

LIBERTY



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Should the
STATE

Propagate
Religion?

See pages 2 and 30




Some people think that it is perfectly proper and wise to have the state support and propagate religion, if it is a good religion. But we believe that if it is a good religion, it is capable of propagating



THE STATE PROPAGATE Religion?

By
CLAREMONT LOVINGTON

itself and needs no support from the state. If it is a bad religion, all but its adherents will admit that the state should not propagate or support it. A religion that is not capable of propagating and supporting itself on its own merits, and that has to appeal to the state for help, is a bad religion.  Some very loose thinking is being done by many

good people upon this subject. Some people think that everything that is “good” and “pure” should be supported and propagated by the civil gov-

ernment, and everything that is not “good” and not “pure” should be legislated against by the state. They fail to draw any distinction between things which are “civil” or “secular” and things that are “religious” or “spiritual.” As a consequence, their thinking is muddled and confused.

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Example of Confused Reasoning

We shall give a concrete example of this kind of confused reasoning. Not long ago the hierarchy of a certain church that had gained the ear of the state and influenced its functions reasoned as follows: "The state does not hesitate to pass pure-food laws and to adopt other measures which safeguard the public health and the physical well-being of its citizens. The man who peddles poisonous foods and drinks is dealt with severely by the law. But the health of the soul," said the hierarchy of this church, "is paramount to the health of the body; therefore the man who propagates erroneous doctrines commits a far worse offense, because he brings eternal ruin and disaster to the soul."

The hierarchy further argued that "unsound and corrupt spiritual food constitutes a far greater menace and danger to society than adulterated and pernicious drink and food material." Then going a step further, the hierarchy of this church argued that "that state not only ought to prohibit the propagation of all unchristian and anti-Christian teachings condemned by the church, but ought to provide good spiritual food for all the people by making Christianity a part of the public education system, teaching the gospel in the state schools as approved and interpreted by the state church."

Such logic may seem sound to a church hierarchy that has succeeded in obtaining a predominant control over a state, so far as its own peculiar doctrines and interests are concerned; but let us suppose that a dissenting minority group should grow so rapidly as to gain the ascendancy and control over the state. Would the allegedly and assumed orthodox state church still hold that the newly acquired state church should control the state in matters affecting the prohibition of the doctrines that the new church-and-state regime might declare as "unchristian and anti-Christian"?

Just such strange things have happened when civil governments were in turn administered by Catholic and then by Protestant regimes. Each acknowledges the other as heterodox and itself as orthodox. Each suffered persecution at the hands of the other when clothed with civil authority. Each claimed that its own teachings were the

teachings of Christ and true Christianity, and consigned the teachings of the other to the lower regions.

Liberty Impossible in Church-and-State Regime

There are two things that contribute to such an embarrassing situation. They are the doctrines of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. An authoritarian church and a totalitarian state always produce the above results. A church or a state that believes that it rules by divine right also believes that it has a right to rule in all things both temporal and spiritual. Such a doctrine always leads to a union of church and state and the persecution of all dissenters and nonconformists to state religion. Religious liberty is utterly impossible under a church-and-state regime. The failure to draw a line of demarcation between civil and religious matters, and between secular and spiritual functions, is the root cause of all religious persecution.

The United States of America has set an example to all the world and has demonstrated to all the world that the affairs of the state and the concerns of religion prosper far more and produce more benevolent results when both are separated and each acts independently in its own sphere, than when they are united and one dominates the other.

The state has a right to regulate pure-food laws because the state is ordained to defend and protect the bodies of human beings, whereas the church is ordained to work for the souls of human beings. The state has no authority over the souls or spiritual destiny of its citizens, but over their bodies only. The body is dependent for its well-being upon physical food, and the soul of humans is nourished with spiritual food. Since the church is commissioned to feed Christ's sheep, it is the duty of the church to hand spiritual food to the people. This commission was never delivered by Christ to Caesar or the state, but it was expressly given to His disciples—the church. Those who claim that the state, as well as the church, is to feed the flock of God spiritual food resort to fallacious arguments that have never yet produced practical results. Their reasoning is not only unsound, but selfish, arrogant, and intolerant in spirit as well as in practice.



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State Religion Fosters Intolerance and Bigotry

No country or government that has attempted to support and propagate religion in the past has succeeded in being tolerant and charitable toward any other religion than the state religion that it fostered. In every age and in every country a union of church and state has led to baneful consequences, and history makes no exception. Whenever civil force is employed in the interests of religion, bigotry is unceasingly vigilant in its stratagems and connivances to secure for the state religion an exclusive ascendancy and dominance over the human mind and religious practices. The spirit of intolerance in religious leaders under a church-and-state union is ever ready to arm itself with all the instruments of terror of which the civil power is capable, to exterminate those who doubt its dogmas or resist the acceptance of its infallible pronouncements.

It makes little difference by what name a state religion operates; whether Catholic or Protestant, its means and methods of operation are the same. The Catholics and Protestants have alternately waged the most ferocious and unrelenting warfare on each other, whenever they were in the ascendancy and were armed with civil power. There is no need for the pot to call the kettle black when both are equally smeared.

We Protestants who have erred along these lines in the past are willing to confess our faults and acknowledge our mistakes. The Protestants of Geneva, Switzerland, erected a monument to Servetus, whom Calvin burned at the stake for his opinions, and humbly acknowledged the mistake and attributed it to the mistaken concept of state churchism. It is simply impossible to have religious liberty flourish where a state religion, which discriminates against all other religions, operates in a government.

Church Never Benefited by State Patronage

Not only are civil and religious liberty and equality impossible under the regime of a church-and-state union, but religious progress is impossible. Force in religion destroys true spirituality, tolerance, and charity. It can only engender bitterness and hatred on the part of the persecutor, and certainly it can never develop devotion and admiration for a state religion on the part of the persecuted.

But religious domination and oppression by means of the civil power never benefit the state church ultimately. Any church that receives legal sanction from the state for the dogmas it holds, and is given financial support from the state treasury for the maintenance of religious institutions and its workers, is in danger of incurring the disfavor of the state and of being administered and controlled by the state whenever disagreements arise between the church and the state, or whenever political upheavals occur in the course of human events. Quite recently the state churches have suffered very bitter and humiliating experiences as the result of having received financial support as well as legal sanction

and aid in the enforcement of church dogmas and usages.


For centuries the Russian government had a state religion and gave it very substantial financial support in the building of its churches, cathedrals, and schools, paying the salaries of the clergy and religious teachers in religious schools. In fact, the state church enjoyed not only copious financial support, but legal sanction and enforcement of her church dogmas, and at times the head of the state church was the dominating factor not only in the church but in state affairs.

Religious oppression was rampant in the land of Russia, and dissenters and nonconformists could not call their souls their own. The dungeon and exile were the rewards for free expression of religious opinions. Religious oppression and hardships breed contempt even among the adherents of a state religion, and it fosters and fomented hatred, especially among those who are unbelievers in religion. For many centuries the state church was able to suppress all opposition and maintain its control over state affairs as well as religious concerns, so as to prevent any evil consequences to the church interests. But a day of reckoning finally arrived, as it does in all countries where state churchism rules with an iron hand. The people bear up under oppression and restraint for a long time, but when it becomes unbearable, then the people revolt, and woe to the oppressors.

When the Russian revolt occurred, it turned its wrath upon its oppressors, and the heads of the church and the state both had to make a hasty exit, and those who failed to make the exit out of the country paid dearly for their failure. Religion itself was taboo, and the state church had all its property confiscated. The state religion suffered the loss of all the state ever gave in patronage for its support, and was left worse than stranded upon its own resources. The adherents of the state church had never cultivated the spirit of self-sacrifice, and as a consequence the church was unable to support itself.

Lessons Not Learned

One of the strangest anomalies in history is that those state churches which have suffered such bitter and humiliating experiences at the hands of the populace and the state as the result of too much meddling in politics and the use of force in religion do not seem to have learned any lessons from these devastating experiences of the past, and still insist on trying the same experiment over again. The lure of state power and state support seems to have an intoxicating effect upon all who indulge in such experiments.

If there is one lesson that history teaches with unerring accuracy, it is that no church or religion, no matter what its name, can afford to meddle with politics or receive state support, either legally or financially, without surrendering its spirituality, its freedom and independence, and finally suffering a bitterly humiliating experience as the reward for its own oppressive acts of intolerance and persecution for conscience' sake. The state should remain absolutely neutral in all religious concerns. 

KSKY Radio is an effective traffic-cop-
ing aid for Sunday-morning
churchgoers in the Dallas-Fort
Worth, Texas, area. One might
absentmindedly flip it on en route to church and
enjoy a little preworship sermon with Charles
Stanley's *In Touch* or Adrian Rogers' *Love Worth
Finding*.

But heading home after church might yield a
starkly different type of show, which could lead
the uninformed to check the radio dial to make
sure they were still listening to *Christian* radio.
For instance, one might hear the sharp rhetoric of
Laura Ingraham, a conservative talk radio person-
ality whose show "drives the liberals nuts."¹

More and more Christian radio stations
are segueing into the secular arena by airing
shows that are patently political. More and
more, the fuzzing of the line between radio
religion and politics leads listeners to assume
that Christianity and Far Right political conserva-
tism are peas in a pod.

One of the more striking examples of this
trend is the presence of Michael Medved, also
featured on KSKY. Medved, who might be called
a media moralist, lambastes Hollywood for its
contribution to the moral vacuum of popular
culture. In 1992, his *Hollywood vs. America* was

published, prompting perturbed members of the
entertainment establishment to denounce him as
a "fundamentalist Christian fanatic."² The prob-
lem with this label is that Michael Medved hap-
pens to espouse the Jewish faith.

Medved joins a host of Jewish radio person-
alities in an ever-growing public alliance between
conservative Jews and Evangelicals. The tsks-
tsking Dr. Laura Schlessinger has been praised and pro-
moted on James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* for
her advocacy of commandment keeping. Dobson
has also aired Rabbi Daniel Lapin's take on the
"culture war and the fate of America."³ While
many Christian radio stations devote all their air-
time to the proclamation of the gospel, increasing
numbers are giving the microphone to politicians
and policymakers, some of them Jewish.⁴

Does this growing friendship flourish out
of the moral commonality of Judaism and
Christianity? Not likely, since the Judeo-Christian
ethic was in place in the early part of the twen-
tieth century when right-wing Christianity was
rife with anti-Semitism. Author William Martin
says of that era, "Because Jews were explicitly not

—Continued on page 22

By
JENNIFER J.
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Mutual

BACK-SCRAT

CHIM



The strict purpose of the establishment clause of the First Amendment was never to require a strict neutrality between religion and nonreligion. It was designed to prohibit Congress from establishing a national church, from designating a particular faith or sect above the rest. It was never intended to require a strict neutrality between religion and nonreligion.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution “affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance of all religions, and forbids hostility towards any.” Anything less than accommodation would require “callous indiffer-

ence,” which was never intended by the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

Looking at the initial drafts of the First Amendment makes it clear that our Founders sought to forbid a national religion, but never once, in the slightest, believed that our government would ever be hostile toward religion.

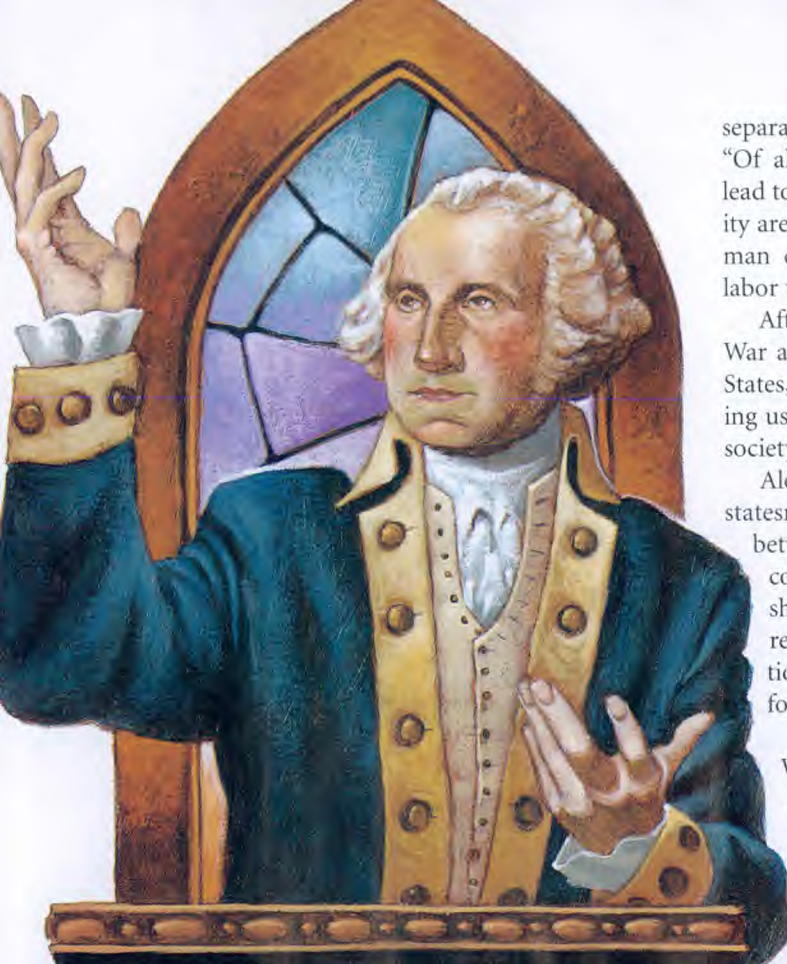
One of the most important political documents and political speeches ever delivered in our nation was Washington’s Farewell Address. He pointed out that two foundations for political prosperity are religion and morality, and no one could be called an American patriot who attempted to

NEVER HOSTILE TO Religion

By DEE WAMPLER



ILLUSTRATION BY RALPH BUTLER



separate politics from its two foundations: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars."¹

After serving as leader of our forces in the Revolutionary War and for two terms as the first president of the United States, George Washington gave his farewell address, reminding us that "we can never hope to be a happy nation" if our society endures without religion.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), the famous French statesman and historian who penned a two-part work between 1835 and 1840, *Democracy in America*, gave us a comprehensive and penetrating analysis of the relationship between character and society in America. It was the religious aspect of our country that first struck his attention: "Religion in America . . . must be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country."

Also consider the statement of President Woodrow Wilson that "America was born a Christian nation,"² and of Patrick Henry that "it cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians."³

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As to religious expression in public schools, Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, allowed that the “only foundation for useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion.” The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 set aside federal money for schools and ordered: “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”

The *New England Primer* opened with religious admonitions, followed by the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the names of the books of the Bible.

The famous *McGuffey’s Reader*, first published in 1836, which was the mainstay in public education until the 1920s, making it the most widely used and influential textbook of all time, recited: “The Christian religion is the religion of our country. From it are derived our prevalent notions of the character of God, the great moral governor of the universe. On its doctrines are founded the particularities of our free institutions. ... The Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus are not only basic but plenary.”

Political science professors at the University of Houston recently collected all the writings from the founding era to see whom the Founders were quoting. Researchers assembled more than 15,000 writings. The project spanned 10 years, and by the end of their work, researchers isolated 3,154 direct quotes made by the Founders, and identified the sources of these quotes. The man most quoted was Baron de Montesquieu (8.3 percent). Sir William Blackstone was second (7.9 percent,) and John Locke was third (2.9 percent).⁴ Surprisingly, researchers discovered that the Founders quoted directly out of the Bible *four times more often* than they quoted Montesquieu, four times more than Blackstone, and 12 times more than John Locke. In all, *34 percent of all the Founders’ quotes came directly out of the Bible.*

The study is even more impressive when the sources of the ideas used were identified. Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), the English jurist whose *Commentaries on the Law of England* is the most famous treatise on the law ever written, stated the God-centered view of law that may be out of fashion with some lawyers in today’s legal community.⁵

Blackstone’s work was used for more than one century to settle disputes, define words, and examine procedures. He used the Bible again and again to arrive at his conclusions.⁶

Biblical heritage was so well understood during the early years of our nation that the U.S. Supreme Court declared in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. U.S.*: “No purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation, state or national, because this is a religious people. ... This is a Christian nation.”⁷

In *People v. Ruggles*,⁸ the U.S. Supreme Court stated: “Whoever strikes at the root of Christianity tends manifestly to the dissolution of civil government.”

Illustrations of the close connection between faith and public life include the following:



The United States presumed to remain against religious

■ When the federal legislature met in 1789, one of its very first actions was to appoint chaplains in both Houses of Congress.

■ On the very day Congress approved the wording of the First Amendment, its members resolved to request of President

Washington a day of public thanksgiving and prayer.

■ Every president of the United States (with only one possible exception) has been administered the oath of office with his hand on the Bible, ending with the words “So help me God.”

■ The Supreme Court begins every proceeding with the ringing proclamation “God save the United States and this honorable Court.”

■ All currency bears our national motto,⁹ “In God we trust.”¹⁰

■ The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag affirms that we are “one nation under God.” Congress would not allow a comma to be placed after the word *nation*, in order to reflect the basic idea that ours is a “nation founded on a belief in God.”

■ The Declaration of Independence reads, "All men . . . are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

■ President George Washington proclaimed a Thanksgiving, with religious overtones; a day of national celebration. Congress made it a national holiday more than a century ago.¹¹

■ The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., exhibits arts with religious messages, including *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, *The Birth of Christ*, *The Crucifixion*, and *The Resurrection*, among many others with explicit Christian themes and messages.¹²

■ Legislative prayers have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.¹³

■ Tax exemptions for church properties were upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.¹⁴

learned not to speak *at* one another, but *with* one another. We have made our nation a neighborhood, but unfortunately not yet a brotherhood. This article should remind us of our heritage.

In the context of current events today, the issues of church and state rage and gather much national attention. There are few issues so likely to generate heat rather than light, as the question of the proper line between the realm of church and state. May we ever keep in mind the heritage of our faith, and the Source of all national security.

¹ James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Prayers of the Presidents, 1789-1887*, 1899, Vol. I, p. 220.

² Roger Lundin and Mark Noll, *Voices From the Heart: Four Centuries of America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 237.

³ *Time*, Feb. 14, 1954, p. 49.

⁴ David S. Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Baton Rouge,

*at its founding was a profoundly Christian society and was
such by the Founders—even as they set up protective mechanisms
intolerance and religious control by the state.—EDITOR*

■ Congress approves of federal grants for college buildings of church-sponsored institutions.¹⁵

■ Engraved on the metal cap of the Washington Monument are the Latin words *Laus Deo*, which mean "Praise be to God."

■ Along the stairway of the Washington Monument are carved on tribute blocks the following:

- In God We Trust
- God in Our Native Land
- Search the Scriptures. (John 5:39; Acts 17:11)
- Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)
- Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not; for such is the kingdom of God. (Luke 18:16)
- May Heaven to this Union continue its beneficence.

■ The Minuteman Statue at Lexington, Massachusetts, is inscribed with words including "You . . . are placed by Providence in the post of honor, because it is the post of danger. . . . Let us be [sure that] nothing unbecoming our characters as Americans, as citizens and Christians, be justly chargeable to us."

We have, in the past 200 years, adopted a Judeo-Christian concept of welcoming all peoples and all religions. We have

La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 142.

⁵ Jason S. Marks, "Only a Speed Bump Separating Church and State?" *Journal of the Missouri Bar*, February 2001.

⁶ Richard Elsworth-Day, *Man of Like Passions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1942), pp. 34-37.

⁷ 143 U.S. 457 (1892).

⁸ *Johns. R.* 290 N.Y. (1811).

⁹ 31 USC §5112(d) (1).

¹⁰ 36 USC §186.


¹¹ Chapter 167, 16 Stat. 168.

¹² The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., exhibits more than 200 similar religious paintings.

¹³ *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783 (1983).

¹⁴ *Walz v. Tax Commission*, 397 U.S. 664 (1970).

¹⁵ *Tilton v. Richardson*, 403 U.S. 672 (1971).

This article points out what Liberty is often at pains to acknowledge: the United States at its founding was a profoundly Christian society and was presumed to remain such by the Founders — even as they set up protective mechanisms against religious intolerance and religious control by the state. The historical examples cited in the article are less a proof of intention than of the entangling nature of the shared religious assumptions. Editor. 

Benjamin Gitlow's 1925 day before the United States Supreme Court opened the door to vigorous legal disputes testing First Amendment religious liberty guarantees in all jurisdictions. Hardly a church-state activist, Gitlow, an avowed anarchist, unleashed inflammatory rhetoric that pushed the limits of free speech under New York state law.

The court responded with a ruling that extended the First Amendment guarantees to individual states, courtesy of the

Creator with certain unalienable rights." (Still struggling to break free from the heel of a European imperial power, the high-sounding phraseology overlooked the reality of the time when slaves were bound in chains and women couldn't vote.)

The new nation's first president anchored his April 30, 1789, Inaugural Address expressing homage to "the benign parent of the human race," identified as "the Great Author

By WARREN L. JOHNS

First Amendment Religious Liberty

NEUTRA

due process provisions of the fourteenth Amendment.¹ Since the First Amendment also guards against religious totalitarianism, the court's *Gitlow* reasoning crafted the framework for a century of religious liberty tests: flag salutes, prayers, religious symbols on public property, and the restraint of trade, compliments of Sunday blue laws.

A month after the nine justices ruled in *Gitlow*, the Dayton, Tennessee, *Scopes* trial offered a sensational hint of things to come. In a case rigged to draw attention to a rural town coping with economic transition, John Scopes, a likable high school substitute biology teacher and a hand-picked party in interest, fronted the challenge to a state's power to bar evolutionism from public school curricula.

Those were the days when a defendant faced an all-male jury and the judge invited a clergyman to use the courtroom as a pulpit to invoke God's blessing on the trial. Despite Clarence Darrow's passionate argument for academic freedom, the judge fined the defendant \$100. Later appealed and remanded on a technicality, the legal proceedings faded away while the cultural ripple effects continue to reverberate.

No question about it, prior to 1925 the full impact of the First Amendment's "establishment" and "free exercise" clauses had yet to be seriously tested in state courts.

Historically, expression of reverence toward and belief in God pervades government's institutional language, inextricably commingled in the nation's legal documents. The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone for democracy by saluting Divinity, embracing the belief that "all men are created equal" and "are endowed by their

of every public and private good." George Washington embraced "fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect."²

Current political leaders on the public payroll unabashedly tack on signatory phrases such as "God bless America" in messages to voters. Senators and Congressmen never hesitate to add their voices to the harmonious rendition of the song of the same name. President John F. Kennedy once advised his audience: "God's work must truly be our own." George W. Bush consistently laces presidential pronouncements with declarations of allegiance to God.

God is acknowledged in all 50 state constitutions—typically in the preamble.³ The three earliest date from 1776.

Maryland and Pennsylvania share the phrase "grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberty," with Pennsylvania adding, "and humbly invoking His guidance." Virginia invokes "Religion, or the Duty which we owe our Creator" and admonishes "it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian Forbearance, Love and Charity towards each other"

Thirty-one years after *Gitlow*, Alaska described its citizens as "grateful to God." Three years later, Hawaii, the youngest state in the union, expressed gratitude for "Divine Guidance."

An American majority embrace a belief in God. The persistent challenge is to discover how best to fine-tune this cultural reality without running afoul of the *establishment* prohibition or the *free exercise* assurance, which, taken

together, expect the government to be nonsectarian, *neutral* but not *hostile* to religion.

Establishment and *free exercise* clauses are twin protections, bound tightly as a single package. Interpretation of either with a blind eye to the other throws the equation out of balance and can lead to an extremist position. A “one note Charlie” case that fights *establishment* while ignoring or trampling *free exercise* risks jeopardizing the delicate bal-

Guarantees

LITY,

Astride the grand entry to the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C., a sculpted Moses, cradling the Ten Commandments, greets all comers—even those intent on removing religious symbols from public property. Inside, massive oak doors carry engraved artistic

NOT

ance envisioned between the twin mandates.

The First Amendment appears to require government *neutrality* in its protection of religious practice. State-sponsored *neutrality* shouldn’t accommodate *hostility* that attempts to remove reference to God from the legal landscape.

Has *establishment* concern dominated legal perceptions since *Gitlow*, leaving *free exercise* with the short stick? To avoid state-sponsored religion, has the pendulum swung so far as to inadvertently ignore *free exercise*? Is there a clear and present danger that, pushed to the nth degree, solo *establishment* can open the door to an established secular humanism, with a government hostile to faith-based religion?

So what about the Ten Commandments in the public arena?

Is a state law that orders “Don’t kill a human being” unconstitutional because it paraphrases “Thou shalt not kill”? How about a civil prohibition penalizing theft: “Don’t steal property from another”? Does it sound suspiciously similar to “Thou shalt not steal”?

If a paraphrase of one of the Big Ten passes Constitutional muster, would a literal English translation such as “Thou shall not kill” make the grade irrespective of its Mount Sinai connection?

Thoughtful theologians remind believers that the apostle Paul admonished New Testament believers that the written words of God’s law lacked meaning unless inscribed inside the human heart, inspiring more than pro forma goodness.

renderings honoring the biblically based law. In silent testimony, yet another depiction of the Biblical Ten is carved into the wall, directly above the bench where the nine justices grill lawyers.

Are symbolic replicas of the Ten Commandments, the cross, or the Star of David anything more than representations of freely exercised faith?

When the chief justice administers the oath of office, the U.S. president-elect places his hand on a Bible containing the Genesis account of creation week as well as events descriptive of the origin of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Trial witnesses promise fidelity to the “truth” through a court-administered oath, typically capped with the words “so help me God.” An embossed visage of Moses gazes down from the walls of the U.S. House of Representatives, inspiring legislators. Both the United States Senate and the House of Representatives employ clergy empow-

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ered to open congressional sessions by publicly inviting God's blessing.

Chaplains of all faiths serve as commissioned officers in the United States military, paid with tax money appropriated by Congress. Government-issued religious symbols, pinned to uniform lapels, identify chaplains—crosses for Christian clergy and appropriate symbols for other faiths. Military base chapels, some adorned with religious symbols, are built on federal land, at taxpayer expense. American coinage proclaims: "In God We Trust."

Must this be swept away as unconstitutional *establishment*?

Government action respecting and protecting symbolic

No eyebrows were raised for the better part of the twentieth century. But once the turf supporting the memorial became public land, legal vigilantes, flying the First Amendment flag, galloped to the scene charging establishment.⁶ Pushing the envelope toward the supremacy of the *establishment* clause, the federal court ordered the Latin cross removed.

Make no mistake, union of church and state threatens individual freedom and offers not a whit of refuge to religious liberty.

Tyranny flows from a totalitarian state controlled by a majoritarian faith that suppresses and even persecutes dissenters—shades of the "rack and screw" tortures of

HOSTILITY

foundations of faith doesn't remotely imply that citizens can be coerced to worship any shrine, bow down to any deity, or swear allegiance to any sectarian dogma. The United States stands as a nonsectarian protector of a citizen's *free exercise*, whether creationist, secular evolutionist, atheist, agnostic, Jew, Muslim, or Christian.


An acknowledged evolutionist has declared, "Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning and it is true of evolution today."⁴ Political action organizations⁵ devote considerable energy attempting to establish this secular "religion" by imposing its dogma on dissenters. Are Ten Commandment replicas second-class religious symbols that deserve less constitutional protection than evolutionism?

Americans who lost their lives in the June 1944 Normandy Invasion rest memorialized in a military cemetery overlooking the once blood-soaked sands of Omaha Beach. Glistening white crosses mark Christian graves. Stars of David guard the honored dead of the Jewish tradition.

A previous generation of patriotic citizens, mourning the loss of local Americans killed in World War I, invested time, money, and material to plant a memorial cross in the Mojave Desert's rough terrain in 1934. This act of spontaneous gratitude saluting the fallen of a brutal conflict alleged to be a "war to end all wars" and "to make the world safe for democracy" involved not a penny of tax money. Far from the 18-wheelers that cruise Interstate 15 connecting Los Angeles and Las Vegas, the remote site attracted Easter sunrise celebrants.

medieval Europe or the excesses of the Taliban. Spirituality will be compromised, if not persecuted, where religious practice exists at the state's whim—witness Christian survivors of Soviet gulags; surreptitiously scribbled symbols of a cross or a fish on Roman walls, and the hideaway haunts of catacombs.

Now that the Mojave Desert memorial cannot stand, must the simple crosses on tax-supported highway shoulders memorializing highway deaths be uprooted? Would it be constitutionally rational to raze the Normandy cemetery crosses under the *establishment* banner? Or will there be a demand, in the Taliban tradition, to deface the figure of Moses gracing the Supreme Court architecture and to chip away the Big Ten symbol cradled in his arms?

It won't happen as long as the legal pendulum avoids swinging far past the neutrality norms of *establishment* extremes, and instead balances the twin-blessing package of *free exercise* and *establishment* within the magical formula demanded by the First Amendment. 

¹ *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652 (1925).

² "Washington's Inaugural Address of 1789," *American Originals*, www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/american_originals.

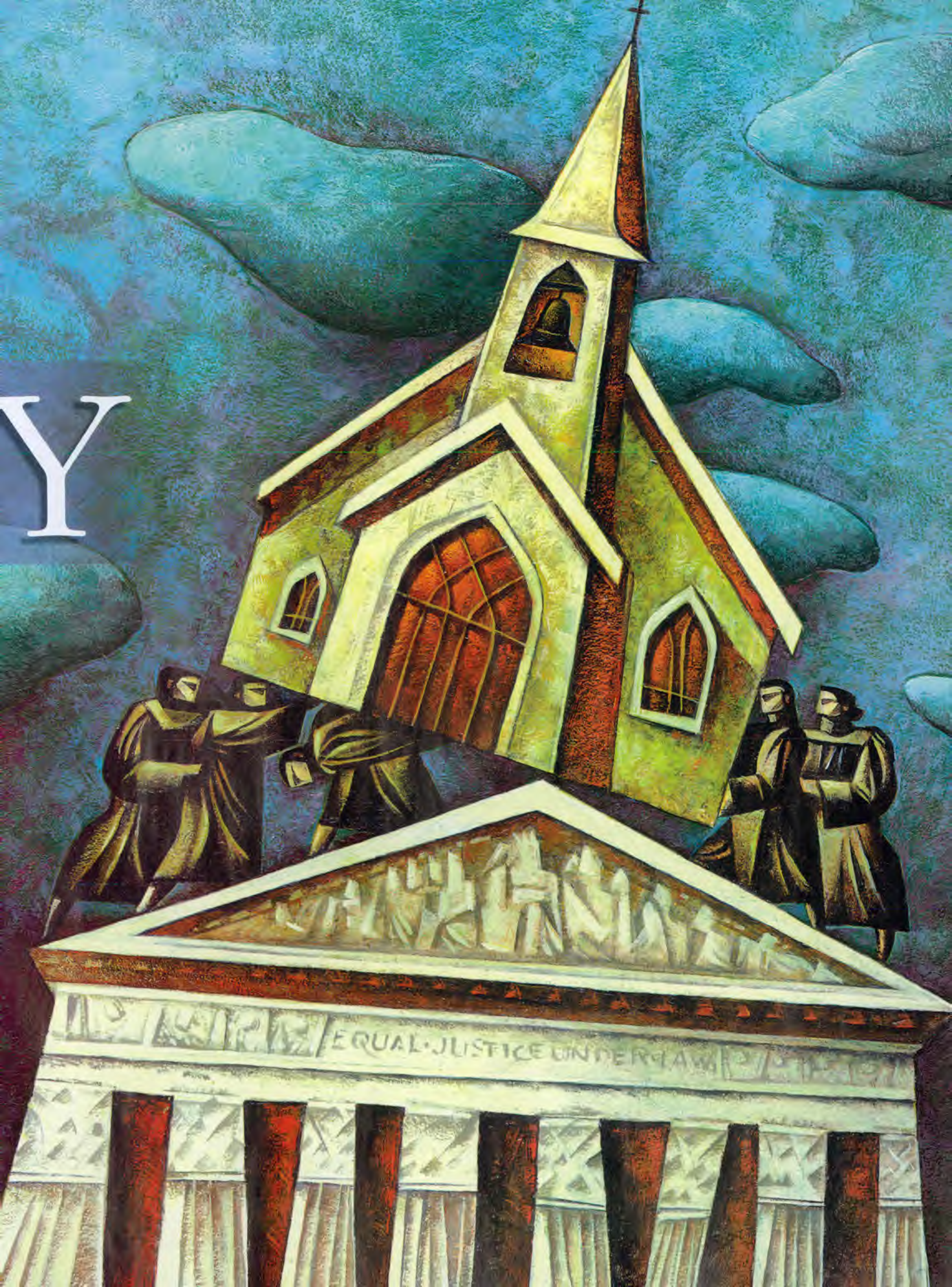
³ See William J. Federer, "Separation of God and State?" www.WorldNetDaily.com, posted Oct. 11, 2003.

⁴ Michael Ruse, "Saving Darwinism From the Darwinians," *National Post* (May 13, 2000, p. B-3, as cited by Henry B. Morris, "Evolution Is Religion—not Science," *Impact*, Feb. 2003).

⁵ The National Center for Science Education devotes its energy to the preservation of evolutionism's preferred position in public school curricula.

⁶ *Buono v. Norton*, 2004 WL 1238143 (9th Circuit, June 7, 2004).

Y



Few emperors of Rome possessed the learning and refinement of Marcus Aurelius. Power and pomp meant little to him; his great passion was for justice. Serving without salary, he supported himself and a host of court retainers from his own abundant riches. In a sensual age, he was a Stoic, who practiced temperance, self-denial, and stern morality. Even those who found his abstemious way of life repellent revered him for his practical decency. Considerate toward the poor, he lowered their taxes and moderated their civil obligations, which had previously been oppressive. Deeming the brutality of gladiatorial exhibitions offensive, he ordered that they be given less frequently and with less bloodshed. Aurelius's literary gifts were exceptional, as revealed in his wise and pithy *Meditations*, not written for publication, but as a kind of political, philosophical diary of private reflections.

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MARCVS ENLIGHTENED

By
BRIAN D. JONES



AVRELLIVS

P E R S E C U T O R



But Marcus Aurelius was an energetic persecutor of the Christians, and for zealous intolerance was a star of the first magnitude in a galaxy of persecuting emperors. During Aurelius's reign and with his full sanction, Felicitas, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, and many thousands of less renowned Christians were cruelly tortured to death.

Why would so decent a man have such a blot on his otherwise stainless record? The combined factors that affected Aurelius's thinking reveal much about the causes of religious persecution in every civilized age. Aurelius the persecutor makes an especially inter-

evolutionistic, with a moderate dose of mysticism. Stoics saw nature's animating force as a divine spirit inhabiting all matter more or less homogeneously. In this pantheistic order, humans were seen as inherently good, provided that they lived in harmony with their nobler instincts, otherwise called "the god within." Reliance on a superior external Being who made atonement for their sins was antithetic to the Stoics' view of life. Repentance and reconciliation for sin was to them an abominable idea, denigrating their (supposedly) innate moral sufficiency and power of self-improvement. In their view, a merciful Savior was a guilt-provoking intruder into the citadel of humanity's natural decency and divinity. Devotion to virtue and duty in accord with natural law were the pathway to a pure conscience and moral bliss.



esting study because his intolerance was the result not of crude barbarism, but sophisticated political thinking infused with religious fervor. He had moral and ideological grounds for his policy of extinction toward Christians. It is well worth examining what made Marcus Aurelius, philosopher, humanitarian, and social reformer, a great persecutor.

His Religion

Aurelius's hedonistic age didn't love Stoicism, but honored it in the abstract as an ascetic form of self-improvement, practiced only by the most learned and disciplined. Human perfectibility through personal effort was the key doctrine of Stoicism. Originated by Zeno of Citium in the fourth century B.C., and systematized by Epictetus three centuries later, this school of philosophy was pragmatic and

THE HISTORY OF EUROPE AND RIFE WITH INSTANCES OF CAUSES PROTAGONISTICALLY NAME OF

His Politics

To this ideology Aurelius added *duty to the state* as a person's supreme obligation. In his view the state embodied the highest manifestation of nature's order on earth. Dissent from the edicts of the state and its established traditions was a violation of nature and, hence, moral treason. He believed that religion was an essential part of life and that the only valid religion was that of the state, whose collective wisdom was always superior to individual judgment. The idea of personal accountability to a divine Creator, or of an *individual* conscience that might take allowable exception to the collective will, was alien to Aurelius's philosophy. Religious liberty or diversity was to him an intellectual affront, a species of moral anarchy and political subversion that must be eradicated for the good of all.

His Advisers

Marcus Aurelius's reign (A.D. 161-180) began over a century and a half after the establishment of the Christian church. Busy with the affairs of state and immersed in the traditions of pagan

Rome, he was not disposed to objectively examine the influence of this foreign religion, which had been peaceable and constructive from its beginning. Instead he followed the persecuting policy of his predecessors, even adding new force to it. He listened to the bigoted advice of his counselors, such as Cornelius Fronto and Junius Rusticus, who used their silver-tongued sophistry to turn Aurelius against Christians. Thus he was fed with deliberate lies about the alleged treachery and barbarism of this interdicted "sect." He also consulted mystics and oracles whose sensual superstitions and avarice aroused their instinctive dread of a religion that exemplified purity, truth, and charitable deeds. In short, *Aurelius left his final judgment of religions other than his own to the counsel of religious "experts" opportunisti-*

OTHER CHRISTIAN LANDS IS PERSECUTION FOR RELIGIOUS UNDERTAKEN IN THE JESUS CHRIST.

cally devoted to the state religion. In this move, he failed to reckon that no prejudice is so fierce as religious prejudice, and no intolerance so merciless as religious intolerance. He also failed to recognize his own moral duty to learn for himself the truth of God's revealed Word.

The reinstatement of Roman virtue (which was in steep decline) and the unity of the Roman Empire (which was unraveling through exploitation and self-indulgence) were the supreme objects of his life. This called for the extirpation of all dissenting elements. It was of no consequence to him that Christians had served loyally in both civil and military capacities. That loyalty could be a facade. A uniform ideology and unanimously observed religion were essential to the preservation of Roman power and civilization. Thus, for seemingly laudable ends, he spawned a misbegotten breed of religiopolitical absolutism.

What is the significance of this historic precedent? Does it merely have antiquarian interest, like the discovery of crumbled columns in the wastelands of Greece or a batch of old coins in Byzantium? Or does it have a lesson for our day?

Morality's New Mentor?

Our time is strikingly similar in some respects to Aurelius's. As it was with second-century Rome, the values of our civilization have been progressively crumbling for some decades. Today more and more world leaders are seeing light in global unity, enforced, as necessary, by military might. Further, with a superficial religious syncretism and an almost mystic admiration for the Papacy not witnessed since the Middle Ages, we find disturbing parallels to Aurelius's advocacy of a uniform religious worldview, allowing no alternatives or dissent. The current drift is toward a politically endorsed morality and common body of religious beliefs whose substance is fashioned by the religious "experts" in Christendom, with political advice from non-Christian leaders. Heads of state and the masses alike are eager for a world leader who will give authoritative spiritual guidance to humanity—someone who will define and interpret moral issues in the rapidly changing social and political order. This universal shepherd of humanity might well be looked to as an educator of human conscience, a preceptor to the nations, not for his own glory, but for the preservation of human existence, liberty, and rights, as well as for the honor of God. Thus could emerge a kind of neo-Aurelianism bearing the stamp of generic Christianity.

A New Intolerance

But what should be the fate of those whose consciences cannot adhere to the official definition of personal freedoms, obligations, and rights, especially in religious matters? What if their religion, or absence of it, is deemed inimical to the good of society? Already it is possible to see how such nonconformance might kindle a modern-day "inquisition" to ascertain whose morals are sound, i.e., in agreement with the established creeds of the new world order.

Of course this might be done with (presumably) the best of intentions, and yet the fruit of such pious zeal have always been bitter and bloody. If Christendom were united in upholding one view of orthodox morality, how could that controlling authority resist the temptation to be not only the definer of doctrine and educator of the conscience but also the defender of the faith, corrector of deviancy, and enforcer of divine wisdom? Marcus Aurelius did this as an *antagonist* to Christianity. But the history of Europe and other Christian lands is rife with instances of persecution

for religious causes *protagonistically* undertaken in the name of Jesus Christ. As honorable-seeming as may have been the motives of ecclesiastic councils (Protestant and Catholic by turns) for killing Huss, Jerome, Tyndale, the Huguenots, Albigenses, Waldensians, Anabaptists, Quakers, "witches," and millions of other people who held disfavored religious beliefs, the *spirit* of persecution was still present in all those exploits.

Persecution Repudiated

Ironically, the scriptural teachings of the religion that has the most onerous record of persecuting zeal actually condemn persecution. Who doesn't know that multitudes have been tortured and lynched in the name of Jesus? But how many recall that Jesus said, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56)? The occasion of these words is significant. They

Saul the Persecutor

The apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was once as ardent a persecutor as any. Ultrareligious and zealous for the traditions of his fathers, he made it his supreme mission to annihilate Christianity (Acts 8:1-4; 26:9-11). But while on an expedition to kill more followers of that hated cult, he had a supernatural encounter with the resurrected Christ (Acts 9:1-9). After coming to know Jesus as He truly is, Paul utterly repudiated persecution for any cause. He now clearly recognized that persecution is the fruit of ignorance, bigotry, and that fundamental antagonism to true spirituality that is in every unrenewed heart. "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now" (Galatians 4:29; cf. 1 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. Never condoning retaliation, he advised the vic-

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were Christ's response to the disciples' offer to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans, who had churlishly rebuffed Jesus' proposed goodwill visit (see verses 52-56).

Christ realized that the persecuting instinct found in many of His misguided followers would mar the future path of civilization. "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you . . . for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12). We could interpret this prediction to mean equally that Christians will be persecuted by openly non-Christian powers *or* that Christians will be persecuted by other supposed Christians for the sake of Christ's name and honor. Christ further hinted at this latter application in His saying, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). But these blood offerings the God of love will not accept, for Jesus continued, "And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me" (verse 3; cf. Psalm 16:4). All of Christ's other references to persecution consistently reject this practice on any grounds (e.g., Matthew 5:10-12, 43, 44; 10:23; 23:34-39; John 15:20).

times of persecution to patiently and peaceably endure mistreatment until God Himself delivered them (see Romans 8:35; 12:13; Galatians 5:11; 6:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6).

Persecution Prophesied

Whatever one may think of Bible prophecy, it is thought-provoking to consider the apocalyptic visions of John the revelator in light of current events. This longest lived of the apostles recorded a panoramic view of human history in its final stages before Jesus' second coming. He foretold a grand coalition of church and state, whose spiritual nerve center, according to many expositors (Luther, Calvin, Gaussen, Wesley, Henry, Clarke, Barnes, Poole, et al.), is Europe and its offspring nations. John depicts the final crisis and test facing all humanity as religious:

"All the world wondered after the beast. . . . And they *worshipped* the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he

spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to *worship* the first beast. ...And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast. ...And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that *as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed*. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:3, 17).

What a specter of religiopolitical totalitarianism is presented here! Fascination with miracles; man worship; global edicts; technology to enforce international law; rapid, world-girdling communications; economic interdict made possible by a universal system of exchange and trade—all factors that fit our times with staggering foresight.

Quo Vadis?

Who could fail to recognize that with the recent disintegration of Communism, the militant discontent in the Islamic world, and the corresponding elevation of "Christian" democratic powers, Western religion is due for a mighty resurgence of power in international affairs? What glue could be more effective or apparently more desirable than that all races and nations come together into a universal unity of Christian morality—one that in its sense of moral superiority will brook no dissent and countenance no alternative creeds?


Who could be so crabbed and narrow as to take exception to once impossible-seeming alliances alluringly endorsed by spectacular miracles and freely-flowing goodwill? Dostoyevsky correctly observed that the most entrancing combination of influences upon the unregenerate human mind is "miracle, mystery and authority." Far more people are inclined to give credence to spectacular miracles than to sobering truths.

A Beacon of Warning

We have much to learn today from Marcus Aurelius, humanitarian, reformer, unifier of nations, and devout persecutor. Chiefly, that his example as promoter, preserver, and enforcer

of state-sponsored religion is one devoutly to be avoided.

This caution has perhaps never been sounded more insightfully than by John Stuart Mill, who, more than a century ago, wrote:

"Absolute monarch of the whole civilised world, [Marcus Aurelius] preserved through life not only the most unblemished justice, but what was less to be expected from his stoical breeding, the tenderest heart. The few failings which are attributable to him were all on the side of indulgence; while his writings, the highest ethical product of the ancient mind,...scarcely...differ...from the most characteristic teachings of Christ. This man, a better Christian, in all but the most dogmatic sense of the word, than almost any of the ostensibly Christian sovereigns who since have reigned, persecuted Christianity. ...Inasmuch as the theology of Christianity did not appear to him to be true, or of Divine origin; ...the gentlest and most amiable of philosophers and rulers, under a solemn sense of duty, authorised the persecution of Christianity.... But it would be...unjust to him, and false to truth, to deny that no one plea which can be urged for punishing Anti-Christian teaching, was wanting to Marcus Aurelius for punishing, as he did, the propagation of Christianity. No Christian more firmly believes that atheism is false, and tends to the dissolution of society, than Marcus Aurelius believed the same things of Christianity; he who, of all men then living, might have been thought the most capable of appreciating it. Unless anyone who approves of punishment for the promulgation of opinions, flatters himself that he is a wiser and better man than Marcus Aurelius—more deeply versed in the wisdom of his time—more elevated in his intellect above it—more earnest in his search for truth—let him abstain from that assumption of the joint infallibility of himself and the multitude, which the great Aurelius made with so unfortunate a result" (from the article "Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius," *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, Rev. Ed., London, 1882, vol.1, p. 303). 

Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*. Vol. 1. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984, pp. 45-48.

Rendall, Gerald H., *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, To Himself*. London: McMillan and Co., 1901.

Uhlhorn, Gerhard. *The Conflict of Christianity With Heathenism*. Trans. from the 3rd German edition by Egbert C. Smyth and C. J. H. Ropes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891, pp. 282-297.

Christians, they could be depicted as enemies of Christianity, and, since being a Christian was virtually synonymous with being 100-percent American, it was difficult to regard them as fully American.”⁵

Because of the substantial Jewish presence in the morally corrupt entertainment industry, and because they were gener-

Mutual BACK-SCRATCHING

Continued from page 7

ally antiprohibition and pro labor unions, they were seen as part of the bane of modernism that was sweeping Western culture. Prominent Fundamentalists disseminated their anti-Semitism quite proudly. For instance, Gerald Winrod, founder of Defenders of the Faith, toured the country decrying biblical criticism, evolution, the Social Gospel, alcohol, and modernism. In 1934 he emerged as a full-fledged anti-Semite, blaming Jews for the Depression and praising Hitler's efforts “to defy Jewish occultism, communism, and finance.”⁶

Most likely, increasingly frequent and passionate public displays of Christian-Jewish affection among radio celebrities are but the fruit of an intertwining of grass roots in a movement called “Christian Zionism.” This movement is most recently traceable to the 1970 release of Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, which has sold over 35 million copies and was cited by the *New York Times* as being the best-selling nonfiction book of the decade. Advancing an eschatology called premillennial dispensationalism, this book popularized the view that modern Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. An example of the many passages applied is found in the writings of Amos the prophet: “I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel... I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God” (Amos 9:14, 15, NRSV).^{*} No doubt Lindsey was fueled by the Six Day War in 1967—in which Israel captured all of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. These events galvanized premillennialists to believe that the last days had begun.

Premillennialism's most popularized feature is the rapture theory, which conveniently depicts Christians escaping the coming global meltdown referred to as “Armageddon.” The expected events are as follows: Before the millennium of peace comes to earth, the Jews will return to, and completely possess, their homeland. A great tribulation will follow, and Christians will escape the carnage of Armageddon because God has promised to snatch them away in the rapture. During the time of tribulation, Jews will have an opportunity to accept the Messiah and receive deliverance. Those who do not will be destroyed with the rest of the impenitent.

With the 1995 release of Tim La Haye and Jerry B. Jenkins' *Left Behind* novel, the rapture theory went gangbusters, infusing its end-time scenario into the collective consciousness of the masses. The series has sold in excess of 55 million copies and is considered some of the best-selling fiction of our time.

If Jewish possession of the homeland is a precursor to the awaited rapture, what self-respecting premillennialist wouldn't do all they could to assist the cause of Zionism? The result of this impetus is Christian Zionism, a movement among Evangelicals that specializes in assisting Jews financially and spiritually in returning to, and taking full possession of, the land of Palestine.

The ante of the cause has been upped in recent years. It's true that the alliance of Christian Zionists and the pro-Israel lobby dipped during the Clinton administration because of the Oslo peace accords, which called for reductions in the expansion Jewish settlements and asked Israel to withdraw from a significant portion of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. But when in 1996 the conservative Likud Party's Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister, a new era began. He invited 17 prominent U.S. Fundamentalists to tour the Holy Land. While there, they forged a collective statement that included a blanket rejection of any attempt to pressure Israel to abandon the settlements. This group envisioned a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty rather than a Jerusalem shared by Palestinians and Israelis.

Since then, a plethora of organizations have supported the settlements with their prayers, their votes, and their dollars. Jews for Jesus, Bridges for Peace, Ebenezer Trust and Exodus are a few of the more than 200 evangelical groups in the U.S. and Canada that are tied to Christian Zionism. These groups infuse the Christian world with their ideas and political strategies through tours to Israel, prophecy conferences, films, books, magazines, Web sites, and videos. Religious/political rallies electrify the devotees, who receive affirmation from a rainbow of well-connected officials such as House of Representatives majority whip Tom DeLay, the mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, and the Reverend Jerry Falwell.

The latter was interviewed on *60 Minutes* in October 2003, several months after the Israeli attack of the West Bank city of Jenin.⁷ Bush appealed to Sharon to withdraw from Jenin, but the pro-Israel lobby and the Christian Right saw things differently. They immediately mobilized their masses to barrage the White House with more than 100,000 e-mail messages, calls, and visits urging the president to allow Israel to defend itself. Bush grew suddenly silent toward Israel, and the activists considered it a signal victory. Referring to this incident, Jerry Falwell told the nation, “I think now we can count on President Bush to do the right thing for Israel every time.”⁸

When a religious figure speaks—however obliquely—of puppeting a president, advocates of religious liberty must stand up and take notice.

Just how much muscle do Christian Zionists have in Washington? First consider their numbers. Mainstream Evangelicals number about 100 million, but only about 25 per-

cent of them—about 25 million—could be called “Fundamentalist” or “dispensationalist” and could thus be included in the Christian Zionist movement. Yet September 11 triggered an explosion in Fundamentalist Christian support of Israel. A growing sentimental/religious bond with Jews founded on dispensationalist interpretations of prophecy, mingled with a fear of Islamic terrorism, produced a growth spurt that defies calculation.

In considering the strength of this movement, we must also factor in its high profile. Consider the fact that almost 90 percent of religious radio and television in the U.S. is dominated by the Far Right of Christendom, and thus favors a Christian Zionist orientation. Gifted communicators and lovable personalities combine their talents to draw sharp lines in the sand. Eloquent Christian talk show host Janet Parshall says that support for Israel is a litmus test for those who claim to be America’s Moral Majority.⁹

And we mustn’t forget the “golden rule” that gold rules in determining the strength of a platform. Perhaps not so much the wealth of its constituents, but the fervency and utter devotion of Christian Zionists make for the movement’s financial strength. The hope of hastening the coming rapture and ensuring their own deliverance no doubt motivates dispensationalists to dig deep into their pockets. When in 1997 an organization called the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews conducted a campaign to raise funds for resettling Soviet Jews, a single church—John Hagee’s Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas—donated \$1 million.¹⁰

But not all Evangelicals share John Hagee’s enthusiasm. Reformed theologian Donald E. Wagner believes that there are underlying contradictions. When Israelis are justified in violence against Palestinians, he says, they are encouraged in the breaking of their own Torah. He questions the apparent naïveté of Jewish organizations in coalescing with a movement that seeks the conversion of Jews to Christianity. “I once asked Israel’s director of religious communities if he was aware of the implication of the alliance with fundamentalist Christians, particularly in light of their history of anti-Semitism, their dedication to the Christianizing of America, and their ‘convert or fry’ Armageddon scenarios. His response was ‘Of course we know all this, but we will

take support wherever we can get it.’”¹¹

Vocal Jewish influentials are also skeptical. Rutgers University sociology professor Arlene Stein skillfully debates the issue. She says that while Christian conservatives have softened their tactics, their political agenda—which includes an effort to “erode the barrier between church and state”—is “more ambitious than ever.” The pro-Israel stance of some is motivated, she says, by “a generalized antipathy toward Islam.” She worries at the Christian Right’s post-9/11 culpability of Islam as the new enemy of Christian civilization. “Conservatives suggest that the new fault line isn’t between communism and capitalism, it’s between Judeo-Christian culture and the godless other—namely, the followers of Muhammad.”¹²

Advocates of religious liberty should share her concern. In an attempt to ensure the fulfillment of their interpretations of biblical prophecy, Christian Zionists may compromise Christian principles of liberty of conscience and the just, compassionate treatment of all people. If it continues to gain momentum, Christian Zionism promises to be a mutual back-scratching that will, in the end, draw blood. ☐

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¹ KSKY Web page at www.ksky.com/ingraham.aspx.

² www.michaelmedved.com.

³ See www.family.org.

⁴ Dr. Laura opened her Aug. 5, 2003, show with the announcement that she would no longer be practicing Judaism.

⁵ William Martin, *With God on Our Side* (New York, Broadway Books, 1996), p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ This was in retaliation for horrific terrorist bombings.

⁸ Donald E. Wagner, “Marching to Zion,” *Christian Century*, June 2003, p. 20.

⁹ Michael R. Welton, “Unholy Alliance: Christian Zionists and the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict,” *Canadian Dimension*, Mar/April 2003, p. 17.

¹⁰ Donald E. Wagner, “Marching to Zion,” *Christian Century*, June 2003, p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Arlene Stein, “Affair With Religious Right Is Misguided, Shortsighted,” *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, April 30, 2002, p. 1.

*Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

A *Pictou* is Worth Religious

Events in a charming Nova Scotia seaside



PHOTOS BY GORDIE MARR



y BARRY BUSSEY

Words

estination

Pictou, Nova Scotia, is “a charming seaside destination steeped in Scottish culture and history” on the Northumberland Strait—a convenient stop-off point for those taking the ferry to Prince Edward Island. It is a place where one can sit back and enjoy the traditional and maritime music as it wafts across the harbor from the marina’s hospitality center. Its history dates back to the 1773 launch of the ship *Hector* from Lochbroom, Scotland, carrying some 200 brave souls seeking a better life in the New World.

The people of Pictou are proud—and for good reason. Recently they volunteered their time and resources to build an exact replica of the *Hector*. The ship now plays an important role in the all-important tourism industry. Seafaring tourists tie up at the marina and join visitors from all over the world in summer celebrations on the harbor front. On the Marina Stage special events are presented by various community groups to entertain the guests. Unfortunately, the tranquil scene was marred in the summer of 2002 by a dispute over a religious drama presentation. The subsequent legal battle has become a key case in the struggle over religious speech in a public place.

Kenneth Gilliard is the pastor of Pictou’s Cornerstone Community Church. He requested the use of the Marina Stage for his church’s presentation of a drama, *This Blood Is for You*. The drama is performed by the actors in mime (without dialogue) as the song “Satisfaction,” by the Rolling Stones, plays in the background. The person playing the part of the Tempter comes onstage and seeks to encourage the other actors to indulge in various vices, such as excess spending, alcohol use, drug use, and attempted suicide. In the attempted-suicide scene a young actor puts a toy gun to his head as the Tempter encourages him to pull the trigger.

Another actor comes onstage to play the role of the Believer trying to introduce the others to words of Scripture. A conflict ensues between the Tempter and the Believer over the people. The next scene is the crucifixion of Christ, with the background music changing to a song entitled “This Blood Is for You.” The drama ends with the individuals accepting Jesus and being saved. Pastor Gilliard then shares a Scripture text and a brief message to end the short program.

In 2002 when the pastor approached the town for permission to use the Marina Stage, he was refused because his program “had a message” that would not be in keeping with the site objectives that the town had in mind. Exactly what those objectives were is uncertain other than that the town allowed only “lighthearted entertainment.” Nevertheless, he was offered an alternative venue—a little out of the way—the Market Square Gazebo. He accepted, and his group performed on August 17 and 18, 2002. During the first presentation a woman from a restaurant across the street took offence at the fact that one of the Tempter’s “helpers” had her face painted black, and still others complained about the use of the gun. There was a shouting match between various audience members, profanities were uttered, and a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer was called in. But by the time he arrived, everyone had settled down. A second performance, conducted under the watchful eye of the police, went without incident.

The town was suddenly faced with a situation that was much different from its advertisement as “a charming seaside destination steeped in Scottish culture and history.” It was now making history in its own right. The mayor was troubled by the “inordinate number of citizens’ phone calls” about the drama. The people complained that it was loud, they didn’t like the actors’ faces being painted, and they didn’t like the use of a gun. It appeared that the town’s original fear of the presentation not being “lighthearted” suited for the venue was substantiated by the uproar.

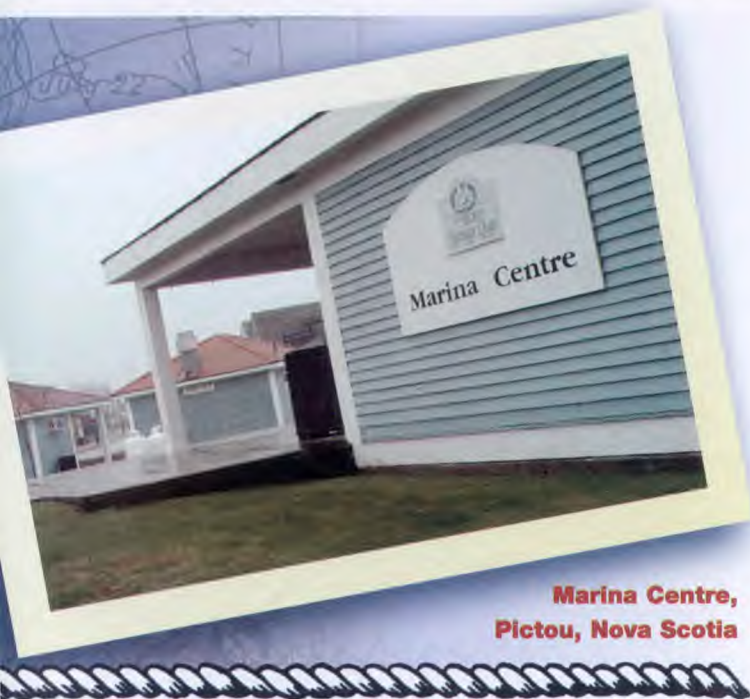
Pastor Gilliard made a second attempt a few days later to obtain permission to use the Marina Stage. The Marina Stage had a higher profile than the Market Square Gazebo, with more traffic, making it a more desirable location. He was denied again. Being undeterred, he informed the town that he planned yet another presentation for the upcoming weekend—but this time he would be at the Marina Stage regardless of what the town said. In Canada, he maintained, he had a religious right to speak at a public place.

Not surprisingly, the next day he received a letter from the bylaws officer. The letter stated that in order to use the venue, he had to obtain a special events permit. When he called the town

Barry Bussey is a lawyer who writes from Toronto, Canada. He is the public affairs and religious liberty director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada.

for information on the process of obtaining such a permit, no one at the office knew how. In fact, they had yet to create an application form or a process for such a permit. Obviously, special events up to this point had no need of a permit, but now that there was a program not in keeping with the town's objectives, a permit was needed.

Recognizing that he was getting the classic runaround, Pastor Gilliard decided that he would go ahead with the drama anyway and let the consequences fall where they



**Marina Centre,
Pictou, Nova Scotia**

may. On August 24, 2002, his group went to the Marina Stage and performed—this time with no faces painted, and no adverse reaction from the audience.

A few nights later at 11:30 p.m.—while the pastor and his wife were fast asleep—there was a loud knocking at their door. He was met by an RCMP officer with a summons to appear at Provincial Court on a charge of violating the public places bylaw for loitering on the marina property. Whatever else can be said, it was obvious that the town had shown ingenuity in coming up with such a charge against the pastor.

The Provincial Court was not at all convinced that the town's case was compelling. On March 6, 2003, the court held that the pastor was not guilty of the charge.

In the meantime the pastor wanted to do all he could to keep within the law, and decided to formally apply to the town for permission to present the drama for a third showing in September 2002. Using a letter to the town as the basis for the application, he made his request known. The town council met during an in camera meeting of the committee of the whole to discuss the request. Subsequently, a letter was written to the pastor stating two reasons his request was denied. First, the stage was

booked for the New Scotland Days celebration at the exact time he requested, and second, the council considered all of the factors noted in the public places bylaw for special events and was of the view that his program did not meet the criteria.

Just to be sure, the pastor's wife went to the town office to see what was scheduled during the time they had requested, and found—not surprisingly—there were no events scheduled. The pastor then filed a complaint under the Human Rights Act. A Nova Scotia Human Rights Board of Inquiry held hearings in October 2004 and released its decision on January 31, 2005.*

The board was not impressed with the town's version of events. It held that the pastor was denied a special events permit "because the performance contained a religious message." Section 5(1) of the Human Rights Act states that "no person shall in respect of (a) the provision of or access to services or facilities...discriminate against an individual or class of individuals on account of (k)... religion."

During testimony at the hearing several of the town personnel argued that the town had an "operating policy" of not allowing religion or politics on the Marina Stage. No copy of the policy could be produced—it appears to have been a general consensus. The mayor denied that such a policy was his idea, but he was contradicted by those working at the town office. They stated that they "heard the mayor say on several occasions that there was to be no politics or religion on the Marina Stage."

The board pointed out that the Marina Stage was a public facility—any citizen had a right to equal access and ought not to be discriminated against in violation of the act. The bylaws listed five criteria for a special events permit, but the board held that the town did not apply them. Nor was there a process implemented by which one could apply for a permit.

"While the Town of Pictou has the discretion to offer a service to some or all members of the public," said the board, "that discretion cannot be exercised in a discriminatory way. The town cannot ignore the law in exercising that discretion." The town was held to be in violation of the Human Rights Act. It had discriminated against Pastor Gilliard because of religion and was ordered to pay his legal costs and \$6,000.00 with interest.

This summer one can expect to find in Pictou, Nova Scotia, not only "a charming seaside destination steeped in Scottish culture and history," along with the *Hector* lying at the wharf, but also a mime drama entitled *This Blood Is for You*. In all likelihood it will be playing on the Marina Stage. Those 200 brave souls of 1773 would no doubt approve of their settlement being a land where there is freedom against discrimination because of religious speech. □

* *Reverend Kenneth Gilliard v. The Town of Pictou*, Nova Scotia Board of Inquiry under the Human Rights Act, case no: 04-02-0034.

Quality and Passion

A magazine of your subject and quality is special, and I appreciate your situation. There is no magazine that I read more thoroughly. The issue of religion and government is a passion within me that was born during my educational experiences at Baylor University. At age 68 I live to bring attention to the constitutional principle of voluntarism in matters of religion, the essence of the Constitution's religion commandments.

GENE GARMAN

E-mail

Faith Restored

My husband and I were introduced to *Liberty* in 1998 when he was first elected city commissioner. We have thoroughly enjoyed reading your magazine. The July/August 2004 issue was most profound for me, particularly "Dealing With Babylon" and "In Search of a Christian Nation." Your magazine has restored my faith in Americans and given me hope for a better America.

EVELYN PEOPLES JORDAN

Panama City, Florida

Law and the Lawyer

Although I agree with the premise of his article "A Christian Looks at the American Republic" (Jan./Feb. 2005), Robert Cannada did not clearly communicate an important legal principle: The Declaration of Independence is not law.

His assertion that the freedom of conscience, and all rights, enjoyed by Americans is derived from "transcendent moral truths" is a correct one. However, encouraging Christians to interpret rights within the "principles

of the Declaration" and asserting that the Declaration "addresses the government and office holders" are misleading.

The Constitution and the enacted laws and treaties "made in pursuance thereof" are the law of the land. There is no other standard by which American law is to be judged civilly. That being the case, the U.S. Constitution is a godless document in the sense that God, deity, or supreme intelligence is not mentioned.

Furthermore, the Declaration of Independence was not addressed to the government. It was addressed to the king of England. When the American Revolution ended, the Declaration became a dead letter in terms of effect. Granted, the Declaration does give us insight today into the history of how and why our country was founded, but it is of no legal effect. It is not law.

The Constitution was written and designed to be self-supporting. The creation of the American government and the philosophies underlying that creation were creatures of the Enlightenment. Those philosophies recognized the "transcendent moral truths" from which our natural rights originated. These truths were often, but not always, attributed to a Supreme Creator. To that effect, the Constitution, and it alone, secures our rights in terms of codified, written law.

It is because the Constitution is a secular document that recognizes Cannada's "transcendent moral truths" that it is able to effectively secure our rights. It is not because Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration's "committee" chose to insert the word "Creator." Indeed, if Christians

and other religious groups recognize God's grant of freedom, their efforts to secure that freedom are well-informed. However, it is error to rely on our nation's Declaration of Independence as if that document somehow created, guaranteed, or secured our rights.

ROGER PRATHER

Athol, Massachusetts

Nuanced

When someone on the private message board of the American Society of Journalists and Authors asked about religious magazine markets, I remembered writing a couple of pieces years ago for your publication, and so looked up the Web site and was delighted to see Clifford Goldstein's opinion piece, as he was the editor the times I contributed. I don't agree completely with his position (there is, I think, a danger to a religion when its leaders demand a robotic fealty not only in deed but in word and opinion), but it is good to see that he is still involved with the public discourse. If you can, please pass on my regards—I only wish more publications encouraged the in-depth, nuanced reporting possible in yours.

ERIK SHERMAN

E-mail

And it is a long time since we paid Erik!—Editor.

Weak Arguments

I greatly enjoy your magazine, and generally find your articles to be well-thought-out and informative. But the article "The Evil of Religious Persecution," by Haven Bradford Gow (Jan./Feb.

2005), just isn't up to the usual standards of *Liberty*.

Gow quotes Vincent Carroll and David Shiflett, who pronounce that "Christians are regularly targeted for ridicule and vilification by a significant portion of America's cultural elite." Yet Gow provides no examples of such ridicule and vilification, either his own or that of Carroll and Shiflett. I must say I find this pronouncement astonishing, not to mention contrary to my own observations of life in these United States, where respect for religious belief is ubiquitous—and if any belief can be said to be marginalized, it is certainly the atheists and secularists who are regularly subjected to vilification by both religious leaders and politicians. "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof," as the old saying goes. We can all play the "I'm a victim" game—but if you expect sympathy, you first must demonstrate that you actually are being victimized. Just because not everybody agrees with you doesn't make you a victim.

Gow then quotes Tony Perkins of FRC, who describes three instances of what he calls "anti-Christian bigotry." All three are cases of the ACLU challenging Ten Commandments displays on publicly owned property. This is just plain disingenuous, and frankly, it smacks of demagoguery. The fact is that many people of faith disagree on the issue of Ten Commandments displays on public grounds: is a Catholic who opposes a display of the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in his town's public square engaging in anti-Christian bigotry? Of course

not! (I need not point out to the readers of your fine magazine that the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish versions of the Ten Commandments are substantially different.) Equally, one can reasonably believe that the Ten Commandments should not be displayed in a public square without being an anti-Christian bigot. Additionally, while we can all be dismayed at the ignorance displayed by the teacher who prohibited a student from reading his Bible during study time, as soon as the matter was brought to the attention of the administration, the problem was rectified. For every idiot teacher who thinks that the separation of church and state prohibits Bibles in school (it doesn't), there's another idiot teacher who thinks it's perfectly acceptable to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to her public school class (it isn't).

America is one of the most (if not *the* most) religious nations in the Christian world; yet too many Christians such as Gow, Carroll, Shiflett, and Perkins (and Falwell, Robertson, Dobson, Reed, etc., etc.) just can't stop complaining about how bad things are, how victimized they are, and how terrible is our secular society. I recognize that there are many political advantages in this cult of victimization in which too many of our Christian leaders are immersing themselves. But that doesn't make it right.

DAVID W. SIMON
Palm Springs, California

Mea culpa! I do believe that there is fierce secular opposition to religious expression—par-

ticularly Christian religious expression in the U.S. today. However, as you point out, some of the examples author Gow gave fit better in the category of overstatements that are tending to empower a counter push for religious control which I find dangerous to continued religious expression out of the mainstream.—Editor.

God the Question

I enjoyed reading Timothy Standish's book review "Darwin and the ID," and thought he raised several good points. I was surprised, however, that he missed the most important point of the entire evolution/ID debate, namely, the implications of the theories in question.

Evolution provides us with a *mechanism* by which modern species of plants and animals evolved from species that do not exist now and whose existence can only be inferred from the fossil record. ID accepts the mechanism, and merely posits that an Intelligence—that is, God—caused this evolution. As the NSTA (National Science Teachers' Association) has asserted, "There is no longer a debate among scientists about *whether* evolution has taken place. There is considerable debate about *how* evolution has taken place." Did God initiate and drive evolution, with the purpose of creating us and our current world of diverse species (ID theory), or did we evolve purely by the random interaction of environmental changes, genetic mutations, and the principles of evolu-

tionary fitness (natural selection theory)?

As even the Catholic Church has conceded, there is nothing about the existence of evolution that necessarily excludes belief in God. For that matter, there is nothing about evolution that necessarily *requires* a belief in God. For this reason it is appropriate to call evolution "theologically neutral." This is the key difference between the theory of evolution and ID theory, and why it is appropriate to teach evolution in the schools, but not ID theory. Evolution can be taught to both theists and atheists alike without contradicting their personally held religious convictions. ID theory, on the other hand, *necessarily implies* the existence of God—and is therefore anathema to atheists and humanists.

So public schools teach evolution; students are then free, after introspection and indoctrination into the religion of their choice, to conclude either that God drove evolution or that nature caused evolution without any need of a supernatural intelligence. Neutrality is maintained, and individual decision-making is fostered. But to teach ID theory is to exclude atheists from the community: if a public school teaches ID theory, that school is saying to the natural-selectionists, "You are wrong." This is grossly inappropriate in our society of strict church/state separation. If parents wish their children to be instructed that God caused human beings to come into existence, they should enroll their children in

the parochial school of their choice. Public schools need to teach *facts*—and leave the theological conclusions to the churches, families, and an individual's personal conscience.

DAVID W. SIMON
Palm Springs, California

Good to have a repeat offender letter writer. I must say that both intelligent design and evolution present problems for a literal reading of the Bible and such basic issues as a seven-day creation week. It's God's Word; I say take it as read.—Editor.

Tracking Core Assumptions

The September/October 2004, issue of *Liberty*, with its cover title of "Sex, Law, and Politics," contained some of the most insightful articles yet published anywhere on the issue of gay marriage. Far from a puritanical rehash of traditional Christian morality, the issue tackled the core assumptions of the gay marriage movement, and its deeper legal, social, cultural, and religious implications. *Liberty* is at its best when it makes a substantial contribution to the pressing issues of the day, as it did in this issue. Extra copies of the issue should be widely distributed, and even more widely read.

ALAN J. REINACH
Westlake Village, California

Always good to read affirmation—even if from one of our valued authors! See Alan's articles in our May/June issue devoted to the Ten Commandments.—Editor.

Not a Fair Attack

As a longtime reader, and a member of the ACLU, I was surprised and disappointed to see the ACLU's actions in opposing the displaying of the Ten Commandments on public property described as "examples of anti-Christian bigotry" in "The Evil of Religious Persecution," by Haven Bradford Gow, in the January/February issue of *Liberty*. To defend the constitutional prohibition against state-sponsored or sanctioned religious activity is hardly bigotry. When Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his followers took over the local school district in Antelope, Oregon, a few decades back, and promptly posted pictures of the Bhagwan in its classrooms, most of the longtime residents of the town were quite happy that the ACLU took legal steps to have those pictures removed. I presume that Gow would not be opposed to that action.

Gow was right in citing the words of Justice Powell in *Widmar v. Vincent* on the religious rights of students. The Constitution protects individuals from the unconstitutional curtailment of their rights by governments. The teacher in Louisiana who told her student that he could not read the Bible at an appropriate time during the school day was probably not bigoted, but rather ill-informed.

But the same amendment in the Bill of Rights that protects individuals from unconstitutional governmental interference with their religious practices also protects individuals from the unconstitutional sponsoring (i.e., establishment) of religion by government, which is what the posting of the Ten Commandments, or a picture of

the Bhagwan, is.

America may well be a nation of Christians, but we are not a Christian nation, and there is a significant difference between the two. The day that we become a Christian nation, and start arguing over whose version of Christianity is the official one, will be a sad day for non-Christians such as myself. To label those with whom you disagree "bigots" can, in itself, be an act of bigotry.

LAURENCE R. SPRECHER
Portland, Oregon

Good points all. Certainly, on occasion ACLU lawyers have expressed antireligious, anti-Christian bias, but much of their work on church-state separation is, as you write, protective of our constitutional right of religious freedom.—Editor.

Not Theology

I do not mean to denigrate the theological understanding presented in "When 2 + 2 = 5" (Nov./Dec. 2004), but we are no longer discoursing about why Luther was attacking the false understandings of works (indulgences). As I look at the prism of "Once saved, always saved," I believe we should be taking salvation and sanctification to greater heights. Vision and action must be united. Faith without works is dead. Theologians can discourse for hours on how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, and the eyes and ears of the audience will not receive this knowledge.

I am not an ecumenist for political reasons. While I am very cautious about syncretism, I hopefully stand with Jesus in faith ("Peter, put away your sword") and reach out, not

demanding congruence, but asking for your heart. Your mind only becomes a priority once we have gained each other's trust, and this effort must be reciprocal.

There is a place for absolutes, and there is a place for relativity. And may God give us the discernment to know the difference.

THOMAS M. WHALING
Laguna Hills, California

You make a good point about the need for a living, personal faith that will effectuate true

interfaith alliances. That is true, but there is danger in too easily dismissing the importance of theology. After all, ideas are the effectors of action. We have recently marked the death of a pope who showed admirable personal piety. Too easily forgotten was his insistence on elevating the very elements of doctrine that precipitated the Reformation. It seems that his successor is inclined to do the same, so the question of doctrine remains important.
—Editor.

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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.

LIBERTY

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Critical Mass

There is a surreal aspect to many of the events in our world of late. So many changes. So many alarms and threats. "The old order changeth," but what is to come?

I think it axiomatic by now that much of the violent expression of radical Islam derives from a sense of panic at changes beyond the control of true believers and whole societies. "Modernization," "globalization" and "democracy" present real challenges to Islamic communities, not just because these will sweep away often archaic social norms, but because important elements of the new models being imposed on them are indeed an affront to basic tenets of deeply held faith. Not to recognize this is to trivialize the matter into one of conservatives versus moderates, and to imagine that so long as holy books are not flushed down the toilet we are ok.

I can only hope that Islam is able to adapt to a changing world and its norms without being forced to rewrite its theology. We in the West are becoming a little aware of the historic tensions between Sunni and Shiite, and other minor sects. And it strikes me that rather than recognizing the real issues of legitimacy and spiritual emphasis in these subsets of belief, we are all too ready to play them off against each other as though they are political parties or

special interest groups.

Given the situation with Islam, there is an especial surrealism to the "culture" wars being fought in the United States. As the battle for America heats up it is worth paying at least as much attention to what is going on here, as we have been forced to give in response to airborne Jihad blown in from a distant place.

More and more I hear radio and television types invoke the charge of "un-American" against those who do not share a litmus test of "moral" issues. More and more I hear religious leaders repeating it.

More and more I see efforts to construct a "Christian America"—a building project, we are assured, more of a renovation than a revolutionary construct. But more and more I see the mullahs of this movement as less concerned with protecting the holy book, than with realizing a new vision of church-state conflation.

Of course the United States was, is, and, I pray to God, will remain, a Christian nation in the practical sense. Indeed it is our current shame that so much of the non-Christian world judges Christianity by what "we" do in places like Abu Ghraib and by the products and entertainments "we" urge upon them. You and I recognize that not everything in our society reflects the religious values that at the

same time permeate most communities. Why? Because we still have a practical appreciation of how a separated church and state work—even as some of our politicians and religious leaders work to demolish this very fundamental element of what made America.

Not too long ago, after a death watch that had lasted some years, Pope John Paul II passed away. Given his obvious personal piety and his consistent enunciation of such basic moral issues as the value of human life and the dehumanizing effects of modern culture, it was no surprise that the world community should respond emotionally to his passing.

With that as a given, the response from Protestant America included much that was unseemly. Flags at half mast showed more than respect, they showed a historic acknowledgment of a status never contemplated by earlier generations. Not many years ago there was a crimonious debate in the United States as to whether we should have an ambassador to the Vatican. And when it was done, it was done slowly and quietly.

I am old enough to remember a few popes before John Paul II. I well remember grandfatherly Pope John, the architect of Vatican II reforms, and a man well thought



of by much of the world. But I don't remember any presidents bowing before his bier. Something has changed. And it is a matter of substance, not just style.

Somewhere along the line America has forgotten its past, even as zealots attempt to redefine a Christian America.

While Thanksgiving sits perilously close to the irreligion of Halloween, it provides an annual tableau of Protestant settlers seeking a new world where faith could exist beyond the controls of big religious interests and government patronage.

Americans today seem unwilling or unable to connect any historical dots before the Mayflower. Too often we are fed a caricature history of an insatiable Henry VIII and a lusty English Reformation. And we are lately more reminded of the sainthood of his Catholic antagonist Sir Thomas Moore, than of the very real issues that divided them and split England and, coincidentally, much of Europe away from the

overlordship of Rome.

But you may ask why I should write this way in a magazine dedicated to religious freedom—religious tolerance? To be sure, on a religious liberty model, doctrinal differences become almost irrelevant—and are to be protected and defended.

I am emboldened to speak out on two levels. First, the doctrinal differences are important as they define what a group is. In this case the United States dare not shrug off the deeply Protestant assumptions behind the Bill of Rights and the Constitution (particularly the First Amendment—free exercise *and* disestablishment clauses). Fading, it seems, is the historic national determination not to fall prey to the dynamic that in the Europe of the Middle Ages—and later—allowed compulsion of religious belief.

The second and most immediate level of my concern is that we not blind ourselves to the imminent peril for religious liberty as our leaders

match the paradigm of Rome.

The Vatican has city-state status and acts that way with world leaders in projecting its power. It is almost missing the point to dwell on the role of Benito Mussolini in reinstating the Holy See to a secular legitimacy once won by the sword by popes who warred with the fractious Italian states. Protestants and Catholics can, and should be allowed to argue as much as they like over claims of legitimacy and doctrinal integrity. But the facts of history up to the present are plain on religious freedom—a union of church and state at best shows favoritism and nearly invariably results in persecution of religious minorities and dissidents. Protestant America understood this and intended to preserve the model of separation of church and state.

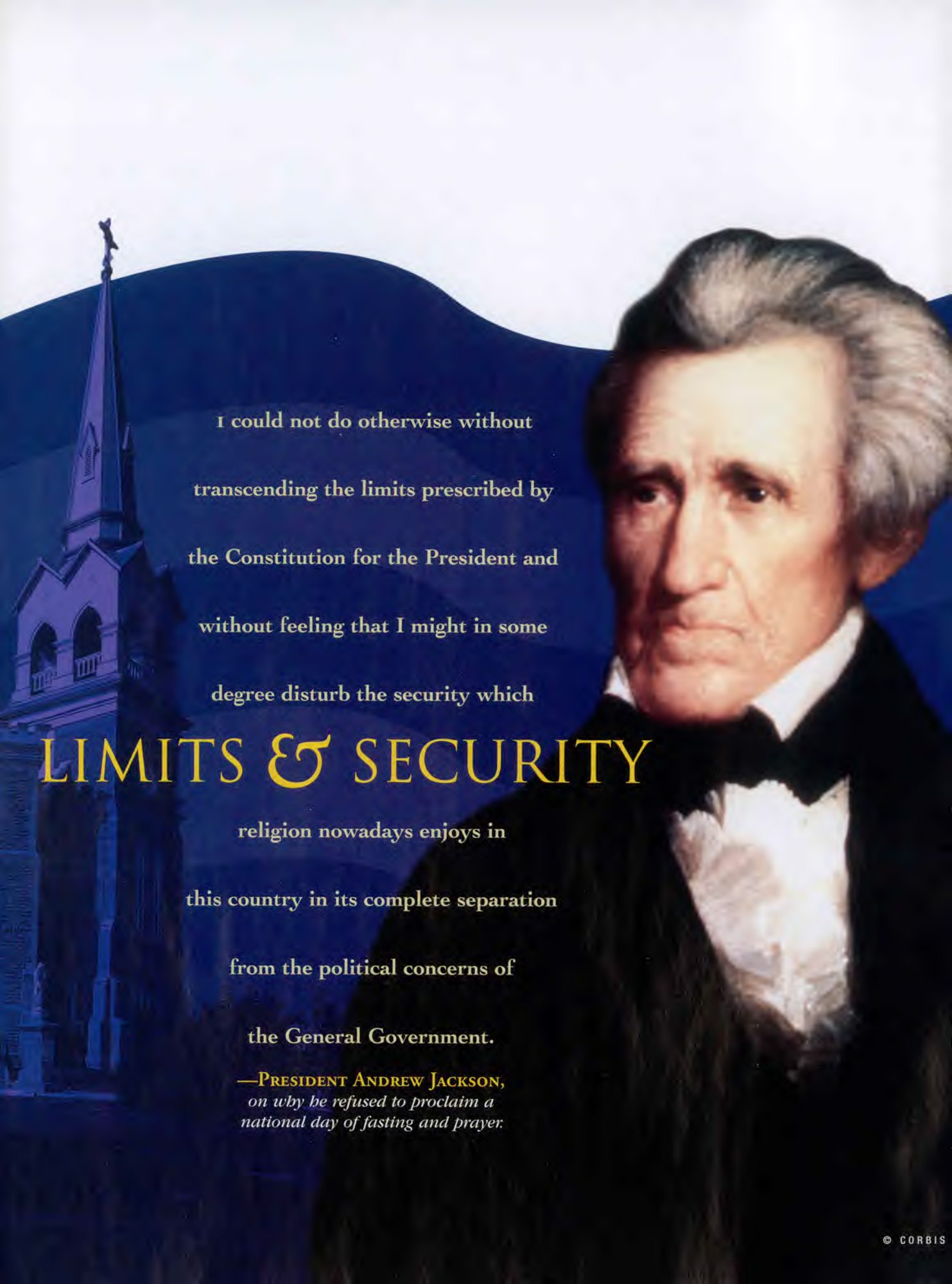
And now at precisely the moment the major religious forces in America are arguing *against* a separation of church and state they seem ready to embrace the great exemplar of church/state union. That is deadly peril in my book!

If the performance of both Catholic and major Protestant figures in the last U.S. Presidential election is any indication of the future, we are in for severe challenges to faith and conscience.

If the methods of some of those presently in power say anything to me it is that they will use any power, given or assumed, to pursue a moral agenda. I may applaud their morality, but I fear their agenda necessitates removing the very underpinnings of religious freedom.



Lincoln E. Steed
Editor,
Liberty Magazine

A composite image featuring a portrait of President Andrew Jackson on the right side, looking slightly to the left. On the left side, there is a blue-tinted illustration of a church steeple with a cross on top. The background is a dark blue gradient.

I could not do otherwise without
transcending the limits prescribed by
the Constitution for the President and
without feeling that I might in some
degree disturb the security which

LIMITS & SECURITY

religion nowadays enjoys in
this country in its complete separation
from the political concerns of
the General Government.

—PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON,
*on why he refused to proclaim a
national day of fasting and prayer.*