had made arrangements that if he could get past the peak season when UPS supposedly did not allow employees to take time off, he would be able to take vacation time until spring to avoid any conflict. After that he would have until next peak season to bid on a different job at UPS that would not require him to work on Friday night. With nearly 20 years in the company he felt he would have the seniority to get such a job.

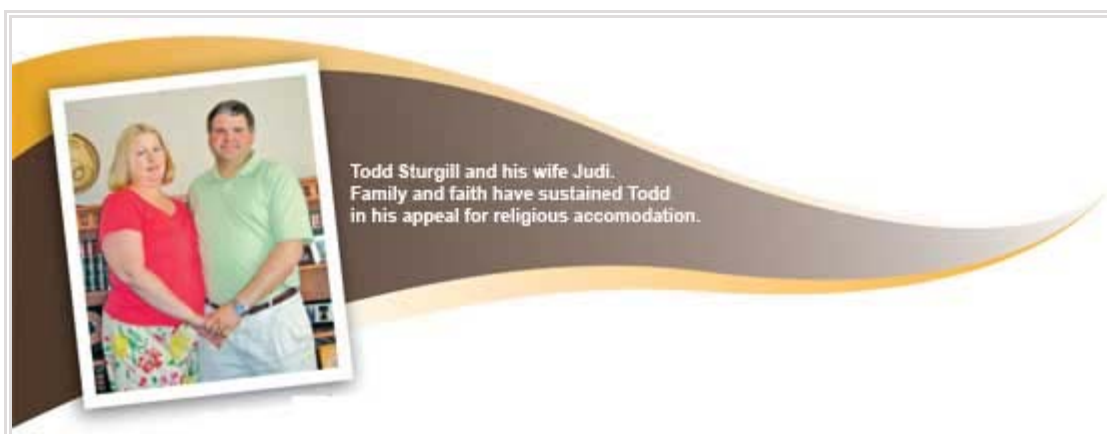
December 17 was a crucial day for Todd; it was the last Friday during the peak season Todd was concerned about. The next Friday was December 24, which is a light day for UPS. If he got past that Friday his Sabbath conflict with UPS would be eliminated, and he would not have to deal with the issue again.

The problem, though, was that Todd had a lot of packages to deliver that day. In fact, as he would learn during the trial, he had on average 100 more packages than all of the other UPS drivers less senior than he, far more than the 35 he would bring back that evening.

Todd called his immediate supervisor that Friday and was told no help was available that day and that he should call the manager, the one who was not paid to make copies. When he called, the manager asked him what he was going to do. Was he going to deliver the packages and keep his job, or bring them back and lose it? He told the manager he was going to do what he had been telling UPS since July; he would not work, past sundown.

For Todd, this presented a stark choice: his job or his faith. It was a decision he had already made in his mind. Consistent with what he had been telling UPS since his original request in July, he returned to the UPS center with 35 packages, an hour's worth of work, and checked out at 5:03 p.m. Sundown was at 5:04 p.m.

The following Monday when Todd arrived at work he was told to see the manager. The manager and the union steward were present. Todd was being fired for "job abandonment," for bringing back an hour's worth of work after nearly 20 years at UPS. He would file a grievance with the union, but after UPS made false representations to the grievance board, Todd's termination was upheld.



Todd quickly discovered that in northwest Arkansas it was next to impossible to find a job paying what he had made at UPS. He ended up working as a mortgage broker for a third of the salary he had made at UPS and with no benefits. He was forced to radically scale

back his lifestyle, cash in his pension, and put his house on the market.

During the trial Todd argued that there were several ways UPS could have accommodated him so that he would never have had to bring back packages. UPS could have let him use an "option day" and simply not have come to work that day. UPS could have also given him less work so he would have been able to deliver all of his packages or transferred packages to another driver. All of these were things UPS did on a routine basis for employees for such things as going to Little League games, birthday parties, etc. In fact on the day UPS fired Todd Sturgill, they let other people off work completely with no explanation at all. However, when it was for a religious reason, UPS was unwilling to do it.

The reason UPS gave for not doing for Todd what it did for other employees was that they claimed Todd wanted a hard-and-fast "guarantee" from UPS that he would not have to work past sundown. The reality was that Todd wanted UPS to help him out only during peak season, and only this peak. The only person who ever talked about a "guarantee" was UPS.

The reason Todd did not need such a guarantee was that after the holidays were over he would be able to use his time off to accommodate himself. This would tie him over until he could transfer to another job at UPS that would always get him off well before sundown. Put another way, if UPS had not fired Todd on December 17 he would have been able to accommodate himself and would not have needed UPS's help ever again in the future. UPS was unwilling to do that and instead fired a nearly 20-year employee that its own management described as a "hard" and "good" worker; such was the hostility of this multibillion dollar company to its employee's desire to follow his conscience. To fully understand UPS's hostility to any religious accommodation, it is important to know that had Todd called to UPS that day and simply said, "I am not coming into work" he would have gotten an unexcused absence. Under the progressive discipline process he could have collected up to five of those (he had none when he was fired) before he would have even been given a formal warning. Because Todd tried to work with UPS and do his job, he was fired, even though if he had just not shown up he wouldn't have even been formally disciplined.

All of this was presented to the jury and now it was in their hands and they had reached a verdict. The jury filed into the courtroom looking somber. The foreman handed the verdict forms to the clerk. She read through them to make sure that they were filled out correctly. She then handed the forms to the judge, who read them and then handed them back to the clerk to read out loud.

The jury found in favor of Todd Sturgill on his claim that UPS failed to accommodate his religious belief. They awarded him every penny he asked for. They also awarded punitive damages to Sturgill in an amount double what he asked in compensatory damages. The jury did rule in favor of UPS on what is known as the "termination" claim. Essentially the jury decided that UPS did not fire Sturgill because he was an Adventist, only because he brought packages back.

Todd Sturgill still has a long road ahead of him, and his case is the exception. UPS will appeal this case, and it will probably take close to a year for the appeal to be resolved. While we are confident that Todd will prevail on appeal, the appeal is just more time when he is forced to live on a third of his salary and without benefits. UPS does not want to give him his job back despite the jury verdict. As of press time we are awaiting the court's ruling on our motion to reinstate Sturgill.

Need for Congressional Fix

Most employees who are fired are not as fortunate as Sturgill. Had he lived in a different part of the country, the courts there have interpreted the law in such a way that he would have probably lost. Further, because of the ambiguities of the law, other courts rule against employees on a routine basis.

This case is a perfect example of why Title VII needs to be fixed by Congress. UPS argued before the trial that they were not required to pay "one nickel" to accommodate Todd Sturgill. Nineteen years working for a company, and it is not willing to spend five cents to accommodate its employees' religious conviction!

Currently pending in Congress is the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA). This law would bring Title VII into line with other discrimination statutes and require employers to actually try to accommodate their employees and not let them fend for themselves.

While Todd Sturgill has prevailed to this point, Congress needs to make it clear to employers what their duties are. If WRFA were the law of the land, it would have been clearer to UPS that they needed to work with Sturgill; and both Sturgill and UPS would have been better off. Todd would still have his job, and UPS would have avoided a lawsuit and retained a veteran employee.

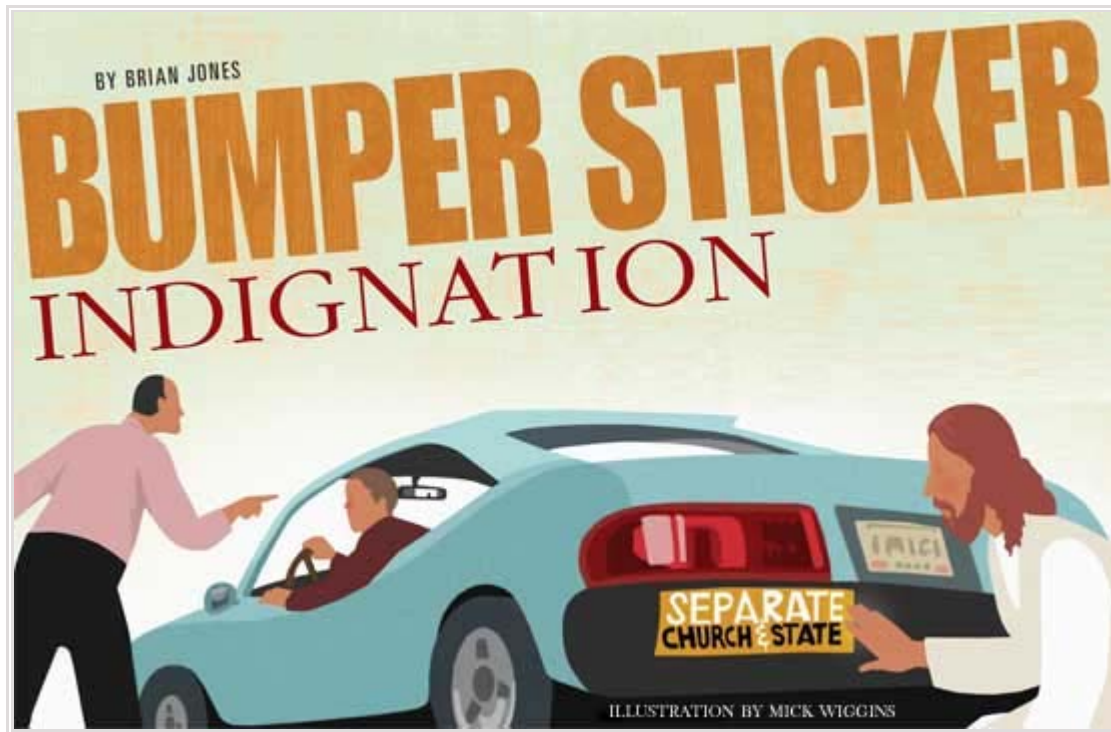


Todd R. McFarland is associate general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He writes from Silver Spring, Maryland. Much of his work is taken up defending religious accommodation cases like that of Todd Sturgill. Usually they do not share a first name!

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

Bumper Sticker Indignation

BY: BRIAN JONES



My wife and I had just bought an aging Toyota in fairly good working order, for a reasonable price. After our busy week of car hunting and a full work schedule, we decided to unwind over lunch that Friday afternoon at a new Korean restaurant in town. For a while we were the only customers there, but as we finished our meal two men came in for a take-out order. While they were waiting, we paid our bill, and I said to our friendly waitress, "The Lord bless you." One of the men, with puzzlement in his voice, said in a question of surprise, "You're Christians?" To my positive reply, he said, "Well, praise the Lord!"

An Unsought Dialog

But his eyes showed that he was perturbed and doubtful. Not able to linger, my wife and I got into our car—the only one parked in front of the restaurant, and started to drive away. Out came the man who had accosted me moments before. He motioned for me to crank down my window. After making a little small talk about the restaurant, he got to his point. "You say you're Christians. How come you have that bumper sticker on the back of your car saying 'Separate Church and State'? That view doesn't fit the gospel very well." It seemed hard for him to suppress his irritation.

"Well, friend," I replied, "I'm not ashamed of the idea on that bumper sticker. But the fact is, I've just bought this car, with the sticker already applied. I was quite amazed, too, when I first saw it, especially because the previous owner of the car works for a charitable organization whose sponsoring church promotes union of church and state. So I asked *her* why she had this bumper sticker, just as you are now asking me.

"She answered, 'I'm 45 years old, and until last year I never had a bumper sticker on my car. But one Sunday the minister at my church heavily blasted certain religious groups and talked about the need for Christian politicians and activists to rise up against heretical sects and ungodly people who don't live as Christians. This intolerance really upset me. I felt it was time to take a stand for my beliefs. Mandatory, "believe or burn" religion is wrong—so, to express my protest, I bought this bumper sticker.'

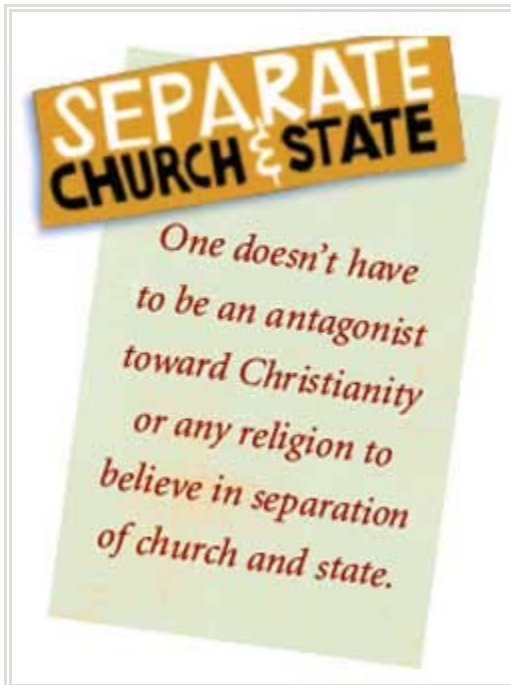
"I understand this woman's point of view. One doesn't have to be an antagonist toward Christianity or any religion to believe in separation of church and state. In fact, that principle is conducive to the healthy development and preservation of true religion, which always has a way of outliving the false, without coercive action or governmental support."

At Theological Cross-Swords

My interlocutor wasn't convinced. He continued to glare at me and said, "Well, the Soviet Union had separation of church and state in their constitution, and look at what they did to Christians."

"It was Communism's purpose to annihilate the church by the power of the state," I replied. "True separation of church and state means the noninterference of government with religion and vice versa. Human history is also stained with a long record of brutalities performed by churches through the arm of the state. It isn't separation of church and state that leads to intolerance, but rather the dominion of one over the other or the joint action of both over the individual conscience. Such actions bring forth intolerable conditions that no genuinely spiritual person can approve."

Somehow I don't think these answers satisfied my questioner, but I have thought quite a bit about our conversation since. I've especially wondered why the world's most religious Man, who did more than anyone else to revive interest in spiritual life and the welfare of society, was an adamant advocate for the separation of church and state—and that when church and state were almost everywhere united, as they had been from time immemorial. When Jesus was on earth the Hebrew nation operated under a kind of muted "theocracy" (or, more precisely, ecclesiocracy) that was nonetheless humiliatingly subordinate to the government of Rome. Imperial Rome deified its emperors and never thought outside the bounds of cemented union between religion and government.



What Was Jesus' View?

So why would Jesus of Nazareth propagate ideas so antithetical to the established wisdom of His age? Let's look at a summary of His position on church and state:

1. Government and religion have their separate spheres of action and authority. See Matthew 22:21 and Mark 12:14-17.
2. The church should not be subject to state taxation, but it is not to militantly oppose abuses in this line (Matthew 17:24-27).
3. The church is not to use force against any other religious groups or persons whose practice and beliefs differ from its own (Luke 9:49-56). It is noteworthy that Christ made no concession to the bigotry and misbegotten views of His apostles in order to retain their favor. Nor did He avoid controversy when moral issues had to be clarified in order to lay a right foundation for the church against which the gates of hell would not prevail. Christ did not conduct a political campaign, but pursued a royal mission for the rebirth of the human spirit, an undertaking that would never have been advanced by harsh, repressive, or dictatorial measures. God's all-pervasive attribute is love, not intimidation through His omnipotence (Luke 10:5-11).
4. The church is to bear persecution, but never to inflict it (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:28-31; Luke 17:1, 2; John 18:10, 11, 36).

5. The kingdom of God is not of this world, but its principles are to be preached to all the world for a witness to all nations, in order that people may be saved from sin, personally and individually, but never by political or ecclesiastical fiat (John 18:36; Matthew 24:14; 25:31-46; 21:28-32).

6. All earthly nations without exception will ultimately prove antagonistic to the true gospel (Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9-13).

Why would someone who was supremely desirous of making people religious and drawing the whole world to Himself (Matthew 24:14; John 10:16; 12:32) be so scrupulously protective of everyone's individual right to choose whom to worship and serve or even to decline worshipping anyone at all? Evidently Jesus understood something about people that they don't understand about themselves. Unless worship springs from a heart of responsive love to God—"we love Him because He first loved us"—then it is no more than a hollow form at best, and at worst, it is a vehicle for the pious unleashing of human prejudice and coercive control.

The whole idea of religious liberty is not natural to man. It comes to us from the Founding Father of liberty, who said, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36, cf. John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17).

Can Liberty Turn Us Into Libertines?

But didn't Jesus realize that a morally unregenerate society would interpret liberty, especially in religious things, as license? Certainly He knew (John 8:12-31; Matthew 13:18-30, 37-43). He knows the hearts of all perfectly. And that is just the point. He purposes that none

should be obliged to worship Him except by the constraint of informed, appreciative love (Luke 17:11-21; John 4:23, 24). True religion is an internal affair of the heart. Its effects naturally translate themselves into action—the action of redeeming, reconciling love, not of punitive force that says, "Believe as I do; worship as I do, or suffer holy wrath at my hands." Such a policy stems from the spirit of Adam and Eve's first son, Cain, who killed his brother over their two contrasting modes of worship. Abel's worship was in compliance with God's specified instructions; Cain's was not. Cain was a "heretic." But if Abel had killed Cain in the name of fidelity to God's truth, then he would have been a murderer. It is possible to be right in doctrinal understanding but wrong in spirit.

So How Do the Issues Get Settled?

Ultimately, God will settle all accounts. He Himself will deal with the spiritually disobedient (Luke 12:41-48; 18:1-14). But until then, He offers us every gracious and sincerely loving inducement to know and worship Him on His own terms—terms of pure wisdom, justice, and love that work together kindly and constructively for the salvation of all.

Meanwhile Jesus warns us against the snarling watchdog religion that spies faults in other men while remaining blind to its own (Matthew 7:4, 5). For with what judgment we judge, we shall be judged, and with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again (see verses 1 and 2 of the same chapter).

In the future all who love God will be under a pure theocracy, according to Revelation 21 and 22. There will be no distinction then between church and state, for God Himself shall visibly rule and reign over all this earth, as He presently does over the rest of the universe. All subjects in His kingdom will be cheerfully devoted worshippers of God, who have responded favorably to His truth from willing hearts.

Before His kingdom is visibly established here, however, no nation, no church is so trustworthy as to be commissioned by the Lord to usher in His reign of righteousness, especially not with chains, stakes, flails, interdicts, or any pain-inflicting, liberty-curtailing device. It's just because man is so intolerant of dissent in religious questions, especially those that he understands the least, that Jesus advocated separation of church and state. After all, Jews and Gentiles joined in an ecumenical entente to oppose His doctrine of religious liberty, construing it as a threat to the status quo of their divergent orthodoxies. They clasped hands to accuse, torment, and kill the Creator of soul liberty, which they had so recklessly misused to their own eventual ruin.

Redux

I flash back to the sight of that angry, accusing face, worn by a man scandalized at the thought of keeping church and state separate. I wonder if this man was concerned whether he was served by Buddhists in that Korean restaurant, and what he should do about it if they were? I admit, I don't yet know what their religion is, but they are very gracious, and their cooking is excellent. I would like to talk to them about Jesus someday. But I won't despise or boycott them if they don't believe what I have to offer. Nor would I consign them to any holy inquisition of pastors, priests, or prosecutors for correction.



Brian Jones, a minister of religion as well as a much published author, writes from Chloe, West Virginia.