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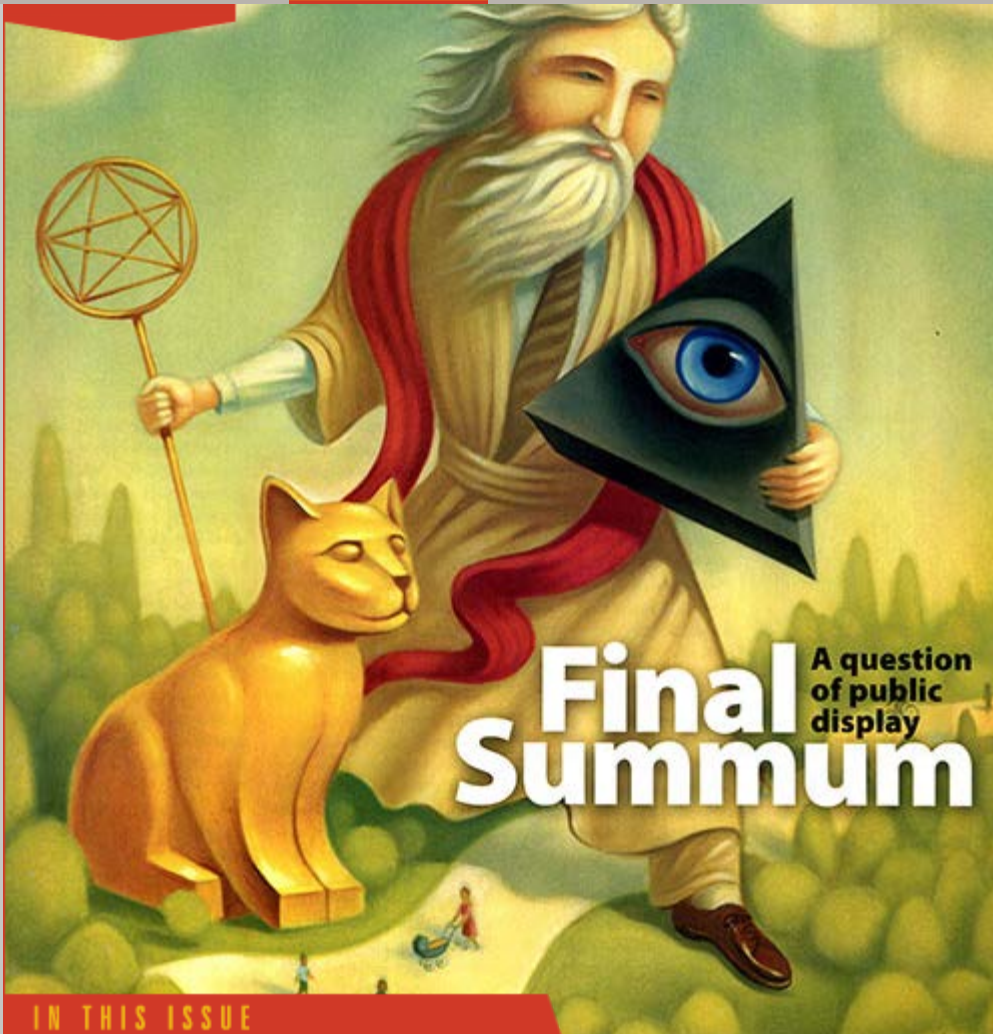
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MARCH / APRIL 2009

Very Public Prayers

Editorial

BY: LINCOLN E. STEED

Well before the actual inauguration of President Barack Obama there was a chorus of complaints about his choice of Rick Warren to give the inauguration prayer. What might just as easily have been interpreted as an attempt to link up with a populist expression of mainstream religious values was interpreted as a tilt toward the minister's views on abortion and gay rights. Never mind that during the campaign, in front of that very same Rick Warren, candidate

Obama had clearly outlined his differences on those points and maintained ideological independence. Many seemed determined to embarrass the new administration for the prayer choice and see religious partisanship at work.

It was almost an anticlimax to hear the actual prayer at the January event. To be sure the possibility of it giving offence was diminished greatly by the chuckles at Chief Justice Roberts fumbling in the administration of the oath. But it was a secularly sacred moment and all turned out well—even the public prayer.

If there was a problem with the prayer it was its very broadness, not any narrow religious viewpoint that some had feared. The good pastor presaged the new President's inclusiveness by early on throwing a theological bone to Islam by saying of God, "You are the compassionate and merciful One." True: and expressed in the familiar terminology of the Koran. At the end, before reciting the Lord's Prayer from the New Testament, Rick Warren identified "the One who changed my life" as "Yeshua, Isa, Jesus, Jesus (hay-SOOS)." Most religions covered there, including the Republicanism of the past eight years!

It was a very formal prayer that invoked the Creator, the uniqueness of the United States (avoiding direct claims of Divine privilege that have intrude into past pronouncements), and looked to God for help in the difficult days ahead. Its only theological gaffe, based on my reading of the Bible, was the assumption that Dr. King and others were watching from heaven. After all the Bible says that "the dead know not anything" (Proverbs 21:4) and Paul looked forward to the return of Jesus at the end of days when "the dead will be raised." (1 Corinthians 15:52) However, it is a common enough assumption and we should not hold it against the prayer-giver's good will. What it does, though, is illustrate the hazards of a public prayer, either endorsed by the state or, as is likely here, given under the smile of the ruler and tending to legitimize a particular religious viewpoint—or, worse, none at all, other than a broadly acceptable syncretistic model of faith.

Curiously it was another prayer, the benediction given by civil rights icon Joseph E. Lowery, that seemed more inclined to move into spiritual heart-searching. When he prayed that "we have sown the seeds of greed—the wind of greed and corruption" it was pastoral and intensely revealing of our national condition. He continued by praying that "even as we reap the whirlwind of social and economic disruption, we seek forgiveness and we come in a spirit of unity and solidarity to commit our support to our president by our willingness to make sacrifices, to respect Your creation, to turn to each other and not on each other."

The prayer lowered its tone a little at the end by a reference to the racial inequalities of the past which tended to caricature the real sin of bigotry. The blogosphere had a paroxysm of comment on this, but maybe we should be more inclined to understand the experience of the old civil rights warrior.

Another warrior of sorts gave a curiously partisan prayer at the opening ceremony of the inauguration sequence held at the Lincoln Memorial on Sunday, January 18. Gene Robinson, a truly divisive figure in the religious world, did not hesitate to load up his prayer with references to "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people." The ordination of Bishop Robinson, an openly gay cleric, has split his Episcopal community, and surely represents broader religious contention. Certainly the larger faith communities alluded to in Rick Warren's prayer have series issues with Robinson's theology. The decision to include Robinson does indeed show a social inclusiveness which might indicate otherwise good intentions with the Obama administration. But it shows up the weakness of co-opting religion at a civic occasion. It does amount to a public endorsement of a particular religious viewpoint—given that there is an active dispute presently within faith circles.

There was another prayer given in the context of the Inauguration of President Obama. Senate Chaplain Barry Black prayed at the luncheon held in the Capitol Statuary Hall right after the ceremony. His two minute, 148-word prayer was a model invocation that centered on the call for Divine blessing on the event and guidance for the new administration.

Before the event Chaplain Black told a reporter that prayers are not "another act in the drama." He decried any political directives for the



prayer. "I would be very concerned if someone or some committee was standing by to scrutinize what someone had passionately felt compelled to say to God on behalf of the people for a particular occasion," he told them.

He is right, of course. Prayer controlled or directed by others, especially the state, is noxious. At the end of the day, each prayer given at the time of the inauguration is one person speaking to God. To require more is to unravel what little we still have of the church-state distance required in the U.S. Constitution.

The Supreme Court has often been forced to reconcile the persistent religious activity by legislators and under government auspices. They have come to call it all Ceremonial Deism. This strikes me as an oddly damning term. The justices settled on it as a way to describe religious behavior and symbols which have become part of society and lost their distinctive religious nature. But the term is odd; because in spite of revisionist attempts to portray the founding fathers as religionists determined to establish some sort of religious state, the reality is that a significant number of them were Deists. Back then Deists were seen for what they would be today: men who acknowledge the fact of God, but act as if He were an absentee landlord.

I would rather remember the many members of the society in the original colonies who were overtly religious in their outlook. The Great Awakening of 1750 produced an activist religion in many ways. However, the view that this dynamic faith needed to be protected from the state was the prevailing one.

Curiously, the role of the chaplain was one area of church-state contention that seems to have slipped past that early concern. President James Madison, framer of the Bill of Rights, wrote much about this seeming contradiction. Obviously, as a person of faith, he lived happily with the function of the chaplain, but he maintained clearly the inconsistency in the establishment of the function.

Writing in his "Detached Memoranda," Madison made the point that Congress should pay for their own clergy and not use tax money for that purpose. "If religion consists in voluntary acts of individuals, singly or voluntarily associated, and if it be proper that public functionaries, as well as their constituents should discharge their religious duties, let them, like their constituents, do it at their own expense," was his argument. "How small a contribution from each member of Congress would suffice for the purpose! How just would it be in its principle! How noble in its exemplary sacrifice to the genius of the Constitution; and the divine rights of conscience! Why should the expense of a religious worship for the Legislature be paid by the public, more than that for the Executive or Judiciary branches of the Government?"

Why indeed? We had better pray that the prayers paid for and organized on our behalf reflect our views and not the government's. Come to think of it, that is precisely the problem. No government can possibly accurately represent all the religious views of its citizens without watering all down to meaninglessness or excluding others.

MARCH / APRIL 2009

Final Summum

A Question Of Public Display

BY: K. HOLLYN HOLLMAN

In November the Supreme Court of the United States heard a case that presents an interesting twist on the persistent constitutional problem of religious displays on government property. Typically, the question is whether a particular display, such as a depiction of the Ten Commandments or a Nativity scene, violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

Pleasant Grove City, Utah v. Summum involves a dispute over a religious display that defied the usual order of events. Instead of challenging a religious display on city property as unconstitutional, a small religious group claimed they had a right to display a monument reflecting their beliefs, as well. While the case offers a compelling factual setting for examining the proper relationship between religion and government, it will be decided without reliance on the constitutional provision best designed to protect that interest.



The Case at Hand

The dispute began when Summum, a New Age religious sect based in Utah, sought to display a monument depicting its teachings, known as “Seven Aphorisms,” in Pleasant Grove City’s Pioneer Park. According to news reports, Summum was established in 1975 and operates out of a pyramid building in Salt Lake City. The group is known for a belief system steeped in meditations and for practicing mummification, as well as for its litigation in several Utah cities. Summum designed a monument similar in size and appearance to other privately donated monuments in the park, including a Ten Commandments monument donated by the Fraternal Order of Eagles in the 1970s. When the city denied their request, Summum sued, arguing that the city had discriminated against them in violation of their rights under the First Amendment’s free speech clause. From Summum’s perspective, Pioneer Park was a “public forum,” the kind of open space traditionally used by individuals to distribute messages

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without interference by the government.

The district court refused to force the city to accept Summum's monument. But a three judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit reversed, holding that Pioneer Park was a traditional public forum and that the city had unlawfully excluded Summum. Under the public forum doctrine, the government is strictly limited in its ability to restrict speech, and discrimination based on the viewpoint or identity of the speaker is prohibited.

At a glance, the result of the Tenth Circuit's decision appears only fair: if the city allows a religious monument offered by some of its citizens, how can it reject one from others? The rationale for the decision, however, obscured the point. The court's holding that Pioneer Park was a traditional public forum threatened to have far-reaching consequences. It was interpreted as opening the door to a parade of horrors, possibilities such as requiring governments to "either remove the . . . memorials or brace themselves for an influx of clutter," as Judge Michael McConnell, an influential expert on the law of religious freedom, said in his dissent from the denial of rehearing by the full court.

The city appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and perhaps based in part on Judge McConnell's opinion, the Court agreed to hear the case. To assist in making its case that Summum's Seven Aphorisms monument should be kept out of Pioneer Park, Pleasant Grove City enlisted Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a group that has often used free speech arguments in favor of protecting religious voices. In this case, however, ACLJ argued that Summum had no right to have their message displayed in the park. Instead, it argued that by allowing the Eagles to place the Ten Commandments monument in the government-owned park, the government exercised editorial control over the park's content, making it government speech. As such, and under existing case law, when the government speaks, Pleasant Grove City can determine its own message without being required to allow competing messages. In addition, the city argued that the Tenth Circuit decision created an unmanageable rule that would force a government that displayed the Statue of Liberty to make room to display a Statue of Tyranny.

In response, the attorney for Summum argued that at least some of the displays in Pioneer Park, including the one submitted by the Eagles, were created solely by private parties to advance their own messages. The city had simply allowed those messages to be displayed and done nothing to adopt such speech as its own. Pioneer Park, they argued, was a traditional public forum in which the city may not discriminate among speakers based on the content of the speech or identity of the speaker. Summum argued that the city's "government speech" claim was simply a theory conveniently adopted to keep Summum out of the park.

The Establishment Clause: The Elephant in the Courtroom

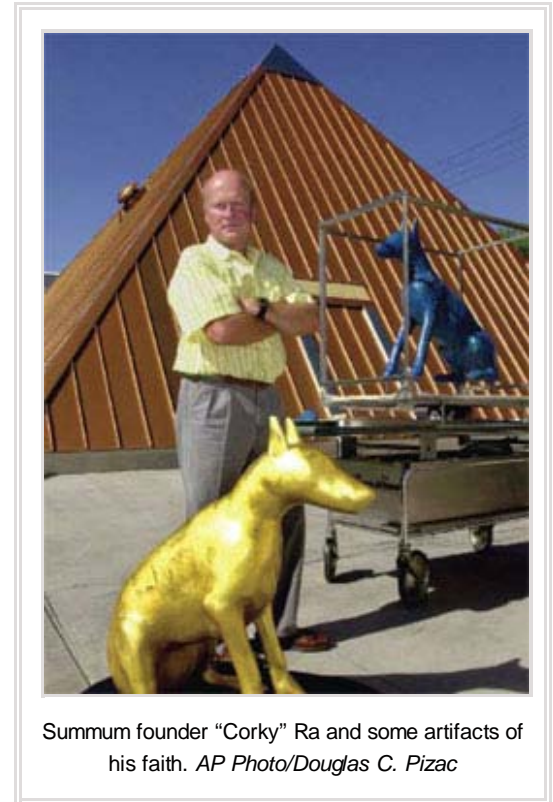
Conspicuously missing from the pleadings in the case was the question of whether the city had violated the establishment clause. For reasons having to do with peculiarities of Tenth Circuit case law, Summum pursued its lawsuit based on the free speech clause of the Constitution, not the establishment clause. As a general matter, reviewing courts are not free to introduce legal theories that have not been raised by the parties, even when those theories may be more obviously relevant to the case at hand.

This is unfortunate because the establishment clause provides the proper framework for considering government-sponsored religious displays, as well as adjudicating claims of denominational preference and religious animus. As many religious liberty advocates have long argued, government-sponsored religious displays harm religion and religious liberty. In many circumstances, religion's reliance on government, whether financially or symbolically, can make religion appear weak and allow a religious message to be corrupted by political forces. The establishment clause protects religious freedom by protecting the right of religious adherents to promote their faith and by keeping the government from usurping that role.

For example, three years ago, the Supreme Court considered establishment clause challenges in two major religious display cases. In *Van Orden v. Perry*, the Court upheld a Fraternal Order of Eagles Ten Commandments monument (like the one in Pioneer Park) displayed on the Texas State Capitol grounds among other statues donated by and dedicated to the citizens of that state.

In *McCreary County v. ACLU*, however, the Court held that a county's display of the Ten Commandments among other historical documents in a courthouse was unconstitutional where the record showed the intent of the display was to advance Christianity. Taken together the cases illustrate the fact-specific nature of determining the constitutional boundaries. In *Pleasant Grove City v. Summum*, an establishment clause challenge based on the city's posting of one religious monument, paired with the rejection of another, could have made a stronger case for unconstitutionality.

Even though establishment clause concerns were missing from the parties' briefs, they quickly appeared during oral arguments. As Chief



Summum founder "Corky" Ra and some artifacts of his faith. AP Photo/Douglas C. Pizac

Justice John Roberts said to counsel for Pleasant Grove City, “You’re really just picking your poison, aren’t you? I mean, the more you say that the monument is government speech to get out of the . . . free speech clause, the more it seems to me you’re walking into a trap under the establishment clause. If it’s government speech, it may not present a free speech problem, but what is the government doing speaking—supporting the Ten Commandments?”

Other questions from the bench indicated that the justices were dissatisfied with a result that would deem the monuments private speech and lead to the government having to display all kinds of bizarre messages of its citizens if it allowed any displays. The justices also expressed skepticism that the city could avoid discrimination by simply applying the label of “government speech” to preferred monuments. While the parties offered approaches that appeared to be all or nothing, Justice David Souter suggested that some monuments may be a mixture of private and public speech that defied the purely “private” or “government” categories the parties proposed.

In a friend of the court brief filed on behalf of neither party, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, and People For the American Way urged the Court to reverse the decision below, clarifying that the establishment clause, not the free speech clause, provides the proper framework for adjudicating the claim of religious discrimination. These religious liberty advocates argued that permanent monuments in a park are typically government speech, having been crafted or adopted by the city. When government speaks, it gets to choose the message, subject to constitutional limits, including the establishment clause, but not the most restrictive free speech analysis. By inviting free speech arguments, the groups argued, the court below missed the proper vehicle for claims of religious discrimination.

Conclusion

Whenever the government displays a religious message, it creates a problem of picking among the various faiths of its citizens. Even displays of widely accepted teachings such as the Ten Commandments involve the theological decision of which version (Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant) will be represented. A government bound to serve its citizens without regard to religion is hardly the appropriate authority to make such decisions. Even in those contexts in which religious displays have been upheld, it is hard to avoid the sense that government is showing a denominational preference, violating a central concern of religious liberty law. That concern is explicit in the facts alleged in Summum’s case.

As the Court heard its only religious liberty case this term, many listeners regretted that unless and until the case is reversed and pursued under a different theory, Summum cannot win under the clearest command of the establishment clause—prohibiting denominational preference. The path for the parties remains muddled. Perhaps the city will win, despite concerns that government may have acted out of religious animus. Perhaps the Court will clarify the “government speech” doctrine in ways that limit the ability to exclude messages based upon the substance or speaker. Perhaps the Court will establish a hybrid theory to analyze cases that have aspects of private and government speech. In any event, while the case offers little opportunity to impact religious liberty law, it stands as an important reminder to those who value religious liberty that a government that promotes the religion of some of its citizens threatens the religious liberty of others.

K. Hollyn Hollman is general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

MARCH / APRIL 2008

Censorship And Religious McCarthyism

BY: LAWRENCE SWAIM

On April 9, 2008, the administration of the U.S. Air Force Academy planned to present a seminar titled “U.S.A.’s War on Terror: Not a Battle Between Christianity and Islam.” It would feature Michael (Mikey) Weinstein, alumnus of the academy and director of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation; Muslim scholar Reza Aslan; and former U.S. ambassador Joseph Wilson. Their presentation included a strong defense of religious liberty in the military, and argued that military doctrines should never be determined by sectarian religious interests. It was to include selected clips from *Constantine’s Sword*, a film documentary based on a book by James Carroll.

But the seminar did not go as planned. On April 8 a widely distributed press release was put out by Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, decrying *Constantine’s Sword* as “anti-Catholic,” and denouncing the author of the book from which it had been taken as “an embittered ex-priest.” The Catholic League also launched a major public relations campaign, contacting over a hundred elected officials, along with the secretary of the Air Force and the secretary of defense.¹

The presentation on April 9 was held up for 25 minutes while Weinstein and his friends argued loudly with Gen. John F. Regni, superintendent of the academy, that they be allowed to present the seminar as planned. There was no evidence whatsoever that *Constantine’s Sword* was “anti-Catholic,” they pointed out, and in any case the scheduled footage was about overzealous Protestant Evangelicals, not Catholics; but Regni, it appeared, was nonetheless terrified of the Catholic League’s ability to create bad publicity for the academy.

In the end, footage from other sources was shown.

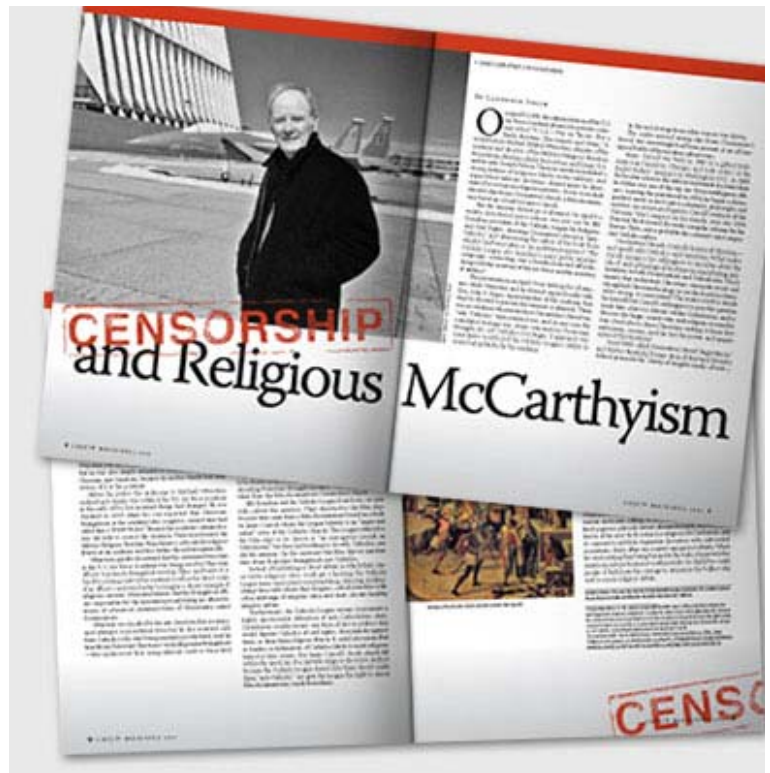
The cadets missed seeing clips from *Constantine’s Sword*, but unwittingly had been present at an all-too-typical battle of the modern culture wars.

James Carroll was born in 1943 to a gifted Irish-American family in Chicago, and took orders at the Paulist Fathers’ seminary in Washington, D.C., in 1969. He became active in the antiwar movement at a time when his father was one of the top Air Force intelligence officers. Leaving the priesthood in 1974, he began a distinguished career as an essayist, columnist, playwright, and novelist. *An American Requiem*, Carroll’s memoir of the Vietnam War’s impact on his family, won the 1996 National Book Award. He writes a regular column for the *Boston Globe*, and is probably this country’s most important Catholic author.

Constantine’s Sword is Carroll’s history of Christian—and specifically Catholic—anti-Semitism. What makes Carroll unique is his willingness to speculate about the role of central theological doctrines in exacerbating anti-Semitism in both Protestantism and Catholicism. Was it merely that individual Christians misunderstood and misapplied Christian theology, or are the doctrines themselves wrong, to some extent? The reader is left to decide for himself; but Carroll’s willingness to pose the question made him a hero to liberals within Catholicism, and to those in the larger society who seek religious reconciliation. (And also to those Christians seeking to learn how militarism, racism, and the lust for power and empire entered Christendom.)

Garry Wills called *Constantine’s Sword* “Augustinian,” and Krister Stendahl, former dean of Harvard Divinity School, praised it for “clarity of insights rarely—if ever—reached in the telling of this painful story.” Susannah Heschel wrote: “For two thousand years Jews have been longing for a Christian who would understand their experience. At last James Carroll has written a book delineating the history of Christian-Jewish relations that demonstrates empathy and compassion for both sides.” Religion scholar Karen Armstrong thought it “heartfelt and eloquent,” suggesting that it could “do what the Vatican has signally failed to do: to help Catholics accept the truth, as a first step to repentance.”

It was Carroll’s willingness to ask hard questions about institutional Christianity that enraged the Catholic League. But their success in banning film clips of which they disapproved was infuriating to those who had organized the April 9 seminar at the U.S. Air Force Academy,



especially Michael Weinstein. For one thing, he appeared in the censored footage. But he was also deeply attuned to Carroll's concern about Christian anti-Semitism, because he and his family had been victims of it at the academy.

Mikey (he prefers the nickname to Michael) Weinstein endured anti-Semitic slurs while at the U.S. Air Force Academy in the early 1970s, but assumed things had changed. He was shocked in 2005 when his son reported that Christian Evangelicals at the academy who sought to convert him had called him a “#*#*% Jew.” Because the academy's administration did little to correct the situation, Weinstein formed the Military Religious Freedom Foundation to advocate for religious liberty at the academy, and also within the military generally.

Weinstein quickly discovered that the command structure at the U.S. Air Force Academy was being used by Christian officers to promote Evangelical worship, films, and books. It is hard for a young cadet at the academy to refuse the direct order of an officer—and even harder to imagine a clearer example of religious coercion. Weinstein believes that the Evangelical officers responsible for the unwanted proselytizing are often followers of a fanatical, extremist form of Christianity called Dominionism.

Weinstein was shocked by the anti-Semitism that accompanied attempts to proselytize Jews; but he also received calls from Catholics who were being similarly proselytized. And he heard from Protestant Christians—including many Evangelicals—who understood that using military rank to force-feed sectarian religion is a gross violation of the First Amendment.

But nothing could have prepared either the academy or its critics for what happened in February 2008. Three supposed “reformed terrorists,” who had been invited by the U.S. Air Force Academy to speak to cadets, shocked their audience by turning the academy's historic fiftieth assembly into an old-fashioned revival meeting. They declared that Islam was satanic, that Evangelical Christianity was the cadets' only hope, and advocated an apocalyptic religious war against the Muslim world. Mikey Weinstein was appalled by the negative publicity this episode generated, especially in the Muslim world.

Weinstein proposed a seminar consisting of a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim, who would jointly make the case for the war on terror within a context of religious coexistence. After some foot-dragging, the superintendent of the academy agreed, and the seminar was set for April 9, 2008. Footage of Weinstein speaking about religious liberty in the military was to be shown at the seminar, as well as clips of academy cadets attending Protestant Evangelical events. The footage would be taken from the film documentary *Constantine's Sword*.

Bill Donohue and the Catholic League found out—or were told—about the seminar. They objected to the film clips because they came from a film documentary based on a book by James

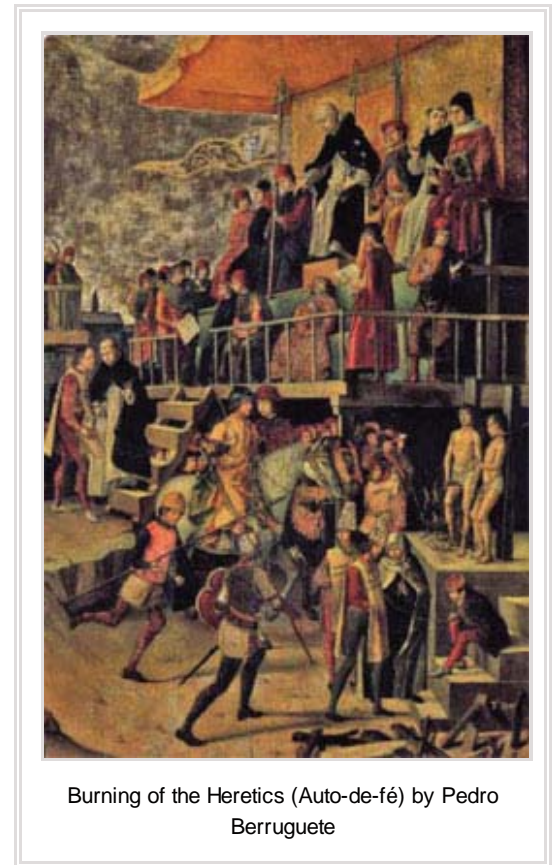
Burning of the Heretics (*Auto-de-fé*) by Pedro Berruguete Carroll, whom the League believes is an “angry and unfair” critic of the Catholic Church. The League referred to the film clips to be shown as “an outrageous assault on Catholicism,” but they had nothing to do with Catholics, nor did the seminar. On the contrary—the film clips in question were about Protestant Evangelicals, not Catholics.

Instead of facilitating a robust debate in which their conservative religious ideas could get a hearing, the Catholic League seems more intent on intimidating, silencing, and punishing those with whom they disagree—which interferes with a free exchange of religious ideas and short-circuits healthy religious debate.

Furthermore, the Catholic League seems to promote a highly questionable definition of anti-Catholicism. Anti-Catholicism usually means any form of law or politics that would deprive Catholics of civil rights, discriminate against them, or deny them religious liberty. It could also mean libel or slander, or defamation of Catholics likely to incite religious hatred or hate crimes. But James Carroll's books clearly fall within the spectrum of acceptable religious discourse, and just because the Catholic League doesn't like them doesn't make them “anti-Catholic,” nor give the League the right to censor film documentaries made from them.

Interestingly, the Catholic League doesn't appear to care much about real anti-Catholicism (Evangelical Protestant officers in the military using the command structure to proselytize Catholics, for example). Furthermore, Donohue has made bigoted statements about other groups, such as in a 2004 interview in which he said that secular Jews in Hollywood tend to hate Christianity.² Critics pointed out that it was precisely this kind of generalization—or guilt by association—that was at the heart of Christian anti-Semitism historically.

Donohue has increasingly engaged in violent rhetoric. In 2007 the Catholic League led an intense, and ultimately successful, lobbying effort to prevent the showing of a sculpture consisting of a chocolate figure of Jesus at the Lab Gallery in New York. Donohue told the sculptor Cosimo Cavallaro, “You're lucky I'm not as mean [as the Taliban] because you might lose more than your head.” Donohue also said to Cavallaro, “You stuck your middle finger up at the Catholic Church, and we just broke it, pal.”³



Burning of the Heretics (*Auto-de-fé*) by Pedro Berruguete

Some people dismiss Bill Donohue and the Catholic League as harmless, yet their attacks have the power to destroy careers, relationships, and reputations. Above all, they are able to intimidate. In our time, the free exchange of religious ideas is threatened not just by the state, but also by cultural vigilantes who seek compliance with their theological extremism by using disinformation and name-calling. In the past, religious dissenters suffered pogroms, physical torture, dismemberment, and the public horror of the auto-de-fé; today it is religious McCarthyism, and its capacity to publicly stigmatize dissenters with unfounded accusations, that is often our society's unique test of faith. While less excruciating than being burned at the stake, it impoverishes American culture because it so often works. So shall it be—until people of faith have the courage to denounce the bullies who seek to censor religious debate.

Lawrence Swaim is the executive director of the Interfaith Freedom Foundation. His academic specialties are American studies and literature. He writes from Fremont, California.

1. Catalyst, May 2008, p. 13. The Catholic League published all the names of the people they contacted on April 8 (apparently mainly by sending them e-mails) in the online version of their publication. They devoted three articles to their success in getting the U.S. Air Force Academy to change the format of the April 9, 2008, seminar. This writer also received an e-mail on April 8 denouncing the film clips to be shown at the seminar as "anti-Catholic," and making derogatory statements about James Carroll.
2. Shmuley Boteach, Bill, "Jews Are Not the Enemy," www.beliefnet.com/story/158/story_15826_1.html
3. CNN interview on youtube.com (www.youtube.com/watch?v=U15Mqu4Fr5w&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Evideosit%2Ecom%2Fvideo%2FChocolate%2DJesus%2DMakes%2DCatholics%2DCRAZY/)

MARCH / APRIL 2008

The Beginnings Of Religious Diversity

The English Reformation And Religious Freedom: PART II

BY: DAVID J. B. TRIM

This article is Part Two in a four part series. Click [here](#) for Part One, [here](#) for Part Three, and [here](#) for Part Four.

One result of the English colonization of America is that religious diversity and, consequently, the very concept of religious liberty in the modern United States, both derive from the English Reformation. However, the Reformation in England is often portrayed as not being really about religion at all, but rather about the sexual appetites of King Henry VIII. Some seem to imagine that if the root causes of the Reformation can be shown to have been unworthy, theologically unimportant, or both, then it will be easier for its consequences to be undone.

The first of this series of articles showed that when Henry VIII asserted his own supremacy over the English Church (rejecting papal authority), carnal desire was a minor factor; he sought to perpetuate the Tudor dynasty and enhance its power in England. If lust was not a significant factor, however, what about religion? What relationship was there between the separation from Rome and the Protestant Reformation in England? Was not Henry VIII the architect of Protestant England?

The Emergence of Diversity

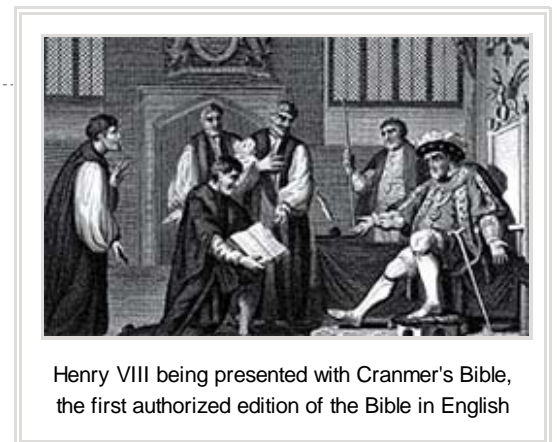
Traditionally, textbooks and popular history books have declared that the English Reformation occurred because Henry VIII willed it; and because it was the king's will (and later two of his children's), it became reality. In this view, the English Reformation was "an act of state."¹

However, laws alone did not suffice to erase substantial religious dissidence in early-modern France, Savoy, the Netherlands, and Ireland. In sixteenth-century England, as much recent historical research reveals, many ordinary people resisted royal policies, whether by commission or omission, and whether because they were more radical or more conservative than the government. Religious reform was not inevitable in England nor could it ever have been the fruit of a single decision by Henry VIII.

In any case, while Henry denied the universal authority of Rome, he accepted all the key doctrines of the Catholic Church. This key point was recognized at the time; early English Protestants, unlike some later historians, did not attribute the Reformation to him. Writing 30 years after the break with Rome, which he remembered, the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe, author of *Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Dayes* (better known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*—one of the most popular books in the United States well into the nineteenth century), declared that Henry VIII had no real intention of reforming the church—reformation came only because of the godly character of Henry's son, Edward VI, and daughter, Elizabeth I.

Henry did institute some reforms of the English Church, but they were very moderate and he rejected Protestantism until his death. It must also be stressed that he utterly rejected any notion of religious liberty. Indeed, under Henry for the first time religious dissidence could be treated as treason, as well as heresy; the Henrician religious regime thus was actually more repressive than that of the medieval church.

Despite this, a range of dissident religious movements took root in England during the final third of his reign. Those English people who retained a deep attachment to the Roman Church were one of the persecuted "sects," but there were also various groups interested in the ideas of Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, and the Anabaptists. Even many people who



Henry VIII being presented with Cranmer's Bible, the first authorized edition of the Bible in English

accepted most of the doctrines and practices of Henry's church might be at least interested in one or two heterodox ideas. England in his father's reign had been judged by foreign visitors to be one of the most devout countries in Latin Christendom; in the mid-1520s it was a still stronghold of the Roman Catholic Church. By the late 1540s, England was not yet Protestant, but heterodox opinion flourished where once there had been near uniformity.

This was not Henry VIII's intention, nor was England's substantive transformation in the decades after his death. But we can see today that the emergence of heterodoxy was the beginnings of the English Reformation.

Henry VIII and Reform

If it was not Henry's intention, then how did it happen? Although it was not clear at the time, with the benefit of hindsight we can see that a kind of foundation had been laid in the second half of Henry's reign by the moderate reforms of Henry and some of his ministers, and by the emergence of heterodox groups despite Henry's persecutions. Although Henry's own original idea for "his" church seems to have been Catholicism without the pope, it was possible for a range of ideas to circulate in Henrician England and even at Henry's own court, because the king himself was a would-be reformer. His interest in church reform was of a more moderate kind than that endorsed by Luther, whom the king (an amateur theologian) had openly attacked in 1521.²

Title page of the first authorized edition of the Bible in English, authorized by Henry VIII to be However, Luther himself was part of a broad spectrum of reform in the early sixteenth-century church, which included humanists, such as the celebrated Erasmus of Rotterdam and Henry's friend and lord chancellor, Sir Thomas More, who remained loyal to Rome. Henry VIII, like Erasmus and More, wanted to suppress abuses and corruption (whether the corruption of church officials or the debasement of belief by superstition) rather than make significant doctrinal changes, and his reformist instincts had little to do with his desire to end his marriage, but when, as a by-product of its annulment, he became master of the English Church, he naturally sought to reshape it in his own image.

Thus, in the late 1530s, reform of the Church of England went beyond removing prayers for the pope. Henry or his ministers had the Bible translated into English and a copy placed in every local church. They suppressed monasteries (which were perceived as strongholds of superstition, as well as of support for the Papacy), the cult of saints (which included pilgrimages, shrines, and the reverencing of relics), and the "worship" of images and sacred objects. The result was considerable iconoclasm, as English churches were "cleansed" (by smashing). In addition, the king was often open to arguments for further limited reform of the church—such arguments could be made not only by royal ministers who secretly favored Protestantism (discussed below), but also by those who opposed it, but who, like the king and many continental Catholics in the 1530s, still wanted to reform church practices, though not doctrines. This meant that those who were (often covertly) Protestant had breathing space and room for maneuver.

Henry did dabble with doctrinal reforms as well. The king personally was extremely devout; he fancied his abilities as theologian, and his self-fashioned persona of "church reformer" seems to have been an important part of his identity. This meant that as well as wanting to end practices he saw as debasements of pure Christianity, he also read and discussed heretical texts and doctrines and, in the first years after the break with Rome, he allowed some at court and in the church to do likewise.

One consequence was that the Church of England's official theology was both fluid and unique. Although around 1539 Henry even toyed with Lutheran doctrines, he ultimately remained attached to the faith of his childhood; he simply could not bring himself to accept justification by faith alone, nor abandon belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, nor give up prayers for the souls of the dead, despite finding Luther's denial of purgatory persuasive. Since no one dared tell the king that he held two mutually incompatible beliefs, Henry's idiosyncratic personal faith resulted in a peculiar official theology.

Thus, the net effect of Henry's sympathy for restricted reform was that, at some times between 1533 and his death in 1547, heterodox ideas could legally circulate to a limited extent. This should not be overstated—in 1539 the king, almost as though frightened by his own doctrinal dabblings, reverted to a far more traditional theological stance and (as we will see) inaugurated stringent persecution of those who would not conform. Yet by the time some significant reformist doctrines were repudiated by the king and declared heretical, there was already a large enough group of committed believers that persecution could have only limited success. Furthermore, the presence of both Catholic and Protestant doctrines in the theology of the Henrician Church of England meant that the many people who genuinely were confused about what God really wanted, and were not yet willing to make one "great do-or-die decision" for or against "the Reformation," had some time and space to experiment and to think over the alternative positions.³

In sum, because of Henry's interest in reform and his idiosyncratic personal religion, the boundaries between Catholic and Protestant remained fluid in England even after they had essentially become fixed on the continent. The dividing lines between Catholics and different sorts of Protestants were not clearly demarcated in Henrician England.

Early English Protestants

This theological fuzziness benefited those Englishmen and women who actively did want substantial reform of the church, including of its

doctrines as well as its practices. In addition, although they were later disappointed by Henry's conservatism, they were encouraged and given impetus by Henry's defiance of papal authority.

In 1525, even as Henry contemplated how he might get rid of a wife and get an heir, William Tyndale began printing his English New Testament in Germany. The first formal evidence of Lutheranism in England dates to that Christmas Eve, in a sermon delivered at Cambridge University. Well before the decade was done, Cambridge had become "a seedbed of protestant beliefs, and a center, along with London, for the distribution of protestant books." This attracted the heavy-handed persecutory attention of Sir Thomas More, who was very far from being the martyr for religious liberty that some, based on *A Man for All Seasons*, imagine him!⁴ But in the late 1520s and early 1530s the eyes of the church hierarchy were mostly fixed on the problem of how to annul Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon, rather than on the small body of English Protestants. Heresy laws were not implemented as rigorously as they had been—or indeed were to be again under Henry VIII. Other English people, interested in reformist ideas (not all of which were yet definitively Protestant), were encouraged to explore further by Henry's denunciation of papal authority; if Rome's claim to universal authority had always been false, then what else might have been a corruption of original truth?

Then, in the 1530s and early 1540s, the ongoing process of limited reform meant some government, church, and court officials who secretly were committed to the Protestant "heresies" were able to clandestinely promote reforms within the church hierarchy. They included Thomas Cromwell, the architect of the break with Rome and Henry's chief minister from 1532 to 1540 when he was disgraced and executed largely because of his covert "furtherance of the evangelical cause."⁵ Thomas Cranmer, who as newly-installed archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 had annulled Henry's first marriage and gradually underwent a genuine personal conversion to Protestantism; the brother of Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third queen, who died giving birth to a son (later Edward VI), Edward Seymour, who, as the king's brother-in-law and uncle of the future king, had considerable influence; and Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth and last wife, and active stepmother to the king's two younger children. Both Edward and the future Elizabeth I were given Protestant educations thanks to the quiet influence of Cranmer, Seymour, and Catherine.



Left to right: Prince Edward, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour c. 1545

Meanwhile, as noted earlier, Henry in 1535 had authorized the translation and publication of the Scriptures in English. Unfortunately (for Henry and the conservatives in the English Church), people then actually did read the Bible or had it read to them. Many ordinary people wanted to discover God's words for themselves; one convert to Protestantism later recalled how, after the weekly Sunday service was finished, people gathered in the back of the church to read the New Testament aloud; many illiterate people "would flock about them to hear their reading," while others learned to read specifically so that they could read the Bible.⁶

Strict control of doctrinal orthodoxy was lost. In 1535 Henry had probably been inspired by Erasmus's vision of farmers chanting Scripture as they plow and weavers keeping time to their moving shuttles "by humming the Bible."⁷

By 1545 he was appalled that the Word of God "is disputed, rhymed, sung, and jangled in every alehouse and tavern, contrary to the true meaning and doctrine of the same."⁸

The Bibles that had been placed in every parish church at the king's command were now chained up by his command, and Parliament passed laws allowing only the nobility and gentry to read the Bible in English. In the 1530s the full force of the state had been focused on those who wanted to maintain the connection with Rome; there had been many executions of those (most notably Sir Thomas More) who denied Henry VIII's supremacy over the church. In the 1540s the focus of persecution reverted to "heretics"—torture and death now befell those who openly denied

transubstantiation or insisted on "uttering the scriptures."⁹

However, with biblical teaching and Christian doctrines the stuff of "alehouse and tavern" debate, the growth of heterodoxy had been given tremendous momentum. Persecution could limit but not undo the circulation of new ideas and teachings, even though, on Henry's death, out-and-out Protestants remained a vocal minority.

AN IDIOSYNCRATIC CHURCH

Canterbury Cathedral Henry created an idiosyncratic national church, distinct from all confessions. Its official beliefs and practices changed as Henry himself toyed with somewhat radical positions, then veered back to conservative ones. On Henry's death on January 28, 1547, the Church of England still formally considered itself to be part of the universal church. It was schismatic, but not heretical. It had thrown off the authority of the pope and abolished the cult of saints, but apart from the exclusion of papal jurisdiction only minor theological changes had been made. The dissolution of the monasteries certainly altered the geographic dispersion of religious observance and arguably had wider social consequences; the iconoclastic "cleansing" of churches, along with the general attacks on superstition, had changed the physical

appearance of churches and altered worship patterns; but there was no shift to overtly Protestant doctrine as had occurred in parts of Germany and Switzerland by the early 1540s. The Mass was retained, along with its theological significance, as were most of the liturgical rituals that were important parts of the lives of ordinary people throughout the country; services were still in Latin. Many people would have noticed little changes in the day-to-day practice of their faith.

In combining rejection of papal authority with an essentially orthodox Catholic structure of belief, the Church of England on Henry's death was unique. It was not Roman, but nor was it Protestant.

THE HENRICIAN CHURCH AND THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

And yet . . . by the end of Henry's reign in 1547, although the majority of people conformed, at least outwardly, religious uniformity had nevertheless been broken and heterodoxy flourished in a country that only 20 years earlier had been one of the chief defenders of the church of Rome. England was at a tipping point—capable of being steered back to that allegiance to Rome or of adopting different types of Protestantism. The decisive years would be while Henry's children reigned.

What is very clear is that the creation of Protestant England (and thereafter America) was neither the fruit of Henry VIII's lust, nor even what Henry wanted. The emergence of heterodoxy, of limited (and illegal) diversity, was unintended and vigorously resisted, yet it was indispensable for the subsequent success of the English Reformation. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that the final years of Henry's reign witnessed the incubation of Protestantism in England. However, just as incubated eggs do not always develop, when Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, a Protestant Reformation was an uncertain outcome.

This article is Part Two in a four part series. Click [here for Part One](#), [here for Part Three](#), and [here for Part Four](#).

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8. Henry VIII, speech to Parliament, Dec. 1545, in A. G. Dickens and Dorothy Carr (eds.), *The Reformation in England to the Accession of Elizabeth I*, Documents of Modern History series (London: Edward Arnold, 1967; New York: St Martin's Press, 1968), p. 119.
9. The specific charge against one early Protestant, the poet Anne Askew: "The examination of Anne Askew, 1546," in David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell (eds.), *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 33-34, at 34.

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When Religion Becomes Evil

A Book Review

BY: CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

It wasn't supposed to be this way. After all, it has been more than 400 years since Rene Descartes locked himself in a room and, with his famous mantra "Cogito ergo sum," laid the foundation for modern rationalism. It has been 300 years since the Enlightenment, which offered hope that, through reason, rationality, and natural philosophy, humanity would perfect and progress its way to utopia, leaving behind the myths, fables, and superstitions it inherited from the dark days of what Auguste Comte derided as the "age of theology." And it has been more than 150 years since Charles Darwin eliminated the need of any creator, because natural selection and random mutation were declared the means by which humanity came into existence.

Thus, it wasn't supposed to be this way; that is, there wasn't supposed to be so much religion and religious faith anymore. Here we are, having pushed our way into the twenty-first century, and still—even in an age of CERN, iPhones, and nanotechnology—religion and religious faith remain, even stronger in some places than anyone would have ever imagined.

Of course, in recent years religion has become a force to be reckoned with; not so much because of the power of its moral strength but because of its power to drive humans into inhumanity. In the twentieth century, secular ideologies were the boogymen: Fascism, Communism, Nazism. Today, especially in the post 9/11 world, the focus has shifted, and religion is now center stage as a force that carries with it not just the potential for evil but for the realization of that evil. After 9/11 we know full well the truth of Pascal's maxim: "Never will men do evil more willfully and more cheerfully than when they do it from religious conviction."

Who needs reminding that the men who flew those jets into the Twin Towers weren't Kantian idealists, atheistic materialists, Humean skeptics, Derridean deconstructionists, or logical positivists?

Now, it would be naïve to argue that religion alone is the motivating factor behind these acts of terrorism. One doesn't need to remember (though it helps) G.W. F. Hegel's famous line that "the state is the march of God through the world" to realize just how intertwined politics and religion can get. Most, if not all, violence done by religious fanatics today are also done by political fanatics as well: that is, the suicide bomber, perhaps screaming "Allah Akbar!" as he (or she) detonates the explosives, is also thinking "Death to the Zionists" or "Death to America" as well.

Even a quick survey of most of the religious extremist movements in the world today—whatever their religion (Christians, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu)—would reveal a political undertone. It's rare, at least in the most violent of the movements, for political considerations not to play a major role. From the violence that once plagued Northern Ireland, to the fighting in Kashmir, politics and religion cannot be separated. And, unfortunately, it's when religion mixes with politics that it "becomes evil."

Hence, Charles Kimball's aptly titled volume *When Religion Becomes Evil*, published in 1992 (right in the wake of 9/11). The title itself could easily make one think it's just one in the slew of anti-religious diatribes by the likes of Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Sam Harris (*The End of Faith*), and Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*). The only problem, however, is that Kimball is an ordained Baptist minister and a Christian. Working from radically different premises than does Hitchens and Company, he of course comes to a radically different conclusion about potential solutions.

One thing, though, Hitchens and Kimball would agree on: religion can be exploited and turned into a force for evil. It's the question of how, and why, that Kimball explores.

"Understanding the factors," he writes, "that can and do lead people of faith and goodwill—wittingly or unwittingly—into destructive and evil patterns of behavior must be a high priority on the world's agenda." A sentiment no doubt echoed even as, perhaps, the smoke from the World Trade Center catastrophe hadn't yet fully cleared.

Why, then, do some folks, most of whose faith teaches things such as the golden rule, love, charity, and kindness, end up epitomizing the worst in humanity? The answers, of course, are complex, and Kimball wisely avoids any simplistic, one-size-fits-all response. Early on, though, he does deal with what he calls "absolute truth claims," which, simply put, is that each religion makes claims on truth that, by nature,



must mean that the other man's "absolute truth claims" must be wrong. The Christian absolute truth claim that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who died for the sins of the world, by default automatically means that Jews, Muslims, and in fact any other faith that denies that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who died for the sins of the world, are wrong. At the same time, those who deny that belief must, by default, believe that the Christians and their "absolute" truth claim is, in fact, false. Multiply these conflicting "absolute truth claims," especially on what many religions believe are doctrines which constitute, Kimball writes, "the foundation on which the entire structure rests," and it's not hard to see why tensions rise.

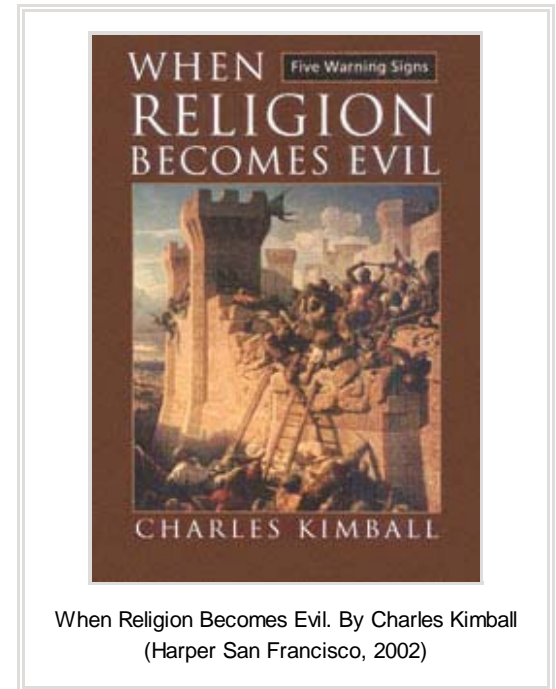
Kimball goes through a host of examples religion becoming evil—from David Koresh, Muslim extremism, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu—in each case looking at the basic assumptions of these groups and why, he believes, those assumptions lead these folks to everything from mass suicide, to mass murder, to both, or in some cases to just an extremism that defies logic or reason. In one particularly moving section, he recounts the story of a girls' school that caught fire in Saudi Arabia but the firemen were forbidden by the religious police to enter on the fear that some of the girls would not be properly attired. As a result, 15 of the girls perished. That, it seems, was even too much for the Saudis, and the outcry in the country brought about some changes in the oversight of women's education.

What, then, is the solution? Kimball, in great contrast to

Illustration by Edel Rodriguez Hitchens and so forth, believes that "people of faith offer the best hope for correcting the corruptions leading to violence." In the final chapter, he seems to argue for some kind of ecumenical dialogue between faiths, in which each seeks to draw out what they can from the others. While better than doing nothing, the solution hardly seems feasible. The kind of religions folks willing to engage in these discussions are precisely the kind we don't have to worry about (Can one imagine Osama bin Laden or the Taliban engaged in interfaith dialogue?). For the extremists, the ones of their faith willing to talk like this are often deemed apostates, themselves worthy of some sort of censure, or worse.

No, it wasn't supposed to be like this. Religion was supposed to have died off, slowly replaced by the gods of science, rational inquiry, a priori materialism, and the like. It hasn't. Nor was it supposed to be like this, either: folks killing others in the name of a faith that espouses peace and kindness to others. But it is like this, and one of the greatest challenges of our times is how to deal with it.

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Islam: Religion Of Peace?

BY: SALEEM AHMED

To the majority of Muslims, Islam is a religion of peace. They are law-abiding citizens who mind their own business, respect others' religious beliefs, and lead a low-key life. Their interfaith activities are guided by verses such as the following in the Qur'an, their holy book:

Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and discuss with them in ways that are best and most gracious (Qur'an 16:125) (Within parentheses are chapter (sura) and verse (ayah) numbers);
The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but (also) chaste women among the People of the Book (Qur'an 5:5);

Let there be no compulsion in religion (Qur'an 2:256). While extremist Muslims also believe Islam is a religion of peace, this peace can only be on their terms, based on their interpretation of selected Qur'anic verses and hadith (Muhammad's purported sayings and actions). They do not mind their own business. In their vendetta for perceived injustices to Muslims historically or currently, they are willing to kill others, including Muslims who disagree with their philosophy. They thrive on terrorizing the public—locally and internationally. And while they also use the Qur'an for guidance, the tenor of verses they select is totally different:

Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them. And seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) (Qur'an 9:5); Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of truth (even if they are) People of the Book, until they pay Jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued (Qur'an 9:29); Take not Jews and Christians for your friends and protectors. . . . And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them (Qur'an 5:51).

While thoroughly confusing messages when taken as "snapshots" frozen in time, these "mixed signals" in the Qur'an represent an evolution in the divine message Muhammad received over the 23 years of his prophethood (610-632 C.E.). While guidance on spiritual matters remained unchanged, that on temporal matters evolved after he fled from Mecca (622 C.E.) and was welcomed as head of state in Medina. Responding to fluctuating sociopolitical developments, these verses guided Muhammad on how to respond to threat: with equal force, or with diplomacy and compassion.

The Challenge Muslims Face

Unfortunately, the Qur'an is not arranged chronologically. For example, guidance permitting Muslims to eat with and marry "People of the Book" (Jews and Christians) is followed 46 verses later—in the same sura—by guidance prohibiting Muslims from trusting them. While this gives the impression that initially Muslims could trust Jews and Christians but were later advised against this, actually the opposite happened: Muhammad was cautioned against trusting "outsiders" earlier in his ministry when he was a marked man with a price on his head; and the reconciliatory posture toward "People of the Book" was part of the last message he received around 632 C.E., when Islam had spread throughout Arabia and he no longer faced the same danger.

While the prophet lived, no need was felt to consolidate all guidance he had received as this was an ongoing process. The need for consolidation took on urgency after a particular battle, one to two years after Muhammad's death, in which several Qaris (who had memorized the divine guidance) were killed. Fearing that Muslims would be lost without a central repository of prophetic guidance, Umar (later the second caliph) suggested to Abu Bakr (then caliph) to consolidate all revelations into one book. Initially reluctant to do something that had not been "sanctioned by the prophet," Abu Bakr asked Zaid, another close companion of Muhammad, to coordinate this project. Zaid collected verses written on "leafless stalks of the date-palm tree and pieces of leather, hides, and stones, and from the 'chests of men' (who had memorized verses)." The Qur'an thus compiled contains more than 6,200 verses, arranged in 114 suras of unequal length. The shortest has three verses (sura 108); the longest, 286 (sura 2). While some Muslims believe Muhammad had instructed his followers on the



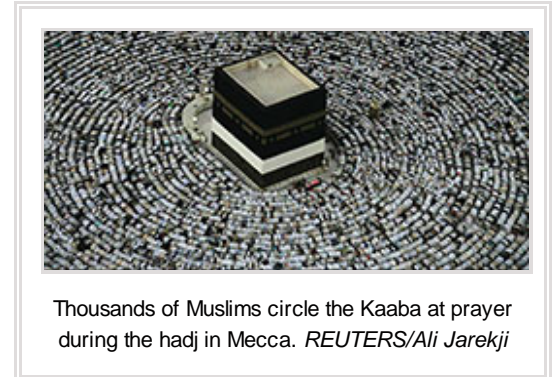
placement of verses, others believe this was a later decision. Probably both happened to varying degrees.

Qur'an's Divergent Interpretations

Since Qur'anic verses indicate neither context nor chronology of revelations, some Muslims freely pick whichever guidance and/or hadith supports their agenda at any time, ignoring other guidance suggesting the opposite. The consequence of this pick-and-choose approach is exemplified by the following divergent writings on terrorism, all quoting verses from the Qur'an: (1) press releases from the Fiqh (Islamic law) Council of North America and Islamic Society of North America (both dated July 25, 2005) condemning terrorism, labeling suicide bombers as criminals/murderers, and promoting Islam as a "Religion of Peace;" and (2) an article by Saudi Arabia's former chief justice Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Humaid inciting Muslims to constantly fight unbelievers and projecting Islam as a "Religion of War." Reading this 19-page article (included in the book *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* by Al-Hilali and Khan [Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1996], suicide bombers shine as martyrs.

The extremists' puritanical vendetta against other Muslims may also be gauged from the following five headlines in the newspaper Dawn (Karachi) during April through September 2007, mostly involving Lal Masjid, a pro-Taliban group in Pakistan: "Lal Masjid Threatens Suicide Attacks"; "Anti-polio Campaign Thwarted by Clerics"; "Woman and Three Men Publicly Executed"; "Lal Masjid Fatwa Against Magazine"; and "Women Beheaded for 'Immoral Activities'" (April 7 and 27, June 5 and 17, and September 8, respectively).

That extremists have little following worldwide may be gauged from the absolute routing of orthodox Muslim parties in Pakistan's 2008 elections. While they had won 20 percent of the seats in Pakistan's National Assembly in 2002 and formed governments in the two provinces bordering Afghanistan and Iran, they won less than 5 percent of the seats in 2008 and also did poorly in these two provinces. In fact, the 2002 results probably represented a "protest vote" against the U.S.A.'s massive bombing in adjacent Afghanistan. Similarly, the 2008 results clearly showed people's protest against extremism.



Thousands of Muslims circle the Kaaba at prayer during the hadj in Mecca. *REUTERS/Ali Jarekji*

Undeterred by their increasing unpopularity, however—but having more faith in bullet than ballot—extremists march on, destination unknown.

Hidden within Qur'anic passages we also find an antidote for extremists' blind use of selected Qur'anic verses. This is in the form of another Qur'anic verse: None of our Revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something similar or better (Qur'an 2:106).

Thus, earlier Qur'anic guidance on any subject stands abrogated by later guidance. "War verses," revealed to guide Muhammad in earlier years, when enemies were out to throttle his fledgling religion, should be considered replaced by "peace verses," revealed later when Islam had spread throughout Arabia and he no longer faced danger. So, while Muslims continue to recite Qur'an's "war verses," they should only follow its "peace verses".

This would be similar to our reading of the U.S. Constitution. The original U.S. Constitution set the value of non-free men and women at 3/5 the value of free individuals. And while the abolition of slavery in 1865 repealed this, the original Constitution, preserved in the U.S. Archives, will forever carry that proclamation.

Demystifying Islam as a Religion of War

Since "sensationalism sells news," the voice of majority Muslims—moderate and self-respecting humans—gets drowned by the "noise" of extremists.

For example, majority Muslims were saddened by the 2001 destruction of Buddha's statues by the Taliban in Afghanistan and by the emotional and violent outburst of some Muslims protesting publication of Muhammad's unfavorable caricatures by some European newspapers in 2005. While the media prominently covered both these reactive events, it largely ignored the press releases of Muslim organizations expressing dismay at both above-mentioned reactive Muslim actions.

Perhaps the media—and publications like Liberty—can help bring to the world's attention the voice of "Muslim majority protest"? And while at it, the media might also consider investigating the following questions: (1) To what extent do Sheikh Abdullah's thoughts reflect the official Saudi position? (2) Should Muslims who unquestioningly follow Qur'an's "war verses" be permitted to live in or visit countries where such violence is prohibited? (3) Why don't we hear of extremist leaders killing themselves in suicide missions? Why are their followers so "expendable," while they decline to sacrifice themselves for a cause?

The bottom line: Yes, Islam can be, and in practice usually is, a religion of peace; but we cannot say the same for all its followers.

Dr. Saleem Ahmed writes from Honolulu, Hawaii. He is the author of *Beyond Veil and Holy War: Islamic Teachings and Muslim Practices with Biblical Comparisons* (Moving Pen Publishers, 2002). A second book on Islam—*Islam: A Religion of Peace?*—is due out early 2009.

MARCH / APRIL 2008

The Bridge To Tomorrow

BY: REX D. EDWARDS

“Never does the human soul appear so strong and noble as when it forgoes revenge, and dares to forgive an injury.” —Edwin Hubbell Chapin

On Monday, March 29, 1948, the city of Jerusalem had on hand only a five-day supply of margarine, four days of macaroni, and ten days of dried meat. There was no fresh meat, fruit, or vegetables available in its markets. Any eggs that could be found sold for 20 cents apiece. The city, with its 100,000 Jews, was living off its slender reserves of canned and packaged food: sardines, macaroni, and dried beans. Convoys bringing relief had been wiped out. With the road up to Jerusalem cut, one sixth of the entire Jewish settlement in Palestine was isolated and menaced by starvation.

Rationing had been avoided as long as possible so as not to create a climate of insecurity in the city. Now it began with a vengeance. Adults were allowed, for example, 200 grams (about four slices) of bread a day. For children, a supplementary ration consisted of one egg and 50 grams of margarine a week.

Nor was food the only staple in short supply in the city. No kerosene had reached Jerusalem since February. Housewives had begun using DDT as cooking fuel. People learned how to improvise. Anyone with a patch of land or a window box tried to grow a few vegetables. For those who did not own even a flowerpot, a handful of erudite biologists at Hebrew University suggested hydroponics, a technique of growing vegetables in water without soil. Soaked cotton was recommended for nurturing seedlings.

Occasionally help came from the enemy. One night a Jewish householder heard a soft whistle coming from beyond the barbed wire ringing his home. Creeping to the sound in the dark, he found Salome, the elderly Arab woman who had been his maid for years. She passed him a few tomatoes through the wire, whispering, “I know you having nothing.”

As I read this account¹ it struck me that this vignette of history was naming an aspect of that noblest—and rarest—of all human graces: magnanimity.

The dictionary-makers define magnanimity as the quality of being “noble in mind; elevated in soul . . . ; rising above pettiness or meanness; generous in overlooking injury or insult.”² C. P. Snow calls it “this major virtue, which at any level sweetens life, and at the highest glorifies it.” Of it, the late Harry Emerson Fosdick, the most famous Protestant preacher of a past era, wrote: “No man ever saved anybody, or served any great cause, or left any enduring impress who was not willing to forget indignities, bear no grudges The world’s saviors have all, in one way or another, loved their enemies and done them good.”

Magnanimity, applied to relations between nations and peoples, transforms hostility into helpfulness. Salome’s magnanimous act is quite astonishing considering a decision made on the afternoon of Saturday, November 29, 1947, in a cavernous gray building that had once housed an ice-skating rink, in Flushing Meadow, New York, when delegates of 56 of the 57 members of the General Assembly of the United Nations were called upon to decide the future of a sliver of land set on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean. Half the size of Denmark, harboring fewer people than the city of St. Louis, it had been the center of the universe for the cartographers of antiquity, the destination of all the roads of man when the world was young: Palestine.

Before the General Assembly was a proposal to cut the ancient territory into two separate states—one Arab, one Jewish. That proposal represented the collective wisdom of a United Nations special committee instructed to find some way of resolving 30 years of struggle between Jews and Arabs for the control of Palestine.

A mapmaker’s nightmare, it was categorized “at best, a possible compromise; at worst, an abomination.” It gave 57 percent of Palestine to



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the Jewish people despite the fact that two thirds of its population and more than half its land was Arab. The Arabs owned more land in the Jewish state than the Jews did, and before immigration that state would contain a majority of barely 1,000 Jews.

All these facts were known to Salome. She knew the partitioning of the land in which her people had been a majority for seven centuries was a monstrous injustice. Was her magnanimous response to the needs of a hungry Jew easy? When we feel sorely sinned against, our first impulse is to strike back, to exact the ancient world's eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. But the advent of Christianity brought a nobler goal: to "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21, KJV). "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NKJV), Christ commanded.* To most of us such triumph over vindictiveness doesn't come naturally. It's a grace that must be developed, made habitual by practice. Jesus, asked how many times an enemy should be forgiven, replied: "Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22, KJV).

Magnanimity does not condone wrongdoing, of course. Nor does it suggest that the wrongdoer should go scot-free, or "lessen the claim of just obligation."³ He who forgives easily invites offense. But it does call for understanding the pressures that led to the transgression, plus a willingness to help the guilty one. "If you do not forgive," said Jesus bluntly, "neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26, NKJV). In other words, those who refuse to forgive cast away their "own hope of pardon."⁴ It is just. Why? Because we have been forgiven a debt that is beyond all paying. Our sin brought the death of God's own Son, and if that is so, we must forgive others as God has forgiven us, or we can hope to find no mercy. The unforgiving unforgiven dies.

We are, in fact, called to not only forgive but to forget. While an injury is a part of our memory history, forgetting involves a deliberate act of the will, putting the injury out of our minds, refusing to dwell upon it. This takes some doing, but the person who says, "I can forgive, but I can never forget," is saying, in the words of Henry Ward Beecher, "I cannot forgive." Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, reminded once of a cruelty done her, replied serenely, "I distinctly remember forgetting that!"

General Wilfred Kitching, when international head of the Salvation Army, was fond of telling of the man who arose in one of his public meetings to testify: "God has not only forgiven my sins and cast them into the sea of His forgetfulness, but He has put up a notice, 'Fishing Prohibited!'"



Two Israeli children hold banners during a protest in Tel Aviv against Israel's offensive in Gaza January 2009. The left banner reads in English "Yes to peace." REUTERS/Eliana Aponte

The Gospels make it plain that Jesus made magnanimity's possession and practice the prime aim of those who would live the good life, the ultimate test of character. Consider His gentle treatment of the adulteress about to be stoned. Why would He not condemn her? Because He would be condemned for her. Innocence would not condemn, because innocence would suffer for the guilty. Justice would be saved, for He would pay the debt of her sins; mercy would be saved, for the merits of His death would apply to her soul. But He did not make light of her sin, for He assumed its burden. Forgiveness cost something, and the full price would be paid on the hill of the three crosses where justice would be satisfied and mercy extended. It was there that the very ultimate in magnanimity was verbalized in that noblest of all prayers: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do."

Forgive whom? Forgive enemies? The soldier in the courtroom of Caiaphas who struck Him with a mailed fist? Pilate, the politician, who condemned a God to retain the friendship of Caesar? Herod who robbed Wisdom in the garment of a fool? The soldiers who swung the King of kings on a tree between heaven and earth? Forgive them? And yes, the Jews who stole your land, dispossessed you, and bulldozed your house! And yes, the colleague who falsely accused you and assigned to another credit for your work! And yes, the professed Christian pastor who gives new meaning

to the scandal of Christianity: when the righteous are ungodly. Why? In the words of the Duke of Buckingham,

"The truest joys they seldom prove
Who free from quarrels live:
'Tis the most tender part of love
Each other to forgive."
—John Sheffield

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1. Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre, *O Jerusalem!* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), p. 265.
2. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, unabridged, 2nd. ed. (1977), s.v. "magnanimous"; cf. "magnanimity."
3. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 247.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 247.