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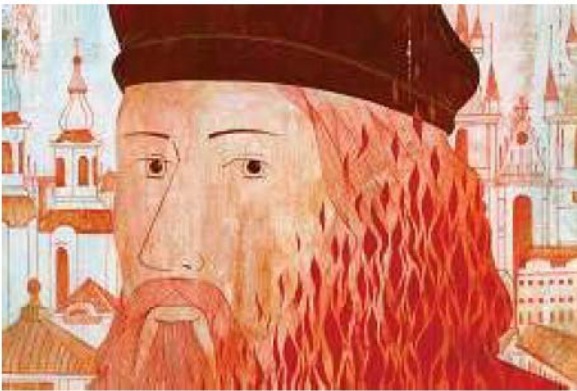
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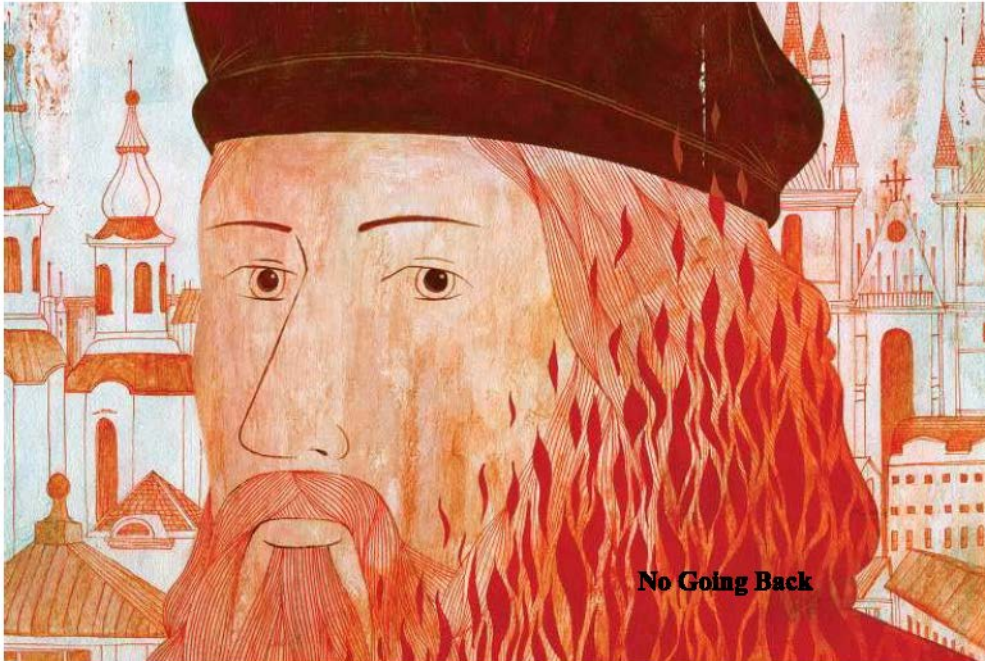
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Published in the March/April 2016 (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/issue/march-april-2016>) Magazine

by

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On July 6, 1415, in Konstanz, Germany, the cathedral was filled to capacity. The air was heavy as Jacob Balardi Arrigoni, bishop of Lodi, preached from the text "that the body of sin be destroyed" (Rom. 6:6). Cardinals, replete with miters, sat in a semicircle around a man in chains, his body emaciated from hunger after having spent a year in prison. The Holy Roman emperor, Sigismund, occupied the regal throne.

Jan Hus was born about 1370 in a peasant home in southern Bohemia (today a part of the Czech Republic).¹ For the most part, his early life was unexceptional, with the exception, perhaps, of his hunger for education. Hus obtained a master's degree in 1396 from the University of Prague and became much better known when, in 1402, he was appointed preacher of Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, a church founded in 1391 to facilitate preaching in the vernacular.

Two key factors had impacted citizens of Prague. Early Waldensian missionaries had circulated copies of the Scripture in the vernacular, and two early wandering missionaries drew pictures contrasting the lowly Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey with all the pomp surrounding a papal retinue.² Equally important were copies of writings from an English reformer. "Wyclif, Wyclif," noted Hus in one such early manuscript, "you will turn many heads."³

Schism

Debates over Wyclif were overshadowed by the Papal Schism (1378-1417) as rival popes anathematized each other. Although Hus never took a direct role in the conflict, two men close to him did play an active role, which, in turn, impacted Hus.

The first was King Václav IV (Wenceslaus), who was a weak and unpopular ruler with a foul temper, surrounded by incompetent advisers, and a drunkard, twice imprisoned.⁴ His reign (1378-1419) spiraled gradually downward with the exception of his second wife, Žofie, who gave her husband, on the occasion of their wedding, a wagon full of conjurers and juggling fools. Queen Žofie chose Hus as her confessor, attended his sermons at Bethlehem Chapel, and used her influence to further reform and protect Hus.

The second person to influence Hus was Zbyněk, who in 1402, at the age of 25, outbid other contenders to obtain the archbishopric of Prague for 2,800 gulden. However, as a pious military man, he still lacked theological training and was therefore inept at church administration. The writings of Wyclif were declared heretical before he took office. As the Papal Schism dragged on, concern about heresy in Bohemia grew as a major concern of the papacy.

Václav, for his part, hoped that if he supported the right papal contender he could regain the title of Holy Roman Emperor, a title lost in 1400. In 1409 he shifted his support from the Roman pope, Gregory XII, to the newly elected Pisan pope, Alexander V. The task of Zbyněk was simple: eliminate heresy and help Václav regain his title. But after the king changed his papal allegiance, Zbyněk refused to recognize Alexander V.

Hus was a powerful and charismatic preacher. As the power struggle played out, he condemned papal corruption. Hus ridiculed the power that priests claimed for themselves. In the process, Hus turned to the Bible as the benchmark for all aspects of Christian doctrine and lifestyle. He saw that the Scriptures were eclipsed through church tradition.

Hus confronted the archbishop: "How is it that fornicating and otherwise criminal priests walk about freely . . . while humble priests . . . are jailed as heretics and suffer exile for the very proclamation of the gospel?"⁵

Such a direct confrontation turned Zbyněk to be his sworn enemy. Zbyněk often sent spies to listen to Hus's sermons. In one instance, Hus accosted one such spy from the pulpit: "Hey, you in the hood, make a note of this, you sneak, and carry it over there," he told the infiltrator as he pointed toward the archiepiscopal residence.⁶ Hus was afterward cited before a hearing, but successfully defended himself with popular support from the queen and the public.

Zbyněk now complained to Pope Alexander V, who issued a papal bull calling for an investigation of heresy and demanding that preaching of Scripture in private chapels immediately stop. Hus spoke publicly against the bull, which prompted even more hostility from Zbyněk. In return, on July 16, 1410, more than 200 works of Wyclif were set ablaze.

"I call it a poor business," responded Hus. "Such bonfires never yet removed a sin from the hearts of men. Fire does not consume truth. It is always the mark of a little mind that it vents its anger on inanimate objects. The books which have been burned are a loss to the whole people."⁷

The king and archbishop upped the ante, which culminated in another writ of excommunication against Hus in February 1411. In the end, Zbyněk was forced to back off and clear Hus of all charges. In the process that was supposed to vindicate Hus, the archbishop strategically moved the final public declaration to the city of Bologna. The king, fearing a trap, forbade Hus from going. "If anyone wants to accuse Hus of any charge, let them do it here in our kingdom. . . . It does not seem right to give up this useful preacher to the discrimination of his enemies."⁸ It appears likely that Queen Žofie prompted Václav's protective maneuver.

Indulgences

Politics in Italy spilled over into a new push for indulgences. In 1412 Pope John XXIII (one of the three popes who emerged during the Papal Schism) proclaimed a crusade against the king of Naples, who had taken over Rome. In order to fund this new venture, the pope began a widespread sale of indulgences. Revenues raised in Bohemia would be split with the king, so even Václav stood to profit from the venture. Prague quickly became a center of indulgences.

Hus once again was outspoken, using Scripture to condemn these indulgences. He was incredulous that a holy war was planned in order to secure the power of the Papacy. Now Hus was summoned to appear before the newly elected archbishop of Prague, Albiš. "Even if the fire to burn my body were placed before my eyes," he stated defiantly, "I would not obey."⁹ The king ordered Hus to submit to ecclesiastical authority.

Until now Hus had tried to reform the church from within. Now everything had changed. "In a word, the papal institution is full of poison, antichrist himself, the man of sin, the leader of the army of the devil, a limb of Lucifer, the head vicar of the fiend, a simple idiot who might be a damned devil in hell, and more horrible idol than a painted log."¹⁰

Protests turned ugly in Prague. The preaching of Hus electrified the people. Three protesters were beheaded, becoming the first Hussite martyrs. The whole business was an embarrassment to King Václav, who denounced Hus as a troublemaker. Even Queen Žofie was unable to quench the king's wrath. The conditions for reconciliation were simple: Hus must agree that the pope is the head of the church and must be obeyed. Hus refused to compromise and was excommunicated yet a fourth time. Prague was placed under interdict (no church ordinances or services could take place), and on October 15, 1412, Hus went into a voluntary exile. "I am a fugitive," he noted to a friend.¹¹

The Council

In late 1414, Pope John XXIII convened a council in Constance with two purposes: to end the Papal Schism and to eradicate heresy. Hus accepted an invitation to attend the council. On October 11, 1414, he drafted his will and departed, riding on his horse Rabštýn. Friends warned him that this was a trap, but Emperor Sigismund, Václav's half brother, promised him safe conduct. Along the way a herald announced that there was a dangerous man chained to a wagon who could read minds. The publicity created opportunities for Hus to share his faith. At each inn he stayed in, he left behind a printed copy of the Ten Commandments.¹²

When Hus first arrived in Constance, the site of the council, in one of his earliest surviving letters he noted the high cost of food.¹³ This may have at least partially reflected his concern for money, because he borrowed funds to pay for the trip. During this early period his letters to his friends are even somewhat playful. He liked to make jokes about his name "Hus" (which means "goose"), noting that "the goose is not yet cooked and is not afraid of being cooked."¹⁴ Within a week he was arrested.

Now as Hus sat in a dark and putrid Dominican prison, he grew sick. In some of his letters he requested warm clothes and food. Hus was beginning to starve and would have died from disease had not a papal physician relocated him to better quarters. As he recovered, he requested a Bible several times from his friends. His heart longed to study the Scriptures. Just as painful, for Hus, was the fact that he was deprived of Communion.¹⁵ Hus recognized just how grave his situation was, warning friends not to open his letters until they were certain of his death.¹⁶

Hus prayed to God to give him strength to remain faithful to Christ and Scripture, and despite whatever judgment the council might determine, he regularly observed that all humans must answer before the divine judgment of God.¹⁷ As the council proceeded, one can see one of Hus's most profound theological contributions that laid the groundwork for the Protestant Reformation a century later: he argued that it was Christ, not the pope, who stood as the true head of the church.¹⁸ A thorough study of the Scriptures finally led him to condemn the church he initially hoped to reform. He acknowledged that not every believer is by default a member of the Catholic Church. Instead, a person must be "of the church" or a genuine member of the church of Christ, even if one was not a part of the Church of Rome. Hus matured in his understanding of the church. He thus developed a distinctive ecclesiology away from Rome and paved the way for the Protestant Reformation.¹⁹



Once Hus made this distinction between the Roman Church and Christ, it was not very difficult to see that mortals, including popes and councils, can err. Hus championed biblical authority. Scripture should and must reign supreme over all human authority. "For this truth [of faith], on account of its certitude, a man ought to risk his life. And in this way a man is not bound to believe the sayings of the saints that are far from Scripture; nor should he believe papal bulls except insofar as what they say is founded on Scripture simply."²⁰

Together, Hus's view of the church, combined with his understanding about the supreme authority of Scripture, represented a scathing rebuke of the Roman Church and its hierarchy. The life of Hus demonstrates the gradual unfolding of a man who discovered his mission. He believed that all authority should rest on the Bible alone. In this sense "Hus was not an

original theologian."²¹ Instead, his skill lay in taking the ideas of Wyclif as a radical rejection of a flawed power system that had developed within the church. In this way, Hus served almost as a "dress rehearsal" for later Protestant Reformers, especially Martin Luther, who frequently referenced Hus.²²

The Cooked Goose

As the Council of Constance continued its proceedings, Hus tried to initially refute charges and defend himself, but he was routinely shouted down by conciliar fathers who denounced him as arrogant or stubborn. One such person, a Polish bishop, shouted, "Do not permit him to recant; even if he does recant, he will not keep to it."²³

The final session arrived on July 6. Thirty charges were presented against the accused heretic. Some were simply outrageous—one even insinuated that Hus believed that he was the fourth member of the Godhead. Hus, of course, rejected such outlandish charges, but he was unable to defend himself. At the end, Pierre d'Ailly, the presiding cardinal, gave Hus one last opportunity. Hus responded by asking them to prove his errors from the Bible. The bishops dismissed him for being "obstinate in heresy."²⁴ All the way to the end Hus stuck to his bedrock belief in the primacy of Scripture.

Hus was now ordered to be silent. He dropped to his knees on the stone floor. His books were condemned to be burned. Hus prayed out loud to Christ to forgive his judges and accusers. One last time the council offered: "Recant or die."

The bishop of Lodi next gave his sermon about destroying the body of sin, followed by seven bishops who placed priestly vestments upon Hus. He was defrocked. In turn each bishop tore off the vestments from his body, saying, "O cursed Judas . . . we take from you the cup of redemption." They finally concluded with the words "we commit your soul to the devil." Crowned with a paper miter with the inscription "This is a heresiarch," he was the

the streets of Constance to the place of death. Hus was bound to the stake with a sooty chain and wood piled to his chin.

Hus uttered his last words: "God is my witness that . . . the principal intention of my preaching and of all my other acts or writings was solely that I might turn men from sin. And in that the truth of the gospel that I wrote, taught, and preached in accordance with the sayings and expositions of the holy doctors, I am willing gladly to die today." As the flames and smoke rose, his voice could be heard in song: "Jesus, son of the living God, have mercy on me."²⁵ At last the goose was cooked.

A Mission to Uphold the Scripture

All throughout his life Hus developed a theology of suffering. He was fiercely loyal to the church, which is quite ironic, since it was the church that condemned him to death. "He bound his conscience to truth and refused to deviate from the pathway of truth, regardless of cost or consequence, without regard for personal safety or ultimate destination."²⁶ For Hus the Scriptures were the source of all truth about Jesus Christ. And as a man on a mission, he exalted Jesus Christ, who suffered for him as his true model. In fact, it was but a small thing and a privilege to suffer for Christ. "Do not fear to die for Christ if you wish to live with Christ," he admonished one priest.²⁷ As a man on a mission, this meant that he would stand for truth, no matter the consequences.

In the final days and weeks leading up to his death, Hus was plagued with a series of dreams. In some of them he was haunted by dark and foreboding thoughts. In one such dream he saw a group of painters come and destroy the walls of his beloved Bethlehem Chapel, where there were painted biblical scenes. As the vandals destroyed the artwork, he saw another group of painters who repainted the scenes in even more vivid colors.²⁸ He believed all the way to the end that if it were God's will, He could spare his life just as he had done for many other individuals in salvation history. Yet he also knew that perhaps God had a purpose in his laying down his life. During his execution he was reported to say: "You are now going to burn a goose, but in a century you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil."²⁹

Hus spawned a movement. He rejected any doctrine or practice not found in the Bible. Similarly, he denounced the abuse of power within the church. His stubborn insistence about the primacy of Scripture caused one papal visitor to label him the most dangerous heretic since Christ came to this earth!³⁰ Hus placed the authority of the Bible above the church. Thus, perhaps the greatest tribute to this man on a mission was the translation of the Bible into Czech, the Kralice Bible, which is still used today.

1 Some of the basic biographical information is constructed from Thomas A. Fudge, *The Memory and Motivation of Jan Hus, Medieval Priest and Martyr* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2013); *The Trial of Jan Hus: Medieval Heresy and Criminal Procedure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

2 See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911). White based her account of Hus upon the nineteenth-century historians J. H. Merle d'Aubigné and J. A. Wylie.

3 Thomas A. Fudge, "To Build a Fire," *Christian History* 68, no. 4 (2000): 10–18.

4 Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought: The Fascinating Story of the Great Christian Thinkers and How They Helped Shape the World as We Know It Today* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2003), p. 172.

5 Jan Hus to Archbishop Zbyněk, July 6, 1408, in *The Letters of John Hus*, p. 22.

6 Quoted by Fudge, "To Build a Fire."

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 *The Letters of John Hus*, p. 92.

12 Ibid., pp. 126, 132.

13 Ibid., p. 130.

14 Quoted by Fudge, "To Build a Fire."

15 See *The Letters of John Hus*, pp.135, 153–155.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

18 Cf. *The Letters of John Hus*, pp. 96–101. For an extended treatment of Hus's ecclesiology, see Matthew Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966).

19 Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), pp. 576, 577.

20 John Hus, *De Ecclesia*, trans. David S. Schaff (New York: Scribner's, 1915), cited by Allison, p. 84.

21 Hill, p.175.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

23 Quoted by Fudge, "To Build a Fire."

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 Fudge, *The Memory and Motivation of Jan Hus*, p. 247.

27 *The Letters of John Hus*, p. 170.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

29 Hill, p. 176.

30 *The Letters of John Hus*, p. 161.

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Roger Williams, after his banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, had but one great objective to which he devoted the rest of his life, and that was to establish a government in America that might become the model for future generations, and also to create an asylum for the oppressed and persecuted of every religious faith, not only in America, but also in Europe. He believed that in order for citizens to enjoy the greatest peace and prosperity, the church and state should be entirely divorced and separated in their functions. He believed that truth was its own best defender, and that it needed neither aid from the civil government nor carnal force to advance its tenets. "The armies of truth," he said, "like the armies of the Apocalypse, must have no sword, helmet, breastplate, shield, or horse, but what is spiritual and of a heavenly nature."

The Puritans likewise believed in religious liberty, but they thought that this blessing should not be enjoyed by any dissenting sects that were not in agreement with the Puritan faith. In fact, the Puritans fled to America that they might enjoy the blessing of religious freedom in worship, which was denied them in England before the Puritan Parliament came into supreme power under Oliver Cromwell. After the Puritans gained the ascendancy in political power in England, and even before that political upheaval, they denied to others the religious liberty that they demanded for themselves. Oliver Cromwell exposed this fault of the Puritans, of both the Presbyterians and the Independents, in a speech on the dissolution of Parliament when he said: "Is it ingenuous to ask liberty and not give it? What greater hypocrisy for those who were oppressed by the bishop to become the greatest oppressors themselves so soon as their yoke was removed?"

This has ever been the case. There never yet has been a sect that has been oppressed, which, when gained the ascendancy in numbers and strength, did not in turn oppress the weaker dissenting sects through governmental agencies and law. It is human to oppress when entrusted with power, but it is divine to grant liberty to all men, whether they agree with us or not.

Roger Williams had caught this divine concept and principle of love, and he practiced it in his life and in his dealings with his fellow men; and the American people did well in rendering him a tardy justice and honor in the tercentenary celebration to his memory. He was in the truest sense the apostle of religious liberty to America in those turbulent and malevolent times when no man was permitted to call his faith and his soul his own. He was 150 years ahead of his day in thinking and in practicing both civil and religious liberty principles.

In fact, his ideals of total separation of church and state have never been completely carried out, even in America, in spite of our boast of religious freedom in this favored land. Our government has never divorced itself in its functions from the legal sanctions of religion and religious observances, nor from religious persecution of dissenting sects that are not in agreement with those religious legal sanctions. Full religious liberty has never yet been granted to the individual, in spite of the constitutional guarantee that vouchsafes complete religious liberty and freedom of conscience in religion.



he sacredly guarded.

As soon as Roger Williams arrived in America in 1631, he began to preach absolute liberty of religion for every sect, and for so-called heretics, and even for infidels; and he sensed that this cherished blessing for all men could never be realized without a complete separation of the church from the state. He failed, however, to convince the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Having incurred their ill will, he was banished by them because he taught that the "civil magistrate should not punish anyone for the breach of the first four commandments" of the Decalogue, or "interfere in matters of religion and conscience," nor should he "constrain anyone to this or that form of religion." Such doctrine, which at present is considered in America as sound doctrine, was then called "damnable heresy."

The banishment of Williams made him more determined than ever to plant the seeds of civil and religious liberty in America, and to found an independent government in which all could worship God in harmony with the dictates of their own conscience, in which no one could be molested by the civil magistrate so long as he conducted himself as a good citizen in purely civil matters. He decided to prepare settlements in the New World for all who were religiously oppressed in Europe as well as in America. He made his first appeal to the Independents, or Separatists, then to the Baptists and the Quakers, to come to the plantations of Rhode Island. They came from all lands in large numbers, and were granted perfect freedom of worship for all faiths. In justification of his doctrine of the absolute separation of church and state, Roger Williams said:

"The civil sword may make a nation of hypocrites and anti-Christians, but not one Christian." "Christ Jesus, the deepest politician [statesman] that ever was, . . . commands a toleration of anti-Christians." "The civil magistrates [are] bound to preserve the bodies of their subjects, not to destroy them for conscience's sake." "Seducing teachers, either pagan, Jewish, or anti-Christian, may yet be obedient subjects of the civil laws."

"Christ's lilies may flourish in His church, notwithstanding the abundance of weeds in the world permitted." "A national church [is] not instituted by Jesus Christ." "The civil commonwealth, and the spiritual commonwealth, the church, [are] not inconsistent, though independent the one on the other." "Pursuing of men to godliness or God's worship [is] the greatest cause." "Masters of families, under the gospel, are not charged to force all under him from their own [back to Top](#)

Many of the states in the union still have religious statutes upon their books, which have been retained from colonial times, when America had a union of church and state, and these religious laws are permitted to override the federal constitution and its guarantee of religious liberty to the individual. All that is needed to kindle the flames of religious persecution today is to elect a religious bigot to a civil office, and these un-American laws will be invoked against the nonconformist who dares to assert the supremacy of conscience in religious matters.

The more austere and conscientious a person is in his religious convictions, the greater is the danger that he will become a persecutor of those who happen to disagree with him, provided he is entrusted with power. Like Saul the persecutor, this type of person is always actuated by the idea that in persecuting dissenters he is doing God valiant service.

The religious legalist, no matter how pious he may be, is never tolerant. Force, instead of love, is the propelling power of his religion. Everything and everybody must bow to his religious convictions. The dissenter has no right to his convictions, because he cannot be right in the sight of a self-satisfied legalist.

Roger Williams was not a legalist in religious matters. He was a dissenter, and he believed that others had the same right to dissent from his views, and that the right of dissent for all should be sacredly protected by law, so that all might stand on an equality before the bar of justice. The pages of history are stained with the blood of millions of martyrs, for the simple reason that both the church and the state failed to recognize that the right to dissent should

conscience to his.” “Persons may with less sin be forced to marry whom they cannot love, than to worship when they cannot believe.” “Christ Jesus never appointed a maintenance of ministers from the unconverted and unbelieving.”

Roger Williams vehemently opposed what he called “the most deplorable statute in English law,” namely, the statute that compelled everybody, without distinction or religious faith, to attend the divine services in his parish every Sunday. In assailing this statute, Williams said: “An unbelieving soul is dead in sin, and to drag an unbeliever from one form of worship to another is the same thing as changing the clothes of a corpse.”

With equal earnestness he combated the practice of forced contributions for the benefit of ministers of religion. His adversaries asked: “Is not the laborer worthy of his hire?” “Yes,” Williams replied, “from them that hire him, from the church.”

Perhaps no sects suffered greater hardships and persecutions for their faith during the seventeenth century than the Anabaptists and the “Sabbatarian Baptists,” the latter now being called “Seventh Day Baptists.” Roger Williams espoused the cause of these persecuted people, and offered them an asylum in Rhode Island. In 1671 the first Sabbatarian church in America was formed in Rhode Island. Evidently this movement created a stir; for a report went over to England that the Rhode Island colony did not keep the Sabbath—meaning Sunday.

Roger Williams wrote to his friends in England denying the report, but calling attention to the fact that there was no scripture for “abolishing the seventh day,” and adding: “You know yourselves do not keep the Sabbath, that is, the seventh day” (“Letters of Roger Williams” [Narragansett Club Publications], Vol. VI, p. 346).

Roger Williams not only offered the seventh-day observers an asylum, but championed their cause as being the most scriptural. Rhode Island became the stronghold of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination, which had large, flourishing churches. One of their members later became a governor of Rhode Island.

Roger Williams was truly an apostle of religious liberty sent from God to America. The cause of religious liberty in America may still produce great leaders in defense of those fundamental principles, but it will be difficult for any to excel Roger Williams in the purity and logic of his reasoning, in the breadth of conception, and in the sincerity of the advocacy of sound principles in that cause. Indeed, he dug diamonds in the rough out of the mine of liberty, others polished them; he plowed the first furrow across a virgin field, others cultivated the plowed ground; he cut the original pattern of liberty, others copied it; he was as a sun shining in its meridian brightness, all others were as satellites revolving around him.

Author: Charles Small Longacre (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/charles-small-longacre>)

Charles Small Longacre was editor of *Liberty* from 1913-1942. He wrote this in 1939.

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True Champion of Religious Freedom

Published in the March/April 2016 (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/issue/march-april-2016>) Magazine
by Gregory W. Hamilton (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/gregory-w.-hamilton>)

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When I was informed by family members that Elder John V. Stevens had passed away on Friday evening, November 30, 2015, I sat down, took in a deep breath, and reflected on the many years I had listened to him preach and teach, the many times he had helped and trained me to mediate workplace discrimination issues involving the seventh-day Sabbath, and the time he had made a special trip to attend my ordination to the gospel ministry at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, in 1992.

John was a father-like mentor to me. He will live on in my memory as one of the most competent and powerful spokesmen for religious freedom and human rights I have ever known. In my estimation, only two other individuals stand out so distinctly in the annals of religious freedom advocacy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church—Alonso T. Jones, the first editor of a religious liberty journal, and Bert Beach, who pioneered interchurch dialogue.

John Stevens was a man of unwavering conviction, and his philosophical rationale was pioneering in nature and bold for his era, particularly within Adventist Church settings and Evangelical circles, where his messages were extremely challenging, and often counterintuitive and controversial. For example, John held strongly to what he believed was biblical truth. The Bible and Bible prophecy shaped and guided his worldview, but he did not use his well-founded beliefs in a way that forced others, through law, to believe those same truths. In other words, he could discuss the pros and cons of abortion; he could personally oppose honoring Sunday as the day of Christian worship because of its pagan origins; and he could oppose same-sex unions; and yet at the same time oppose all constitutional amendments that sought to make religion, or any aspect of it, the law of the land. Freedom of choice and freedom of conscience was the most sacred of rights that both God and the Constitution bestowed to humanity, and it was not humanity's or government's jurisdiction to impose both acts of worship and religious beliefs on society.



John V. Stevens, Sr. observes California governor, Jerry Brown signing conscience-exemption legislation.

To John, this meant essentially that in order for the free exercise of religion to thrive, it was best for both church and state to know and respect their boundaries. The constitutional separation of church and state must be championed and preserved at all times, or the free exercise of religion as we know it today would become compromised. This is because, in terms of understanding America's natural bent toward Puritan views of "exceptionalism," religious powers—during an extreme time of world unrest—would eventually find success in dictating its religious demands to the state and thus all of its citizens. This was never the constitutional Founders' intent, and yet so many Evangelical Christians believe that it was. For Christians to demand an end to the constitutional separation of church and state—as many have during the past 45 years—was a prophetic sign for John and others of us that the end of America's beloved constitutional system is close at hand, and that Christ is soon to come. It deeply pained John to see so many Evangelical Christians buy into a historical revisionism that emphasized an actual intent to have a Christian nation government.

In regard to those concerned that irreligion and irreligious forces would pose a much greater threat through government sanction, as with the U.S. Supreme Court's legalization of same-sex marriage, John frequently responded by saying that the Bible indicated that in the last days religious powers would claim the ascendancy over the state as both a premeditated endeavor on their part and not just a reaction to secularism run amok, and that this would merely fuel them further in achieving their ultimate utopian aim of establishing a Christian nation by law, even in the midst of a nation of vast religious pluralism.

But his views went even deeper. John believed that Vatican II's inclusion of religious freedom for the first time in Catholic Church history—in the document written and pioneered by Jesuit priest and theologian John Courtney Murray known as *Dignitatis Humanae*—paved the way for a Catholic definition of religious freedom that conservative Protestant Evangelicals in the United States found convincing, and led the way forward in revising U.S. constitutional history. *Dignitatis Humanae* championed the free exercise of religion but rejected, through purposeful silence, the Western constitutional doctrine of the separation of church and state found in Europe and more specifically in the establishment clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. John believed that this was the basis for much of the historical revisionism that emerged from the pens and voices of Francis Schaeffer, Christian dominionist R. J. Rushdoony, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and David Barton in the 1970s until now.

While serving as the director of the public affairs and religious liberty department of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (1974-1993), John published a quarterly newsletter called *Undercurrent*, in which he would compile a list of key news pieces and quotes that warned against this kind of historical revisionism. It was an extremely controversial publication, but it found its way into church bulletins all across a five-state region in the Pacific Southwest.

John would transfer this same zeal for religious freedom to the international arena of several Communist countries. His church-state diplomatic efforts were focused, in his words, "in the interest of fostering greater liberties for all religious persuasions." Early in his pastoral ministry years he served as Arizona's senate chaplain, and as president of the Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, where the number of new believers and new churches established, nearly doubled.

His other professional experiences included helping to found the Council on Religious Freedom (CRF) and to vigorously oppose, on First Amendment grounds, President Ronald Reagan's appointment of the first permanent ambassador to the Vatican's Holy See in 1984.

There are many other accomplishments, but John's signature achievement was in introducing, shepherding, and helping to pass California Assembly Bill 2744 (AB 2744) in 1974. Claude Morgan and John Stevens stood on either side of Governor Jerry Brown as the governor signed this public employee's collective bargaining bill that contained a conscience amendment provision for religious objectors.

Rest in peace, John. Job well done, thou good and faithful servant of Christ. Jesus is coming soon!

Author: Gregory W. Hamilton (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/gregory-w.-hamilton>)

Gregory W. Hamilton is President of the Northwest Religious Liberty Association (NRLA). Established in 1906, the Northwest Religious Liberty Association is a non-partisan government relations and legal mediation services program that champions religious freedom and human rights for all people and institutions of faith in the legislative, civic, academic, interfaith and corporate arenas in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Mr. Hamilton wrote the seminal work, "Sandra Day O'Connor's Judicial Philosophy on the Role of Religion in Public Life," published in 1998 by Baylor University. From

time to time, Greg publishes Liberty Express, a journal dedicated to special printed issues of interest on America's constitutional founding, church history and its developmental impact on today's church-state debates, and current constitutional and foreign policy trends. He is available to speak in North America and internationally about these subjects and related issues. To become familiar with the Northwest Religious Liberty Association, please visit www.urla.com.

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by Céleste Perrino-Walker (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/celeste-perrino-walker>)*

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When Maria Goldstein ordered 500 copies of a flyer at Office Depot online on August 20, 2015, she was in for a big surprise. The flyer was meant to be handed out in conjunction with a weeklong prayer and fasting campaign at her church aimed at educating people and changing opinions about abortion. It contained statistics about abortion in the U.S. in general and the nonprofit organization Planned Parenthood in particular, as well as “A Prayer for the Conversion of Planned Parenthood,” written by Fr. Frank Pavone, the national director of Priests for Life and a prominent pro-life leader. She intended to pick her order up at the Schaumburg, Illinois, Office Depot, which was close to her home, but she received a phone message from a store employee saying that she needed to discuss the order with her.

Upon calling the store, she was informed that her flyer couldn’t be printed, because it violated corporate policy, though no one could tell her precisely what that policy was or how her flyer violated it. She was invited to use the self-serve copiers to print the flyer herself. This solution wasn’t convenient, and although she was able to have her flyer printed through a different venue, Goldstein felt discriminated against.

“In the beginning stages,” says Goldstein, “I was really confused. I couldn’t believe that they’d be discriminating against me based on my religion. I just couldn’t believe it. And I certainly believed that when I contacted someone at Office Depot, they were going to make it right. I thought they’d see there was nothing wrong with the flyer, and they’d offer to print it.”

Repeated attempts to reach officials at the store, however, were unsuccessful until she contacted the Thomas More Society, a national public interest law firm that provides pro bono legal services in cases that support life, family, and religious liberty. They advised her to make one more attempt, notifying Office Depot that she had retained legal counsel. Not surprisingly, she received a return call the next morning and was told that if material made an employee feel uncomfortable, they didn’t have to print it. She was also informed that the store was working on a policy to address similar situations.

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“That’s what I was told,” says Goldstein, “but in the media, Office Depot said the flyer constituted hate speech and implied persecution against employees of Planned Parenthood, which was not at all what they told me.

“I was very upset when they came out with the terms ‘hate speech’ and ‘persecution’ because it’s so much against what I do. I’m a sidewalk counselor at an abortion clinic. Every week I go out there, and I counsel women. I offer them help. I have cried with women. I’ve given out information; I’ve given out my phone number so they can contact me, and they have.

“I’m not against them. I’m not against anybody who’s involved in the abortion business. What I seek and what the prayer [on the flyer] was seeking was enlightenment, and to call it hate speech and persecution was so off base it was really insulting.”

Without assistance from the Thomas More Society, that’s likely how Goldstein’s situation would have ended. Instead, her lawyer, Thomas Olp, wrote to Office Depot president Roland Smith, stating that refusal to print Goldstein’s flyer violated public accommodation laws as detailed in the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance and the Illinois Human Rights Act, which exist to prevent precisely this type of religious discrimination. In fact, all states have versions of public accommodation laws, though they do not all protect the same rights. (For a full list by state, see sidebar.)

In Cook County, where the Office Depot that Goldstein attempted to use is located, the Cook County board of commissioners enacted the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance to prevent “prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination occasioned thereby [which] threaten the rights and proper privileges of the county’s inhabitants and menace the institutions and foundation of a free and democratic society.”¹ Their ordinance protects the rights of people such as Maria Goldstein who request services from businesses in the county through public accommodation protections. “Public accommodation” is defined by the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance as a “person, place, business establishment, or agency that sells, leases, provides, or offers any product, facility, or service to the general public in Cook County, regardless of ownership or operation (1) by a public body or agency; (2) for or without regard to profit; or (3) for a fee or not for a fee.”²

“The public accommodation law requires that you give full service,” says Olp, ‘full’ meaning that the same service you would give to anybody else, you’ve got to give to this person, too. You’re offering full service to the public; you’ve got to give it to everybody without unlawful discrimination, which is defined to mean discrimination because of race, religion, etc.”

Office Depot’s response to Olp’s letter came via their assistant general counsel, Robert Amicone, who defended Office Depot’s right to refuse service based on the fact that Fr. Pavone’s prayer could have been a potential copyright violation (grounds for refusal of service because of copyright infringement laws) and that the flyer contained graphic language calling abortion clinics “death camps in our midst” and referring to the “killing of children in the womb” and “the grisly trade in baby body parts.” He characterized the reference to the “evil” of the abortion industry as hate speech and wrote that because of its graphic content and hate language, the flyer would have violated Office Depot’s policy regardless of its religious expression.

However, Olp said Office Depot backtracked from their initial response very quickly. It’s possible that had something to do with the story going viral in the media. Amicone’s letter arrived on September 11, 2015, a Friday morning, and by early afternoon they had reversed their position. In a letter of the same date, Elisa Garcia, executive vice president and chief legal officer, wrote, “Upon reflection, we believe that reasonable minds may differ on whether the flyer is a violation of the policy, and in that case, we should have found a way to fulfill Ms. Goldstein’s order.”³ The letter concluded with an apology to Goldstein and an invitation to allow them to fulfill her order, which she did.

“We’re very happy that Office Depot changed its mind,” says Olp, “and did it so quickly.”

You could call it a simple misunderstanding; that’s clearly how Office Depot chose to see it, in the end—officially, at least. You could call it religious discrimination; that’s how it felt to Maria Goldstein. But whatever you choose to call it, however you choose to view it, you should consider it an early warning sign of an infringement of religious liberty and sound the alarm. James Madison, in his “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” wrote that it is “proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens, and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise, and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.”⁴ In a country in which it is becoming increasingly harder to speak what you believe without offending someone or being accused of “hate speech,” in which politically correct phrases are de rigueur, in which standing up for what you believe in is becoming trickier and trickier, it becomes increasingly necessary to take preventative action, as Maria Goldstein did, before precedents are set. You cannot hold the line if you do not first take a stand.

“It’s the height of political correctness,” says Olp, “to say, ‘If you don’t tolerate anything that’s legal out there, you’re involved in hate speech; you’re doing something wrong. And if it’s religiously motivated we don’t care. We just think it’s wrong. We’re going to ignore any religious aspect of what you’re doing. Because, after all, religion should be kept in your church. Go into your church and worship, but when you come out into the public square, no religion, please.’ That seems to be the secular mentality. And more and more it’s being pushed into the laws.”

You would think that America, being a country comprised primarily of immigrants, a great many of which were fleeing religious oppression, would itself be more passionate about religious freedom and less judgmental. Yet this has never been so. There has been discrimination based on religion since its birth. “In newly independent America, there was a crazy quilt of state laws regarding religion. In Massachusetts, only Christians were allowed to hold public office, and Catholics were allowed to do so only after renouncing papal authority. In 1777, New York State’s constitution banned Catholics from public office (and would do so until 1806). In Maryland, Catholics had full civil rights, but Jews did not. Delaware required an oath affirming belief in the Trinity. Several states, including Massachusetts and South Carolina, had official, state-supported churches.”⁵ There has, of course, been discrimination based on race, which prompted an entire civil war, and discrimination based on country of origin: Germany and Japan during World War II, and more recently, anyone whose ethnicity originates in Muslim-majority countries. While anti-Semitism appears to be waning in America, it continues to be a persistent problem.

Discrimination has always had a grip on America, and not all types of discrimination are unlawful. But in the area of public accommodation, according to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the most comprehensive civil rights legislation in the history of the United States, it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on race, color, religion, or national origin in any place of public accommodation. If we do not make a stand for religious freedom in the public square, no one will make it for us.

“Let’s red-circle an area for religious expression, religious liberty,” says Olp, “and not allow it to be closed down further and further by secular believers forcing people to essentially keep their mouths shut and not do what Christians need to do, which is to evangelize. Every time you stand up for religious liberty, it’s a good thing. It helps people appreciate first, that there is religious liberty, and second, that it needs to be protected by people who have backbone and are willing to stand up for it.”

While Goldstein is worried that the wording of the apology from Office Depot seems to leave the door open for future problems, she feels blessed that God was able to use the situation. “I set out to pass out 500 flyers to my fellow parishioners, and through this situation, God has allowed me to reach thousands of people with the message of truth that the pro-life movement is one of love and peace and hope. That’s what we’re about, and it’s not hate, and it’s not persecutory.”

Goldstein says she’s learned to trust in what God wants to do, and not back down. “When we’re being discriminated against, which seems like it’s happening more and more, we can’t back down. We’ve got to stand up for our religious liberty and for our God, quite honestly.”

1 www.jmls.edu/clinics/fairhousing/pdf/cook-county-human-rights-ordinance.pdf

2 *Ibid.*

3 Elisa D. Garcia to Office Depot, Sept. 11, 2015.

4 http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_religions43.html

5 www.smithsonianmag.com/history/americas-true-history-of-religious-tolerance-61312684/?page=2

Author: Céleste Perrino-Walker (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/celeste-perrino-walker>)



Join the discussion...

David M. Mullbock - 10 months ago

Her victory is actually a defeat for religious liberty. Christians usually don't believe in compartmentalizing their faith (relegating it to one part of their lives while excluding it from other areas) but this is what the government is imposing on people when it forces privately owned venues to be a party to civic movements (or social events) which are contrary to their beliefs. In this case it is the Christian who is imposing her views on others by forcing them to participate in her activities or face legal sanctions with financial penalties. The same applies to the situation with the Timber Creek Bed And Breakfast not wanting their business to be used as a venue for homosexual weddings. If people don't believe in what you are doing and don't want to be a part of it, take your business elsewhere.

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2016...>

Reply Share



Steve - 10 months ago

To be fair though, Story never said if the Office Depot employee who was not comfortable in making copies of the flyer was forced to do it against his/her will? Did they find someone else to make the copies instead? What if every employee there was not on board with contents of the flyer? Would the woman distributing the flyers not apply the Golden Rule in that case? Why couldn't she have made the copies herself or taken them to the other store that was willing to make copies with no problem? Why did she have to make a stink about it and even threaten a lawsuit when other remedies were clearly available

to resolve it all apart from suing someone totally unnecessarily? Steve

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 by Alan J. Reinach (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/alan-j.-reinach>)*

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In the aftermath of violence and the flood of anti-Muslim rhetoric that has followed, there have been many wonderful statements of solidarity with religious freedom. Liberals and conservatives, religious and secular—there is an amazing consensus rejecting religious bigotry and hatred. It is not only the atrocity in San Bernardino that is beyond words. It is time to go beyond statements. Talk is cheap.

If we want to deal with intolerance, bigotry, and hatred in a constructive manner, we each have to learn to work to build bridges of friendship and understanding. It's not a sure bet even then, but it is the least we can do. But it must be a friendship beyond superficial social tolerance. After all, before World War II Germans were very friendly with their Jewish neighbors, shopkeepers, business partners, lawyers, teachers, etc. But we are even more vulnerable: too many Americans have no friendships or regular association with Muslims. We fear whatever—or whoever—we don't know or understand.

So here's my challenge: churches should seek to build a partnership, a friendship, with a mosque in their community. Hold joint programs. Get to know one another. Plan some community service programs together. Plan some social activities together. Learn about their beliefs and culture, and let them learn about ours. Let's stop talking about people we don't know, and get to know each other.

Pastors should be sure to join, or initiate, interfaith clergy associations in which the Muslim imams are included. This is not to water down what we each believe. It is to emphasize our common humanity, and work to break down fear and prejudice.

The city of San Bernardino has come together in unity following the attack. We can all take a page from their gracious response, and show grace to one another instead of demagoguery. Stop paying attention to the loud mouth, and don't let this moment become our 1938.

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A close friend and colleague, Fabian Carballo, president of the North American Religious Liberty Association—West, which I serve as executive director, penned the following suggestions:

Ask your pastor to call clerics from a local mosque and invite them to a Christmas program and recognize them with a small gift.

Involve the children at your church in a letter writing campaign showing support for our Muslim neighbors.

Share a meal with a Muslim acquaintance or friend and talk about what we have in common.

Send a message from the church that affirms the Muslim community's presence in your neighborhood.

Host a health fair and invite your Muslim neighbors and talk about diet and what we have in common (this is especially relevant for my Seventh-day Adventist community, which has a number of dietary standards that will be familiar to our Muslim friends).

Invite a cleric to speak to the congregation in the afternoon after worship services and teach the main tenets of their religion, allowing for questions to be asked.

Carballo continues: Surely, many Americans may oppose this strategy. But what is the alternative? More distrust, more marginalization, an escalation of violence and discrimination? Our ministry is about freedom of conscience, the very heart of the gospel. Isn't it time we become radically engaged in the battle for freedom and use grace and kindness as our biggest weapons? Please respond with your plan of action, and with any additional ideas you may have or any suggestions as to how our ministry may be enlarged. To do nothing is to let the enemy win.

My heart has been warmed by stories emerging of kindness and compassion. My friends at Loma Linda University Medical Center highlighted the amazing triage operation mounted there to care for victims of the shooting in San Bernardino; and such acts of kindness as the nurse in Texas donating pizza for the emergency room staff. The media tell us about the dark side, but in every tragedy there are untold acts of kindness and compassion we never hear about. Humanity rises to the occasion, and God is present in the love and care of those around us. Yes, even when the darkness of the human soul becomes evident, as it did in San Bernardino, God is still good, and His love is still manifest through His children.

Author: Alan J. Reinach (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/alan-j.-reinach>)

Alan J. Reinach is Executive Director of the Church State Council, the religious liberty educational and advocacy arm of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, representing five western states: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah. His legal practice emphasizes First Amendment religious freedom cases, and religious accommodation cases under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related state civil rights laws. Reinach is also a Seventh-day Adventist minister who speaks regularly on religious freedom topics, and is the host of a nationally syndicated weekly radio broadcast, "Freedom's Ring." He is the principal author and editor of *Politics and Prophecy: The Battle for Religious Liberty and the Authentic Gospel*, and a frequent contributor to *Liberty* magazine.



Join the discussion...

Oscar77 · 9 months ago

However, what does one do with the fact that over 50% of Muslims in America desire replacement of the Constitution by Sharia law? That a significant minority believe in violent jihad as a legitimate exercise? That the stated goal of Islam is to require submission of all the world to its requirements by conquest? Does that all go away? What has happened in Dearborn, Michigan, where Muslims are now a majority, and Christian expression is now oppressed? Do we ignore that? Is it "hate and intolerance" to point that out?

^ | v · Reply · Share >

Greg Bratcher · 10 months ago

Agree on the importance of Americans actually meeting and getting acquainted with Muslims. I lived in Yemen for four years (ADRA Director), and then Detroit for ten years, and I grew to love with the Arabic Muslim culture, its people, language, food, customs. As an active AMR (Adventist Muslim Relations) member, I love to visit the local Tafseer (Teaching) at the local Mosque and dine with Muslim friends.

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Opinion, by Ralph Filicchia (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/ralph-filicchia>)

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In the past a majority of the 60 million Christians in the United States have voted for candidates they believed were morally superior. But how do you determine what makes a morally superior candidate? Is it enough to be against a abortion, partial birth abortion, gay marriage, and stem cell research that destroys human embryos, and for traditional values and Jesus Christ?

Do certain litmus issues trump all other positions held?

But for Christians the story doesn't end there. Christianity is not concerned only with today's morals and issues, but also with the future's values. Christianity is a religion with a prophetic element that cannot be easily dismissed. As briefly as it can be put, the following must be understood: Many Bible-based Christians believe that the end of this age will be dominated by an entity or figure referred to as the antichrist. This individual will be empowered by Satan and is presented in Revelation 13 as the "beast from the sea," with an identifying number of 666. This individual or system will for a short time become a world ruler who controls all commerce to the point where no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast on their hand or forehead. In other words, do it his way or you starve!

At the present time the world is rushing headlong toward globalization and a New World Order. Trade agreements are being pushed that are arguably detrimental to the United States but seemingly good for developing countries. Borders between countries are slowly being abolished, perhaps planned by those who want the world identified not by countries but by economic zones. This might explain the reluctance of more than one administration in this country even to address the problem of illegal immigration. It is possible that planners are looking to the development of the coming New World Order, the merging of economic regions—and if some Americans are short-changed in the process, so be it, as the planners figure it will be worth it in the long run.

In the early 1990s Clinton adviser Strobe Talbott outlined that administration's preferred approach to world affairs: "Nationhood as we know it will be obsolete. All states will recognize a single global authority."

A chilling statement if there ever was one. It could be taken as the equivalent of saying "Goodbye, America, and everything you ever stood for." This "preferred approach" is not endemic to the Democratic Party, of course. At the present time it is the "approach" of both parties, neither of which has been given a mandate for this by the American people.

Consider the words of President George H. W. Bush, in his state of the union address on January 29, 1991, referring to the first war with Iraq:

"We know why we're there. We are Americans, part of something larger than ourselves. . . . What is at stake is more than one small country; it is a big idea: a New World Order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind. . . . The world can, therefore, seize this opportunity to fulfill the long-held promise of a New World Order."

Madness? Insanity? Religious fanaticism? Call it what you will, but many evangelical Christians believe this world government will be established. What they may not notice (fail to understand) is that some of the main architects of this coming state of affairs may be those public figures who present a moral agenda while unknowingly setting the stage for the emergence of the antichrist. Many fail to see any contradiction between their support for moral domestic values and an accompanying agenda to bring about the world coalition the Bible warns of.

Evangelicals should be able to see through the glib claims of those who would solicit their support, but there is at least one huge blind spot called the abortion issue, and many are, unfortunately, unable to see past it. Which means that unless they wake up and begin taking the long biblical view, they will be instrumental in taking their country down a disastrous path leading to its loss of sovereignty, values, culture, and freedoms. While trying to save their country, they might actually harm it!

Any new world order will likely not be the promised millennium. It will be more akin to the Tower of Babel, which in the end produced nothing, because the final outcome of this world is in God's hands, and not in the hands of multinational gangsters, power-mad politicians, utopian dreamers, or the biblically illiterate who might be used by all of the above.

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Martin · 9 months ago

It really surprises me that so many Americans have forgotten how God was instrumental in forming this Great Republic called the United States of America and want to follow the broken record of socialism. The new world order is nothing more than socialism on steroids. Some of us know it is coming, but it really makes me sad. Satan will have his day in the sun, but the SON will have the final say and put an end to all this nonsense.

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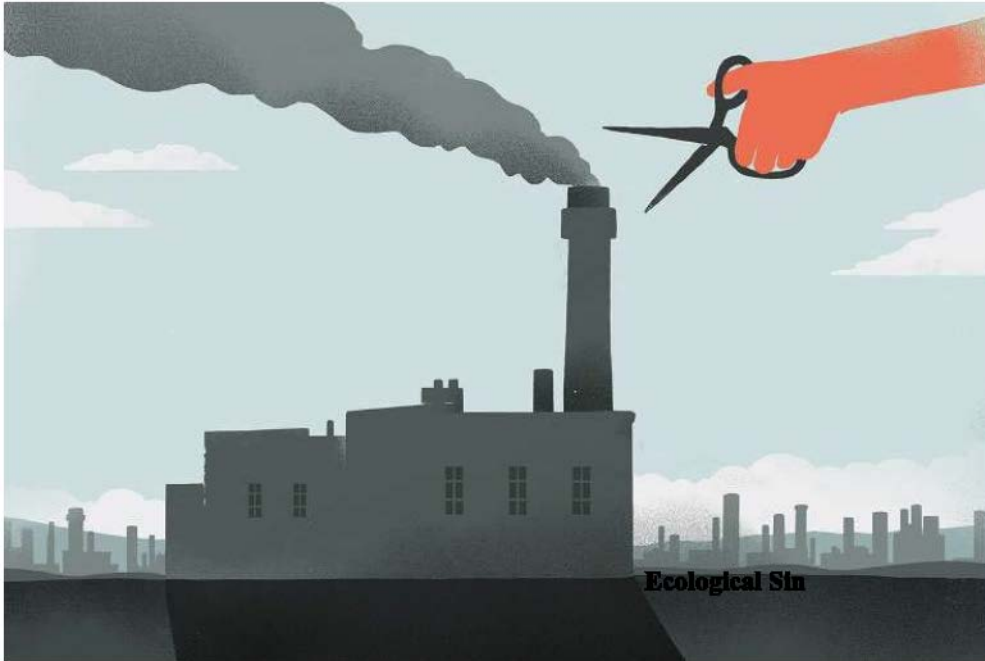
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 by Betty Marsden (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/betty-marsden>)*

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The late years of the nineteenth century and even the early ones of the twentieth were filled with the promise of a better, more hopeful future.

“Therefore, gentlemen,” declared Werner von Siemens (founder of the company that still bears his name) in the late nineteenth century, “we will not be shaken in our belief that our research and inventive activity leads mankind to higher levels of culture, ennobling it and making it more accessible to ideal aspirations, that the impending scientific age will diminish its hardships and its sickness, enhance its enjoyment of life, and make it better, happier, and more content with its fate.”

“It was paradise,” wrote Jean-Paul Sartre, of those early years of the twentieth century. “The miraculous era when cinema, radio, the telephone, the automobile, and the airplane were born. The earth seemed nearly conquered by the joint efforts of Western imperialism and technological promise.”

One event did, somewhat, shatter that optimism: World War I, by far the most devastating human-made catastrophe to date. That was, at least until World War II, which followed closely behind and, of course, was much worse.

With such history still fairly fresh in our collective conscience, unsurprisingly most people didn’t greet the beginning of the twenty-first century with the optimism that their great-grandparents did the twentieth.

And with good reason. The technology that was supposed to enrich our lives might, instead, end them. Putting aside the threats of a nuclear catastrophe, ISIS, or Vladimir Putin, the big fear now comes from “climate change,” a contemporary euphemism for air pollution. Only this time the problem is not just dirty air over Beijing or smog over Los Angeles. Instead, the fear is nothing less than the survival of the planet. So vast and consequential are the potential issues that

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even Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church weighed in, warning that “the destruction of the human environment is extremely serious” and that we must “escape the spiral of self-destruction that currently engulfs us” because of climate change.

With the belief that such an apocalyptic threat awaits the world, it would certainly be worthwhile to remember how, at times of other real (or even perceived) dangers, the most basic freedoms and liberties came under assault for a “good” cause. And, as far as good causes go, they don’t get better than, as Al Gore warned, “the truly catastrophic damages that have the potential for ending civilization,” which we supposedly face from climate change. In other words, if any cause were worth trampling on freedoms, this would be it.

The Fears

The scientific consensus is that yes, climate change is real, and presents a bona fide threat. Of course, the “scientific consensus” on numerous things—from a geocentric cosmos (the prevailing scientific consensus for 1300 years), to spontaneous generation, to the absolute nature of time and space, to an eternally existing universe, to the dangers of saturated fat—have been revised, revamped, and overthrown down through the ages. The scientific consensus of one generation can become myths to another.

Worse is that the rancid politicization of the climate change dialogue makes matters more confusing. President Obama warns about the “urgent and growing threat” of a changing climate, while GOP primary candidate Marco Rubio says that “we are not going to make America a harder place to create jobs in order to pursue policies that will do absolutely nothing, nothing to change our climate.”

On one level, whether or not the science behind climate change is correct is beside the point. What is the point is that many believe it is, which means that a lot of people, some with great political influence and power, fear that—unless massive changes soon take place—grave danger awaits us all.

Among those dangers? Well, for one, rising sea levels, which can destroy coastal habitation. Rainfall changes might lead to increased flooding. On the other side of that coin is the possibility of increased droughts. Global temperature change will bring more life-threatening heat waves, more hurricanes and typhoons of greater intensity. And don’t forget about rising acidity in the oceans, making them less hospitable for sea life.

“Climate change is one of the most serious public health threats facing the nation,” warns the Natural Resources Defense Council, “but few people are aware of how it can affect them. Children, the elderly, and communities living in poverty are among the most vulnerable.”

The United States Pentagon says that climate change is an “urgent and growing threat to our national security” and blames it for “increased natural disasters” that will require more American troops designated to combat bad weather.

A report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says: “Over the next twenty years, we can expect more and intense climatic hazards everywhere. Particularly at risk are those communities located in areas prone to floods, cyclones, and drought. Suffering repeated climatic shocks depletes their resources and makes them reliant on external assistance.”

Democratic candidate Martin O’Malley even blamed climate change for the rise of ISIS. “One of the things that preceded the failure of the nation-state of Syria and the rise of ISIS,” he said, “was the effect of climate change and the mega-drought that affected that region, wiped out farmers, drove people to cities, created a humanitarian crisis. It created the symptoms, or, rather, the conditions, of extreme poverty that has led now to the rise of ISIS, and this extreme violence.”

When everything, from the rise of ISIS to the potential of mass starvation, is being linked to climate change, civil libertarians need be vigilant because—if the past is any precursor to the future—nothing, including freedom, will be allowed to stand in the way of defense against such dire threats.

The Reaction

Because many of the most fearful forecasts for climate change are based on computer models projecting 30-50 years out, it’s hard to know if things are as bad as claimed. Again, it doesn’t matter. What matters only is that enough people think they are. Hence, the potential danger to the civil liberties of anyone seen as adding to, or hindering any solution to, a danger that could destroy us all.

For instance, the New York attorney general has begun an investigation of ExxonMobil to determine whether the company lied to the public about the risks of climate change or to investors about how such risks might hurt the oil business. Meanwhile, Peabody Energy, the nation’s largest coal producer, had already been under investigation by the New York attorney general for two years in regard to questions about whether it properly disclosed financial risks related to climate change. Though with the exception of stockholders and the energy executives themselves, who is going to lose sleep over energy giants getting investigated for lying? But the more important question is How far could this go?

Vaclav Klaus, for 10 years (2003-2013) president of the Czech Republic, warned that attempts to curb greenhouse gas emissions are an attack on freedom itself.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that the widespread acceptance of the global warming dogma has become one of the main, most costly, and most undemocratic public policy mistakes in generations.

“The previous one was Communism.”

Closer to home, the conservative Heritage Foundation fears that federal government talk about climate change isn't to protect us but is “to justify taxing, regulating, and controlling us. It's about making us poorer and less free.”

Past as Precursor

One could argue, perhaps, that the hype about the potential dangers to freedom posed by attempts to deal with climate change is as hyped as are the warnings of the dangers posed by climate change. Maybe? But the historical record shows that freedom always takes a back seat to danger, real or perceived.

However much Americans took their Constitution seriously, few had many qualms about the outrageous ways Abraham Lincoln trampled upon it amid the dangerous days of the Civil War.

During World War I the federal government restricted freedoms, especially freedom of speech, in ways that most Americans today would find incomprehensible, yet were deemed necessary for the immediate crisis.

Today Americans look in horror on how we treated Japanese-Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a minor brawl in contrast to the fate that awaits the earth according to climate change predictions.

Even after September 11, Americans were able to tolerate things like the Patriot Act and other restrictions they were told could keep them safer. However, the threat of al-Qaeda is nothing compared to rising sea levels, massive droughts, and the inevitable destruction of New Orleans and Miami and many other cities because of climate change.

Even this nation, which has paved the way for the world when it comes to freedom, has shown—in response to threats far less than “the potential for ending civilization”—a willingness to trample on basic rights.

Could we be facing something similar as the fear of climate change grows? It would be naive to think otherwise.

A True World Political Authority

In his recent encyclical on climate change and the environment, *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis added a new phrase to religious vocabulary: a “sin against creation,” a euphemism for anything that adds to climate change. Working on the assumption that the scientific consensus regarding climate change was valid and that “things are now reaching a breaking point,” the pope then talked about the need for a global political authority that would enforce whatever was believed needed to save us from disaster.

“Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed, since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention,” he wrote. He said too that, given the current situation, “it is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments and empowered to impose sanctions. As Benedict XVI has affirmed in continuity with the social teaching of the church: ‘To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago.’”

A true world political authority? On one hand, the pope isn't saying anything that others haven't said. On the other, who would this world political authority be, what would be its powers, and how would they be enforced? Neither Francis, nor Benedict, his immediate predecessor, whom he quoted, was specific, other than to say that the threat is so great that whatever needs to be done to stop it must be globally enforced.

For now, such a political authority doesn't seem overtly plausible or particularly threatening. Hard to imagine any power, in and of itself, being able to pull that off. However, the biblical book of Revelation does warn of an end-time confederation of political and religious powers that will be exceedingly repressive.

And although it's only speculation now, what could bring about such global unity other than a global threat, and what could be deemed more of a global threat than the destruction of our globe because of climate change?

Repression, persecution, and loss of liberty have come from a lot less.

Author: Betty Marsden (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/betty-marsden>)

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Betty Marden is a nom de plume for a regular contributor who wants the topic, not the messenger, to be its own authority.

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Mary Moraska • 3 months ago

This country has done more than it's share of cleaning up our environment. Let's spend our time encouraging other nations to do the same. Let's not follow Al Gore down that path of extreme belief that we can change everything. No one on his team seems to want to acknowledge that normal changing weather cycles, forest fires all over the world and constantly erupting volcanoes are affecting our atmosphere. We are not in control of everything. As a Catholic, I would tell the Pope to read the Book of Revelation and retract his suggestion for any kind of global authority. Also, there is not a scientific consensus on the cause or solution for global warming. We do not hear the scientists' voices who disagree with Al Gore. They are not looking to sell books or gain high paying speaking engagements on this "popular" cause. But they are out there for those who want to search. As a resident of a coastal city, I have seen how rising ocean levels affected my friend's property. When will we learn that our love of the ocean makes us blind to the changes that the ocean has made to the shoreline since the beginning of time. Let us spend our energy changing hearts and turning them back to our Creator. Then we will all have His perspective on His creation and make the right choices. Mary from Charleston S C

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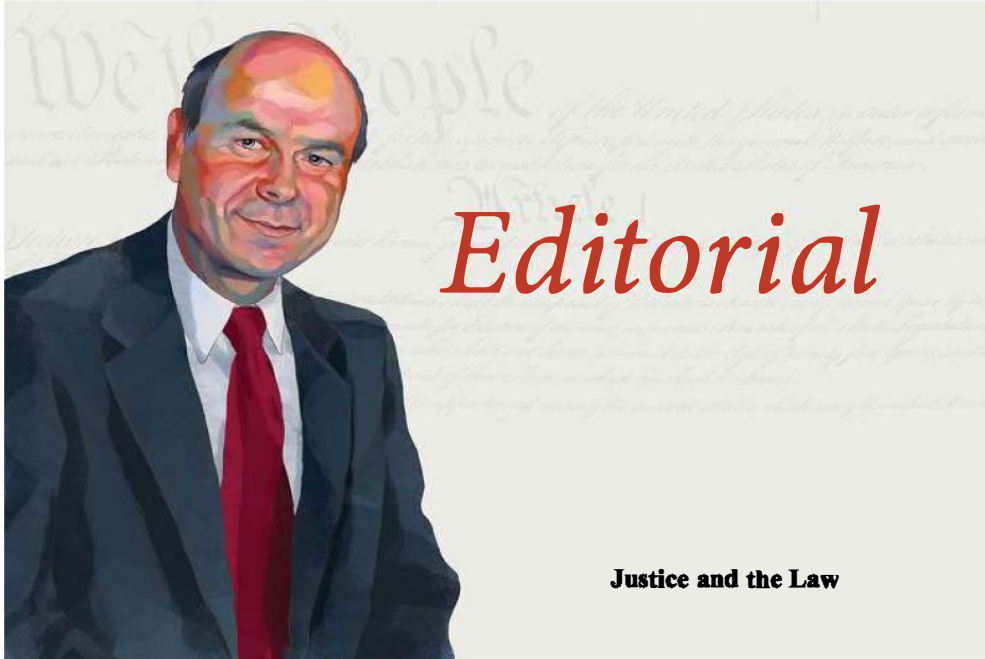
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Justice and the Law

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 Editorial, by Lincoln E. Steed (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/author/lincoln-e.-steed>)*

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He was pugnacious. He was opinionated. He was humorous, but dangerous when provoked. And he had become an institution in himself.



Antonin Scalia

I'm talking, of course, of the late Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia, who died last month at 79— at the time the longest serving member of the current court, being appointed justice in 1986. He was seldom quiet. And his influence will likely continue for a long time. He will be missed as a man who spoke his convictions without hesitation. His originalist theory of constitutional interpretation is likely to be quoted for many years; if only as a counterpoint to the more typical Living Constitution model that permeates most of the judiciary.

Many years ago I attended a Christian Lawyers weekend in Canada, which featured Justice Scalia. He was nothing if not controversial. In particular he waved Thomas More, the newly minted Roman Catholic patron saint of lawyers, in front of the mostly Protestant lawyers so provocatively that at one stage the leadership went in to a huddle to see if a formal response was needed. They decided to roll with the many punches. And black-eyed as they became, all ended up enjoying Scalia's trenchant legal analysis and his quick wit.

He made numerous jibes in the direction of capital justice. One was part of a humorous anecdote about cattle thieves in the wild West. Scalia made much of the either-or reality of trials for cattle rustling. If the court found you innocent, you went free. If you were guilty, they took you out and hanged you.

The story he told has resonance for me as I observe the current political posturing in the buildup to November elections. It went like this.

A certain young fellow had been found guilty of stealing cattle. He was to be hanged. The townspeople, needing some excitement, gathered for the hanging. Standing on the raised platform with the young man, the mayor told him, "These folks have gathered to watch you hang. We have a tradition here that you can talk to the crowd before you die. You can tell them whatever you want. Criticize the town, the judge, me if you like. You are free to talk."

The rustler looked around at the expectant crowd. He shook his head. "No, I've got nothing to say."

The mayor was amazed. "Son," he said, "say anything you like. The time is yours. These folk expect it."

Again "No" and a shake of the head.

This was too much for the local politician. "Will the gentleman yield his time?" he cried out.

The condemned man was puzzled. The mayor explained: the politician saw the potential for a crowd and wanted to address them if he was agreeable.

"Sure," said the rustler, "but hang me first."

That joke was good for hearty laughs that somewhat obscured the justice's stark view of justice. In many ways it characterized his rather one-dimensional "originalist" view of the Constitution. Although I agreed with his point that if what was wanted by legislators or constituency went against the Constitution, there was a plain solution—an amendment to the Constitution.

The reality is that the Supreme Court has periodically stretched the literal law to encompass things far afield from the narrow language of the Constitution. I can think of two that fit this: the Citizens United case and Lawrence v Texas. The framers were indeed corporately minded and they did indeed intend to protect privacy, but I think it hardly worth proving that their minds would have ever wandered enough to envisage CPAC electioneering and gay rights threatening religious freedom rights.

During a lecture Scalia gave that weekend at the University of British Columbia he said something so entirely full of common sense that it struck me he was less dangerous than most of the ideologues in public office. "I may believe these things," he said, alluding to his very reactionary views on capital punishment and separation (or lack of) of church and state. "But you don't have to worry about me," he said, "because of my own view of the original intent of the Constitution."

Many of us felt his role in the Smith case was a betrayal of religious freedom. But some proof of his ability to hold a view and be constrained by the logic of the Constitution was on display when he supported the right to burn the flag. Right-wingers, including his own wife, could not believe he would vote that way. But the good justice usually voted his legal truth and suppressed his own activism.

My fear is that others on the Court will not have the discipline to override their personal prejudices or identity agendas. In all my time observing the Court, I have been impressed by how imperfectly the justices follow the intended bias of the conservative or liberal factions that nominate them—Scalia (with the nod to my prior point) and Thomas being two very clear exceptions, of course. In a multicultural, multifaith nation the Court presented a red flag of late, with six of the nine Roman Catholics, three Jewish, and none Protestant. No constitutional crisis here, but a religious demographic aberration that in a time of religious contention could bleed through to troubling religious cases.

And my fear is accentuated by the present factional reality. The assumption by both Liberal and conservative is they can load the deck with a reflex partisan. On top of that is an assumption I find terrifying: an assumption that I know Scalia himself would have rejected. It is the view that the Court legislates from the bench. That is a cynical view and one not supported by a reasonable study of the forming of the republic and the constitution.

We need justices who are men and women of honor. The need is not just for legal specialists--most people do not realize that justices do not have to be lawyers or judges--but men and women of moral compass who seek justice. In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, I read this injunction: "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:15, NKJV). Good advice.

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