

CHRIST-CENTERED LIBERTY

# LIBERTY

The cover features a photograph of a tall, blue, modern building with a grid-like facade. To the right of the building stands a statue of Jesus Christ, dressed in a white robe with a yellow sash. The background is a bright, cloudy sky. In the bottom left corner, there are some green trees and a portion of another building.

**Christ-Centered**  
**Liberty**

# Kingdom Time

 [libertymagazine.org/article/kingdom-time](http://libertymagazine.org/article/kingdom-time)

Published in the [November/December 2010](#) Magazine  
by [Lincoln E. Steed](#)

This editorial was written at the last minute. The rest of the magazine was edited, designed, and final read before I sat down to "pen" these words. Still I waited. I waited until my associate editor sent an urgent plea to me on voice mail: "Please write the editorial so we can print." I used to schedule all the editorial productions at a largish publishing house, so I know the implications as much as anyone. Since 9/11 I have waited as long as I can before writing the editorial, for the simple fact that the news cycle had shrunk so much and the unexpected keeps happening.

I have been hoping for another "scoop" this issue. (With a bimonthly magazine the term "scoop" has a more sedate turn to be sure. But for me it has every bit the underscore of the daily press, but with a little more certainty.) Finally I am quite sure we have it.

In this issue we have been able to include an interview with the newly elected world president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dr. Ted Wilson. He was elected back in June. There, you have our lead time! I was at the world conference of the church held in Atlanta, Georgia. I was among the 70,000 in attendance the last weekend. I heard his sermon that Saturday Sabbath. And I was determined to get the interview for *Liberty* as soon as possible.

July 5 was my first day back in the office at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. I went looking for "Ted," as he still wants to be called. I found him alone in his old, rather small office. The new reality had not yet quite overtaken him. We were able to talk a little, and I was able to line up the interview as well as a video promo spot for our annual fund-raiser in January.

We talked about his sermon in Atlanta. "Like Adventism coming out of exile," is how I characterized it to him.

We spoke of religious liberty. After all, Dr. Wilson had included religious liberty in that sermon as an important element of what Seventh-day Adventists are about. This was my chance to remind him of what our *Liberty* readers know well: that over a century ago the Seventh-day Adventist Church led the way in defending freedom of worship. I reminded him of how influential *American Sentinel* editor Alonzo Jones was at the forefront of a monumental battle to head off a national Sunday law in the United States. It was a battle to assert the separation of church and state. A battle to defend the rights of religious minorities. And a race against time to inhibit the United States from inadvertently fulfilling the prophecy of Revelation 13, which speaks of a church-state coalition at the end of time, which will compel all to a particular form of worship.

For the editor of the precursor magazine to *Liberty*, the equation was straightforward: we were looking at a major prophetic moment. If prophecy is fulfilling so clearly, it demands a corollary in the church—a revival. As a key speaker at the next two General Conference sessions, Editor Jones agitated powerfully for revival, and his sermons stirred many. In some ways the spiritual shivers of that time can still be sensed in Adventism. But it was not quite the moment Jones expected. The Sunday law was defeated and the revival became more an argument than a persuasion.

I told Dr. Wilson that we are arguably at another of those crossroads; another prophetic moment and the need for revival. It seems he has come into office with a clear agenda for revival: remarkable mostly because it has been so long



coming.

When we had our editorial conference for this issue there was considerable discussion about its overtly Adventist tone. Well, the magazine is produced by Seventh-day Adventists, after all. Our regular readers know we defend religious freedom of all—no exceptions. They know we are committed to historical accuracy in telling the story of freedom. They need to know we are interested in religious liberty from a practical and prophetic viewpoint. It is great that Jefferson so nicely framed the secular principle of religious freedom, but it is sublime that Jesus began His earthly ministry with a call to His kingdom that proclaimed freedom/liberty. So this issue is more about us than usual. There will be other issues covering other topics and other faiths; but no apologies about this one. Adventist visionary Ellen White once admonished editor Jones to "unfurl your colors" because "the world has a right to know what Adventists believe."

These are not "the best of times" for our world; certainly not for the United States. In the 44 years since I first came to the U.S. to live I have never seen such a malaise, loss of direction, and inward reproach. The recession may be fading for the number crunchers, but there is a growing fear that things are slipping toward the void; that the American dream is no more. Endless wars, endless political battles, endlessly climbing debts, social change that no one seems to control, natural calamities and ecological meltdown; these are the adverbs to our state of being—fear.

Desperate times always bring forth desperate measures. Not the best of times for religious freedom, I fear. Vigilance is called for. And godly fear. And a revival of godliness among individuals across the land. For only with truly spiritual sensibility can we head off those who always use religion to nefarious ends.

I want to tell you that my church is stirring with revival. In mid-October hundreds of leaders of our world church gathered in Washington for an Annual Council. It's usually a time for lots of policy work and much male bonding (there are more than a few women leading out these days, of course). This year things took a different turn. President Wilson laid out the case for reformation and revival. Others responded. I watched the dam begin to burst. It was a little like the stirrings my generation felt in the "flower power" era, when the Jesus movement reached into self-satisfied middle America. I believe—and I am praying for it to be true—that many of my fellow Seventh-day Adventists are in the process of recharging their spiritual batteries. Keep an eye out for them, dear *Liberty* reader. Anytime the kingdom of God takes center stage it will necessarily involve a proclamation of true religious liberty.

Lincoln E. Steed is editor of *Liberty* Magazine.

## **Author: Lincoln E. Steed**

Editor, *Liberty* Magazine

Lincoln E. Steed is the editor of *Liberty* magazine, a 200,000 circulation religious liberty journal which is distributed to political leaders, judiciary, lawyers and other thought leaders in North America. He is additionally the host of the weekly [3ABN](#) television show "The Liberty Insider," and the radio program "Lifequest Liberty."



# Christ-Centered Liberty

 [libertymagazine.org/article/christ-centered-liberty](http://libertymagazine.org/article/christ-centered-liberty)

Published in the [November/December 2010](#) Magazine  
by [Clifford R. Goldstein](#)

I once found myself seated at a table in Washington, D.C., with representatives of many political and religious groups. Representing a conservative Christian organization, I was surrounded by those whose first principles conflicted with mine on many major points. I had to ask myself, *What in the world am I doing here?*

The answer lay in the common cause of a commitment to church-state separation. On this issue, as a Seventh-day Adventist, I had solidarity with those whose views differed, sometimes radically, from mine.

This story serves as a metaphor for the position, something easily misunderstood, that Seventh-day Adventists as church-state separationists often face. What is it that Seventh-day Adventists in general believe about church-state separation that would have put me at a table where, but for that aforementioned exception, I was frantically ill suited?



## The Bible and Religious Freedom

The answer is found in Scripture. A superficial reading of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, especially the Israelite theocracy (where folk could be executed for enticing people after “other gods”), would make the Bible seem the last place to find justification for religious freedom, much less church-state separation. A deeper reading, however, reveals a deeper truth, which is that human freedom, religious freedom, helps form the core message of God’s Word.

And nothing reveals that message more than the cross.

Here, the Son of God—nails in His hands, nails in His feet, a crown of thorns on His bloodied head—was hung beaten and bloody between heaven and earth because He had given humans freedom, moral freedom, religious freedom, even the freedom to obey or to disobey. Had He not allowed this freedom, humankind would not have violated God’s law, sin would not have arisen, humans would not have faced the prospect of eternal destruction because of that violation, and Jesus would not have sacrificed Himself at the cross in order to redeem humanity from the abuse of the freedom that He had given them.

What the cross proves is that the Lord deemed human freedom, human moral autonomy, so sacred, so fundamental to the principles of His divine government that, rather than deny humans this freedom, He paid in Himself the penalty for our abuse of it. Rather than force us not to sin, He “became sin for us” (see 2 Corinthians 5:21); rather than curse us by creating us as automatons, with no more free will than a computer chip, He became a “curse for us” (Galatians 3:13); and rather than make us live without free choice, and thus without the capacity to love (for love to be love, it has to be freely given), Jesus chose suffering, humiliation, and death.

## The Cosmic Moral Factor

Scripture takes this concept of moral freedom to realms, literally, beyond the earth. This freedom exists as a cosmic principle, something like gravity. How else could one explain the fall of Lucifer in heaven?

“You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found



in you” (Ezekiel 28:14, 15, NKJV).\*

The Hebrew word for “perfect” carries the meaning of “completeness,” “wholeness,” “innocence,” “unimpaired,” even “that which is entirely in accord with truth.” The word for “created” is a verb used exclusively in reference to the creative activity of God, such as in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (NKJV). Scripture presents a perfect being created by God in a perfect environment, and yet at some point “iniquity” was found in him. How could that be—unless perfection, wholeness, completeness, even in the “holy mountain of God,” included moral freedom, the freedom to make the wrong choices? That’s what happened to Satan in heaven, and then to humanity in Eden as well.

Adam and Eve, perfect beings created by a perfect God in a perfect environment, had moral freedom, moral choice. How could they be truly “moral” without it? God could have programmed them to do only good, but that would have made them “good” only in the sense a computer, programmed to filter out pornography, did “good.”

Perfection, in God’s universe, must include moral freedom for intelligent creatures, the freedom to do wrong; otherwise it’s not freedom, and without freedom there can be no love or true morality. Why would the Lord have warned Adam and Eve against eating from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17) if the freedom to disobey didn’t exist in them from the start? The command, a *warning*, was meaningful only in the context of freedom. And God gave them that freedom, fully knowing that wired in the coils of their genes were those who, millennia later, violating that same freedom, would nail Him to a cross.

It’s no wonder, then, that though Jesus knew the cost of sin and disobedience, He never forced anyone to obey Him, even when here in the flesh. He pleaded, He wept, He warned of judgment and the consequences of transgression, but He always allowed freedom of choice. He didn’t create humans free only to come thousands of years later and trample upon that freedom Himself.

When a rich young ruler asked Jesus what he needed to do to be saved, Jesus answered and the ruler walked away. Jesus knew the consequences of that decision, and though He loved the man, *because* He loved the man, He didn’t force the issue. He never defied free will, which is ironic because, if anyone had the right to, it was Christ. As God, as the Creator of the universe (Colossians 1:16), as the great “I AM” (John 8:58, NKJV; Exodus 3:14), He is the source of everything that was created (John 1:1-3). All that we are, or ever could be, comes from the One in whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), and yet, if He doesn’t force us to worship Him, how dare anyone else?

“What a pity,” wrote Annie Dillard, “that so hard on the heels of Christ come the Christians,” and they quickly lost sight of the principles of religious freedom that Jesus had so powerfully embodied. The results of this loss were tragic, and long-lasting, too. Centuries of religious wars and persecution impacted America’s founding fathers, who wished to avoid the sectarian bloodshed between Christians that ravaged Europe and made a mockery of Christ’s words: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

And central to their vision for their new nation was the religious freedom revealed in the Bible. Even someone as nonfundamentalist as Thomas Jefferson wrote that God, though “being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it [religion] by coercions on either, as was in His Almighty power to do.” In other words, even though God has the power, and one could argue even the right, to force us to obey, He doesn’t, and so neither should humans. To do so, Jefferson said, would be “a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion.” God doesn’t force obedience.

### **Seventh-Day Sabbathkeepers in a First-Day Land**

In contrast, government, by its very nature, works by coercion. Biblical faith, as we have seen, works by the freedom that God built into the moral fabric of the creation itself. What better way, then, to keep from conflating these two realms than to separate them, at least as much as practically possible (which isn’t always so easy)? Hence, the concept of church-state separation was born, which Seventh-day Adventists have so strongly supported.

Of course, however lofty and transcendent the ideal of cosmic moral freedom might sound, Seventh-day Adventists have had a much less metaphysical reason for promoting it. We are *seventh-day* Sabbathkeepers in a nation that for



centuries not only “kept” the first day but used the law to promote it. Not that people were compelled to go to church on Sunday (though in the earliest days there was some of that), but in many places “blue laws” forced businesses to close on Sunday, which placed economic hardship on those who, by personal conviction about the meaning of God’s Word, closed their businesses on the seventh day and not on the first as well because they couldn’t afford to. Seventh-day Adventists in the United States were arrested, fined, jailed, even put on chain gangs.

The situation has been much worse in other countries, where Adventists have lost their lives because of Sabbath observance. During the heyday of Communism, for instance, many Adventists, conscripted into the military, faced harsh punishment for refusal to work on a day specially set apart for worship of the Creator (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11), not a particularly popular stance in nations predicated on a militant atheism.

For Adventists, though, the issue isn’t just personal, but eschatological. Despite myriad interpretations, including the popular (if theologically dubious) *Left Behind* series, the book of Revelation in the Bible warns about religious persecution just prior to Christ’s second coming. Adventists believe, therefore, that part of their calling as a church is to defend religious freedom, church-state separation being, at least here in the United States, the best vehicle for doing just that.

### **Uncomfortable Alliances**

History is easy to forget, and many Christians have forgotten that church-state separationism has helped protect them from denominations who, wielding the power of the state, used that power to persecute those whose beliefs in and worship of Jesus differed from theirs. Seventh-day Adventists haven’t forgotten; our keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, as opposed to the ubiquitous (not to mention unbiblical) first day, constantly reminds us of the potential danger that majoritarian rule poses to the minority. We understand, too, that religious freedom means the right to practice—within limits (defining those limits, of course, is the great challenge)—what many might deem dubious religious practices. It also means that things like mandated prayer in public schools or the posting of the Ten Commandments in public places, however seemingly innocuous, tread on the principle that the power of government should be kept as far away as possible from religious practice in a society where faith, morals, laws, and government are inextricably and, of necessity, intertwined.

Other groups, sometimes non-Christian ones, agree. Whatever their motives, even if they arise from an overt *hostility* to religion, these groups sometimes take positions that coincide with ours. Thus, Seventh-day Adventists have found themselves in an occasional uncomfortable alliance with those with whom (as I said) we share little else in common, and this has caused some misunderstanding, even from our own members.

But whatever the misunderstanding, whatever the uncomfortable alliances, the death of Jesus has shown that the sacredness of religious freedom is more than worth it.

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Clifford Goldstein, a frequent contributor to *Liberty*, is a past editor of the magazine and at present edits Bible study lessons for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### **Author: Clifford R. Goldstein**

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# Leading for Freedom

[libertymagazine.org/article/leading-for-freedom](http://libertymagazine.org/article/leading-for-freedom)

Published in the [November/December 2010](#) Magazine  
by [Lincoln E. Steed](#)

**Liberty Editor:** Dr. Wilson, you were elected president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at its world General Conference on June 25, 2010. At that time you gave a powerful sermon on the Adventist particulars. And you included religious freedom as vital to our proclamation. How do you see the religious liberty dynamic for us today?

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** The Seventh-day Adventist Church has distinctive beliefs. They are not originating from some august body that just decided on them; they come directly from Scripture. One of the most important areas that God has provided mankind since the beginning of time is the freedom of choice, the choice to allow a creature of God to obey Him, or not. And of course that is essentially the question that is before the universe, and the central theme of the great controversy between good and evil outlined in Holy Scripture. The devil has always been accusing God that nobody worships Him because they love Him, only because they fear Him. So when Christ came to this earth and lived a life of complete dependence on His Father, He showed us how to do that. He then died for us and paid the price for our sins so that we may have eternal life. Christ paid the price for our salvation through His blood and is actually interceding now in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. And all along this pathway, in this plan, we are given the power of choice.

When people are denied the power of choice, they are not truly allowed to express their full potential for belief. Naturally, Seventh-day Adventists are vigorous in protecting the religious rights of any person. Of course, we're not talking about protecting "rights" that are against God's law. We don't want to protect inappropriate things that are completely against God's law. But we protect the right of people to make a decision about God, for God, or against God. That is fundamental to the beliefs we hold as Seventh-day Adventists. Of course we want to encourage those who have the choice to believe in a loving and powerful God who has provided salvation for each of us.



Religious freedom is therefore one of the strong pillars upon which the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands, and we defend it with every possible means we can. And we will continue to do so. It's not just a self-serving, self-preservation approach, but it is to protect the rights of every individual, to allow him or her to make this wonderful choice.

**Liberty Editor: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a truly international body of believers. I know you bring a global experience to your new role. Growing up, you spent years in Egypt and Lebanon, then later served in Africa and Russia. As you know, there are severe religious liberty challenges around the world. How do you see the interaction with Islam, with Eastern Orthodoxy, and indeed the emerging religious dynamic of Africa?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Obviously, when predominant religious organizations have access to social and political leverage, there is the potential for diminishing personal freedoms for those who may not fall into the vast majority category. I think it's important in such situations that Seventh-day Adventists take the initiative to familiarize government and other religious organizations with the beliefs we have. We must acquaint them not only with our beliefs, but also our lifestyle, our approach to life. We must communicate our understanding that life is a whole unit—physical, mental, social, and spiritual, and that's why Seventh-day Adventists are so involved in all of those areas.

When people get a better picture as to what Seventh-day Adventists believe, there's a lot better opportunity for those governments and for those other religious organizations to see that we are real people who have the best interest of society at heart, and that we are there to build up society and the nation. This way, our plea for religious freedom will be far better received. I've seen this happen; and I think Seventh-day Adventists, of all people, need to be some of the friendliest and most proactive in exhibiting who we are, what we are, what we stand for, and that we can help to build positive societies. So when it comes to different predominant religious groups in an area, I think we must reach out and interact in a dynamic way. I'm not talking about ecumenism in the sense of merging our religious identity. I'm talking about how we explain ourselves, and helping people to know who we are. When people identify who we really are, I am confident they will see us as a positive part of society.

**Liberty Editor: The SDA Church has historically promoted the separation of church and state, which is constitutionally mandated in the United States. And we can give a strong biblical model for that. Do you think we should be projecting the separation of church and state model all around the world?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Well, we have to be sensitive to different cultures, traditions, and governments. I think the ideal is to have a separation of church and state. We can look at history, and we can see that whenever religion and politics are closely united, many people suffer. So it's simply a matter of realizing differences of influence in their own sphere, but it's better to have a separation, thereby guaranteeing a freedom of conscience for all.

**Liberty Editor: When I first came to the United States as a teenager I attended Takoma Academy in Takoma Park, Maryland, near the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters—and found that many of my new classmates were the children of leaders there. You were in that class, and your father, who later became General Conference president, was at the time president of the North American Division of the church. As a child of the church, so to speak, how would you characterize church development since then, and what do you see as our challenges?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Yes, I remember you coming to Takoma Academy. I remember us playing soccer together. You had just come from Australia, so of course you played pretty well. Some of us were still learning, but we had a lot of fun.

As far as the development of the church, it has expanded numerically from an organizational standpoint. And from an evangelistic standpoint, it's grown. Somewhat naturally there are organizational challenges, a matter of polarization regarding culture or regional approaches to things. Unfortunately, I've also seen, a more pluralistic approach to theology, to lifestyle standards. We have to recognize that we do need to give and take. We need to be careful in how we relate to each other. We need to respect each other, giving preference one to another, as Scripture tells us. And yet we cannot sacrifice principle. So as the church has expanded certain social values have deteriorated. The church is a part of society, whether we like it or not.

But I am very positive and very optimistic about the future because I know the end of the story. Scripture assures me of the prophetic destiny for those who answer the biblical challenge to stand for God. God has His hand over all, and I'm not worried. Yes, we'll go through challenges and problems. But the activity of the church and its unity is only by the



power of the Holy Spirit—God's promised power. We've got plenty of challenges: social, educational, institutional challenges, religious liberty problems—all kinds of challenges. But when you rely on the Lord and remember His promise to take us through, it gives you a large measure of comfort.

***Liberty* Editor: Religious Liberty for Seventh-day Adventists has always been joined to our sense of prophetic fulfillment. Do you see a special urgency to our times and is there a looming religious liberty "moment"?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** We know from an understanding of the biblical book of Revelation that there will come a time when freedom of conscience will be greatly curtailed. We don't like to over-emphasize that understanding, because we enjoy freedom now in the United States. And we are very grateful to the Constitution and to the government of the United States for that wonderful provision of religious liberty. It is embedded in the very foundation of this country, prior even to the formal establishment of this government. From the very beginning, this wonderful land received people who wanted a place where they could, in freedom and in a setting of real conscientious endeavor, be able to worship and to live as they pleased. And most of those people were wanting to do that in accordance with what Scripture was telling them.

***Liberty* Editor: They varied in their application, though.**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Exactly. And many other governments in the world have provided this extremely valuable facet of life that provides for the growth and prosperity of their countries; that is, freedom of conscience and freedom of religious exercise. And when a country does that, they are blessed of God, and they prosper, and we thank the government. However, we know from Bible prophecy that at some time in the future, for perhaps a variety of reasons (and we can only conjecture about those—what will trigger them, we're not sure exactly), a number of factors will come together that will begin to curtail freedom not only in this country but in other places. I think that's always a threat, and as they say, eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, particularly religious freedom. That's why we have *Liberty* magazine; that's why our church has a Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department. We need to be constantly on guard and aware.

***Liberty* Editor: As you know, and you've brought up Liberty magazine, Liberty has been sent out for a long time to thought leaders, politicians, lawyers, community leaders, mayors, and so on. But curiously, not too many Adventists themselves read Liberty magazine. We send out nearly 200,000 copies each issue, but of that number we can only identify maybe 14,000 to 18,000 going directly to Seventh-day Adventists, which is phenomenal. How do you think we can raise our own members' personal knowledge of religious liberty issues?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Well, whenever there is a particular initiative with the government or with the community that captures the attention of church members, that immediately raises the consciousness of many church members. So it's kind of an ebb-and-flow situation. I know you have a television program, you take speaking appointments, you have a radio program. You have an annual Liberty Dinner in Washington, D.C. That all relates to the existence of *Liberty* magazine, which can raise the consciousness of people. As far as church members are concerned, I think periodic articles in our internal church papers like *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* are a good way to raise a religious liberty awareness. We need to use the Hope TV Channel and Adventist World Radio, which have a huge global reach. It is important to remember, religious liberty is not just peculiar to Seventh-day Adventists, as we've already indicated. It is something that we should continue to champion for the world at large.

***Liberty* Editor: Most people think well of religious liberty. They say that they believe in religious liberty. But the test is in the application of this principle. Some people want it for themselves but not for others. If it is a good principle, it must be for all!**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Exactly. And that's one thing that I have mentioned to other church administrators. They need to take an even greater interest in religious liberty matters, not simply depending on their designated directors to manage the details. They should become acquainted with the needs in their communities—wherever they might be in the world—and become acquainted with government officials, share with them the need for religious freedom, and be on the forefront, because this is an area of vital opportunity. At the last General Conference session, we were given greetings from the president of the United States, and it was a good opportunity to thank the country and other countries for the religious freedom we enjoy. Always keep that in the minds of people. Help them to appreciate it and also to promote it.

***Liberty* Editor: When speaking to religious liberty audiences I have sometimes tried to shock them into awareness by saying that there is far too much religion in the world—that religion without spirituality is**

**one of the major problems the world faces—that there is way too little spirituality. How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church make a difference here?**

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** I think it's a matter of a person's relationship with God. If you understand that you are saved by grace, you are completely dependent and indebted to a powerful God who has not only created you but has redeemed you. When that happens, life does not take on a mechanistic, legalistic approach. But it takes on a dynamic that is Spirit-filled because of your gratefulness and your complete surrender to God. And when that happens, Christianity in theory becomes practical Christianity.

There is a saying that there is more religion in a loaf of bread than one might think. We must tell people that Christianity can make a real difference in life. When you're helping someone who's in real need, an orphan or a widow, or when you're helping people who have lost their job, helping someone who has some basic needs, someone in prison, someone who is having trouble in their own home with their marriage—wherever it might be, when you're actually helping people, that's where true Christianity, practical Christianity, comes in.



**Liberty Editor:** And that's the sort of religion that will influence others, that will be attractive, and not polarizing. I know you've come regularly to the annual Religious Liberty Dinner and spoken at our first North American festival of religious freedom in Hawaii. How do you think we should continue to relate to civil leaders? We try to attract them to special events. Are you encouraging us to continue this type of contact?

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Completely and wholly, I support that. The more that we make people aware of our concerns for the population at large and also for individuals who are in need, the better people will understand. Many times people and civil leaders can make decisions without knowing the real facts. Civil leaders can only benefit from input from our church and others concerned for religious freedom. It will contribute to a breadth of information necessary for balanced public policy. It is important to meet government leaders, to share with them the humanitarian and the spiritual things that our church is doing. That way they'll get the full picture, a positive picture.

**Liberty Editor:** A few months ago, with Dr. John Graz, the director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the world church, I visited with Dr. Ramos-Horta, the president of newly independent East Timor. Dr. Ramos-Horta made an interesting comment. "Religion can be divided up," he said, "but East Timor is for everyone." How does that strike you?

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** Well, I'll take it in the most positive light, hopefully interpreting it as he meant it. There is beauty in the diversity in many countries and in many settings. If individuals are able to maintain their convictions, whether they may be religious, political, philosophical—if the state will guarantee the right for people to have that belief—it will create a richer opportunity for everyone to benefit from that state. That's what I would understand, and I would concur with him totally.

**Liberty Editor:** No country should be pushing for religious uniformity. There's a richness in religious diversity, and religious liberty guarantees the right of people to believe something that some other person might find somewhat hard to

accept—but the right to believe should be unquestioned.

**Dr. Ted Wilson:** We have certain beliefs from the Bible that we wish everyone would understand, accept, and believe. But we would not want to force that on anyone. That is the essence of religious liberty.

Dr. Ted Wilson was interviewed for this article by *Liberty* Editor Lincoln E. Steed shortly after Dr. Wilson had been elected president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on June 25, 2010, at its fifty-ninth General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. He represents more than 16.3 million Adventists worldwide.

**Author: [Lincoln E. Steed](#)**

Editor, *Liberty* Magazine

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# 877-721-3700: New Helpline for Religious Rights

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by [Todd R. McFarland](#)

Having a right means little if you don't have a mechanism to enforce it. For years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has had a program in place to protect the religious liberty rights of its members and others of faith. In the United States and Canada Adventist pastors and attorneys have helped thousands of individuals with a variety of religious liberty issues. These have included Sabbath accommodation problems in the work place, military service issues (both non-combatancy and Sabbath issues), Sabbath accommodation in schools and testing, and taking an alternative oath not to swear to bear arms on behalf of the United States when becoming a U.S. citizen.

While this system of service continues to work well, one continuing struggle has been communicating how best to access its resources. Unfortunately, just how to take advantage of these resources has not always been clear or accessible to Seventh-day Adventist Church members or even local pastors.

To address this issue, the Church has established a centralized intake center exclusively for religious liberty inquiries. Individuals will now be able to call a toll free number 877-721-3700 with their religious liberty problem, and the information will be forwarded on to a regional religious liberty representative. This representative will be able to provide pastoral and spiritual guidance, as well as steer the church member toward an appropriate recourse for their problem. Such actions may range from writing a letter on their behalf to guiding them to an appropriate government agency. Representatives can also work with the employee and the employer to explore accommodations that can resolve the conflict, and in rare cases a referral will be made to a local attorney who can represent them in legal proceedings.

The purpose of 877-721-3700 is to make services that are already available more easily accessible. It is not a providing legal advice or even directly giving assistance. Rather, it allows people who are experiencing discrimination because of their religion a way to contact someone who can help them and has helped other people with similar problems.

Standing up for religious rights is as important as fighting to get them in the first place. With this new intake procedure we hope to make services more accessible.

**Author:** [Todd R. McFarland](#)





# God's Way Works

[libertymagazine.org/article/gods-way-works](http://libertymagazine.org/article/gods-way-works)

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by [Melissa Reid](#)

Mike Mudd was in his mid-20s when he became a Christian and gave his heart to the Lord.

"I had been an atheist my whole life, and then had an experience with the Lord," explains Mudd. "I went from being an atheist to wanting to tell everyone about Jesus and what He'd done for me."

"It was a complete change," he continues. "I used to spend my weekends hanging out with drug dealers and thugs and now I'm in church worshipping the Lord or studying the Bible with my family."

Mike Mudd had been a valued employee at a specialized automobile parts manufacturing supplier in Shelbyville, Kentucky, for almost 10 years before his conversion experience in 2003.



"Shortly after I became a Christian I found out about the Sabbath and became impressed that I needed to keep it," Mudd recalls. Then I found out about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and decided to become a baptized member of the church."

Mudd's pastor wrote a letter that he took to the company's human resources department. It explained the church's beliefs and requested a change to Mudd's work schedule so that this new Christian would not have to violate his conscience by working on the seventh-day Sabbath. At first the company was very supportive and made an accommodation for their valued employee's Sabbath observance. They went so far as to create a new individual shift for Mudd. However, over the next few years there were changes in management and human resources departments, and in September of 2007 the company told Mike Mudd they would no longer be able to honor his Sabbath accommodation request.

"They told me I was going to have to work on Saturdays. And I refused," remembers Mudd. "They started docking me for not coming to work on Saturdays, and so I was terminated because of attendance, so to speak."

When asked if this was a difficult decision for a husband and father to make, Mudd responds, "Well, when they issued the challenge of either working on the Sabbath or losing my job, I just believed firmly that God was going to take care of us. I believed without a shadow of a doubt that He was going to provide."

Mudd went from making good money to no money. There was a three-month period when his unemployment was denied, and there were no funds coming in.

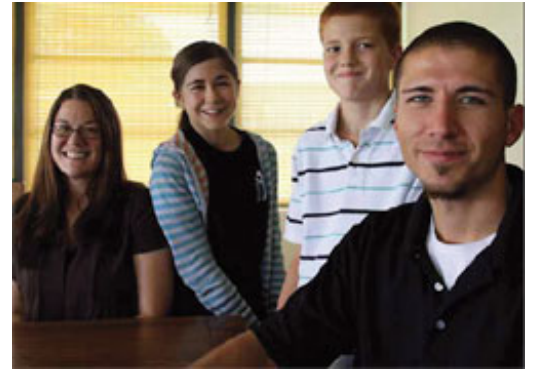
"It was scary at times," Mudd admits. "At that time (2007) the job market was terrible. *Nobody* was finding jobs. Businesses were closing down. A lot of people in my family didn't get it. They thought I was nuts. They said, 'How do you give up a job like this? Just go to work on Saturday.' But we stood firm. We believed that it was important to stand for the Sabbath truth and provide a witness to others."

Mike Mudd, his wife Jenny and their two children Krista and Michael III.



And then Mike Herth, a local church friend, contacted the Mudds. He knew what the family was going through, and shared with Mudd his conviction that this was something important that the Lord would work out and He would bless their faithfulness. He explained the Seventh-day Adventist Church's religious liberty ministry, and its commitment to defending members' individual freedom of conscience.

"I had heard in passing about the church's religious liberty emphasis and department, but I didn't know what my options were and didn't really honestly think that there was a whole lot that could be done," said Mudd. "But Mike urged me to contact them and explain what was going on, and so I did."



After hearing the details of Mudd's experience and discovering that he had a written agreement with his former employer detailing the accommodation he was to be given, the church contacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and filed charges against the company for religious discrimination.

"The case went on for a fairly lengthy period of time," said Mudd. "I was focused on finding a job and making ends meet, so at times we—myself and my family—kind of forgot about it. But they [the Adventist Church] were in the background, taking care of everything."

Throughout the process a church religious liberty representative kept Mudd informed on the progress of his claim with periodic status reports.

Says Mudd of the process, "We would get a call from Kevin James [associate director for the church's religious liberty department in the Southern United States] and he would say, 'Hey, we had a conference call with so and so from the company, and this and this was taken care of today, and this is what's going from this point forward.' And I would just say, 'Well, praise the Lord!' And we just kept praying and waiting patiently and kept on going."

The Lord answered those prayers and provided for Mudd and his family in many different ways. First, simply by responding to a generic "Need work?" ad posted on a telephone pole, Mudd landed a job with one of his former company's competitors who had recently set up shop in the area. The specialized skills he'd acquired over the past decade led first to a new job, then a promotion, and finally to an even better opportunity for work at a local university.

And then God provided once more. Mudd believes strongly that everyone is called into ministry, and so he and his family had begun praying for a way to get involved in sharing the gospel of Christ with others.

"The Lord opened a door for us to attend the Lay Institute for Evangelism in Florida," says Mudd. "We didn't have the funds to cover the cost of the program, but were convicted that it was what the Lord was calling us to do. And that's exactly when we got the culminating call from the Religious Liberty office."

The church's religious liberty staff member told Mudd that his former employer had made a settlement offer. It turned out to be for the exact amount necessary for the family to be able to attend the evangelistic training program in Florida.

Mudd's dream of involvement in ministry was realized, and he now serves as the evangelism coordinator for "Youth for Jesus," a youth-led evangelistic program held in a different U.S. city every summer. "My wife says time and time again that this experience has really brought us together and showed how the Lord will work. It has brought us closer as a family and strengthened our faith. We struggled at times, but the Lord always provided a way out. My wife, my kids, and I got to see how the Lord works when we are faithful. It has been an unbelievable experience for us to see how if we really set our hearts to do God's will and we are faithful, He will always provide for us. Always."

Melissa Reid is associate editor of *Liberty* magazine.

**Author:** [Melissa Reid](#)

# A Turning Point

 [libertymagazine.org/article/a-turning-point](http://libertymagazine.org/article/a-turning-point)

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by [David J. B. Trim](#)

The middle of the seventeenth century was a key turning point in the history of religious war. The Thirty Years' War was ended by the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which institutionalized the principle that princes could choose the religion of their state and that their choice was to be respected by other princes, even those who had the same confessional allegiance as a dissident minority of a neighboring prince's subjects. Fundamentally, states agreed not to wage war on the grounds of religion, but this was counterbalanced by formal recognition that some minorities (though not all) had a right to limited liberty of conscience and worship. Around the same time, the threat posed by the Ottoman Empire (militantly Muslim) to Western Christendom was in decline.

Nevertheless, although religion was no longer the primary cause of conflict, it was still a factor in war in the century after about 1650, as this final article shows.<sup>1</sup> In many Christian states policy-making was still shaped by the desire to present a common Christian front against the Turks. And the religious resentments and hatred engendered by antagonism between Catholic and Protestant provided a powerful aid to mobilizing populations for wars, because confessional elements would be emphasized in propaganda by increasingly powerful nation-states.

Having briefly surveyed how the era of wars of religion came to an end, this article concludes by considering Europe's history of religious wars as a whole. Ultimately, the history that has been surveyed in this five-part series has significant lessons that are relevant to debates over religious freedom in the twenty-first century.

## Crusades Against the Turks

As we saw in the last article, the desire of the sixteenth-century French nobility to go on crusade (as their medieval ancestors had done) had been frustrated by their kings' policy of alliance with the Ottoman Empire. However, the seventeenth century witnessed a new era of French crusading against Islam. In 1664 Louis XIV sent a French expedition to Djidjelli in North Africa. In May 1669 he contributed 60 vessels and around 6,000 troops to a multinational expeditionary force, dispatched under the Papal banner, to help save Venetian-governed Crete; this followed up an unofficial French expedition to Crete in 1668, which had been raised and paid for by French nobles, though with the king's tacit consent. Thus, insular Christian possessions in the eastern Mediterranean retained the old ability to evoke enthusiasm for crusade. The Turks were victorious, despite the international efforts to save Crete.

The Ottoman Empire was, indeed, not yet a spent force. It still fielded huge armies against Christian powers in Europe—but to increasingly less effect. In 1664 the Austrians defeated the main Ottoman field army in Hungary,





which had seemed on a roll after the Turks' dismembering of Transylvania.

After initial Ottoman triumphs in the Polish-Ottoman War of 1672-1676, Jan

Sobieski (King Jan III of Poland-Lithuania) led the Poles to a number of successes and the war ultimately ended in only a marginal Turkish victory.

The celebrated second siege of Vienna in 1683 was a last gasp for the Ottomans in Europe; their attempt to capture the capital of the Hapsburg Holy Roman emperor ended disastrously. The besieging army was virtually obliterated by a relief force led by Jan Sobieski by drawing troops from many European states; the battle that concluded the siege was greeted across Europe, by Protestants and Catholics alike, as a victory of Christianity over Islam. The defeat was so complete that it triggered the gradual reconquest of much of Hungary by a new Holy League. As we saw in the last article, ironically for minority Christian sects, this actually led to a reduction of religious freedom; but the majority Catholic population welcomed the Hapsburg armies as liberators.

All in all, while the Turks were still a significant military power, from the 1660s on they were no longer a threat to the whole of Christendom. There was no longer any prospect of Muslim armies descending into Germany and Italy; while religion was still an important factor in motivating combatants, by this stage the causes of the wars involving the Ottomans were as much geopolitical as religious.

### **Catholic-Protestant Conflict**

Meanwhile in Western and Central Europe, the Thirty Years' War had finally been ended by the peace treaties of Westphalia in 1648. The Peace of Westphalia is often said to have "put an end to the European wars of religion." In fact, it did not end confessional conflicts, which endured. However, their intensity was ameliorated by the Westphalian settlement; moreover, from the 1660s onward, they were rarely the *cause* of war, as opposed to an influence on policy-making and a factor used to generate support for wars waged primarily for secular reasons.

Confessional differences were still the chief cause of rebellions and civil wars. When Louis XIV ended toleration of France's Reformed Church in 1685, the bloody persecution that commenced led to a sustained, if limited, Huguenot rebellion in southern France, which lasted until 1715. The Catholic Dukes of Savoy used troops to carry out bloody massacres of their Vaudois subjects in 1655 and again in the late 1680s, the latter prompting armed Vaudois resistance until limited toleration was restored. The Williamite War in Ireland (1689-1691) was essentially a struggle between Catholic and Protestant. Similarly, armed support for the Jacobite rebellions in Scotland and northern England in 1689, 1715, and 1745 came almost entirely from Roman Catholics.

Nevertheless, while foreign powers frequently encouraged the internal confessional opponents of their enemies, giving rise to a number of rebellions, there were no examples of major military interventions on the behalf of such rebels, of the sort regularly carried out by governments in aid of foreign coreligionists during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It is true that, in the 1710s, Catholic persecution of Protestants in the Palatinate (in what today is western Germany) led to so much international tension that, in one historian's breathless phrase, "a German religious war appeared imminent."<sup>2</sup> However, the fact is that, in sharp contrast to the directly analogous situation almost a century earlier, which was one of the chief causes of the Thirty Years' War, such a war did not occur. Although policy-makers in Britain and Prussia, in particular, were still influenced by concern for "the Protestant interest," eighteenth-century efforts to ease the plight of oppressed Protestant minorities were diplomatic, rather than military.<sup>3</sup>

### **Secularization of International Relations**

Scholars increasingly recognize that religious animosity was still a factor in conflict at the international level.<sup>4</sup> As the historian Jeremy Black observes, however, rather than "causing wars in this period," confessional divisions were "more likely to be resorted to in order to encourage support for and to explain a conflict that had already begun."<sup>5</sup> This was recognized by people at the time. In 1665, "during the second Anglo-Dutch War" (a war fought between two Protestant states that in the previous century had been consistent allies against Catholic Spain), an English pamphleteer "insisted that 'wars for religion' were 'but a speculation, an imaginary thing,' . . . 'which wise or rather cunning men make use of to abuse fools.'"<sup>6</sup>

This is symptomatic of the shift in attitudes. It was, to be sure, overly cynical at the time it was written, because even sophisticated people in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were still interested in the plight of coreligionists and could be moved thereby to greater support for a national war effort that aided fellow believers. Many citizens (and indeed statesmen) of Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, the Dutch Republic, and Great Britain saw Louis XIV's France as the embodiment of Catholic aggression. Dutch, British, Danish, and Prussian and other German statesmen played on



these feelings to obtain recruits and extra taxation domestically, and international support, for the Nine Years' War (1689-1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). However, British soldiers fought in the latter conflict to defend the territory of the Holy Roman emperor; and Britain's allies at one time included the Papacy! Nothing could be more indicative of the change in European international relations.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) were "widely portrayed in propaganda as a religious conflict," both in Prussia and in its ally, Great Britain, "a development that was in keeping with the stress on religious animosity" in the internal politics of many European states, including Britain.<sup>7</sup> However, these wars did not have confessional causes. Indeed, when the Calvinist King Frederick II of Prussia ("Frederick the Great") depicted his wars of aggression against Austria as being fought for the Protestant interest, it had terrible consequences for Austrian Protestants. The Hapsburgs took no chances of disloyalty and expelled a number of small Protestant communities, which had been allowed limited religious liberty dating back to the darkest days of the wars with the Ottomans. The threat to the Hapsburgs now came from Protestant Prussia, not the Muslim Ottomans, and Austrian Protestants paid the price. Frederick the Great cared little.

By the middle years of the eighteenth century, then, both international relations and international conflict had largely been secularized. The late eighteenth century was to be the era of international revolution and for the 200 years thereafter, the Western powers were to fight for nationalistic and secular-ideological reasons. They created empires that spanned the globe and spread the notion that this was why wars ought to be waged; they forgot that, for some 300 years, religious war had been an integral part of the experience of Christendom. Only chauvinism made Westerners blind to the fact that, globally, many people still regarded the political process as not being inherently secular. The events of September 11, 2001, were not only a reminder of realities in most of the world, but also a reminder of a largely forgotten era of Western history.

\* \* \*What, then, can be said about the consequences of the era of wars of religion for religious freedom? Are there lessons for the twenty-first-century world from the experiences of Europeans in the late fourteenth through mid-eighteenth centuries?

### **Violence and Intolerance Are Not Christian**

At times, victory in religious war paved the way for persecution and repression that effectively destroyed a religious minority. Yet on other occasions, wars of religion were still stalemated after decades of bloody combat; the result was to help persuade belligerents that compulsion and violence are futile as means for effecting religious conformity and unity, and frequently are incompatible with the religions in whose name they are undertaken.

The failure of decades of sustained military effort to produce religious conformity and uniformity, or unity out of diversity, was apparent to people of the time. Gradually Christians, in particular, recognized that bloodshed on a sometimes-massive scale, carried out to permit persecution in the name of Christ, was difficult if not impossible to reconcile with Christ's own teachings and practices. The Roman Catholic chancellor of mid-sixteenth-century France, Michel de L'Hospital, became convinced during the French Wars of Religion that "to think that this division of minds can be settled by the power of the sword and with gleaming armour" was the height of foolishness.<sup>8</sup> At the colloquy of Poissy (1561), a rare example of sixteenth-century interchurch dialogue, he encouraged the Catholic delegates not to be too quick to condemn those "of the new religion, who are baptized Christians like they are."<sup>9</sup> L'Hospital wanted all Christians to follow the example of Christ, who, as he movingly wrote, "loved peace, and ordered us to abstain from armed violence . . . ; He did not want to compel and terrorise anybody through threats, nor to strike with a sword."<sup>10</sup>

**So much of war and violence carries a religious subtext.**

### **Violence Is Counterproductive**

Here, surely, is a point that Christians would do well to remember. While war in defense of religious freedom may be justifiable at certain times and places, even this can lead to atrocity and the very opposite of the witness Christ wants of the church. And certainly aggressive wars and campaigns of persecution ought never to be an option for followers of Jesus.



By the late seventeenth century the willingness of Christians to shed apparently limitless blood served to delegitimize Christianity. While the coolness to organized religion associated with

the so-called “Enlightenment” was to a great extent the product of the discoveries of the Scientific Revolution, it was also a product of the excesses of the Thirty Years’ War—if that was what Christianity was about, reasoned many European thinkers, then Christianity was something they wanted no part of.

At the same time, the millennial, apocalyptic fervor that was so important a factor in generating and perpetuating the wars between Protestant and Catholic could not be maintained forever—especially when the foreshadowed apocalypse simply did not come. In the words of one historian of the English Civil Wars: “As the years passed and the new dawn did not break in the form expected, interpretations of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John became so diffuse that they began to lose their power to rouse and to unite.”<sup>11</sup> One result was greater willingness to accept religious plurality within a society—or at least greater reluctance to try to eliminate it with the sword! But another was a massive decline in interest in the apocalyptic books of Scripture, which increasingly seemed irrelevant.

The trend away from persecution, and from warfare designed to facilitate persecution, was neither rapid nor inevitable, but it did lead away from religious war. However, whereas in Britain, the Dutch Republic, and parts of Germany it led to a growing embrace of religious tolerance, it also led to a growing skepticism of Christianity, at least as traditionally understood. This skepticism also helped, in turn, to promote a greater degree of toleration, yet was surely the exact opposite of what the devout and holy warriors who waged confessional wars would have wanted.

Persecution, violence, and torture must always be rejected. Even if it seems likely that they will be limited in terms of geographical extent, who will be affected, and duration, and even if it seems that their effects might be wholly laudable (in religious terms), they must still be rejected by any who believe the teachings of the world’s great religions. Repression can take those who embrace it far from the values of common humanity or Christianity. Religious war is dangerous in its consequences. It would be wrong to say that it ought never to be waged, because at times it can be defensive, protecting people who would otherwise suffer imprisonment, torment, and death. But people of faith ought to be wary—more so than we have historically been—of engaging in wars of religion. Wars have consequences, always; and they can be the opposite of what was expected or intended.

At the time of this writing D.J.B. Trim was a professor of history at the University of Reading, England. He recently accepted a position with the Archives and Statistics department at the World Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. This article draws on D.J.B. Trim, “Conflict, Religion, and Ideology,” chapter 13 in F. Tallett and Trim, eds., *European Warfare, 1350–1750* (New York & Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
2. Jeremy Black, ed., “Introduction,” *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), p. 5.
3. See, for example, Andrew C. Thompson, Britain, *Hanover and the Protestant Interest* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006).
4. For example, David Onnekink, ed., *War and Religion After Westphalia, 1648–1713* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009).
5. Black, p. 6.
6. Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (New York & Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 449.
7. Black, p. 6.
8. Quoted in Loris Petris, “Faith and Religious Policy in Michel de L’Hospital’s Civic Evangelism,” in Keith Cameron, Mark Greengrass, and Penny Roberts, eds., *The Adventure of Religious Pluralism in Early Modern France* (New York, Oxford, and Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 136.
9. Quoted in Mario Turchetti, “Middle Parties in France During the Wars of Religion,” in Benedict, et al., eds., *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands, 1555-1585* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1999), p. 170.
10. Quoted in Petris, p. 137.
11. I. M. Green, “‘England’s Wars of Religion’? Religious Conflict and the English Civil Wars,” in J. van den Berg and P. G. Hoftijzer, eds., *Church, Change and Revolution: Transactions of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch Church History Colloquium* (Leiden: E. J. Brill/Leiden University Press, 1991), p. 116.

**Author:** [David J. B. Trim](#)

# Once Upon a Time: A Tale of the 1800s

 [libertymagazine.org/article/once-upon-a-time-a-tale-of-the-1800s](http://libertymagazine.org/article/once-upon-a-time-a-tale-of-the-1800s)

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Sir, I take shame to myself as a member of the General Assembly of 1885, which repealed the acts of religious protection which this bill is intended to restore. It was hasty and ill-advised legislation, and, like all such, has been only productive of oppressive persecution upon many of our best citizens, and of shame to the fair fame of our young and glorious State. Wrong in conception, it has proven infamous in execution, and under it such ill deeds and foul oppressions have been perpetrated upon an inoffensive class of free American citizens in Arkansas, for conscience' sake, as should mantle the check of every lover of his State and country with indignant shame.

For nearly a half century the laws of our State, constitutional and statutory, were in accord with our National Constitution, in guaranteeing to every citizen the right to worship God in the manner prescribed by his own conscience, and that alone. The noble patriots who framed our nation's fundamental law, with the wisdom taught by the history of disastrous results in other nations from joining Church and State, and fully alive to so great a danger to our republican institutions and their perpetuity, so wisely constructed that safeguard of our American liberties that for forty years after its ratification there was no effort to interfere with its grand principle of equal protection to all, in the full enjoyment and exercise of their religious convictions. Then petitions began to pour in from the New England States upon the United States Senate "to prevent the carrying and delivery of the mails upon Sunday"—which they declared was set aside by "divine authority as a day to be kept holy."

The petitions were referred to the committee on postal matters, and the report was made by Hon. Richard M. Johnson, one of the fathers of the Democratic party. I quote the following from that report, which was adopted unanimously and "committee discharged:"—

"Among all the religious persecutions with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered but for violation of what Government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the Constitution has withheld the power of defining the divine law. It is a right reserved to each citizen. And while he respects the rights of others he cannot be held amenable to any human tribunal for his conclusions. . . . The obligation of the Government is the same on both these classes [those who keep Saturday and those who keep Sunday]; and the committee can discover no principle on which the claims of one should be more respected than those of the other, unless it be admitted that the consciences of the minority are less sacred than those of the majority."

Listen to that last sentence—but again I quote:—

"What other nations call religious toleration we call religious rights. They are not exercised in virtue of governmental indulgence, but as rights, of which Government cannot deprive any of its citizens, however small. Despotism may invade these rights, but justice still confirms them."

And again:—

"Let the National Legislature once perform an act which involves the decision of a religious controversy, and it will have passed its legitimate bounds. The precedent will then be established, and the foundation laid, for the usurpation of the





divine prerogative in this country which has been the desolating scourge to the fairest portions of the Old World. Our Constitution recognizes no other power than that of persuasion, for enforcing religious observances."

Sir, it was my privilege during the last two years to travel through our Northwestern States in the interest of immigration. I delivered public lectures upon the material resources of Arkansas, and the inducements held out by her to those who desired homes in a new State. I told them of her cloudless skies and tropical climes, and bird songs as sweet as vesper chimes. I told them of her mountains and valleys, of her forest of valuable timber, her thousands of miles of navigable waters, her gushing springs, her broad, flower-decked and grass-carpeted prairies, sleeping in the golden sunshine of unsettled solitude. I told them, sir, of the rich stores of mineral wealth sleeping in the sunless depths of her bosom. I told them of our God-inspired liquor laws, of our "pistol laws," of our exemption laws, and, oh, sir! God forgive me the lie—I told them that our Constitution and laws protected all men equally in the enjoyment and exercise of their religious convictions. I told them that the sectional feeling engendered by the war was a thing of the past, and that her citizens, through me, cordially invited them to come and share this glorious land with us, and aid us to develop it.

Many came and settled up our wild lands and prairies, and where but a few years ago was heard in the stillness of the night the howl of the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the wail of the wildcat, these people for whom I am pleading came and settled; and behold the change! Instead of the savage sounds incident to the wilderness, now is heard the tap, tap, tap of the mechanic's hammer, the rattle and roar of the railroad, the busy hum of industry, and softer, sweeter far than all these is heard the music of the church bells as they ring in silvery chimes across the prairies and valleys, and are echoed back from the hill-sides throughout the borders of our whole State.

These people are, many of them, Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-day Baptists. They are people who religiously and conscientiously keep Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath, in accordance with the fourth commandment. They find no authority in the Scripture for keeping Sunday, the first day of the week, nor can anyone else. All commentators agree that Saturday is and was the scriptural Sabbath, and that the keeping of Sunday, the first day of the week, as the Sabbath, is of human origin, and not by divine injunction. The Catholic writers and all theologians agree in this.

These people understand the decalogue to be fully as binding upon them today as when handed down amid the thunders of Sinai. They do not feel at liberty to abstain from their usual avocations, because they read the commandment, "Six days shalt thou labor," as mandatory, and they believe that they have no more right to abstain from labor on the first day of the week than they have to neglect the observance of Saturday as their Sabbath. They agree with their Christian brethren of other denominations in all essential points of doctrine, the one great difference being upon the day to be kept as the Sabbath. They follow no avocations tending to demoralize the community in which they live. They came among us expecting the same protection in the exercise of their religious faith as is accorded to them in all the States of Europe, in South Africa, Australia, the Sandwich Islands, and every State in the Union except, alas! that I should say it, Arkansas! Sir, under the existing law there have been in Arkansas within the last two years three times as many cases of persecution for conscience' sake as there have been in all the other States combined since the adoption of our National Constitution.

Let me, sir, illustrate the operation of the present law by one or two examples. A Mr. Swearigen came from a Northern State and settled a farm in \_\_\_\_ County. His farm was four miles from town and far away from any house of religious worship. He was a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and, after having sacredly observed the Sabbath of his people (Saturday) by abstaining from all secular work, he and his son, a lad of seventeen, on the first day of the week, went quietly about their usual avocations. They disturbed no one—interfered with the rights of no one. But they were observed, and reported to the grand jury—indicted, arrested, tried, convicted, fined—and having no money to pay the fine, these moral Christian citizens of Arkansas were dragged to the county jail and imprisoned like felons for twenty-five days—and for what? For daring, in this so-called land of liberty, in the year of our Lord 1887, to worship God.

Was this the end of the story? Alas, no, sir! They were turned out; and the old man's only horse, his sole reliance to make bread for his children, was levied on to pay the fine and costs, amounting to \$38. The horse sold at auction for \$27. A few days afterward the sheriff came again and demanded \$36, \$11 balance due on fine and costs, and \$25 for board for himself and son while in jail. And when the poor old man—a Christian, mind you—told him with tears that he had no money, he promptly levied on his only cow, but was persuaded to accept bond, and the amount was paid by contributions from his friends of the same faith. Sir, my heart swells to bursting with indignation as I repeat to you the infamous story.

Another, and I am done. Sir, I beg you and these senators to believe that these are neither fancy nor exaggerated sketches. Five years ago a young man, newly married, came to \_\_\_\_ County from Ohio. The young girl had left father

and mother, brothers and sisters, and all the dear friends of her childhood, to follow her young husband to Arkansas—to them the land of promise. The light of love sparkled in her bright young eyes. The roses of health were upon her cheeks, and her silvery laugh was sweet music, of which her young husband never wearied. They purchased a little farm, and soon, by tireless industry and frugal thrift, their home blossomed like a rose in the wilderness. After a while a fair young babe came to them to brighten the sunshine and sweeten the bird songs. They were happy in each other's affection and their love for the little one. For them "all things worked together for good;" for in their humble, trusting way, they worshiped God and loved their fellow-men.

Two years ago the law under which their prosperity and happiness had had its growth was repealed! Accused be the day which brought such a foul blot upon our State's fair fame! A change, sudden, cold, and blasting as an Arctic storm, came over their lives and pitilessly withered all their bright flowers of hope. Under this repeal, persecution lifted its ugly, venomous head. The hero of my sad story was observed by an envious, jealous neighbor, quietly working, as he believed God had commanded him, on Sunday. He was reported to that inquisitorial relic of barbarism, the grand jury—indicted, tried, convicted, and thrown into jail because his conscience would not let him pay the fine.

Week after week dragged its slow length along. Day after day the young wife, with baby in her arms, watched at the gate for his coming, and, like Tennyson's Marianna—

"She only said: 'My life is dreary—

He cometh not,' she said.

She said: 'I am aweary—aweary—

I would that I were dead.'"

Then baby sickened and died—the light in the young wife's eyes faded out in tears—her silvery laugh changed to low, wailing sobs. Pale-faced Misery snatched the roses from her cheeks and planted in their stead her own pallid hue. Sir, how can I go on? At length the cruel law was appeased, and this inoffensive citizen (except that he had loved God and sought to obey him) was released from prison and dragged his weary feet to the happy home he had left a few short weeks before. He met his neighbors at the gate bearing a coffin. He asked no questions, his heart told him all. No, not all! He knew not—he could never know—of her lonely hours, of her bitter tears, of the weary watching and waiting, of the appeals to God, that God for whom she had suffered so much, for help in the hour of her extremity, of baby's sickness and death. He could not know of these. But he went with them to the quiet country burial-place and saw beside the open grave a little mound with dirt freshly heaped upon it, and then he knew that God had taken both his heart's idols and he was left alone. His grief was too deep for tears. With staring eyes he saw them lower the body of his young wife into the grave. He heard the clods rattle upon the coffin, and it seemed as if they were falling upon his heart. The work was done, and they left him with his dead, and then he threw himself down between the graves, with an arm across each little mound, and the tears came in torrents, and kept his heart from breaking. And then he sobbed his broken farewell to his darlings and left Arkansas forever. Left it, sir, as hundreds of others are preparing to leave if this general assembly fails to restore them the protection of their rights under the Constitution, national and State.

On next Monday, at Malvern, six as honest, good, and virtuous citizens as live in Arkansas are to be tried as criminals for daring to worship God in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences; for exercising a right which this Government, under the Constitution, has no power to abridge. Sir, I plead, in the name of justice, in the name of our republican institutions, in the name of these inoffensive, God-fearing, God-serving people, our fellow-citizens, and last, sir, in the name of Arkansas, I plead that this bill may pass, and this one foul blot be wiped from the escutcheon of our glorious commonwealth.

\*This article appeared in *The Sentinel Library* of January 15, 1889. It is the principal part of a speech by Senator Robert H. Crockett in behalf of a bill that he had introduced into the Legislature granting immunity from the penalties of the Sunday law to those who observe the seventh day. The editors wrote: "Of course not a tithe of the persecutions which have been carried on could be mentioned in the speech; and the speaker also forgot that similar outrages have been perpetrated in Tennessee, where a rigid Sunday law has also existed. We are happy to announce that the eloquent plea for liberty and justice was successful, as the bill passed both houses of the Legislature by a large majority." The speech had appeared in the *Weekly Arkansas Gazette* of February 10, 1887.

**Author: Robert H. Crockett**

