

A MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

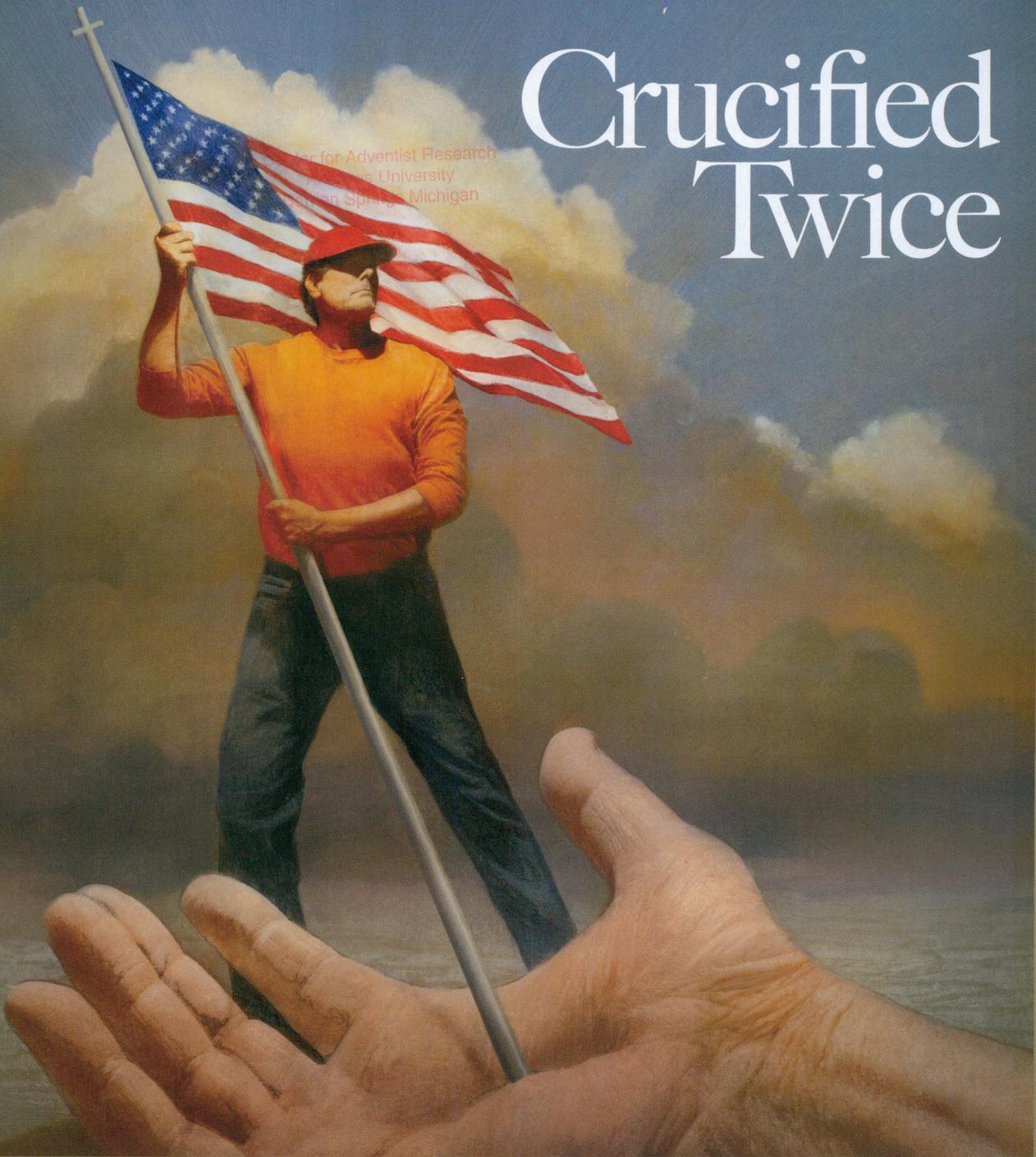
A BLACK AND WHITE ISSUE | STRANGE FIRE

LIBERTY

MAY/JUNE 2021

Crucified Twice

Center for Adventist Research
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, Michigan



THE DARKNESS DROPS AGAIN



EDITORIAL

Those words come from William Butler Yeats 1919 poem "The Second Coming." He wrote it immediately after the Great War—expected to be, hoped to be, by many, the last war. (So much for hope over realism.) He also wrote it just after the so-called Spanish flu had killed as many as 50 million worldwide and 675,000 out of a U.S. population of 100 million. A curious side fact is that flu treatment at the time was largely a massive dose of up to 30 grams a day of aspirin. We now know that above four grams is unsafe; and one has to wonder at the comorbidity effect of aspirin overdose, which manifested as hyperventilation and fluid on the lungs!

Which makes me feel just a little less secure now that I have my second Moderna shot! No headaches yet, so no need to take an aspirin!

After a year of COVID, all signs are that people have had enough. Plenty of people seem not to bother with masks; they want to have parties and family get-togethers, and the roads are as busy as ever getting there. Yes, the number of deaths seem to be declining as we get used to treating this evolving malady; but infection rates remain disturbingly high, and mutated varieties promise continued peril.

So let the band play on. After the Spanish flu (probably originating in New York, by the way), the same eat, drink, and be merry mood prevailed. Of course, it was more than just the end of gasping for breath; the trench war was over, the old world gone with much of the new generation, and those left obviously thought it best for mayflies to flutter and be gay. It was the flapper era, and in Germany the cabaret scene for blue angels. Such a

pity that barely two decades later the world would end again.

I can't shake the feeling that we are about to dance across that no-man's land again ourselves.

COVID has not gone; it will likely never go—just retreat for a time.

The piper has yet to be paid for all the COVID stimulus checks: about \$5 trillion, by my figuring. Of course, that pales next to the U.S. national debt of around \$20 trillion. And maybe vice president Cheney had it right when he said that deficits don't matter. Not when the fiat money system itself is at stake. The state fair attraction of money on demand is at root a sideshow barker's trick, sustainable only when the calliope drowns out reality. Ask the good and democratically inclined leaders of the interwar German Weimar Republic.

It seems, too, that we have lately overprinted that other currency of the U.S. republic: religious freedom.

Before the last presidential election the talk of religious freedom had become so loud as to be meaningless. The public manner has scarcely been more crude and vicious, so to hear it used in promoting religious freedom is jarring.

For most, religious freedom has devolved to decrying the manifestly ungodly prevalence of abortion; demanding prayer/religion back in schools; fighting against gays; and replacing bad science with bad religion.

The trouble is that most of this is carried forward in a way that would surely repulse the Carpenter from Galilee. He was pretty heavily into good deeds and kindness, and not too interested in political power or compulsion.

By my lights the biggest problem of late with religious freedom is a lack of religion itself—or at least the finer sensibilities that all religions like to think distinguish them from the unbeliever.

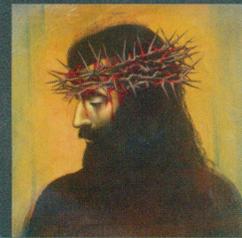
For most religious entities the end of religious freedom is access to government subsidy, special accommodation to their agenda, and protection for their right to condemn the sinners so prevalent in what they wish were a theocratic state. The bolder religionists think religious freedom exercised should be the ability for minority religious views to mandate behavior to others. No wonder so many "pagans" view religion and religious freedom with suspicion!

The basics of religious freedom are indeed basic. We are all deserving of respect, and as free moral agents seek God in many ways. Religious freedom means nothing unless it discounts the arm of force (the state) and grants the right of others to be wrong about spiritual things. Remember, in the Bible account, how God grants the Edenic pair the ability to make mistakes? Remember too how Jesus, the proclaimed Son of God, declined to enter the political realm and in dealing with sinners could say, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more"?

Read any history book, and it is obvious that in times of societal stress, politicized religion, seeking for national identity, lashes out violently against the "other." I see that emerging model in the United States. It is our looming crisis, far more than economic apocalypse (sure to come); gun violence (*Left Behind*, anyone?); insurgency and near civil war (Christian militias and preppers!); fading world dominance (community of nations?) and racial equity (Christian brotherhood, anyone!).

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 Federal Constitution for the United States of America.

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Over the years I have had innumerable theological discussions with those confused over the distinctions between foreknowledge and predestination. God surely knows men and nations. But we had better stop thinking that God or the fates control events. We do, and our actions have consequences. No people and no nation are irredeemable. No course cannot be reversed. The darkness is indeed falling; but let us rediscover true liberty, true charity (for all, as Lincoln put it), and true security. Before the darkness settles.

Lincoln E. Steed, Editor
Liberty magazine

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The Second Coming

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

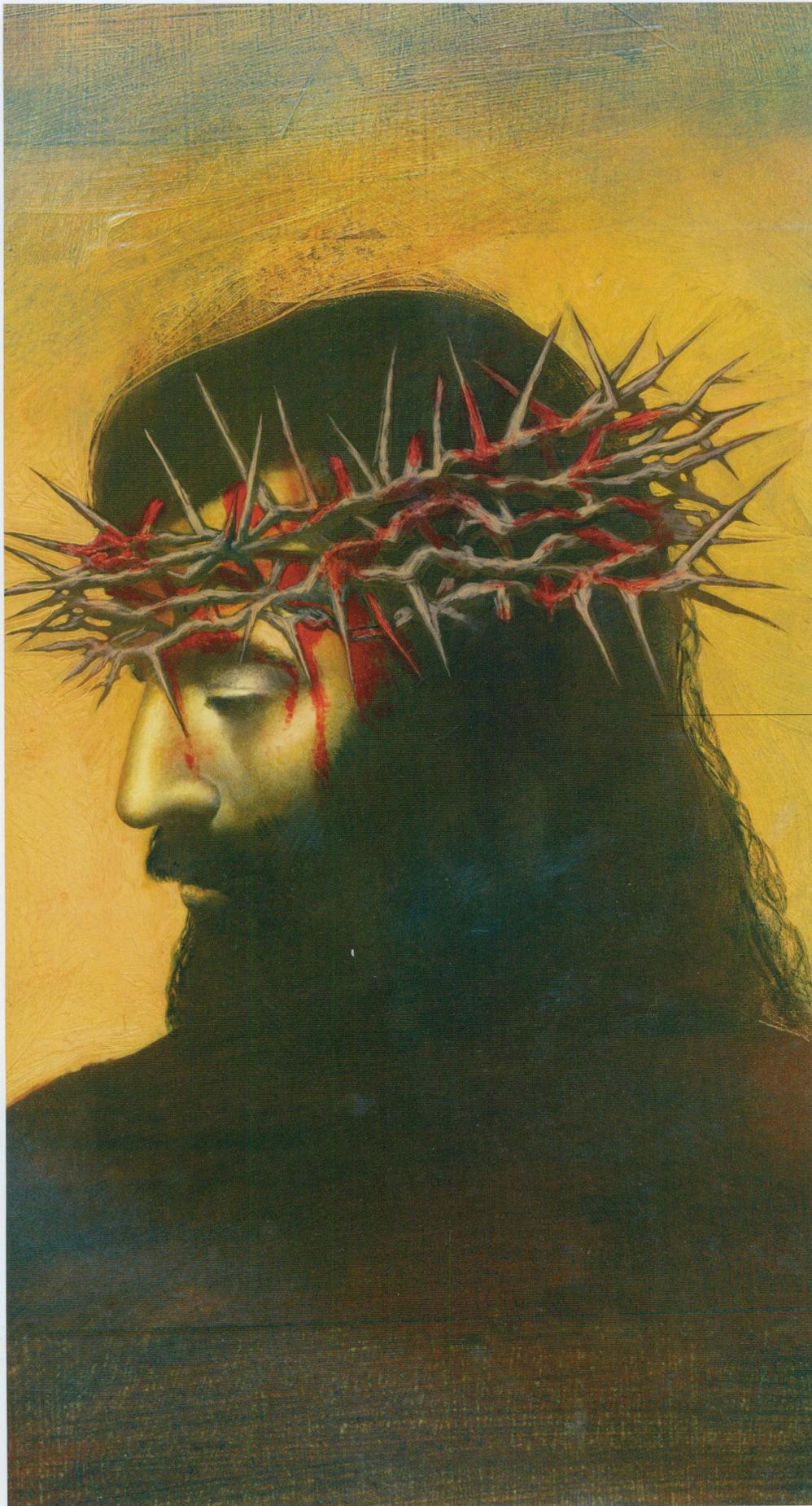
DECLARATION
of Principles

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.



BY ED GUTHERO

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WILLIAMS

How did a democracy, whose Statue of Liberty represents a beacon of freedom to the world, find itself in a fulcrum of chaos and misdirection following a fair democratic election, judged so by every court in the nation? How did it come to be that a traditionally peaceful transition of power was violently threatened amid a cult of personality and desperate efforts to cling to power with politicians apparently willing to sacrifice their own integrity as well as the principles of the nation's Founders in the process? Washington, Madison, Jefferson, and their associates would be mortified to witness our day. What do intimidating paramilitary-style civilians, armed with assault rifles, standing outside the neutral sanctity of voting stations have to do with the sacred freedom that America represents?

What business do spiritual leaders, entrusted with the hearts and souls of their congregations, have getting entwined with political agendas while setting aside the gospel commission and replacing it with a fevered partisan push for earthly political power? Perhaps

**How too many
modern-day believers
succumbed to the
lure of political power
and lost the essence
of the Gospel**

Crucified Twice

“Among the major victims of
Christian nationalism is
Christianity itself. . . .
Whenever the state gets too
cozy with Christianity,
Christianity is the one that
gets compromised.”



even more troubling, what does Christianity, founded by a Man of peace, have to do with any of this? Was it a complete sellout?

Do such sentiments represent all Christians? No. Do such sentiments represent even all evangelicals? Absolutely not. Yet extremist elements have caused too many people to assume this is the case.

There has always been an omen of Shakespearean tragedy hovering about this latest dance of power, politics, and religion since it began accelerating in 2016. Even from the beginning, this romance appeared to be a straight, unspoken yet understood compromise deal: support and votes in exchange for legislation and judges. Tragically, sincere people were swept along in the fervor and entanglements.

In December 2020, as postelection chaos polarized and rocked the nation, Beth Moore, a respected voice in the evangelical community, grew increasingly alarmed and spoke out pointedly: "I do not believe these are the days for mincing words. I'm 63 years old, and I have never seen anything in these United States of America I have found more astonishingly seductive and dangerous to the saints of God than Trumpism. This Christian nationalism is not of God. Move back from it." Moore continued her warning to fellow Christian leaders: "We will be held responsible for remaining passive in this day of seduction to save our own skin while the saints we've been entrusted to serve are being seduced, manipulated, USED, and stirred up into a lather of zeal devoid of the Holy Spirit for political gain," she tweeted.

Beth Moore at least had the courage to speak out early when many other evangelical leaders caved to the lure of an always-toxic dance between compromise, political power, and faith. History has repeatedly shown that such a dance never ends well. But she paid a price nonetheless, as she faced a wave of criticism in the evangelical world. Attendance at her seminars dropped.

Yet, in December 2020, following a troubling mass demonstration in Washington, D.C., where Christian imagery and slogans supporting the departing president and disproven claims of election fraud waved alongside each other in a surreal menagerie, Moore spoke out against the cult of personality and the loosely based, misapplied "prophecy" equating him with the biblical Persian king Cyrus.

"We do not worship flesh and blood," Moore stated. "We do not place our faith in mortals. We are the church of the living God. We can't sanctify idolatry by labeling a leader Cyrus. We need no Cyrus. We have a king; His name is Jesus."

Reality check: What is Christianity really about? Has it any place in power politics? Neutral observers, and many believers themselves as well, may now have the perception that Christianity involves partisan politics, exclusiveness,

more hate than love, muscled-up intimidation, and a self-righteous "holier than thou" attitude. In recent years the bedazzlement of political influence has added an unspoken credo of compromising truth for the perceived greater good.

Too often it has seemed that up is down and down is up, a lie is the truth or the truth is a lie. It is deeply troubling that the name of Jesus has been tainted and obscured by the spirit of such attitudes. The message of Christ has nothing to do with such things. Sometimes we need a reality check—a jolt of cold water to our faces.

This article cannot be about praising one political party over another or condemning individuals. When we seek shelter in the heart of Christ's message, there is enough grace in the shadow of the cross to cover all of our shortcomings. Away from the clutter of rhetoric, one must realize that there are believers on both ends of the political spectrum and that true Christianity is bigger than any political leader and America's politics. Demonization and polarization only make communication and cooperation more difficult.

But this article is surely designed to decry the pitfalls that are sure to occur when the best of good intentions are compromised and we surrender to the unholy romance of religion and politics . . . the dangers of polarization and a tribal mindset . . . when faith and politics shamelessly use each other and nothing is left sacred. We are walking among the rubble of our latest venture into that arena today.

Yet Christian nationalism recurs in various forms, attempting to merge Christian and American identities. Amanda Tyler of *Christians Against Christian Nationalism*, a group that condemns Christian nationalism as "a persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy," warns: "Among the major victims of Christian nationalism is Christianity itself. . . . Whenever the state gets too cozy with Christianity, Christianity is the one that gets compromised."

A much-softened-down approach known as Dominionism (or the Seven Mountain Mandate) has been gaining influence among evangelicals, whether they realize it or not. Many Christian leaders have opposed the philosophy behind it all along, but it has considerable subtle effects in evangelical circles. This manifestation of an early

Faith leaders and politicians embraced in full tango and shamelessly used each other for their own objectives.



1970s concept has the goal of taking over dominion of the earth, twisting Genesis 1:28 to include a mandate for Christians to control civil affairs and all other aspects of society. The Seven Mountain Mandate advocates that it is the duty of all Christians to create a worldwide kingdom and “invade” specific spheres of culture that should be concentrated upon to turn nations to God. These seven categories are church; family; education; government and law; media (television, radio, newspaper, Internet); arts, entertainment, sports; commerce, science, and technology.

In recent years Lance Wallnau has emerged as a primary advocate. He has fine-tuned and popularized it among significant sections of evangelical culture. “I saw them as seven mountains whose lofty heights are mind molders with strongholds that occupy influence as world kingdoms. These mountains are crowned with high places that modern-day kings occupy as ideological strongholds,” Wallnau writes in the 2013 book *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate*. “The business of shifting culture or transforming nations does not require a majority of conversions. We make a mistake when we focus on winning a harvest in order to shape a culture,” he states.

But is this the message of Christ and the commission given to His disciples to go into all the world and preach the good news of the gospel? Christ’s message is one of grace and life change, redemption of the individual. Instead, the Seven Mountain Mandate emphasis to “invade culture and kingdoms of influence” to establish a kingdom on earth before Christ’s return shifts the focus from conversion of the heart to what we can establish here.

The New Apostolic Reformation, a movement that has subtly gained much ground with its self-proclaimed prophets, apostles, emotionally charged atmosphere, and “I have a word from the Lord” pronouncements, often seems to be running on a parallel track with the Seven Mountain Mandate teaching. Many voices claim the prophetic gift. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* offers caution from the Word itself: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The concept gets particularly uncomfortable concerning the fourth mountain: government. In American history our Puritan forebears in New England had legislated religious dogma and behavior; that didn’t work out too well. “Christians are called

to be 'lights' in the world (Matthew 5:16). There is no biblical requirement, however, to take the helm of all the world systems in order to usher in God's kingdom," points out Trevor O'Reggio, a seminary professor of theology and church history at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. O'Reggio and other theologians also point out that the Bible indicates world conditions as getting worse, not better, before Christ's return (2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Peter 3:3).

Since the 1980s, as politicians realized the potential voting power and influence of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, religion and politics have been eyeing each other closely on the dance floor of American elections. Faith leaders and politicians embraced in full tango and shamelessly used each other for their own objectives. Ambitions, power plays, deliberate misinformation, and confusion fueled angst—and somehow, we have White supremacists, other extremist groups, conspiracy theories, and people of faith in the same bag, swirling in a toxic cesspool of discontent, while media personalities on the airwaves urge them on, as if this is some game show or reality event seeking ratings on television. Meanwhile, hurting people with very real concerns are ignored, democracy is mocked, and Jesus is thrown around like a political football.

Seemingly wanting to take a shortcut to mountain 4, extreme elements of the Religious Right saw an opportunity to have pet issues legislated despite warnings from Beth Moore, Ed Stetzer, and other concerned Christians. Respected editor Mark Gaili, who penned an urgent 2019 wake-up-call lead article in *Christianity Today*, spoke up, warning the evangelical world: "If we don't reverse course now, will anyone take anything we say about justice and righteousness with any seriousness for decades to come?"

Author and columnist David French wrote a poignant January 2020 *Dispatch* article entitled "The Dangerous Idolatry of Christian Trumpism," maintaining that "the frenzy and the fury of the postelection period has laid bare the sheer idolatry and fanaticism of Christian Trumpists."

Then January 6.

Unbelievable, sickening images of violence and desecration against the heart of democracy flashed across the world screen: in the madness

a police officer is pushed down stairs and a rioter commences to viciously beat him with a pole bearing the American flag . . . another officer is killed when a fire extinguisher is smashed against his head. A zealot repeatedly smashes a trapped policeman's head as bodies collide. People are trampled as the horde swarms the halls of democracy. Rioters and outnumbered police clash as middle-aged men, believing they are patriots, wearing helmets, flak jackets, and brandishing zip ties invade the heart of American government. Members of Congress are forced to flee in horror before the maelstrom crashes into the legislative chamber. A young woman, deceived by bizarre QAnon conspiracy theories, is killed when she climbs through a smashed window as the mob closes in. A man brandishing a large Confederate flag wanders amid the destruction. Milling about the speaker's podium in the legislative chamber, rioters gather and jubilantly pray for the Lord's blessing on their cause.

The reality of the violent assault on the soul of democracy left many in America and around the world stunned.

"But denouncing today's violence is not enough. This did not happen out of nowhere. The years of lies have piled up and stocked a tinderbox. We have known that there would come a day of reckoning for religious leaders who have sacrificed ethics for political gain. . . . We just didn't know the date would be January 6, 2021." —Mark Wingate, executive director and publisher of *Baptist News Global*.

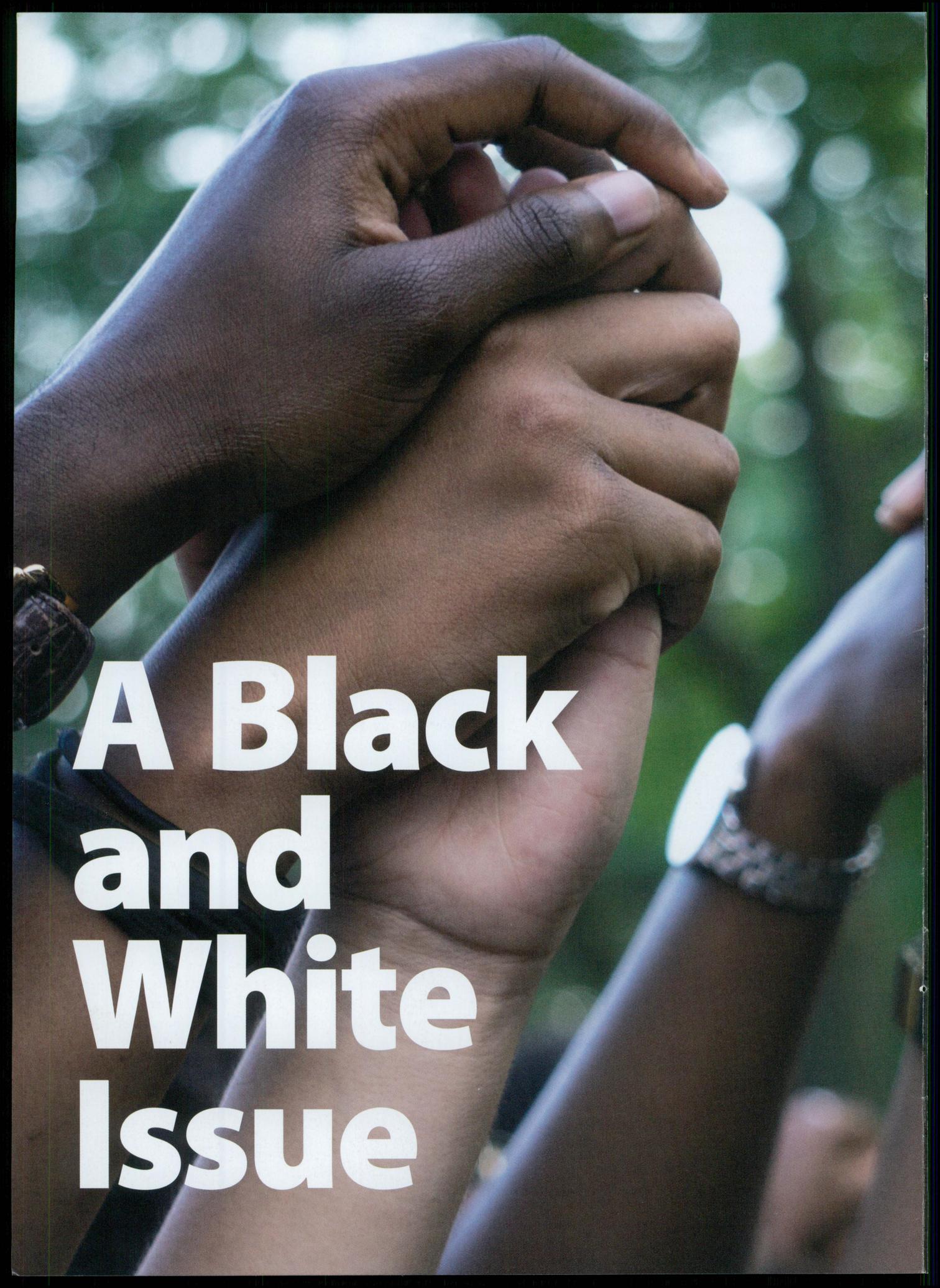
While working on this article, an image sequence kept flashing through my mind as I was attempting to put words to the damage done to the true message of Jesus. . . .

Christ, soon to be crucified, is a prisoner standing before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. " 'My kingdom,' says Jesus, 'doesn't consist of what you see around you. . . . I'm not that kind of king, not the world's kind of king.' . . . 'I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for truth, recognizes my voice.' Pilate said, 'What is truth?' " (John 18:36-39, Message).*

Those words echo down to us today. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, Message).* The scene shifts to our contemporary times. Here is a crown of thorns pressing into His head. Someone pins a political button on His robe and slaps a political sticker on His forehead. His message of love, teachings of "treating your neighbor as you wish to be treated," compassion and reconciliation, are obscured, shoved aside. Using His name in rhetoric to achieve fleeting earthy power is surely to crucify Him anew?

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Ed Guthero, an award-winning graphics art designer, artist, teacher and author, writes from Boise, Idaho.



**A Black
and
White
Issue**



BY ELIJAH MVUNDURA

I was 15 years of age (growing up in White-ruled and racially segregated Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe) when I read in *Time* magazine about the Bible Belt of the southern United States. I still recall my disbelief and puzzlement. How could the “Bible Belt” be the most Christian region in the United States and also be the most segregated and racist?

To me there was a clear-cut difference between Whites who were Christians and those who were not. I had seen the difference in the love and kindness of Father Mangan, the Catholic priest who was my high school headmaster. I had seen the difference in the empathy and love of Elder Norman Doss, an American Seventh-day Adventist pastor, who with his wife used to visit our family in the Black township.

Indeed, I used to think that if all the White people were like Father Mangan and Elder Doss there would be no “color bar” (segregation by race) in Rhodesia. And this wasn’t a naive youthful imagination. I was deeply impressed that Elder Doss and his missionary associates challenged the “color bar” after my father was refused the permit to build the regional headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (projects of that size were reserved for White building contractors). As a result, my father got the contract, which made him one of the wealthier Blacks in Salisbury (now Harare) in the late 1950s.

As it is, such was the impression of Father Mangan and Elder Doss on my youthful sensibilities that in my

teens whenever I was called “kaffir” (a derogatory equivalent of “nigger” in Rhodesia and South Africa) or racially victimized, I used to say to myself, “That White person is mean and hateful because he/she isn’t a Christian like Father Mangan and Elder Doss.” Again because of their influence, I didn’t accept the facile popular view (in preindependence Zimbabwe) that the Bible justified White superiority, Black inferiority, and slavery, or that Christianity was an accomplice of colonialism and racism.

These unarticulated childhood memories and views came to mind recently as I read *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (2020), by Robert P.

Jones, the CEO and founder of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI). That Jones, a White American Christian from the Deep South—Mississippi—can clearly see and forthrightly expose and condemn as unbiblical and unchristian “the unholy relationship between American Christianity and white supremacy,” confirmed my childhood intuition that there is a clear difference between Whites who are Christians and those who are not.

And to be sure, there must be a clear difference between a Christian and the non-Christian members of his/her race, tribe, or nation, and even his/her family. For at the foundation of the Christian faith is the call to break with

The conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204.



familial or natural relations—a break so radical that Jesus expressed it as “hatred” of one’s family members and even one’s own life (see Luke 14:26). Natural relations must be “hated” because they are tainted with self-interest, hypocrisy, and betrayals. They are not based on genuine love because they are not based on God, and God is love. In the case of racial, ethnic, or national relations, they are actually based on hatred and the demonization of the other.

To put it differently in the words of Søren Kierkegaard: “There is genuine conflict between what God and the world understand by love. . . . Purely human conception of love can never go

further than mutuality.” But far different from mutuality is what God’s love is and does. Unconditional and universal, it embraces everyone, even the vile. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).* “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. . . . Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10, 11). Or in Jesus’ own words: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34).

Jesus made love the mark of Christian identity. “By this everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:35). And Jesus Himself exemplified this love on the cross. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). If the Christian life is an imitation of Christ’s self-sacrificing love, the standard is painfully too high—indeed, it’s humanly impossible. This impossibility is what is expressed in the Protestant doctrine of *sola gratia*, by grace alone. For *God’s grace alone* can enable us to imitate Christ’s self-sacrificing love.

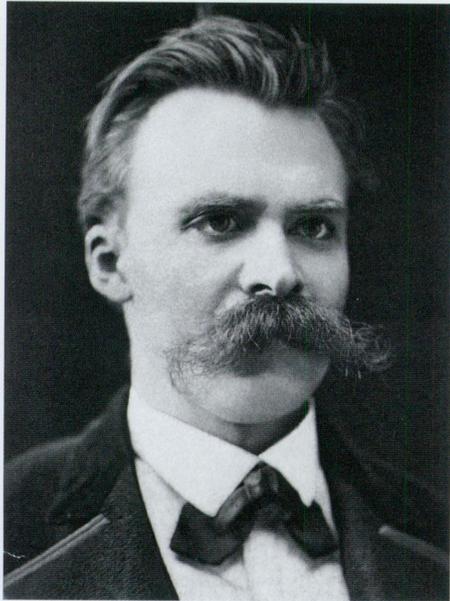
But even with divine grace, self-sacrificing love is still painful and repulsive. Early Christians shrunk from it, and sought to diminish the self-denial and humility it demanded. That’s why Paul called it “the offense of the cross” in Galatians 5:11. As a matter of fact, the history of Christianity is a history of diminishing, or eliminating outright, “the offense of the cross.” And this elimination of “the offense of the cross,” or the imitation of Christ, as the sine qua non of Christian life is what deformed the gospel into religious ideas, traditions, and rituals that could be used as cultural artifacts for building Western civilization and for justifying racism and White supremacy.

Note must be taken, however, that the New Testament predicted and warned about the corruption of the gospel by self-seeking false prophets and false christs: Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 23, 24; Mark 13:5, 6; Luke 21:8; John 15:2; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3. Yet curiously, all these predictions and warnings are overlooked in the narratives of the historical crimes blamed on Christianity—the Crusades, Inquisition, anti-Semitism, colonialism, racism, slavery, oppression, White supremacy, and so on. But by overlooking them, we have the supreme irony of Christianity being criticized and condemned for crimes it foresaw



and condemned as the work of the antichrist.

To return to “the unholy relationship between American Christianity and white supremacy,” it must be seen as the predicted corruption of the gospel, a species of the “spirit of the antichrist” (1 John 4:3). For against Christ’s explicit commandment, it set up a master/slave relationship in the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). Yet Jesus



Friedrich Nietzsche

Himself said, “All ye are brethren. . . . Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:8-11, KJV). Again, “the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom

for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

On this reading, if Whites are “superior,” as White supremacists claim, then they are to serve, be slaves, of the “inferior” Blacks. Their “attitude” should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:6, 7). If the idea of “superior” Whites being *willing* “slaves” of “inferior” Blacks is incongruously inconceivable, scandalous to racial sensibilities, that’s the “offense of the cross,” the radical implication of Christ’s servanthood, which inscribed, as Phillips Brooks put it, “the right of the weaker over the stronger as part of the moral structure of the universe.”

To be sure, Christ servanthood’s “transvaluation of values” is what revolted Friedrich Nietzsche, the self-described antichrist, because, as he argued, “a higher culture can come into existence only where there are two different castes in society.” He derisively called the gospel “slave morality.” For by elevating the weak it destroyed the “master morality,” pagan aristocratic values, and culturally the consequence was—mediocrity and degeneration.

“We must all agree to the truth, which sounds cruel,” wrote Nietzsche, “that slavery is essential to culture,” and a strong, healthy society. That’s why democracy and equality, “Christianity made natural,” as he called them, are a cultural catastrophe, an “abolition of society.”

White American Christianity, to be sure, was not influenced by Nietzsche, but judged by its justification of slavery, embrace of White supremacy, its cruelty and violence—it’s not Christian but Nietzschean. It “covers [its] infernal business with a garb of Christianity,” to cite Frederick Douglass. Indeed, below the garb is a “will to power,” Nietzsche’s countergospel of the Superman and the elite, which sacrifices the weak to the gods of culture and aristocratic way of life. It’s pagan, all too pagan. It reflects the dictum of Tacitus, the Roman historian that “the gods are on the side of the stronger.” Essentially, like Nietzsche, White American Christianity is a revolt against the fundamental message of the Hebrew prophets and of Jesus, that *God is on the side of the weak, the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan.*

Indeed, in the final judgment our eternal destiny will turn on one point:—whatever we did for “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40). “Why do you judge your brother or sister? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” (Romans 14:10). So “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). Again, “honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10). Christianity recognizes the reality of human distinctions or hierarchies, but completely eliminates them. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28). And it is “by winning the victory over the temptation of distinctions [that one] becomes a Christian,” as Kierkegaard wrote in *Works of Love*.

Victory over the temptation of distinctions is really victory over pride, which has been rightly called the root of all sin, for it’s the self playing God. It’s the divisive force that incites envy and rivalry, hatred and discord, in all areas of human relationships in a futile bid to realize or actualize an imagined godlike self. White supremacy is collective pride. As a cultural phenomenon it’s not unique. All ethnic, tribal, cultural, and national identities are rooted in collective pride or egoism. The scandal of White supremacy is its unholy relationship with White American Christianity—a relationship that replaces Christian core values with their very opposites: humility with pride, love with hatred,

peace with violence, equality with hierarchy, and inclusion with exclusion.

White supremacy converts Christianity into a tribal religion. But “is it not written,” said Jesus in Mark 11:17, citing Isaiah 56:7, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?’” To be sure, White Americans are not the only ones guilty of converting Christianity into a tribal religion. If we want to be honest with ourselves, all Christians are guilty. Very few Christians are able to rise above tribal, racial, national, or cultural prejudices, and truly see, in the different other, a child of God, and love sincerely, sacrificially as Christ commanded. For the majority of Christians their faith is mere familiarity or assent to some biblical stories, theological doctrines, or rituals—modified, to be sure—to suit personal whims and cultural tastes.

In other words, many who call themselves Christians are completely ignorant, and I suspect willfully, of the fact that the acid test of Christian faith is an imitation of Christ’s self-sacrificing, all-embracing love, commanded by Christ Himself. This willful ignorance goes back to the early Church, to be sure. That is what occasioned the writing of the First Epistle of John: false prophets interpreting the gospel intellectually denied the reality of the Incarnation, that Jesus came in the flesh. They shifted the gospel from the context of love to the context of knowledge (gnosis). As William Barclay rightly noted, this “produced a spiritual aristocracy who looked with contempt and even hatred on lesser men.”

John opposed them by insisting that imitation of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the true test of Christian faith. “Whoever says, ‘I know him [Jesus],’ but does not do what he commands [love] is a liar, and the truth is not in that person” (1 John 2:4). Again, “whoever claims to love God yet hates his brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20).

In the Bible the term *antichrist* first appears in First John to describe false prophets who interpreted the gospel intellectually to evade imitating Christ’s self-sacrificing love. They set up a counterfeit gospel for people to call themselves Christian, while living in sin. And that’s what White American theologians did. By interpreting the gospel racially and culturally to protect White economic interests and social status, they set up a counterfeit gospel for White Americans to call themselves Christian, while harboring pride, prejudice,

hatred, and racism. To this, Jesus would certainly say: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules” (Mark 7:6, 7).

In the conclusion to *White Too Long*, Jones wrote that “reckoning with white supremacy, for us, is now an avoidable moral choice,” and asked White Christians to awaken and see what White supremacy has done to them and their relationship with their fellow citizens and even with God. Indeed. But if White Christians are to awaken, they must see that behind White supremacy is “the spirit of the antichrist,” which John traced to the devil himself. “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who doesn’t do what is right is not God’s child; nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister” (1 John 3:10). In other words, reckoning with White supremacy is a choice between hatred and love, God and the devil.

White American Christians must learn from Paul. About his ethnic pride and privileges as “a Hebrew of Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5) he wrote: “Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss. . . . I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ” (verse 8). Paul considered them garbage because he grasped that in Christ God had “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,” between Jews and Gentiles, and created a single new humanity (Ephesians 2:14, 15). This single new humanity, said Paul, is God’s household “built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (verse 19). And it’s “a dwelling in which God himself lives by his Spirit” (verse 22).

This dwelling of God in the single new humanity is what renders ethnic pride and privileges garbage. And as Paul emphasized again and again, it’s the fulfillment of God’s promise to bless all peoples of the earth through Abraham. This single new humanity is not a homogenized, undifferentiated mass. The eternal gospel preached by the first angel of Revelation 14 fully recognizes difference, the particular identities of “every nation, tribe, language and people.” The *difference* about the new humanity is that animated by Christ’s love and united in worship of God, *differences do not make a difference*.

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Elijah Mvundura writes from Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

They set up a counterfeit gospel for White Americans to call themselves Christian, while harboring pride, prejudice, hatred, and racism.



The Know-Nothings party flag

Know Nothings

BY RON
CAPSHAW

There was a nineteenth-century American political party known to history as the Know Nothings. Do today's right-wing movements, some of whom stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, warrant a comparison with that nineteenth-century political party?

To do so, we must examine just what the Know Nothing, or American Nativist, Party, whose greatest influence was in the 1840s and early 1850s, actually proclaimed.

The party was formed in reaction to the influx of Irish immigrants coming into the industrial Northeast; they feared this influx not merely because of the competition these workers posed for the native-born workers, but because of the belief that Irish immigrants were bringing un-American Catholicism in with them. In their worldview this was part of a "papal conspiracy" to take over Protestant America and destroy religious liberty.

Of this influx, historian James McPherson has written: "Immigration during the first five years of the 1850s reached a level five times

greater than a decade earlier. Most of the new arrivals were poor Catholic peasants or laborers from Ireland and Germany who crowded into the tenements of large cities. Crime and welfare costs soared. Cincinnati's crime rate, for example, tripled between 1846 and 1853, and its murder rate increased sevenfold. Boston's expenditures for poor relief rose threefold during the same period."

Out of a belief that the Democratic Party was honeycombed and controlled by these Catholic immigrants, nativist members defected, forming the American Republican Party in New York, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts in 1843. Membership was limited to the American-born. Violence against Irish immigrants followed. A year later in Philadelphia, Irish immigrants were beaten up by angry mobs, and two Catholic churches and a Catholic school were torched.

Merging with the Order of the Star Spangled Banner in 1849, nativists swore a secret oath, and used their influence to support candidates who shared their anti-Catholic views.

By 1854 this secret society had grown into the equally secret American Nativist Party. Their candidates did well locally, particularly in the Northern industrial area believed to be threatened by Irish immigrants. Newspaper editor Robert T. Conrad running as a Whig candidate for the mayorship of Philadelphia won on a platform of proposing a government populated only by the American-born. Other candidates won in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and California. Because of these victories, membership in the Know Nothing Party went from 50,000 to 1 million members in 1854.

According to historian Tyler Abinder, the Know Nothings owed their success to the “collapse of the second party system” over the issue of slavery:

“The key to Know Nothing success in 1854 was the collapse of the second party system, brought about primarily by the demise of the Whig Party. Growing anti-party sentiment, fueled by anti-slavery sentiment as well as temperance and nativism, also contributed to the disintegration of the party system. The collapsing second party system gave the Know Nothings a much larger pool of potential converts than was available to previous nativist organizations, allowing the Order to succeed where older nativist groups had failed.”

But despite being anti-slavery, Whigs and Free Soilers organized against the Know Nothings by forming the “Anti-Know-Nothing Party.” Abraham Lincoln himself privately recoiled from the xenophobia of the Know Nothings. In an 1855 letter to Joshua Speed, he wrote: “I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can anyone who

abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people?”

If the Know Nothings gained power, Lincoln believed that “foreigners” and “Catholics” would be excluded from the “all men are created equal” provision of the Declaration of Independence. Lincoln said he preferred living in Russia than



Bloody Monday Election Riots of 1855 in Louisville, Kentucky

an America controlled by the Know Nothings: “When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.”

However, the Know Nothings supported issues unrelated to xenophobia and quite progressive for their time. They championed equality for women and social programs for the working class.

But violence was often practiced by local Know Nothing members, who believed that Catholics were bringing in noncitizens to defeat “American” candidates. A street battle between Know Nothings and Catholics in Kentucky left 22 dead.

After a disastrous attempt to elect Millard Fillmore to the presidency, who refused to cam-



EMIGRANT-LANDING IN NEW YORK.

European immigrants as depicted in an 1858 *Harpers Weekly*.

paign on anti-Catholicism, the Know Nothings quickly declined in numbers and influence.

Much of this had to do with their focus on nativism and anti-Catholicism rather than the issue of slavery in the 1850s. Know Nothings who sought to gain influence in the South presented themselves as the middle ground between the pro-slavery sentiments of the Democrats and the emergence of the anti-slavery Republican Party. In short, on the eve of the Civil War, Americans were more focused on slavery, not anti-Catholicism.

It would be the issue of slavery that led to the Know Nothing Party's collapse. Anti-slavery members had defected to the Republican Party by 1858, and by 1860 Know Nothings were no longer a political force on the national level.

How does this nineteenth-century movement compare to today's right-wing movements? We can understand this better by examining two of the far right groups: the Proud Boys and QAnon members.

The Proud Boys was formed during the 2016 presidential election by Vice Media (a far-right website) cofounder Gavin McInnes. Along with Chairman Enrique Torro, a Cuban-African American, McInnes believes a "white genocide is being planned by the left." McInnes openly advocates for violence and even finds Trump supporters wanting in this area: "Violence is a really effective way to solve problems. I want violence. I want punching in the face. I'm disappointed by Trump supporters not punching people in the face."

McInnes sees violent street battles engaged in by the Proud Boys as ennobling: "The bonding and camaraderie this violence produces is inspiring."

The group is males only, and they regard feminism as a "cancer." According to McInnes: "There is a real war on masculinity in this country

that starts in kindergarten and goes all the way to adulthood. And it's not natural. I just think it's taken so much away from the traditional family that it's contributed to the degradation of the American family.

McInnes says that the group is composed of what he calls "proud Western chauvinists" who "refuse to apologize for creating the modern world."

For McInnes, America should be Whites-only and not contain any "Zionists" or "multiculturalists": "[We are for] the right of White men and women to have their own countries where White interests are written into law and part of the body politic."

The most explicit religious tendency of the Proud Boys and other far right groups is found within their conspiracy mindset, coalescing around the QAnon conspiracy theory. QAnon, which, like the Proud Boys, emerged during the presidency of Donald Trump, is apocalyptic-minded. It holds that there is a "cabal" of "Satan-worshipping cannibalistic pedophiles that are running a global child-sex trafficking ring." Their "messiah" has been Donald Trump, who is expected to engage in a final battle with the cabal, labeled a "Storm," or "The Great Awakening." The defeated cabal will be tried by a military tribunal and imprisoned. The military will "brutally take over the country," which will result in the restoration of "White America" and a "utopia." The impetus for their participation in the storming of the United States Capitol on January 6 was that Biden's "false" victory was orchestrated by the "cabal" to maintain power.

The most apparent links between the Proud Boys and the Know Nothings is their conspiracy mindset, revolving around the perils immigration poses to American culture and a predilection for street violence. The Know Nothings believed that the large influx of Irish immigrants was part of a plot by the Papacy to destroy Protestant America and religious liberty. The conspiracy mindset of the Proud Boys and QAnon enthusiasts is more broadly political and cultural. For this group the left (composed of "Communists" and Antifa and the cabal that controls the government) is mounting a "white genocide" and with it the destruction of Western civilization. Like the Know Nothings, the Proud Boys see their religious foe as international in scope; composed of Muslims and Zionists.

But the Know Nothings believed the conspiracy had not yet taken over the country. The Proud Boys believe that on the government level, the conspiracy has already occurred.

However, the Proud Boys are more apocalyptic-minded than the Know Nothings. Their enemy is a cabal composed of Satan worshippers, and as such, requires a "messiah" in the form of Trump, who will wage a final battle with this cabal.

The Know Nothings had no such messiah, nor the support of a president. They had only a presidential candidate, Millard Fillmore, who,



ANTHONY CRIDER/CC BY 2.0

QAnon flag



Proud Boys in Washington D.C.
on January 6, 2021

despite their backing, refused to campaign on an anti-Catholic theme. Trump, who once told the Proud Boys “to stand back and stand by,” consistently refused to condemn them directly.

Both groups engaged in street violence. Riots broke out in the 1840s in major industrial cities; the Know Nothings were behind the murders of 22 people and the burning of a Catholic Church and two Catholic schools. The Know Nothings sought to violently suppress any voting by Irish immigrants. The Proud Boys love violence and have shown up at events where their “enemies gather.”

But the Know Nothings championed progressive causes such as equal rights for women and economic equality for the working class. Proud Boys hate feminism and have no such economic projects for the working class.

Despite its attacks on the American left, the group has an internationalist bent. It frequently reenacts the 1960 murder of Inejro Asanuma, the leader of the Japanese Socialist Party, and praises such dictators as Augusto Pinochet. Some of its members have appeared with shirts supporting the Holocaust: “Six Million Wasn’t Enough.”

The most immediate link between the Know Nothings and today’s far right lies in their view of the perils of immigration. Know Nothings saw Irish immigrants representing a religious threat to Protestant America. The Proud Boys and QAnon believe that the immigrating foe is Muslims and the threat they pose to Western culture. McInnes has stated that “we need to close the borders now and let everyone assimilate to a Western, white English-speaking way of life.” The Know Nothings had a timetable for when immigrants could assimilate: a 25-year residency in America.

The most immediate conspiracy between the Know Nothings and today’s alt-right is their predilection for street violence. The Know Nothings used violence to keep Irish immigrants from voting such as an incident in 1844 by Know Nothings leader Bill Poole. The Proud Boys routinely show up at events to beat up Antifa and “leftists.” The most apparent difference however is the access to power.

Know Nothings were a local force, achieving their highest success at the gubernatorial level. Proud Boys were praised by President Trump, and several QAnon members appeared at White House-based “social media summits.” The presidential candidate supported by the Know Nothings, Millard Fillmore, refused to have an anti-Catholic plank.

Despite their dislike of immigrants, the Know Nothings were not pro-slavery or explicitly racist. The Proud Boys lumps Muslims and Blacks in with the threat posed to them by the “left.” Along with QAnon they have expressed anti-Semitism.

The Know Nothings membership came from the Northeast. The Proud Boys members are predominantly from the southern United States.

The most obvious difference was the scope of both groups’ violent protests. Know Nothings violence never reached the national level, as it did with the Proud Boys, who helped storm the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

For all their nativism and street violence and their belief that American culture is threatened by immigration, the Know Nothings were anti-slavery and pro-feminist. The alt-right, as personified by the Proud Boys and QAnon enthusiasts, have a far more apocalyptic view.

Ron Capshaw is a journalist writing from Huntington, West Virginia.

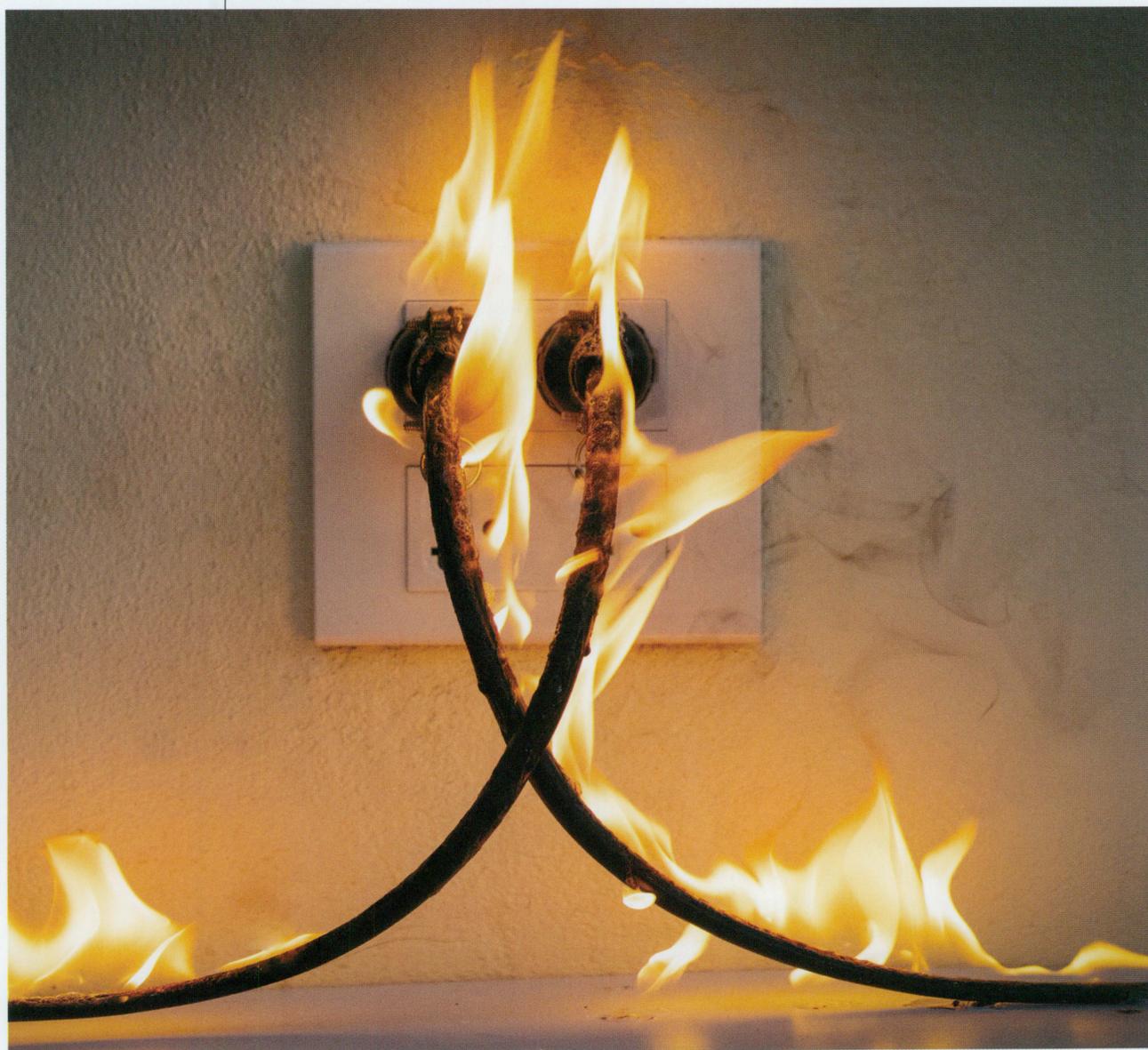
The Strange Fire of Cultural Conservatism

BY KEVIN D. PAULSON

Students of the Bible remember the Old Testament story of Nadab and Abihu—two priests who offered “strange fire” before the Lord in the wilderness sanctuary and were slain as a result (Leviticus 10:1, 2). This narrative has often served as a warning to

Bible believers of the danger of mingling, in various ways, the sacred and the common as though the two were one.

In America of late, the New Christian Right seems to have forgotten this warning. In its pursuit of political leverage and dominance, it



ISTOCK

has widened its embrace of strictly biblical values to include various cultural sensitivities, conspiracy theories, and radical political beliefs. In its efforts to measure the “Christian” status, it has allowed values that harken back to the idyllic “good old days”—biblical, cultural, traditional, or whatever—to become blended into the agenda of this movement.

Paul Weyrich, founder of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress and a leading Christian Right activist, was identified as coining the term *cultural conservatism*. A devout Roman Catholic, he hoped to unite under this rubric all Americans who hunger for past values and “the way things ought to be” (Rush Limbaugh), regardless of their religious affiliation. Another Religious Right activist, Tim LaHaye, boasted of the “new sectarian cooperation” between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. He urged all to put aside theological differences for the sake of political advantage.¹

Despite LaHaye’s fears that “such statements may cause me to lose my fundamentalist membership card,”² it doesn’t seem that this call for conservative reincarnation of the National Council of Churches has evoked any serious resistance within the halls of American fundamentalism. Nor, it seems, did LaHaye’s bizarre alliance with the anti-Christian Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon. Disclosing the amalgamation of these strangest of bedfellows, *Christianity Today* reported: “He [LaHaye] believes Unificationists are part of the solution to rampant secularism in America. ‘Anyone could be part of the solution,’ LaHaye said, ‘if he is really trying to move the country to a conservative point of view.’”³

Here is the most disturbing irony. Evangelicals and fundamentalists have historically been fierce opponents of the ecumenical movement, denouncing its “unity based on love” as falling short of “theological adequacy,”⁴ and declaring: “To use love as an umbrella to cover doctrinal differences and deficiencies does not solve the basic problem. Doctrine does divide. It always has. It always will. It must be so, as the Bible does, in order to separate truth from error.”⁵ But, we ask these revisionist fundamentalists, is political expediency any safer than sentimental love as an umbrella to conceal doctrinal differences?

Obviously, in a free society any number of groups are at liberty to form political alliances. But here I am speaking to evangelicals and fundamentalists as one Bible-believing Christian to others. I ask, Where does the

Bible endorse the formation of political alliances between God’s professed people and those not sharing their faith? The biblical record is consistently negative in this regard. Even when the armies of the world’s ancient superpowers were hammering at their gates, Israel was warned by the Old Testament prophets not to ally themselves with other nations for political and military purposes. Speaking of fundamentalist Christianity and its supposed peril, Tim LaHaye wrote, “I really believe that we are in a fierce battle for the very survival of our culture.”⁶ But the same was true of Jerusalem in about 700 B.C., when its walls were surrounded by the Assyrian army and Isaiah warned Jews against allying themselves with Egypt for their defense (Isaiah 30:1-3). The New Testament offers similar counsel, and in much broader tones, to the believing community: “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16, RSV).⁷

Perhaps the Christian Right would do well to heed the counsel of one of its own voices from the recent and formative past—that of Charles Colson, former aide to Richard Nixon. In a thoughtful postmortem on the 1992 election, Colson expressed the hope that the Religious Right’s political reverses “will wean us away from reliance on political solutions and send us back to the basics,”⁸ meaning the church’s spiritual resources. He declared, “Grasp these powerful teachings [of Christ], and all else pales into significance. Election slogans, court decisions, anti-Christian bias in the media—what are these paltry forces compared to the promises of the King of kings?”⁹

¹ Tim LaHaye, *The Race for the 21st Century* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), pp. 109, 110.

² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³ Beth Spring, “Magazine Says Tim LaHaye Received Help From Unification Church,” *Christianity Today*, Jan. 17, 1986, p. 41.

⁴ “WCC: An Uncertain Sound,” *Christianity Today*, Feb. 16, 1979, p. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ LaHaye, p. 111.

⁷ Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

⁸ Chuck Colson, “Back to Basics: Back to the Church,” *Southern California Christian Times*, March 1993, p. 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Kevin Paulson, a minister of religion and a much published author, writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Where does the Bible endorse the formation of political alliances between God’s professed people and those not sharing their faith?

COULD IT BE IN AMERICA?



BY LYNDON K. MCDOWELL

Consequential circumstances can sometimes be triggered by inconsequential events. Given the versatility of wind and weather, it might seem of little consequence that the *Mayflower* landed at Plymouth Rock rather than far to the south near Virginia, but nevertheless the event has etched itself deeply into the historical consciousness of the country. The Puritan settlement represented the virility and adventurism of the early American experience.

At the bicentennial celebrations of the landing, Daniel Webster, the great constitutional lawyer, waxed Ciceronian describing the Pilgrim virtues: “Who would wish for other emblazoning of his country’s heraldry, or other ornaments of her genealogy, than to be able to say that her first existence was with intelligence, her first breath the inspiration of liberty, her first principle the truth of divine religion?”¹

Eloquent indeed. A model for aspiring orators. A subject for study by students of a country and a history that as yet had not been written.² But “truth of divine religion”? An “inspiration of liberty”? The fruit of “intelligence”? Or were they, to use a term we know only too well elsewhere in our day, al Qaeda Christians?

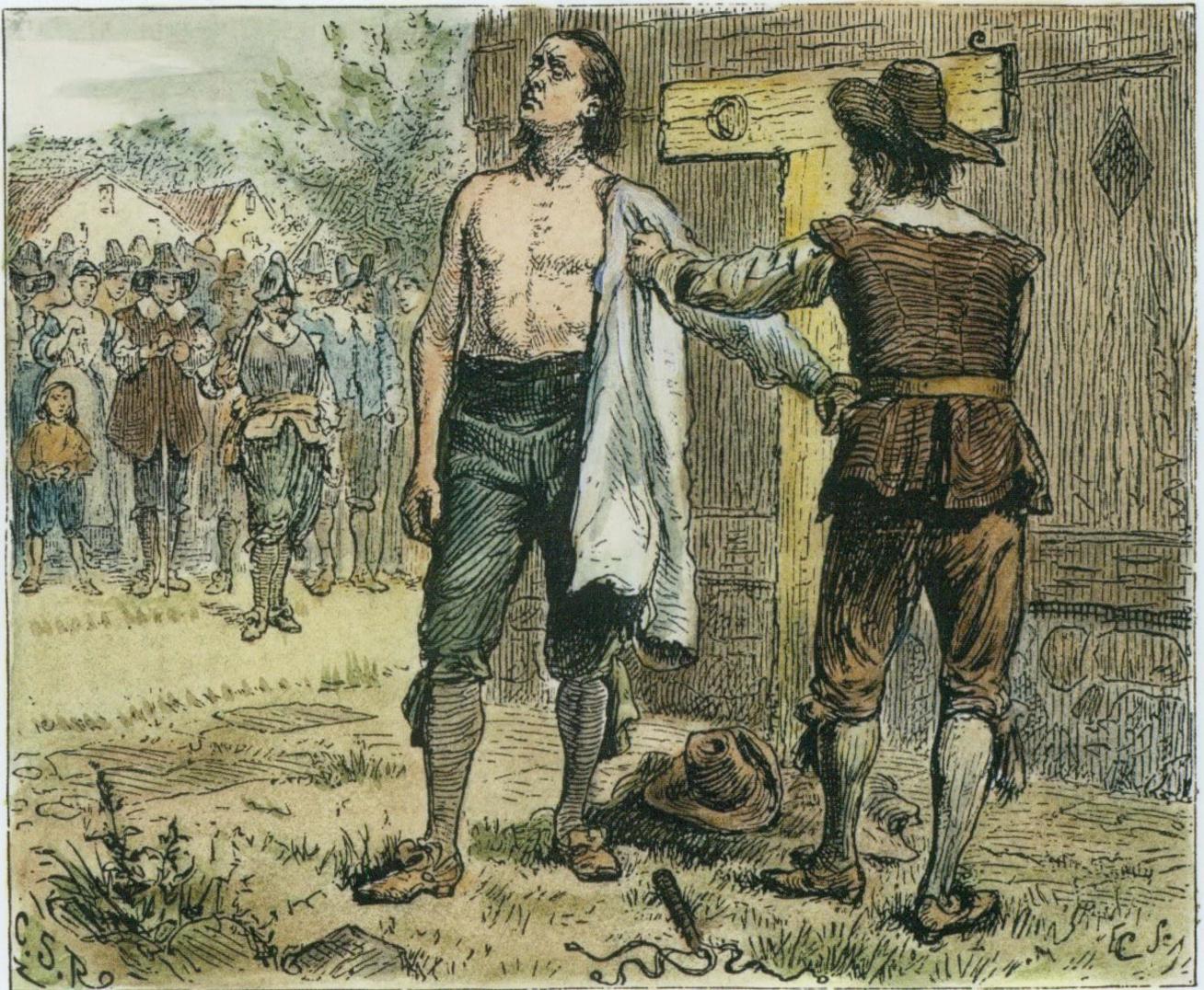
In December of 1641 a copy of the Massachusetts Body of Liberties was proposed by Puritan leader and lawyer Nathaniel Ward. It is recognized as “an important source of rights recognized in the first ten amendments to the American constitution, or Bill of Rights.”³ Those early settlers voted a carefully crafted statement defining their Christian community:

“The free fruition of such liberties Immunities and priveledges as humanitie, Civilitie, and Christianitie call for as due to every man in his place and proportion; without impeachment and Infringement hath ever bene and ever will be the tranquillitie and Stabilitie of Churches and Comonwealths. And the deniall or deprivation thereof, the disturbance if not the ruine of both.”⁴

The words ring with intelligence. They exhale the breath of liberty. They resound with the truth of divine religion. But a malefic threat is there in which only a prophet would have seen mirrored the fires of Smithfield or heard again the tolling bell of St. Bartholomew’s Day. *The people were free to believe as long as that belief was in harmony with what was believed.*⁵

John Leland (1754-1841), a Baptist minister and an important figure in the fight for religious liberty in America, would later warn of what I suggest is the al Qaeda principle. He listed three principles of oppressive governments: those founded on birth and property, those founded on aristocracy, and those that require religious tests to ensure religious conformity. Of the third one he wrote that it “was the error of Constantine’s government, who first established the Christian religion by law, and then proscribed the pagans and banished the Arian heretics. The error also filled the heads of the anabaptists in Germany. . . . The same error prevails in the see of Rome, where his holiness exalts himself above all who are called gods . . . , and where no Protestant heretic is allowed the liberty of a citizen. This principle is also pled for in the Ottoman Empire, where it is death to call in question the divinity of Mahomet or the authenticity of the Alcoran. . . . The same evil has twisted itself into the British form of government; where . . . no man is eli-

The whipping of Obadiah Holmes



gible to any office, civil or military, without he subscribes to the 39 articles and book of common prayer.”⁶

In short, the al Qaeda principle is that punishments and disabilities are imposed on those who disagree with the state’s definition of what is to be believed and practiced. The argument is simple: Since Christianity and the Scriptures are of divine origin, anyone opposed to them is guilty of criminal folly. The conclusion was without appeal, and its fruit would be despotism.

England had set many examples. When William Prynne proclaimed Archbishop William Laud to be a servant of the pope and the devil, he was jailed, branded on both cheeks, and his ears cut off.⁷ Even the captain of the *Mayflower* is said to have refused to have a King James Bible on board his ship. For him and therefore for his passengers as well, the Bishop’s Bible was the only true Word of God. Thus the genetic religiosity of the Puritans disposed them to a cruel dogmatism that infected the colony they founded.

Although the laws they wrote were expressed as *liberties* and not “in the exact form of Laws, or Statutes,” they added: “Yet we do with one consent fullie Authorise, and earnestly intreate all that are and shall be in Authoritie to consider them as laws, and not to faile to inflict condigne and proportionable punisshments upon every man impartiallie, that shall infringe or violate any of them.”⁸

Citizens were free to believe and practice as they wished unless it differed from what the community said was truth. Then some Baptists arrived and the al Qaeda logic came into play.

“Forasmuch as experience hath plentifully & often proved that since the first arising of the Ana-baptists about a hundred years apart they have been the Incendiaries of Common-Wealths & the Infectors of persons in main matters of Religion, & the Troublers of Churches in most places where they have been, & that they who have held the baptizing of Infants unlawful have usually held other errors or heresies together therewith (though as hereticks used to doe they have concealed the same until they espied a fit advantage and opportunity to vent them by way of question or scruple)—such people “who appear to the Court” to be “willfully and obstinately to continue, . . . shall be sentenced to Banishment.”⁹

The consequences were not of inconsequence for Thomas Gould. In October 1655 he refused to have his baby sprinkled and christened. Over the next three years he was in and out of court, until, finally, on May 27 he was banished under penalty of perpetual imprisonment. He chose

imprisonment rather than banishment, but, fortunately for him, news of the proceedings reached England, appeals were made, and he, and others with him, were finally released.

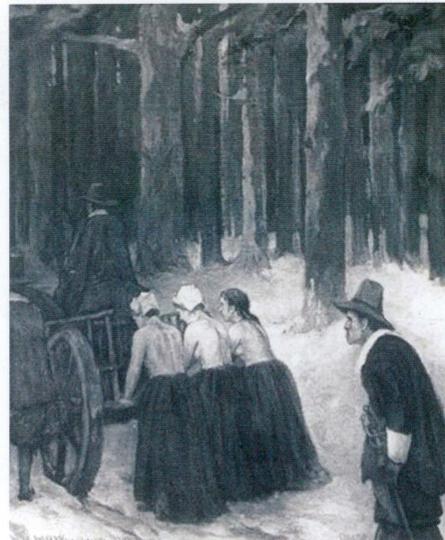
Obadiah Holmes was less fortunate. Tied to a post, he received 30 lashes with a three-thronged whip of knotted cord, wielded with both hands. The whipping was so severe that when taken back to prison his lacerated body could not bear to touch the bed. For many days he was compelled to rest propped up on his knees and elbows.

Mary Fisher and Anne Austin were Quakers who came by ship to Boston. Somehow news of their arrival preceded them, and the deputy-governor boarded the ship, searched the women’s trunks and chests, and took away their books and burned them. Soon after the book burning the women were taken from the ship and imprisoned. Their pens, ink, and paper were taken from them. Under pretense of finding out if they were witches or not, they were stripped naked, and their prison window was boarded up so that there could be no communication with anyone outside.

After five weeks of imprisonment they were taken aboard ship again and William Chichester, the master of the vessel, was bound by a 100-pound bond to take them away.

They were fortunate. A “Vagabond Act” stated that any vagabond Quaker was to be tied to a cart’s tail and flogged through several towns. Domiciled Quakers, if they refused to leave, were then treated as vagabond. Anne Coleman, Mary Tomkins, and Alice Ambrose were condemned. On a cold winter’s day the women were stripped from the middle and upward, and tied to a cart, cruelly whipped with a combined 330 lashes and sent on a journey of some 80 miles. In Salisbury, however, the people took pity on them and released them.

Quaker Elizabeth Hooton received a similar sentence. In midwinter she was whipped behind a cart through Cambridge, Watertown, and Dedham. The terrible nature of the torture can be visualized in the fact that, being midwinter, the victim’s wounds became cold and sometimes frozen. This made the torture intolerably agonizing.¹⁰ One wonders how a community of Christian people could become so hardened



Anne Coleman, Mary Tomkins, and Alice Ambrose



“All persons living in this province, who confess and acknowledge the one Almighty and eternal God, to be Creator, Upholder and Ruler of this world . . . shall, in no ways, be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion.”

—William Penn

and insensible to true Christian sensibility.

Salem, like most New England settlements, was founded on a popular theocracy—the government was in the hands of the church members. The Covenant of 1629, composed of only three lines, was the shortest of any. It read: “We Covenant with the Lord and one with another; and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.”

Again the al Qaeda principle found expression. John Hathorne, the instigator and judge of witch trials, was described as “a very religious man.” Mary Eastey was brought before him and accused of witchcraft. Something of the agony of her husband, Isaac, can be felt in his later testimony: “Mary my wife,” he testified, “was near five months imprisoned, all which time I provided maintenance for her at my own cost & charge, I went constantly twice a week to provide for her what she needed. Three weeks of this five months she was imprisoned at Boston & I was constrained to be at the charge of transporting her to & fro.” Mary Eastey was finally hanged on September 22, 1692. Before she died, she testified, “If it be possible, no more innocent blood be shed. . . . I am clear of this sin.” Hanged with her were Martha Corey, Margaret Scott, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Wilmott Redd, Samuel Wardwell, and Mary Parker.

Between March of 1692 and October 8 some 20 people were executed for the sin of witchcraft. One of these, Sarah Good, had a nursing

child, yet was tried and imprisoned for four months and then hanged. The child died in prison. Another child about 5 years old was not only imprisoned but also chained.

If the impression is held that Salem was a little backwater Hicksville, this would be incorrect. It had a busy port of adventurous sailors and later, after the revolution, became the wealthiest city per capita in the United States, with a motto that read *Divitis Indiae usque ad ultimum sinum* (“To the rich East Indies until the last lap”).

Slowly people began to question the cruelty of such proceedings and reparation was given to the families of those who had suffered; some 578 pounds were paid out. Years later, Hathorne’s grandson, disgusted with what his grandfather had done and wishing to distance himself from him, inserted a “w” into his name and is now remembered as the author Nathaniel Hawthorne.¹¹

Apparently the horror of the trials had a salubrious effect. While cruel religious laws remained on the statute books, few were followed out to the letter.

In the early colonies religion was not only a vital part of people’s lives, but an infrangible aspect of their allegiance to their sovereign. William Penn, royal proprietor of the colony of Pennsylvania, put the matter clearly in 1682:

“When the great and wise God had made the world, of all his creatures it pleased him to chuse man his Deputy to rule it; and to

fit him for so great a charge and trust, he did not only qualify him with skill and power, but with integrity to use them justly. This native goodness was equally his honour and his happiness; and whilst he stood there, all went well; there was no need of coercive or compulsive means, the precept of divine love and truth, in his bosom, was the guide and keeper of his innocence.”¹²

William Penn is known as a champion of religious liberty, but even he limited that liberty, writing, if there was a disobedient posterity that “would not live conformable to the holy law within,” and, as a result, they would fall “under the reproof and correction of the just law without, in a judicial administration.” Further on in the document he wrote: “So that government seems to me a part of religion itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end.” Article 35 declared “that all persons living in this province, who confess and acknowledge the one Almighty and eternal God, to be Creator, Upholder and Ruler of this world . . . shall, in no ways, be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion.” Thus, the liberties were narrowly defined.

William Penn’s authority was based on a charter given by King Charles II, and was in harmony with English common law.¹³ People “were by oath in law and conscience obligated to the monarch who was, of course, placed on his throne by God.”¹⁴ It is not surprising, then, that the English colonists who settled in America wrote, without exception, their state constitutions with English common law in mind. Allegiance to the governor was allegiance to the king, and allegiance to the king involved how they expressed their religious practices.

But that hitherto-inbred loyalty of American citizens to their liege lord rapidly withered on the vine. The Revenue Act of 1766, the Townshend taxes of 1767, the American Board of Customs, and the discovery of the Hillsborough letter in 1768 all helped them reassess their loyalty to the king. The final severance came when the so-called Olive Branch Petition, directed not to Parliament but to King George III himself, was contemptuously rejected. In an unpublished manuscript Benjamin Franklin expressed the matter clearly:

“Whereas, whenever kings, instead of protecting the lives and properties of their subjects, as is their bounden duty, do endeavor to perpetrate the destruction of either, they thereby cease to be kings, become tyrants, and dissolve all ties of allegiance between themselves and their people.”¹⁵

The men who assembled in Philadelphia to write a new constitution were lawyers and businessmen, not clergymen. In terms of separation of church and state this was no doubt fortunate. A short time after Washington was elected as president of the United States the First Amendment to the Constitution was voted. It read, in part, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Then the clergy began to make their voices heard. On October 27, 1789, the First Presbytery Eastward in Massachusetts and New Hampshire sent President Washington an address in which they complained that there was no “explicit acknowledgment of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent inserted somewhere in the Magna Charta of our country.”¹⁶

Four years later one of the periodic yellow fever plagues hit Philadelphia, and people were dying at the rate of about 100 per day. The clergy drew their own conclusion—God was angry with the nation.¹⁷ In New York City John Mitchell Mason (1770-1829), one of the greatest pulpit orators of his day, voiced his concern in a sermon entitled “Divine Judgments.” He magnified the “irreligious feature of the Constitution as one of the chief causes of the calamities of which he was speaking.”¹⁸

And so it went, the past informing the present and an underlie of intolerance and persecution. More to come in Part II!

¹ In Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster and His Time* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), p. 181.

² George Bancroft’s *History of the United States* did not appear until 1834.

³ *The American Republic: Primary Sources*, ed. Bruce Frons (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Ind., 2002), p. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraphs 94 and 95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁷ Will Durant, *The History of Civilization*, Vol. VII, p. 190.

⁸ *Primary Sources*, p. 22, paragraph 96.

⁹ *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution. A Documentary History*, ed.

Donald S. Lutz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), p. 100.

¹⁰ A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics, Rome and the United States* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1891), p. 654.

¹¹ “John Hathorne,” *Wikipedia*.

¹² *Primary Sources*, p. 23.

¹³ As so defined by Sir Edward Coke: The king was the “defender of the faith,” and his subjects swore “to be true and faithful to our sovereign lord and king and his heirs, and truth and faith shall bear of life and member and terrene honour, and you shall neither know or hear of any ill or damage intended unto him that you shall not defend.” See *Law, Liberty and Parliament, Selected Essays on the Writings of Sir Edward Coke*, ed. Allen D. Boyer (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), p. 92.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

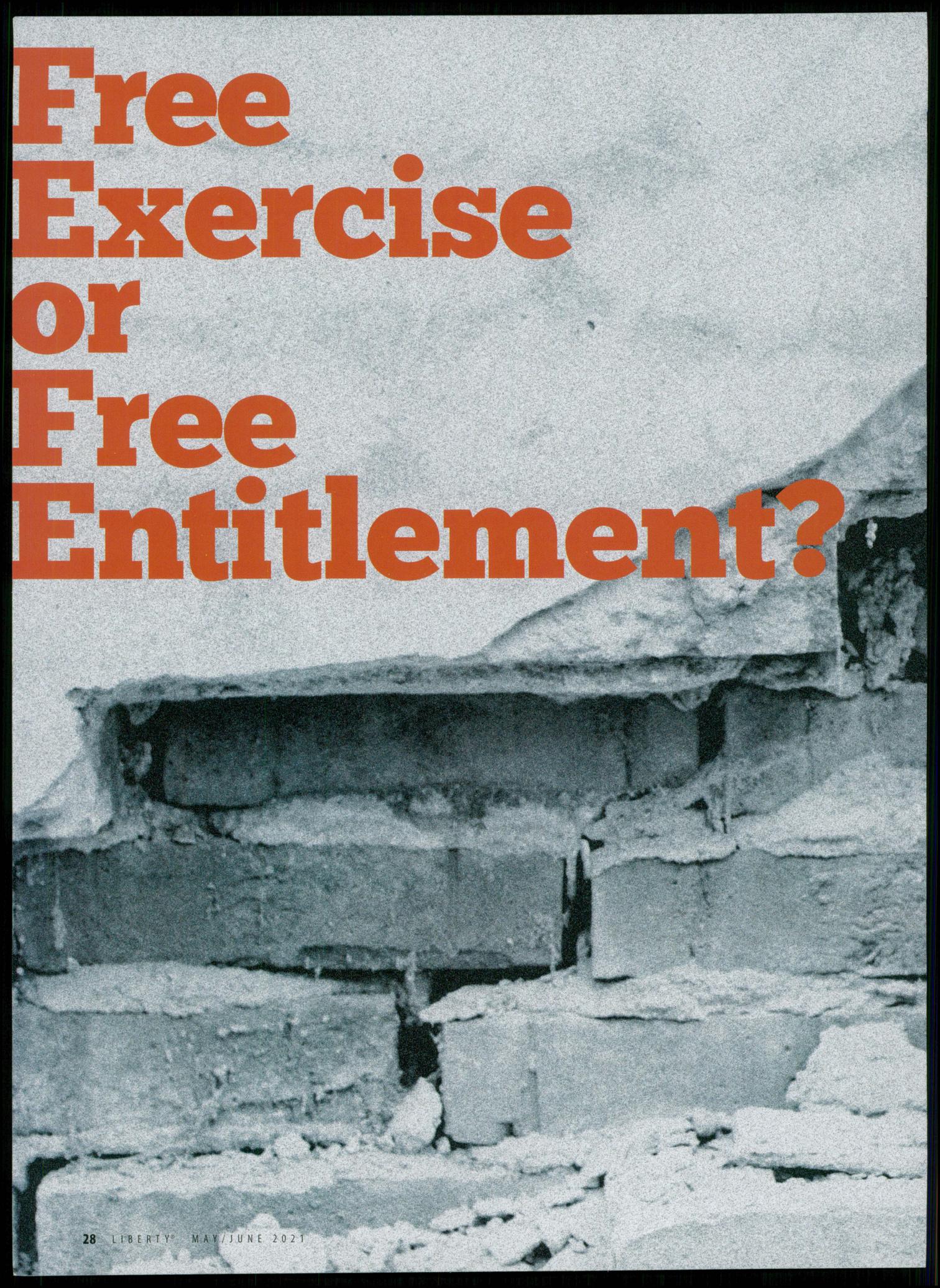
¹⁵ Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin, An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 310.

¹⁶ Jones, pp. 699, 700.

¹⁷ Years later General Burnside drew the same conclusion because the Civil War was going badly for the Union, and he formed the National Reform Association with ministers from 11 different denominations.

¹⁸ Jones.

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Free Exercise or Free Entitlement?



This article is the second in a series entitled “The Battle for Church and State in the United States.” The first article addressed the establishment clause and efforts to change its application, if not remove its prohibitions altogether. This article addresses the free exercise clause and causative factors that have led to a change in how the clause is now becoming an entitlement to religion.

BY EDWIN COOK

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Those 16 words encapsulate what many modern declarations of religious liberty attempt to guarantee by a plethora of verbiage. James Madison penned those clauses, and deliberated whether to use the term *conscience*, but after much debate he opted for the current version. But why did Madison desire to include the term *conscience*?

During the colonial period of American history (early 1600s to 1776), and even several decades into the founding era (1776–1820), established churches existed among the original 13 colonies, which evolved into states. Because of the religion clauses of the First Amendment, a movement began among the states for disestablishment, which removed the favored status of any religious group. Most, if not all, state constitutions adopted provisions that promoted a separation of church and state to prevent the religious dominance and preferential status that had existed in prior years. These provisions included a loss of monetary benefits for failure to comply.

Leading American statesmen, such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin, were well aware of the overtures and encroachment practiced by the Catholic Church throughout European history. They were not necessarily anti-Catholic, but they were antiestablishment—of any religion, because historically some of the established churches that were eventually disestablished were the Anglican churches, the Congregationalist churches, and the Presbyterian churches (all non-Catholic, Protestant churches).

Those established churches exercised political influence and financial largesse

“If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”

of taxes, and often imposed restrictions on conscience. They required by law for citizens to attend church every Sunday. Penalties ranged from fines to being put in stockades and, in extreme cases, the death penalty (many Quakers were hanged on gallows in public, and Baptists, a minority group at that time, were publicly whipped for unauthorized preaching). They passed laws that proscribed Catholics, Jews, or heathen from holding public office and that required an oath of office that affirmed faith in Jesus Christ, as well as the basic tenets of Christianity. They required citizens to pay money for the support of the local minister, even if that minister was not of one's religious faith and even if such payment was against one's conscience.

Majority Protestant groups exercised this type of legal dominance and oppression in many of the colonies (Roger Williams and the founding of Rhode Island being an exception). That historical reality paralleled the actions and dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in what was then referred to as the “Old World” (Europe). What Catholics had done to Protestants and any dissenters in Europe for centuries was now replicated among the colonies, albeit with a role reversal. From this historical context, our Founders recognized the need to prohibit any religious entity from establishing political, financial, or influential dominance in society in such a way that would lead to oppression of the masses, or existing minority groups. Of equal importance, they guaranteed the free exercise (practice) of one's religious convictions, with minor limitations of practices that infringe upon the rights of others, or that endanger their well-being.

Free exercise cases adjudicated by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in the 1940s in particular shaped religious freedom and freedom of conscience jurisprudence.

In *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940), the SCOTUS rendered a significant victory to Jehovah's Witnesses by ruling that they did not have to pay any fee in order to preach publicly.¹ Jehovah's Witnesses traveled from door to door sharing their faith. At times their doctrinal message was condemnatory of other faiths and produced great protests. Small towns where they went typically passed laws that required persons conducting such activity to register with the city clerk and pay a fee to obtain a permit. Jehovah's Witnesses refused to make the payment or register, and many of them were incarcerated.

In another case the SCOTUS ruled that children of Jehovah's Witnesses did not have to salute the American flag or recite the Pledge of

Allegiance in public schools. To underscore the sacred regard for conscience, Justice Robert H. Jackson penned this famous quote: “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”²

Human rights and freedom of conscience became central themes from the 1940s through the 1960s, not just in America but also globally. Allied powers in World War II (1939-1945) fought against the atrocities of the Nazis, in particular their ethnic and religious genocide against the Jews, which was highlighted during the Nuremberg war trials (1945-1946). By 1948 the United Nations had formulated the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of which guarantees the right to freedom of conscience.

In America the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s reflected the growing consensus regarding human equality; which culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Roman Catholic Church shifted its posture toward other non-Christian faiths and toward Protestants during Vatican II (1962-1965); no longer referring to the latter group as “heretics,” but instead as “separated brethren.”³

In light of such emphasis upon human rights and freedom of conscience, the SCOTUS decision in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963) was not surprising. The Court ruled in favor of Adell Sherbert, a Seventh-day Adventist who was denied unemployment benefits because she would not accept an available job that would require her to work during the biblical Sabbath (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). In this decision the Court took a more expansive view of the free exercise clause. In essence, such a view requires government to accommodate religiously motivated conduct in the absence of a compelling state interest and to use means that least burdened religious practices.⁴ The same test was also reflected in the Court's decision in *Yoder v. Wisconsin* (1972), in which the state's compulsory education through 17 years of age was deemed to be too restrictive of Yoder's religious beliefs.

However, almost 20 years later, in *Unemployment Division of Oregon v. Smith*, the SCOTUS did an about-face from its ruling in *Sherbert*. Smith belonged to the Native American church, which used peyote, a mildly hallucinogenic drug. In *Smith* the Court ruled that any generally applicable law must be obeyed and, if in conflict with one's religious convictions, then a religious adherent must seek legal

relief through the political process of a given state, rather than seeking accommodation through appeal to the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. For Smith, this resulted in the denial of unemployment benefits because Oregon law disqualified anyone who used drugs.

In an effort to restore the pre-Smith protections to religious freedom, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA, 1993). The intention was good, but the SCOTUS struck down as unconstitutional those portions applying to the states in *City of Boerne v. Flores* (1997). Since then, about 20 individual states have passed their own RFRA legislation to give the protection to faith. Undeterred, Congress passed the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA, 2000). It requires the compelling interest and the least-restrictive-means tests to be applied to free exercise cases involving lands used for religious purposes, as well as to the religious freedoms of persons who are institutionalized.

In the 1990 *Smith* decision the Court abandoned the strict scrutiny test, and by 1995 the SCOTUS took another shift that would categorize religious freedom as a hybrid right, dependent upon other rights, such as free speech. In *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia* the Court decided a traditional establishment clause case on free exercise grounds and freedom of speech. The SCOTUS ruled that the university's charter, which prohibited university money from being given to religious organizations, was in violation of Rosenberger's free exercise rights, as well as a limitation upon his free speech rights.

Prior free exercise cases were based on the religious convictions (or freedom of conscience) and unique religious practices that obligated government to make an accommodation for them. In this light, religion held a revered place that was not dependent upon additional rights. When the Court decided *Rosenberger* on free exercise and free speech grounds, religious rights could no longer be assessed as "stand alone" rights. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of *Rosenberger* was that it granted a free exercise claim without a stated religious belief—*Rosenberger's* religious beliefs did not include a belief to an entitlement of university student fees. Rather, the Court ruled

that by not granting those funds, Rosenberger's right to practice his faith was limited. Such confusion and blurring of the lines between establishment clause and free exercise clause cases has contributed to the mistaken assumption that free exercise rights equal religious entitlement. The extent to which both clauses have morphed into an amalgam is evident in *Espinoza v. Montana*.

In June 2020 the SCOTUS ruled in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* that the application of the Montana Constitution's "no-aid" provision to a state program providing tuition assistance to parents violated the federal Constitution's free exercise clause, which protected religious adherents from discrimination.⁵ SCOTUS argued that the prohibitions applied by Montana Department of Revenue that did not allow state aid to be used by plaintiffs for the education of their children at religious schools was a greater separation of church and state than the federal Constitution requires. Although the interpretation of the establishment clause of the federal Constitution was not at issue in this case, the SCOTUS nonetheless alluded to it in arguing why the Montana Constitution's "no-aid" provision was in violation of federal jurisprudence.

In *Espinoza* Chief Justice Roberts relied upon the Court's ruling in *Trinity Lutheran* (2017) as a justification for supporting the voucher program. Justice Breyer dissented, arguing that *Espinoza* was similar to *Locke v. Davey* (2004) and should have been decided in like manner—aid, or grant money, does not necessarily need to include aid to religion, especially if a state has a no-aid prohibition. In essence, *Espinoza* further widens the crack in the establishment clause "wall of separation" and opens the floodgates for subsequent challenges to state prohibitions to government aid to religious entities.

¹ *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303-311 (1940).

² *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

³ Unitatis Redintegratio (Latin, Restoration of Unity, a.k.a. Decree on Ecumenism), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html, accessed on January 20, 2021.

⁴ Exploring Constitutional Conflicts website, Free Exercise of Religion: Rise of the Compelling State Interest Test, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/freeexercise.htm>, accessed January 20, 2021.

⁵ 591 U.S. __ (2020), "*Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*," www.oyez.org/cases/2019/18-1195. Accessed January 6, 2021.

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And we can do so now.

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We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors.

We can treat each other with dignity and respect.

We can join forces, stop the shouting, and lower the temperature.

For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury.

No progress, only exhausting outrage.

No nation, only a state of chaos.

From the inaugural address of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., on January 20, 2021.