

A MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

REVERSION | DEFENDER OF THE FAITH



LIBERTY

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016

RELIGION,
THE FOUNDERS,
AND THE 2016
PRESIDENTIAL RACE





EDITORIAL

RE-UP THE CONTRACT

For years we've been told that Europe is secular—postmodern, godless, and even indifferent to religion. I never bought the narrative. To me the post-World War II rejection of religion was just another variation of the hedonism that followed World War I. In both cases religious identity remained even as personal faith was jettisoned. The Clinton era Balkan War should have proved that point. Narrow religious identity can be politically and socially murderous.

One of the most inexplicable events of modern times was the recent march of tens of thousands of Middle Eastern refugees into the European Union. Even today we do not really know who they were. Early on at least 500,000 Christian Syrian refugees sought shelter at one camp in Jordan. They don't seem to have left for Europe. All we know for sure are several rather sobering facts about the people stream. First, in spite of truly touching photos of drowned children, the group was made up of an inordinate number of military-age young men. Second, ISIS gloated publicly that this was in effect an invasion. Third, not unsurprisingly, conflict immediately arose as the groups settled in the European heartland—conflict over Sharia Law.

Then the killings began. I barely have space to enumerate horrific butchery in places like Paris, Nice, and Munich. And mirroring the well-planned operations is a growing number of "random" acts in which an ax-wielding crazy suddenly begins chopping up people. They call it terror.

I wonder if it is not something worse. I wonder if this is not the erasing of the social contract.

It's not something you read of in the newspapers, even though every

college student has some exposure to the principle.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) lived through the English civil war that saw a king who claimed a divine right to rule executed as a criminal and democratic process subsumed beneath a religious mandate. No wonder this philosopher tended to see the natural state of society as war. It would not be inappropriate to say that we are heading toward a "Hobbesian" state of affairs in the pejorative sense. For Hobbes the answer to amoral self-interest was a social contract designed to protect all against the other and empower the state to enforce the contract for "the common good." The term is not his, but in its modern proposal I think veers toward his logic in favoring the group rather than the individual once the contract is in place.

The term "social contract" is more closely used with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) an Enlightenment philosopher who also tackled the idea of self-rule and the group. As expected for a Frenchman on the eve of the French Revolution, he objected to the tyranny of the state. But government was necessary and ideally should come from submission of individual will by agreement to the collective or general will. Curiously he saw private property as almost the original sin, which led to greed and coercion and inequality.

For Americans the views of John Locke (1632-1704) are of more than passing interest, as it was largely his ideas that influenced Jefferson and others and lay behind the American Republican initiative. Locke saw the natural state of man as free because of the "law of nature" and the

Creator behind the principle. It was from Locke that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution derived their views on natural rights and a fixation on property. For him, the natural rights were given over to the state, which would have no rights otherwise.

All three allow for a social contract, even as various modern systems favor one variant of their logic or the other. Absent the king, with his claims of divine right; and absent the dictator or despotic system that rules by might alone, these variants must be looked at when thinking of society, laws, and freedom—even religious freedom.

The newspaper headlines speak in the tropes of banality and grade school expectations so you may not have noticed what some of the thinkers of the age have murmured about lately. Many of them see in recent geopolitical developments the end of the modern nation state, which was essentially an outgrowth of the Treaty of Westphalia.

As the Protestant Reformation gathered steam it created fractures in the political structure. The Holy Roman Empire was a self-conscious empire of greater Germany, which owed its legitimacy to Rome. Beyond it lay various princelings and city-states and nationalist groupings, which generally existed under the blessing of a Papal mandate. As the Empire split and various regions turned Protestant and often nationalistic, there was an outbreak of wars that became known as the Thirty Years' War. It was as vicious a period in European history as any recorded.

Finally, in 1644, representatives from 194 states met to end the hostilities. Four years later they settled. Protestant nations emerged



PEOPLE of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby constitute a Constitution for the United States of America.

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as recognized powers. And, arguably, the modern state was born. Sovereign rights and protections were codified.

Fast-forward to 2016, and what do we have? Europe has played a dangerous experiment in subsuming national identities into a European Union. The Middle East is in flames and borders are no longer sacrosanct, since the will to abide by them is denied by both populations and the armies of drones or mercenaries that harass them. In the United States the elephantine logic of martial law shadows every further shooting by law enforcement or of law officers. The social contract is up for revision.

And now the wild card again. Even as the social contract is questioned by restive populations. Even as mobs yell out the truism that all lives matter and fear that they don't. Even as think tank manipulators seek political vehicles to implement their

post-Westphalian vision. Even as social mores are in the toilet literally. Even as these things happen, we are faced with a global agitation by Islamists to insert Sharia into even Western systems. My point is that this is not just a rude call to impose a particular religious legal system, but a direct challenge to Western views of separation of church and state and the ideal of a secular state. It is a direct attempt to roll back to before Westphalia and create a multifront war against other religious forces. And it all rides on the breakdown of how the social contract is understood and implemented.

You and I can't afford to be against Islam or any other faith construct, no matter how provocative or confrontational it may be. It is make or break to holding back the new dark ages that we continue to allow

individual conscience rights.

You and I must work to reestablish the social contracts that in the West have not just contributed to religious freedom, but have made it possible.

In countering Sharia calls in places like London and Detroit, we must be adamant that it is unacceptable not because it is Islamic but because it is arbitrary and opposed to our social contract, enshrined in a Constitution and precious to a freedom-loving people.

Lincoln E. Steed, Editor

Liberty magazine

Please address letters to the editor to Lincoln.Steed@nad.adventist.org

DECLARATION
of Principles

The God-given right of religious liberty is best exercised when church and state are separate.

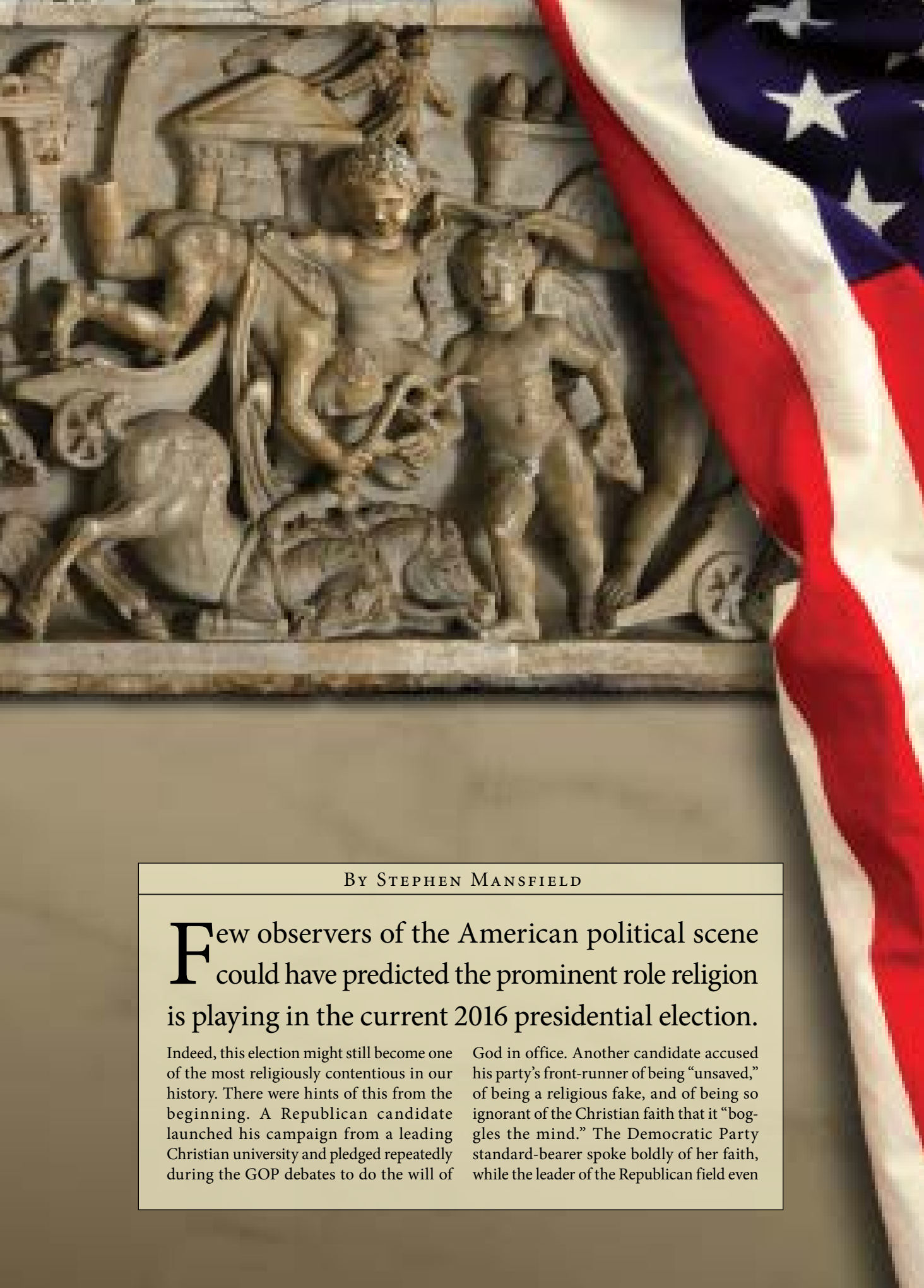
Government is God's agency to protect individual rights and to conduct civil affairs; in exercising these responsibilities, officials are entitled to respect and cooperation.

Religious liberty entails freedom of conscience: to worship or not to worship; to profess, practice, and promulgate religious beliefs, or to change them. In exercising these rights, however, one must respect the equivalent rights of all others.

Attempts to unite church and state are opposed to the interests of each, subversive of human rights, and potentially persecuting in character; to oppose union, lawfully and honorably, is not only the citizen's duty but the essence of the golden rule—to treat others as one wishes to be treated.



RELIGION,
THE FOUNDERS,
AND THE 2016
PRESIDENTIAL RACE



BY STEPHEN MANSFIELD

Few observers of the American political scene could have predicted the prominent role religion is playing in the current 2016 presidential election.

Indeed, this election might still become one of the most religiously contentious in our history. There were hints of this from the beginning. A Republican candidate launched his campaign from a leading Christian university and pledged repeatedly during the GOP debates to do the will of

God in office. Another candidate accused his party's front-runner of being "unsaved," of being a religious fake, and of being so ignorant of the Christian faith that it "boggles the mind." The Democratic Party standard-bearer spoke boldly of her faith, while the leader of the Republican field even

displayed a family Bible before cameras prior to the Iowa primary.

Evangelicals have continued to be a potent force in U.S. politics, though in this election they have proven increasingly fragmented. Their leaders have splintered, variously endorsing every candidate running for office. Even the pope entered the fray, welcoming the most left leaning of all candidates, Bernie Sanders, to the Vatican just prior to the decisive New York primary.

Now that the race has narrowed to a Clinton-Trump contest, we are sure to see even more fiery faith-based battles. Part of the reason for this is the religiously infused politics of Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic nominee. She is a lifetime social gospel Methodist who thought nothing of taking her Senate opponents to task for violating the ethics of Jesus on such issues as immigration and who has claimed that her religion is the basis of her positions on same-sex marriage and abortion. Donald Trump, for whom religion is clearly not a familiar language, will have his hands full.

Yet this is what Americans seem to prefer. A recent Pew Forum survey revealed that more than half of all Americans would like to see wider discussion of religion in this year's presidential race. All indications are that they are likely to get it.

None of this is new, of course. Americans have known religious bickering in their presidential politics since at least the moment Thomas Jefferson announced his intention to run for the office. What is new, however, is the current reticence among U.S. voters to press presidential candidates for specifics about their religious views. It is a reticence that does not serve our country well. Certainly we should hope for a change before the 2016 election ends.

We live in a religiously contentious age. We live at a time when what a president believes religiously and what he or she knows about the world's religions is critically important. Yet we

are used to pious mush and airy phrases when it comes to religion in presidential campaigns. We are used to "God bless America" at the end of a speech, and photos of a candidate attending church, Bible in hand.

We have begun to settle for such symbols over the far more important religious content of what candidates believe. As a nation we are hesitant to press for specifics. Much of this stems from a false sense that our Founders did not want personal faith explored in elections and so forbade religious tests for public office. What we seem to have forgotten is that while our Founders prohibited government-mandated religious tests for public office, they did expect and even hoped that the American people would always regard the religions of presidential candidates as important. This comes as a surprise to most Americans today, and so we should revisit the intentions of our Founders in this all-important matter of religion.

The framers of our Constitution considered a ban on religious tests a natural extension of the First Amendment. If Congress should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," then no single religion should dominate the federal government. Banning religious tests for federal office would serve this cause. Thus the language of Article VI, clause 3, of the U.S. Constitution: ". . . no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Obviously there were those who feared this provision. When the U.S. Constitution was being debated in state legislatures, there were loud protests over the exclusion of religious tests. More than a few were afraid that without such tests, non-Christians might ascend to public office. David Caldwell, a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina, was in favor of a religious test that would eliminate "Jews and pagans of every kind."¹ A Baptist minister named Henry Abbott complained, "As there

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are no religious tests, pagans, deists and Mahometans might obtain office.”²

These were common fears at the time: *If we don't have religious tests, then people of any faith can hold federal office.* The answer of our Founders was clear and consistent: *We want the people, not a simplistic religious test, to decide who is qualified for public office and who is not. The decision rests with the people.*

This confidence in the people's ability to examine the religion of candidates rings out from the writings of nearly every Founder. Consider, for example, the words of Richard Dobbs Spaight, one of the signers of the Constitution.

“As to the subject of religion” “no power is given to the general [federal] government to interfere with it at all. . . No sect is preferred to another. Every man has a right to worship the Supreme Being in the manner he thinks proper. No test is required. All men of equal capacity and integrity are equally eligible to offices. . . . I do not suppose an infidel, or any such person, will ever be chosen to any office, unless the people themselves be of the same opinion.”³

Clearly Spaight believed that while Congress may not establish a state church or restrict individual liberties, and while no religious test for federal office may exist, the people had the power to make religion a factor in their choices about political candidates. Consider also the words of Supreme Court Justice James Iredell, who was appointed to the bench by George Washington and who served from 1790 to 1799.

“But it is objected that the people of America may, perhaps, choose representatives who have no religion at all, and that pagans and Mahometans may be admitted into offices. . . . But it is never to be supposed that the people of America will trust their dearest rights to persons who have no religion at all, or a religion materially different from their own.”⁴

As with others in the founding generation, Iredell's confidence was in the scrutiny of the



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AND AIRY PHRASES WHEN IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS.



people. Finally, consider the words of Samuel Johnston, a member of the Continental Congress, a member of the United States Senate, and a governor of North Carolina.

“It is apprehended that Jews, Mahometans, pagans, etc., may be elected to high offices under the government of the United States. Those who are Mahometans, or any others who are not professors of the Christian religion, can never be elected to the office of President or other high office, but in one of two cases. First, if the people of America lay aside the Christian religion altogether, it may happen. Should this unfortunately take place, the people will choose such men as think as they do themselves. Another case is, if any persons of such descrip-

tions should, notwithstanding their religion, acquire the confidence and esteem of the people of America by their good conduct and practice of virtue, they may be chosen.”⁵

Clearly this eminent Founder took his case even further than the others whose words we’ve considered. He argued that while it would, in his opinion, be unfortunate should the American people elect a non-Christian to public office, they might do it if they ceased to be Christians themselves or if they found a member of a non-Christian faith to have good character and be of virtue. Clearly Samuel Johnston placed his entire faith about such matters in the decisions of the American people. They would pay attention. They would evaluate. They

THERE SHOULD BE RELIGIOUS
THE PEOPLE, NOT TESTS

would make the best choice at the time.

This was the counsel of the Founders regarding religion in the new American nation. Let the people be whatever religion they might choose. Let the states also be as religious as they wish. As important, be careful to deny the federal or general government any role in religion. Let it not establish a religion or prohibit the free exercise of religion—as the First Amendment would eventually say—nor let the federal government require religious tests. Instead, the people will choose—as an expression of culture, of heart, and of meaningful connection to God.

The Founders trusted that the people would be vigilant. They trusted that Americans in every generation would recognize the power of religion to shape politics and choose their candidates with this power in mind. Not as bigots. Not as those conspiring to cause their religion to prevail. Instead, the people would be vigilant because they would know the importance of religion in human affairs, and they would understand its meaning as they consider what is best for the republic.

The distinction our Founders made between federal and state governments has been removed through the years. The courts have read the Fourteenth Amendment as requiring that the restrictions on the national government should also apply to the states. Now the states may no longer require religious tests either.

What has not changed is the Founders' expectation that the people should be the ultimate decision-makers about faith in public office. There has never been a more important moment for a reclaiming of this responsibility. Faith is as much a factor in the challenges of our time as ever. There are also more varieties of faith than ever. Our elected leaders must understand these faiths, just as the people must understand what these leaders believe religiously. This is what the founding generation expected of us. It is vital today that we live out

the hopes of that founding generation.

The conclusion is that asking the important religious questions of our candidates is not un-American. It is not contrary to the thinking of the Founders, nor is it something done only by the bigoted or the conspiring. It is what our Founders expected and our times demand. It is also in the best interest of our nation. There should be religious tests—the tests of the people, not tests imposed by government.

As we enter the general election of the 2016 presidential race, religion will move front and center. According to the Pew Forum, this is as a majority of the American people wish it to be. In light of the lifetime commitments of Hillary Clinton, it is an emphasis she will likely encourage, though some opponents on the right might disagree with her conclusions. Perhaps this emphasis will be also welcomed by Donald Trump. Time will tell.

What is certain is that given the candidates involved in this all-important presidential race and given the religious underpinnings of our global challenges, there has rarely been a more important time for the American people to do the job entrusted to them by their Founders. Ask the questions of faith that must be asked. Make religion a part of their political decisions while always safeguarding religion from the intrusions of the state.

It is time, then, to live out that time-honored Celtic maxim:

That which thy fathers bequeathed thee
Earn it anew if thou would'st possess it.

Stephen Mansfield is a best-selling author and TV personality. His latest book is *Ask the Question: Why We Must Demand Religious Clarity From Our Presidential Candidates*. He writes from Nashville, Tennessee.

¹ Jonathan Elliot, *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, vol. 4, p. 199.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 198,199.

TESTS—THE TESTS OF IMPOSED BY GOVERNMENT.





REVERSION

The Clash of Tribalisms and the Unmaking of the World Order

BY ELIJAH MUVANDERA
ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD HOLLAND

Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union Samuel P. Huntington, the distinguished Harvard political scientist, postulated a “clash of civilizations” as the new paradigm in global politics. But today, 25 years later, it is increasingly clear we are actually faced with a “clash of tribalisms.”

Jihadists have set Muslims more against each other than against the infidel West. Sectarian rivalries now risk dragging the Middle East into the pre-Islamic era of incessant tribal warfare. Religious fundamentalism is fracturing Israel’s democracy. Libya, South Sudan, and other sub-Saharan Africa states are disintegrating into warring fiefdoms. Russian irredentism has carved up ethnic enclaves in the former Soviet republics. Iraq Kurds have carved out their own defacto state, and those in Syria and Turkey are fighting for the same. Radical Hindu nationalists threaten India’s religious pluralism. And radical Buddhist monks threaten the national unity of Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

The same tribal winds are buffeting the European Union and the United States. As refugees flood into Europe amid Jihadist terror attacks, and as extreme right wing, nationalist, and anti-immigrant parties gain ground, the goal of a single Europe has become an ever-receding mirage. And at a national level, separatism is rife in Belgium, Britain, Spain, and Italy. In the United States hyperpartisanship, identity politics, ideological absolutism, racism, deep and widening

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and will lead only to
greater violence.



class cleavages, reinforced by a fragmented news media, have created insular subcultures that are tribal-like in their fears, hatreds, resentments, scapegoating and conspiracies.

This tribalism is very evident in the 2016 presidential elections. Many pundits have, and not without justification, blamed some of this on the Republican Party, on its obstructionism and decades-old dog-whistle politics. But set against the retreat to tribalism around the world, it becomes clear that it is an expression of a broader and deeper malaise: *loss of faith in modern political and economic institutions, which is leading many to seek refuge in tribalism, be it ethnic, religious, class, gender, or digital.* It is crucial to remember, however, that this “loss of faith” and “regression to tribalism” is not new. It recalls the anti-modern tribalisms that appeared in Germany, Russia, and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Communism, Nazism, and Japanese nationalism were reactions to modernity and industrialization; they were attempts to provide for the individual the type of collective cohesion and security those premodern tribes once assured. Indeed, Karl Popper in his 1945 classic, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, described Hegelianism, Marxism, Fascism, and some social theories as “relics of ancient superstitions.” Modern civilization, he argued, “has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth—the transition from the tribal or ‘enclosed society,’ with its submission to magical forces.” In fact, “the shock of this transition is one of the factors behind the rise of reactionary movements which have tried, and still try, to overthrow civilization and return to tribalism.”¹ This is also true of radical Islam. It’s a spiritual refuge, a reaction to the anomie and alienation of modern secularism. Significantly, as Michael J. Mazarr showed, in its moral critique of modernity, resentments, nostalgic vision, and even in its pungent spirituality, radical Islam is at one with past anti-modern tribalisms.²

These striking historical parallels demand a universal historiography or paradigm that would illuminate the common denominator not only beneath the past anti-modern tribalisms but most of all beneath our global present, which post-cold war tribalisms want to retreat from. Again, a universal historiography is called for by the very global ambitions of these tribalisms. All of them, past and present, have not been content with just a tribal homeland; they aspire for world dominion. Greeks, Romans, French, British, Russians, Germans, Japanese, Chinese, Islamists, and even the “candidates”

“Make America Great Again”) want their tribe to rule the world.

But world dominion, the bringing of diverse tribes, races, languages, and peoples under one rule, raises at once and acutely (as ancient Rome realized) brings into harsh focus the problem of unity: how to weld the many into one. Rome’s answer was the emperor cult and *pax deorum* (peace of the gods). He placed its gods and those of the conquered people into one pantheon. “This is how paganism,” in Rousseau’s words, “became one and the same religion throughout the known world.”³ Of course, Yahweh, the God of Israel, did not join the pagan pantheon, nor did Jews and Christians participate in the pagan ecumenism.

And for that, Romans persecuted Christians (Jews were not persecuted because Judaism was licit). The crux is that in the case of Christians, the gospel drove a dagger at the heart of Roman imperial ideology. By setting the God-man Jesus against the man-God Caesar, it explicitly repudiated the emperor cult. By denouncing pagan gods as evil demons at war with God, it sabotaged the pantheon and shattered the peace of the gods. Finally, by uniting Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female in the church, the gospel set a parallel universal institution that challenged and ultimately overwhelmed the empire.

Again, as the mystical body of Christ, the church achieved effortlessly not only what imperial Rome and all empires had attempted (and will attempt) without success—it also solved pragmatically, in history, the philosophical problem of the one and the many. To the question What is the unifying idea, principle, or being above the flux or behind the multiplicity or pluralism in the human and natural order? the gospel presented the crucified and resurrected Christ. Paul put it crisply: Christ “is before all things, and in him all things hold together. . . . For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:17-19, NIV).⁴

It is “the most paradoxical fact,” wrote Karl Löwith, “that the cross, this sign of deepest ignominy, could conquer the world of the conquerors.”⁵ Christ displaced Caesar. The Roman Empire was Christianized. History itself was temporalized, split in half and centered on Christ and the cross. As symbolized by the Apocalypse, all streams of ancient history, Jewish and Gentile (the many) converge on Christ (the one), then

flow out of Him again (the one) toward a future that embraces (the many) all “those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Revelation 14:6, NIV), culminating in the second coming of the divine Christ.

The phrase “every nation, tribe, language and people” appears seven times in the book of Revelation, and in all the cases it’s about the unseen cosmic struggle over who is the world’s real or true Sovereign. To be sure, it first appears in Daniel 3:4, where King Nebuchadnezzar erects a huge golden statue and orders all “peoples, nations, and languages” (NKJV)⁶ to fall down and worship it. When three Hebrews defy the king, he throws them into a fiery furnace, where they are joined by one like one of the gods. When they come out unharmed, the king acknowledges Yahweh as the only true God and proclaims it all over his empire.

The book of Revelation mirrors the same plot. The beast, inspired by the dragon, sets up a counterfeit of the true God and uses totalitarian economic and political means to coerce worship (Revelation 13), but it is defeated, and all “peoples, nations, and languages” worship the true God. Then the dragon, the beast, and all the wicked are thrown into the lake of fire, eradicating evil forever (Revelation 20). This is what really brings the “end of history,” to borrow from the title of Francis Fukuyama’s famous book, written to explain the historical significance of the end of the cold war and the “triumph” of liberal democracy.

In reply to his critics in the afterword to the second paperback edition, Fukuyama rightly reminded them that the phrase “end of history” was “not an original one, but comes from Hegel and, more popularly, from Marx.”⁷ What he did not say was that Hegel’s concept of history (and also Marx’s) as a dialectical process with a beginning, a middle, and an end is not original either. Hegel borrowed it from the Bible, the Apocalypse in particular. To be sure, “the apocalypse is omnipresent” not only in Hegelianism, but in German philosophy and culture as a whole, as Klaus Vondung showed in *The Apocalypse in Germany*, in which he traced the secularized uses of apocalyptic symbols and themes in German from early nineteenth to the late twentieth century.⁸

German borrowing and secularization of the Apocalypse was in response to the same historical event—the French Revolution—that stimulated interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in Europe and America. According to Ernest R. Sandeen, as the revolu-

If the retreat to tribalism intensifies, the problem of global unity, of peaceful coexistence of all “peoples, nations, and languages” will become very acute.

tion unfolded, “students of this apocalyptic literature became convinced (in a rare display of unanimity) that they were witnessing the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13,” especially after 1798, when French troops, under Louis Alexandre Berthier, captured and banished the pope from Rome. “Commentators were quick to point out that this ‘deadly wound’ received by the papacy had been explicitly described and dated in Revelation 13.”⁹ Thus many Christians became convinced that they were at the very edge of eternity. The Second Great Awakening and specifically Adventism flowed from this conviction.

Adventists and converts to premillennialism saw in the fulfillment of prophecy God’s providential action in history. Thus they “abandoned confidence in man’s ability to bring about significant and lasting social progress and in the church’s ability to stem the tide of evil . . . or even prevent its own corruption.”¹⁰ For them, only Christ’s second coming will provide the final solution to human problems. In contrast, Hegel and thinkers in Germany, England, and France set out, in various ways, to devise philosophical and artistic systems that would renew humanity and create heaven on earth. They deliberately excluded God, even as they secularized biblical doctrines, deified themselves, and incorporated divine prerogatives into their all-embracing ideologies or shifted them to nature, science, and history.

The twentieth century was the *ideological experiment* of this self-deifying godlessness. As we know, it was a diabolical failure. Between them the man-gods—Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot—were directly responsible for more than 140 million deaths. This diabolical failure fully vindicates a pessimism in human ability to establish a heaven on earth. I find it highly significant that Adventism’s birth in the mid-nineteenth century coincided with not only the birth of Darwinism and Marxism,¹¹ but also an emphasis on the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, which gives a divine alternative narrative.

Against Hegelian and Marxist claims to solve the divisions and contradictions of modern life, the “eternal gospel” proclaims the reconciliation achieved by Christ (verse 6, NIV). The solution to humanity’s hateful divisions is found in the worship of God. The explicit mention that this God is the Creator of “heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (verse 7, NKJV) directly negates Darwinism. That this call to worship the Creator-God is followed by an announcement of the fall of “Babylon the Great” (verse 8,

NIV), points to the utter futility, substantiated by history, of all human attempts to build unity and harmony without the Creator-God.

Indeed, this futility is being substantiated, before our very eyes, by the unraveling of nation-states, the crumbling of economies, and the fraying of social bonds. The reaction, as we can see, has been a retreat to tribalism. But since tribal unity has always been based on *hatred of the other*, the regression is being accompanied by violence and will lead only to greater violence, given violence’s inbuilt capacity to clone itself. This is a frightening prospect in our closely interconnected and interdependent global order.

There is tension between globalization and tribalism. If the retreat to tribalism intensifies, the problem of global unity, of peaceful coexistence of all “peoples, nations, and languages” will become very acute. But any *human* attempt to provide a *final solution* to the tribal, economic, political, and religious conflicts of our global present will create only a Babylon, *Confusion*, because it cannot be achieved without great violence. Indeed, the Apocalypse predicts global violence against those who refuse to join this end-time Babylon. That is why the three angels’ messages are set in the context of judgment and accompanied by the most severe warning of the impending outpouring of God’s wrath (verses 9-11).

The point is that only God has a global and final solution to the human predicament, “to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment” (Ephesians 1:10, NIV). And “this calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, NIV). These are they who will make up the final tribe.

Elijah Muvandera writes from Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

¹ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945), p. xxxv.

² Michael J. Mazarr, *Unmodern Men in the Modern World: Radical Islam, Terrorism, the War on Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 33-63.

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 178.

⁴ Bible texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁵ Karl Löwith, *The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 3.

⁶ Bible texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 341.

⁸ Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, trans. Stephen D. Ricks (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 1.

⁹ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ The Great Disappointment was in 1844, the *Communist Manifesto* was published in 1848, and *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.



A book reviewed...

Armageddon and Politics

BY ED COOK

Of late the word “Armageddon” is popping up more and more in popular usage. “Armageddon” conjures up thoughts about the end of the world, annihilation, and utter destruction. Although there are numerous interpretations of the word found in Revelation 16:14, the precise biblical meaning seems to refer to the Hebrew phrase “har + Megiddo,” or “mount Megiddo.” But studying the topography of the nation of Israel described in the Old Testament

reveals no “mount Megiddo,” but instead a plain of Megiddo. The clearest visible mount viewed from the plain is Mount Carmel, the famous place where the prophet Elijah confronted 400 false prophets of Baal and challenged them to a test that pitted Yahweh against the (false) god of Baal (1 Kings 18). When one applies the historical context to its allusion in the book of Revelation, the symbolism suggests a spiritual confrontation at the end of time between the true God (Yahweh for the Jews, Jesus Christ for

Christians, and Allah for Muslims) and all other “false gods.”

Modern crises of religion and political violence, such as that produced by ISIS, appear to be related in some ways to the biblical idea of Armageddon. As Michael Baigent describes in *Racing Toward Armageddon: The Three Great Religions and the Plot to End the World*, the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) each have their distinct understanding of how the world should end.¹

From a Jewish perspective, Rabbi Ariel and the Temple Institute espouse certain eschatological (“study of the last days”) ideas that center on the restoration of the Temple of Solomon by removing the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque to usher in the Messiah.² For Jews, the Messiah is not Jesus, who they believe did not even fulfill the qualifications outlined in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah. The Jewish view of the Messiah does not include any idea of divinity. Events leading up to the climactic moment of the Messiah’s arrival include the appearance of the Red Heifer, which will be used to ritually purify those Jews who cross the Temple grounds to destroy the Dome of the Rock. After erecting Solomon’s Temple, Jewish eschatology teaches that it will serve as the spiritual center for all of humanity because the world’s population has had physical contact in different ways with the dead and thus need ritual purification.³

Christian eschatology centers upon the return of Jesus Christ to this world amid worldwide political and religious turmoil, and is often based upon the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Baigent attempts to discredit biblical authority by referring to archaeological and historical data that seem to contradict biblical chronological records. He utilizes such a polemic to assert that the book of Revelation is mere symbolism and not to be taken literally. However, he notes that many fundamentalist Christians do take the prophetic passages of the end-time in such a literal manner that their views are “spilling dangerously over into our politics and foreign policy.”⁴ He refers to such Christian authors as Hal Lindsey, John Hagee, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry Jenkins as proponents of a literalistic interpretation of the apocalyptic passages of the book of Revelation that mislead their audience into believing in an end-time scenario involving Russia and China against the rest of the world, or even referring to demons in human form combating earth’s inhabitants to establish the rule of the beast.⁵ Ultimately, Christ the

Messiah returns to defeat the forces of evil and establish a millennium of peace on earth.

Consideration of an Islamic perspective about Armageddon results in views widely different from those of Christians or Jews. Baigent brings out the historical background of frictions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, dating back to the defeat of Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad, at the battle of Karbala (A.D. 680).⁶ Shiite Muslims believe the legitimate rule should have continued through the descendants of Muhammad, whereas the Sunnis accept the rule of the Umayyad caliph. Contention between both groups to the present day can be traced to that event, leading Shiite Muslims to question the legitimacy of any Sunni rule. Baigent speculates that such a division ultimately will be the determining factor regarding the future outcome of politics in the Middle East.

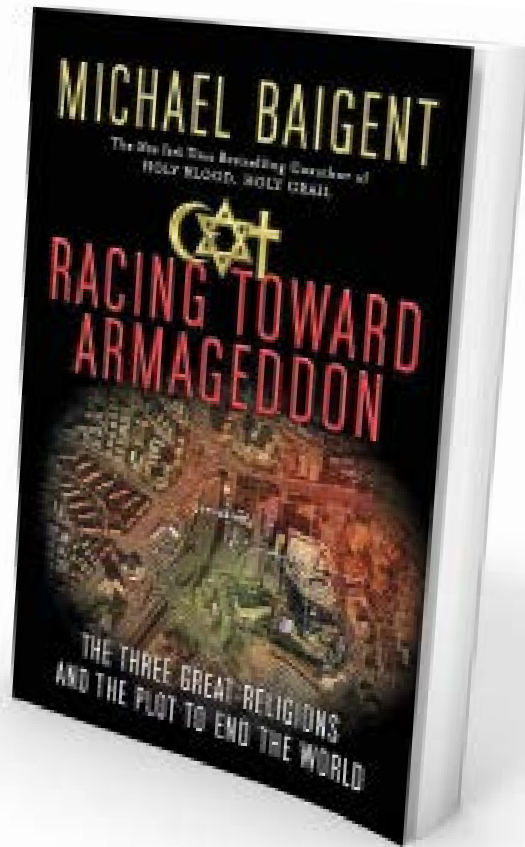
However deep the divide between both groups, they each affirm an Islamic eschatological scenario in which the Mahdi (Messiah) will return with Jesus to establish the messianic capital in Jerusalem. In the Islamic scenario, the ensuing battle of Armageddon will result in the destruction of all Jews and the defeat of the West. All the technology of Europe and the U.S. will be given to Muslims, and a worldwide Islamic caliphate will be established, especially over Europe through the annihilation of the Catholic Church and the conversion of earth’s inhabitants to Islam.⁷

While *Racing Toward Armageddon* is heavily laden with evolutionary theory and a skepticism toward deity (or at least organized religion) without due consideration of contrary arguments, Baigent should at least be credited with accurately assessing the underlying religious motivations of adherents of the three major world religions whose actions may be categorized as political violence. Some of Baigent’s analysis of Middle Eastern politics, however, overlooks political realities. He views Iran and its efforts to secure nuclear warfare capability as a catalyst to the appearance of the Twelfth Imam, who some Muslims believe is the Mahdi. By instigating a final showdown with the West, Iran could usher in the time of the Mahdi and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. While certainly a plausible scenario, many Islamic countries in the Middle East do not by their political leanings indicate support of such radical ideas. In fact, a coalition of Islamic countries has assisted Western efforts in downgrading ISIS. Additionally, the politics of economics bears strong sway in the Middle East. Leaders

of Islamic countries realize that political turmoil and rumors of war ruin tourism and weaken the overall economy because multinational corporations shy away from investing in areas of political instability.

A Muslim scholar, Dr. David Liepert, concurs with some of the conclusions that Baigent draws in *Racing Toward Armageddon*. In February 2015 Liepert wrote an article entitled “Muslims Predict Jesus Will Defeat ISIS, Beginning in 2015,” in which he explains Islamic eschatology.⁸ He refers to some Islamic Web sites where Muslims are beginning to predict the return of Jesus (not as the Son of God, but as the sixth in a lineage of holy prophets sent from Allah) in 2022, which will lead up to the final conflict of Armageddon. Between now and that time there are a series of prophetic events that Liepert describes as including the destruction of ISIS, because their actions cannot be justified by teachings of the Quran. Islamic eschatology is patterned after much of Christian eschatology found in the book of Revelation, such as the rise of the antichrist, the beast of the earth that ascends to power, Gog and Magog, each vying for power and control of the world. In the midst of their grasping for power, ‘Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus) returns to defeat the antichrist and usher in the final scenes of earth’s history. Liepert has noted that radical Muslims misinterpret traditional Islamic eschatology, distort fundamental principles of justice, and mislead uninformed Muslims to join their ranks.

Against such a potentially explosive “Armageddon psyche” of some adherents of the three major world religions, it behooves all political figures to tread lightly and judiciously regarding public statements that have the potential to ignite underlying misperceptions about the end of the world. Thus far, the Obama administration has managed to steer clear of playing into the “Armageddon psyche” of radical religionists by avoiding straw-man strategies attempting to portray U.S. actions in the Middle East as the initiation of an end-time holy war of Christians (the U.S.) against Islam. However, some of the political rhetoric in the presidential campaign could negatively impact U.S. interests both domestically and internationally. Candidates should emphasize American values of democracy, cultural and religious pluralism, and make public statements tempered with prudence, caution, and reality checks that demonstrate the clear distinction between Muslims who respect and uphold values of Western democracies and those Muslims who have



radicalized into outright war against any and all who do not embrace their misplaced holy zeal.

How might these events of Armageddon and politics unfold in the future? While the realities (or misconceptions) of Armageddon ultimately lie in the hands of Deity, politics lie in the hands of humans, and through diplomatic actions the die can be cast either for prosperity or calamity, religious freedom or the worst of all conflicts—religious war.

Ed Cook has a doctorate in church-states studies from Baylor University, Waco, Texas, where he currently leads in church religious liberty activities.

¹ Michael Baigent, *Racing Toward Armageddon: The Three Great Religions and the Plot to End the World* (New York: Harper Collin's Publishers, 2009).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸ David Liepert, “Muslims Predict Jesus Will Defeat ISIS, Beginning in 2015,” posted online Feb. 24, 2015, www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-david-liepert/muslims-predict-jesus-def_b_6725486.html?ncid=txtlinkusaolp00000592.

Raising Objections

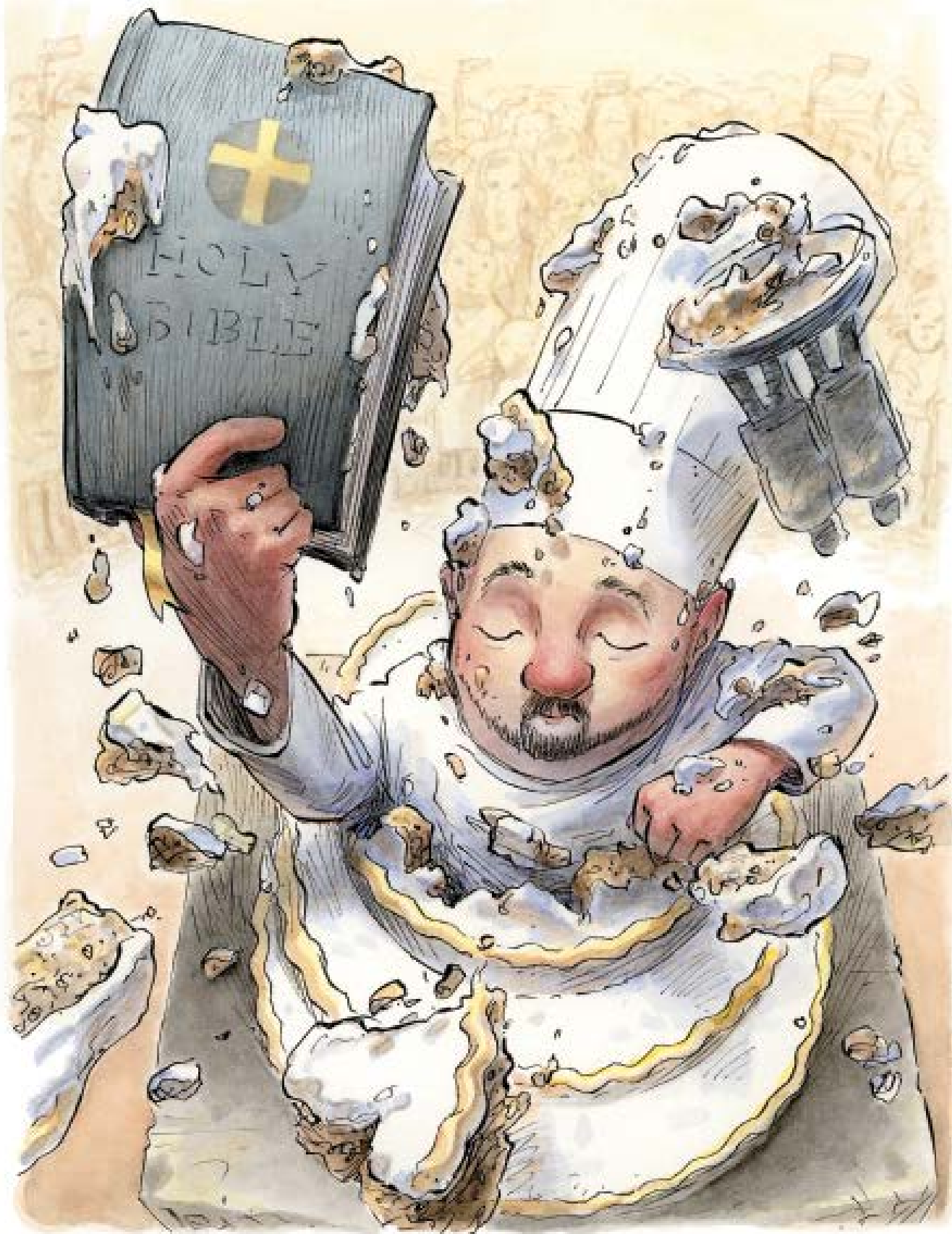
BY KEVIN JAMES

ILLUSTRATION BY DAN VASCONCELLOS

On April 28, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the matter of *Obergefell v. Hodges*. In a revealing moment of candor, a confession was made about the ramifications of a resulting decision that deems same-sex marriages constitutional in all 50 states. Justice Samuel Alito posed a question to U.S. solicitor general Donald Verrilli about faith-based organizations' tax-exempt status. Verrilli was arguing for the federal government for same-sex marriage. "In the Bob Jones case, the Court held that a college was not entitled to tax-exempt status if it opposed interracial marriage. . . . So would the same apply to a university or a college if it opposed same-sex marriage?" asked Justice Alito. Mr. Verrilli responded, "You know, I—I don't think I can answer that question without knowing more specifics, but it is certainly going to be an issue. I—I don't deny that. I don't deny that, Justice Alito. It is—it is going to be an issue."

Mr. Verrilli's response, "It is going to be an issue," certainly caught the attention of faith-based institutions, raising fears that have been growing for some time. It is possible that religious liberty will be gravely challenged if same-sex individuals can legally marry. Will faith practice that opposes such marriages be overridden if same-sex marriage becomes the law of the land? In fact, the implications were immediately apparent when Mr. Verrilli's colleague, Ms. Mary L. Bonauto, was asked if clergy would be required to wed a same-sex couple. Her response was no, as it is something protected by the First Amendment. That answer left Justice Antonin Scalia less than confident. He opined that "if it's a constitutional requirement, I don't see how you can [make exceptions about who is entitled to perform marriages or not]." Justice Scalia has since died, and his position remains vacant—but not the question.

Nearly a decade earlier, in what seems prophetic today, the Becket Fund held a symposium on the impact to religious



liberty if same-sex marriage were deemed constitutional. Several legal scholars weighed in with profound insight. Marc Stern stated, "Same-sex marriage would work a sea change in American law. That change will reverberate across the legal and religious landscape in ways that are today unpredictable." He closed his essay by concluding, in part, that "I am not optimistic that, under current law, much can be done to ameliorate the impact on religious dissenters."

At that same Becket Fund gathering, Jonathan Turley said, "The debate over same-sex marriage has become for the twenty-first century what the abortion debate was for the twentieth century: a single, defining issue that divides the country in a zero-sum political battle." And that battle was on display in legislatures in several of the Southern states this session. From legislators seeking to include sexual orientation and gender identity into their state nondiscrimination laws, to legislators creating legislation to protect private business owners that have objections to same-sex marriage, legal conflict was sharp and vigorously argued.

In Georgia, House Bill 757 was hotly debated at the legislature and in public circles. It was a bill that started out simply assuring that clergy and church property would not be forced to perform or hold same-sex weddings. As the session drew on, other bills were included in it. These were bills that stated clearly that businesses owned and operated by individuals with beliefs against same-sex marriage were protected in withholding their services. Other bills were religious freedom reformation acts. The now-muddled bill went through a series of committees and compromises before it was voted and sent to the governor's desk.

Gone were the guarantees of protections for private business owners. What remained were the protections for clergy and faith-based organizations as well as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. That pared-down bill was very unacceptable to such major businesses as Delta, Home Depot, and the state's strong movie industry, to name a few parties. Though clergy and faith-based operations are already strongly protected in American law, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was mirroring the federal legislation, the governor still vetoed it on the grounds that discrimination toward gays might follow.

Georgia's HB 757 was probably doomed after attempts over several years to pass a religious freedom restoration act that had an attachment of protection specifically for parental rights based upon religion. It was never a

popular bill among big business, the gay lobby, or even some religious groups. Big businesses feared employees holding religion convictions could override business needs if the bill became law. Gay groups felt it would allow open season on gays in the workplace by employees of faith, creating interpersonal unrest over their objections to sexual practices they deemed sinful. Religious groups felt the bill would create too high a standard for government to meet in order to carry out its compelling interests. That bad blood spilled over into this session, and though the RFRA was a "clean" bill (no special protections over parental rights), there was no way the opposing groups could trust its alleged benign purposes in religious protections.

The state of Mississippi went even further. House Bill 1523, entitled "Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act," is a sweeping piece of legislation that goes far beyond Georgia's protections. Along with the clergy and faith-based properties protections a broad range of other protections are assured. Adoption and foster care agencies that decline placing children in same-sex-couple homes cannot be acted against by the state. Private business owners in the area of floral arrangements, photography, videography, disc jockey, wedding planning, printing, and publishing are protected in denying services. Even dressmakers, cake-makers, car rental services, limousine services, jewelry sales, or any business accommodation that serves the public for weddings can refuse service. Companies are protected from establishing sex-specific standards or policies concerning an employee, student dress, grooming along with access to restrooms, spas, baths, showers, and dressing and locker rooms.

The medical and mental health professions can withhold non-life-threatening treatment on the basis of religious objections. State employees can lawfully speak or engage in expressive conduct consistent with their sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction on and off work. Persons acting in behalf of state government, such as clerks, registers of deeds, judges, magistrates, and justices of the peace can recuse themselves from duties involving same-sex weddings. Basically, any person who holds religious objections to same-sex marriages could come under the protections afforded in the bill.

Where this all takes us is problematic. But greater legal conflict and the impression of injustice and prejudice are certain.

Kevin James is associate director of religious liberty for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its Southern Union Conference. He writes from Atlanta, Georgia.



STRING THEORY

“Without Thomas Jefferson and his Declaration of Independence, there would have been no American revolution that announced universal principles of liberty. Without his participation by the side of the unforgettable Marquis de Lafayette, there would have been no French proclamation of The Rights of Man. Without his brilliant negotiation of the Louisiana treaty, there would be no United States of America. Without Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, there would have been no Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, and no basis for the most precious clause of our most prized element of our imperishable Bill of Rights—the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.”

Christopher Hitchens, author and sceptic

BY KEVIN
D. PAULSON

The rightful drawing—and blurring—of the line between the free exercise of one’s religion and the choices made by persons of varying sexual orientation has again become a major front in America’s continuing culture wars.

Most recently a law passed by the Mississippi state legislature and signed by the state’s governor, Phil Bryant, seeks to reinforce what many hold to be their First Amendment rights relative to the practice of their religious faith in light of the 2015 Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage.¹ Among other things, the bill offers—in the words of one of its supporters, state Senator Jennifer Branning—“protection to those in the state who cannot in a good conscience provide services for a same-sex wedding.”²

Critics of the law, however, have denounced it as “the most sweeping anti-LGBT legislation in the U.S.”³ State representative Stephen Holland declared, “This is the most hateful bill I have seen in my career in the legislature.”⁴

This action by the state of Mississippi follows actions by other states along similar lines, such as a recent North Carolina statute overturning local city ordinances protecting LGBT persons from discrimination, in particular as these ordinances affect the use of bathrooms by transgender individuals.⁵ Similar measures passed by state legislatures in Georgia and South Dakota were vetoed by their respective governors in March of 2016.⁶

What the Law Says

What in fact do the specifics of the Mississippi law cover? How far does the law go? To describe the measure as “sweeping”

appears not to be an exaggeration, as it addresses not only LGBT persons but heterosexuals as well, whose lifestyle may differ from the tenets and lifestyle standards of religious conservatives. One online report, published by ABC News, describes the particulars of the bill as follows:

Specifically, religious organizations protected by the law can:

- Decline to “solemnize any marriage” or provide wedding-related services based on their religious beliefs or moral convictions. Those services run a full gamut, from wedding planning, photography, disc-jockey services, and floral arrangements to cakes, venues, and limos.
- Decide “whether or not to hire, terminate, or discipline an individual whose conduct or religious beliefs are inconsistent” with their beliefs or moral convictions.
- Decide to whom they will sell or rent housing . . . based on their religious beliefs or moral convictions.

In addition, for others protected under the law:

- Adoptive or foster parents can raise a child they’ve been granted custody of by the state with the same beliefs and convictions of those protected by the law.
- Medical and therapy professionals can decline “treatments, counseling, or surgeries related to sex reassignment or gender identity transitioning” and “psychological, counseling, or fertility services” to people whose lifestyles violate their religious beliefs.
- People can create “sex-specific standards or policies concerning employee or student dress or grooming, or concerning access to

Religious Freedom and **Discrimination**



restrooms, spas, baths, showers, dressing rooms, locker rooms or other intimate facilities or settings.”

- State employees and those acting on behalf of the state may recuse themselves from authorizing or licensing legal marriages, although they may not stand in the way of others doing so.⁷

Analysis

A number of issues meriting analysis arise from the specifics of this legislation, several of which we will consider below:

First, no distinction appears to be made in this law between “religious organizations” and those providing wedding services, such as photography, floral arrangements, cakes, and limos—the latter more appropriately falling under the category of businesses for profit, as distinct from such religious entities as churches, church-owned institutions, or other ministries. While strictly religious organizations often provide the venue for wedding ceremonies and receptions, few provide such services as wedding photography, cakes, flowers, etc.

By contrast, the solemnizing of marriage relationships is in most cases a religious activity performed by clergy and religious organizations. No law existing presently at any level of American society constrains a church or religious ministry to grant its blessing to any relationship contrary to its theological or moral beliefs. This is true not only for gay marriages, but for many straight marriages as well—those, for example, involving persons divorced on grounds other than those sanctioned by the church in question, or marriages between members of a particular denomination and members of another—a practice opposed by many conservative religious communities. To the writer’s knowledge, no legislative or judicial ruling currently in progress, or even in the initial stages, exists anywhere in the United States just now that would govern the choices of clergy, churches, or ministries in this regard. This aspect of the Mississippi law is therefore quite unnecessary.

Second, the law in question seems equally unclear as to whether strictly religious organizations or private for-profit businesses are the focus of the provision “whether or not to hire, terminate, or discipline an individual whose conduct or religious beliefs are inconsistent” with their beliefs or moral convictions.⁸ The right of religious organizations to hire, terminate, or discipline employees on these grounds

was upheld in a 9-0 unanimous ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2012 *Hosanna-Tabor* decision.⁹ This ruling defined in very broad terms the definition of a “minister,” as the plaintiff with whom the case originated was a teacher who taught a variety of nonreligious courses at a Lutheran church school.¹⁰ This case has caused a number of religious entities, such as the Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati (Ohio) in 2014, to simply add “minister” to the title of all their workers, and to require them to sign a contract renouncing such behaviors as sex outside of marriage, living together out of wedlock, practicing a gay or lesbian lifestyle, or even speaking in defense of these particular choices.¹¹

But should it be legally permissible for a private business owner, whose religious beliefs condemn the sexual choices of persons employed in such a business, to be permitted to discriminate on these same grounds? Should the owner of such an establishment be given the legal right to hire, fire, or discipline workers based on religious or moral beliefs the workers do not themselves acknowledge? Members of conservative religious organizations or ministries—in particular, employees of such entities—have in most cases joined such organizations willingly and thus by choice subscribe to the organization’s doctrinal and moral agenda, to which they can thus be held accountable in the event they stray from it. But should profit-driven businesses be permitted to operate in this fashion? How does that protect freedom of conscience on the part of the employee who labors in such a business solely for a livelihood and not because of agreement with the owner’s religious or moral views?

Equally unclear is the question as to whether this law would not only permit such merchants as photographers, florists, and bakers to discriminate against gays, but also restaurant owners and perhaps others. If, for example, a conservative Christian restaurant proprietor were to refuse service to a gay couple—in the event, perhaps, of a public display of affection by the couple—would such a business be permitted by this law to tell such persons, “We don’t serve your kind here”?

Third, as noted earlier, the Mississippi law in question appears to open the door to housing discrimination not only against LGBT persons, but also against heterosexual couples living together out of wedlock. As cited above, the law permits landlords and real estate owners to “decide to whom they will sell or rent housing

... based on their religious beliefs or moral convictions."¹²

Without question, this aspect of the law permits religionists holding a particular set of beliefs to deny essential services to persons who don't share them. This would seem a clear-cut case of one person's conscientious convictions creating material and physical hardship for others holding a different set of conscientious convictions. In a truly free society, religious liberty cannot be used to forcibly create or impose tangible hardship on the consensual choices of others.

Fourth, to whom—religious organizations, private businesses, or both—does the permission to set gender-restrictive standards apply with reference to bathrooms, spas, locker rooms, showers, and similar facilities, as allowed by this bill?¹³ Again we are led to ask whether strictly religious organizations even need such permission under current or even foreseeable law. So far as businesses that professedly serve the general public are concerned, the right to refuse accommodation to diverse segments of the population seems—at least to the present writer—difficult to justify.

Fifth, the Mississippi lawmakers deserve credit for seeking to craft an accommodation for all parties concerned relative to the issuing of marriage licenses by public officials. Unlike the recent dispute in Kentucky, which saw a state official not only refuse marriage licenses to gay couples but also forbid her deputies to issue them, the Mississippi law permits officials in this capacity to refuse to grant such licenses if in conscience they cannot grant them, but at the same time prohibits the officials in question from standing in the way of others issuing the licenses. In this way, one can hope, the convictions and choices of all can be protected.

Sadly, it would appear this principle—as we have seen—does not apply to other important aspects of this legislation.

The ultimate fate of both the North Carolina and Mississippi laws will likely be determined in the courts. Unfortunately, it seems that the effort of too many conservative religionists to protect their own freedom of conscience is not being pursued with an eye to also protecting the freedom of others. Without question, religious organizations must have the right to maintain doctrinal and moral standards for those choosing to be employees or members of these entities. But by the same token, those who choose a different course for their lives and spiritual outlook

must have their choices safeguarded also.

So far as the conduct of profit-driven business is concerned, conservative religionists in such settings must ask themselves to what extent the business they practice routinely facilitates the pursuit of behaviors their religious faith disapproves. And they must ask themselves if such facilitation truly makes them responsible for the behaviors in question. Does baking a cake for a gay wedding, for example, signify the baker's endorsement of the couple's relationship any more than the baking of a wedding cake for a Catholic ceremony by a Protestant baker signifies the baker's endorsement of transubstantiation and the Mass—which form an integral part of a Catholic marriage ceremony? Do Seventh-day Adventist or Orthodox Jewish landlords who rent to non-Sabbathkeepers become morally responsible for those living on their property who, according to the landlord's beliefs, are in weekly violation of one of God's commandments? How is a Sabbathkeeper renting to a non-Sabbathkeeper any different from a landlord who believes sex is reserved for marriage choosing to rent to a couple living together outside of marriage?

The only path to societal tranquility and mutual understanding on these points, it seems, is to recognize at long last that certain issues of intimate conduct belong strictly within the realm of theological and moral persuasion, and lie fully outside the purview of the secular state. Similar clarity is essential so far as the distinction between the world of commerce and the world of religious ministry is concerned, and the point at which faith-based restriction leaves off and a believer's exemplary witness takes over.

Kevin Paulson writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan.

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/mississippi-religious-freedom-bill-sweeping-anti-lgbt-law/story?id=38170420>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article67731847.html

⁶ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/mississippi-religious-freedom-bill-sweeping-anti-lgbt-law/story?id=38170420>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosanna-Tabor_Evangelical_Lutheran_Church_%26_School_v._Equal_Employment_Opportunity_Commission

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² <http://abcnews.go.com/US/mississippi-religious-freedom-bill-sweeping-anti-lgbt-law/story?id=38170420>

¹³ *Ibid.*

Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church

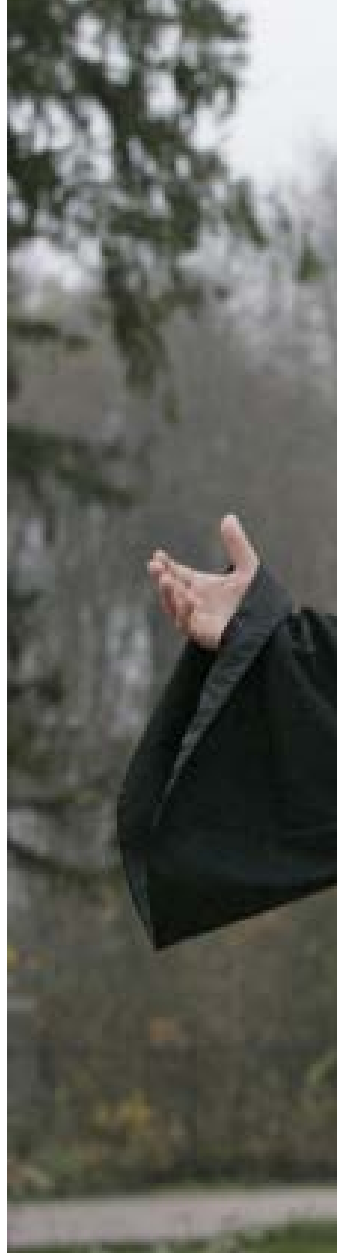
BY CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

A story, perhaps apocryphal, made the rounds in Sweden decades ago. A Soviet apparatchik came to political leaders in Stockholm in the 1970s with one desperate question. “How have you managed to do it?” he asked. That is, *How have you managed to eradicate religion?* Though the Swedes hadn’t exactly eradicated religious faith, no question that Sweden has not been, nor still is, a particularly religious country—a goal that the Bolsheviks had been unable to achieve in the Soviet Union, even with a half century of arrests, executions, and prison terms in the Gulag.

Of course, that was then, this is now, and things are vastly different in the Kremlin *now* than in the days of the Bolsheviks. Decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Putin’s Russia, religion—more specifically, the Russian Orthodox Church—has experienced a resurgence of influence and power, especially as a potent political ally of President Vladimir Putin—supporting him, for instance, in his bombing campaign in Syria, and even giving its endorsement for what church leaders have called a “holy battle.”

Defender of the Faith

© REUTERS/HO NEW





What are the implications of this rebirth of the Russian Orthodox Church, and how might its newly restored power upset the delicate balance of religious freedom in a nation that has not, historically, been friendly to minority faiths?

The Great Schism

Most people in the Western world know the presence of the Roman, or Latin Church, and see the resurgence of the Papacy. Most people are aware, too, of various Orthodox churches: Greek, Serbian, Russian, and others. What many don't realize, however, is that these different churches go back almost a thousand years, the result of what has been called the Great Schism.

Though differences— theological, political,

and ecclesiastical—had been simmering in the first millennium of the church, in the eleventh century, after a series of reforms that broadened the authority of the Papacy, the Roman Church became more dictatorial and autocratic. Pope Leo IX, making the claim of direct succession from the apostle Peter, asserted direct jurisdiction over the entire church, East and West. Though the Schism is normally dated to 1054, when Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Michael I excommunicated each other, the primary cause was this dispute over papal authority.

Theology, though, was involved as well: such as over the insertion of the “filioque clause” into a sentence of the Nicene Creed. The sentence in had originally read: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. Who with the Father and the



© REUTERS/EDUARD KORNIVENKO

A Russian Orthodox priest blesses new officer cadets during an army swearing-in ceremony.

Putin has encouraged the church to build a relationship with the armed forces, and it's now common for orthodox priests to sprinkle Russian space rockets with holy water just before liftoff.

Son is worshiped and glorified.” The sentence was later modified in the sixth century to this: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.” (The word “filioque” is translated as “of the Son,” hence the name, the “filioque controversy”.) The Eastern churches objected over what they saw not only as an unauthorized change but a theologically suspect one as well. The sack of Constantinople by Western Crusaders also sharpened the East-West divide. The division between the Eastern and Western thus ensued, existing even to this day, despite attempts at reconciliation, mostly from the Roman side of the divide.

The Russian Orthodox Church

According to tradition, Christianity was first introduced to the Russians by the apostle Andrew in the first century A.D. though the fact that Russia was in geographical proximity of the powerful Byzantine Empire no doubt played the major role in Christianizing the *Rus*’, and by the tenth century Eastern Christianity got a firm foothold in Russia. In the wake of this Christianization, Prince Vladimir I of Kiev officially adopted Byzantine Christianity in

988 C.E.—the religion of the Eastern Roman Empire—as the state religion. Though the church had its ups and downs through the centuries (including the Mongol invasion), with the ascension of Peter the Great to the throne of Russia (1682-1725) the Russian Orthodox Church greatly expanded geographically, reaching Alaska and even California!

In the twentieth century, as the Western cultural, political, and social influences were pervading Czarist Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church became a powerful force for maintaining Russian culture and values against what had been seen as the decadence of the West—a theme at times echoed in the writings of Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, a fervent nationalist, an adherent to the Russian Orthodox Church, and a vociferous opponent of Roman Catholicism.

As the largest single religious body in Russia, and the most politically and culturally influential, the Russian Orthodox Church had been deemed a great threat to the Bolsheviks. Thus it faced severe persecution during the seven decades of Communist rule. Thousands of clergy were killed, driven into exile, or imprisoned in the Gulags; most churches were closed, and religious education was forbidden. During the World War II, Stalin—looking to use the church to boost morale—allowed a limited revival of church activity, but it was all strictly controlled by the state. However, as the opening illustration of this article reveals, the Soviet regime was never able to repress religious faith fully, despite its best efforts.

Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church

Again, that was then, this is now, and now—under Putin—things have changed. Though a former KBG agent who once called the fall of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century,” President Putin has apparently had a religious awakening and is now a self-professed Christian and adherent to the Russian Orthodox Church. According to some accounts, the former militant atheist faced some personal crises that caused him to become a Christian. Others argue that it is political expediency—a way for him to help garner the support of the church for his political agenda (à la Saddam Hussein, who in the last day of his regime suddenly put on the trappings of religion in hopes of garnering support). Whatever the motives, Putin appears quite zealous for the faith, seeking to establish some sort of pre-Soviet combination of church and state.

“First and foremost,” Putin has said, “we

should be governed by common sense. But common sense should be based on moral principles first. And it is not possible today to have morality separated from religious values.”

He sounds like the late Jerry Falwell, or Pat Robertson, not a one-time KBG operative. Yet in a society that has been struggling to fill the void left after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the Russian Orthodox Church offers some moral stability to a nation seeking to find its own identity in the brave new post-Soviet world. The Russian Orthodox Church views itself as the spiritual voice and ideological bulwark of the Russian nation, and poll after poll show that the church is one of the most respected institutions in the country.

In 2011 Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, was allowed to move into the Kremlin itself, a powerfully symbolic act that revealed the growing clout of the church (imagine Billy Graham years ago being given official residence at the White House!). Putin has encouraged the church to build a relationship with the armed forces, and it’s now common for orthodox priests to sprinkle Russian space rockets with holy water just before liftoff. The Orthodox Church has even held a religious service in honor of the nation’s stockpile of nuclear weapons!

“Many people think the church is only clergy, and it should not speak about secular matters, but we have overcome this Soviet legacy,” says Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin. “The church is millions of people, and they have every right to speak about the concerns of society, especially ethical ones like family values, corruption, education policy, abortion, and relations with power. Many priests do speak out about such things these days, and I think that’s a good thing.”

And when they do, it seems the government is listening too. A recent example of its growing power came over the female punk rock band Pussy Riot, which held an irreverent and illicit performance in Moscow’s main cathedral. Outraged at this act of “blasphemy,” the church insisted that the charges be increased from the relatively minor offense of “hooliganism,” to include the sentence-multiplying addition of “with intent to foment religious hatred.” The church prevailed, resulting in three young women doing two years in labor camps.

Another example of the closer ties came with attitude of the Orthodox Church in regard to Russian intervention in Syria. Vsevolod Chaplin, formerly head of the Russian Orthodox Church’s public affairs department, was quoted

No question: after the collapse of the Soviet Union, all religions, including the Russian Orthodox Church, were allowed freedoms not seen in decades.

as saying that “the fight with terrorism is a holy battle, and today our country is perhaps the most active force in the world fighting it.”

Said an article in *Foreign Policy*: “With some 70 percent of Russians identifying as Orthodox Christians, the Kremlin has relied on the church — and Chaplin, one of its public faces — to bolster public support for the Syrian war effort. The Orthodox Church’s Patriarch Kirill, a loyal Kremlin ally, also pitched in, praising what he described as Russia’s decision to ‘protect the Syrian people from the woes brought on by the tyranny of terrorists.’” Among the arguments is that by fighting against ISIS and other Islamic extremist groups in Syria, the Russians are working to save Christians from persecution. This has to be one of the most ironic of all historical twists that Vladimir Putin, formerly of the Soviet Union, is now being deemed the great defender of the Christian faith.

Religious Freedom in Russia Today

No question: after the collapse of the Soviet Union, all religions, including the Russian Orthodox Church, were allowed freedoms not seen in decades. But that hardly means religious freedom is flourishing in Russia, which, even before the rise of Communism, was hardly friendly to any religious viewpoint other than Russian Orthodoxy. On the contrary, many religions, with the exception of the Russian Orthodox Church, face difficult times in Russia, even today. Hence, a 2015 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom stated: “Amid a sharp increase in human rights abuses, serious violations of freedom of religion or belief continue in Russia.” Among many other issues, the report expressed concern about a 1997 religious law that “sets onerous registration procedures and empowers state officials to impede registration or obstruct the construction or rental of worship buildings.”

Not helping matters is a concept called “canonical territory.” It teaches that the eccle-

siastical and authoritative boundaries of the various Orthodox churches coincided with the political divisions: hence, the Serbian, the Croatian, the Armenian, the Russian, and other Orthodox churches, each with domain in their respective countries. The Russian Orthodox Church, both pre- and now post-Soviet, views itself as the only and one true church for Russia itself (though the boundaries remain even now in dispute), and it has never viewed fondly any other faith, including other Orthodox communities, intruding on its territory.

In the past Russians have often been quite xenophobic, and this is a trait being nourished by Putin, especially in dealings with the West. Many see the Russian Orthodox Church as the moral and spiritual bulwark against Western influence, including Western religions (i.e., Roman Catholicism and Protestantism). Historically, the Russian Orthodox Church has not been open to other faiths on Russian soil, and by all indications it’s working aggressively today to maintain hegemony in its “canonical territory.” Though the church itself can’t do anything directly, its ever-growing clout allows it to do what its archnemesis, the Roman Catholic Church, did for centuries in its domains: use the secular power of the state to oppress or even persecute rivals or those deemed “heretics.” Thus, many groups—evangelicals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other “non-traditional faiths” (that is, anything other than Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Russian Orthodox Christians)—face a continuing struggle, as legislation makes it much more difficult for faiths other than the Russian Orthodox Church to live and work in Russia.

What the future holds for religious freedom in Russia remains unknown, especially for any religious body other than the Russian Orthodox Church. For the Russian Orthodox, as long as Putin finds the church useful, the future looks good, or at least better than it does for those not of its fold.

Clifford Goldstein writes from Mount Airy, Maryland.

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Liberty® (ISSN 0024-2055) is published bimonthly by the Pacific Press Publishing Association for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Periodicals postage paid at Nampa, ID.

POSTMASTER: send changes of address to Liberty, PO Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353. Copyright © 2016 by the North American Division.

Printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, PO Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353. Subscription price: U.S. \$7.95 per year. Single copy: U.S. \$1.50. Price may vary where national currencies differ. For subscription information or changes, please call 1 (800) 545-2449.

Vol. 111, No. 5, September/October 2016

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APPARENTLY REMOTE

In place of religious wars, Americans have substituted discussion and debate, a good deal of it gathered under the heading of “church and state.” Such terms as church and state can sound strangely abstract and remote: of little interest to hardly anyone. Yet, for a great many of us, what these terms stand for may be surprisingly near at hand and even personal. Church can represent the local synagogue or mosque, no less than the cathedral or the denomination headquarters; it can also include the church camp or festival, the street preacher, or even the Salvation Army Christmas kettle. State refers to any level of government: local, state, or federal. And those entities can touch the school population (among others) in many ways, from offering inoculations against disease to enforcing curfews and granting driving licenses. The apparent remoteness of church and state is only that: an illusion, a phantom. These institutions involve us all, touch us all, and possibly even change us all.

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Church and State in America*
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 13.

