



A MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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# *The plight of Iraqi Christians* **DESPERATE**

By  
LAWRENCE  
F. KAPLAN

# **Faith**

Fadi has had it with Iraq. At his family's home in Baghdad, the Christian university student (whose last name has been withheld to protect his family) elaborates in fluent English. "There is no future for Christians here," he says. He knows this firsthand. Last year, four men drove up to his family's house and snatched his twelve-year-old nephew off the street. Targeted for riches that few of them actually possess, Christians routinely disappear from the sidewalks of Baghdad. "We have no militia to defend us, and the government—they do nothing," Fadi says. A day after the abduction, the captors phoned Fadi's family, demanding \$30,000. If his family failed to cobble together the ransom, Fadi knew what would come next. His nephew would be shot or beheaded.

After Iraq's Baathists seized power in 1968, they celebrated by stringing Jews up in a Baghdad square. With the remnant of Iraq's Jewish population having long since fled the country, Christians have become today's victims of choice. Sunni, Shia, and Kurd may agree on little else, but all have made sport of brutalizing their Christian neighbors, hundreds of whom have been slaughtered since the U.S. invasion. As a result, Iraq's ancient Christian community, now numbering roughly 800,000 and consisting mostly of Eastern rite Chaldean Catholics and Assyrian Orthodox Christians, dwindles by the day. According to Iraqi estimates, between 40,000 and 100,000 have fled since 2004, many following their own road to Damascus across the Syrian border or to Jordan, while many more have been displaced within Iraq. As for the country that loosed the furies against them, the United States refuses to provide Iraqi Christians protection of any kind.

From his synod in Baghdad, the most prominent Christian clergyman in Iraq, Chaldean Patriarch Emmanuel Delly, denies the obvious. "There is no persecution of Christians," the septuagenarian archbishop insists.

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PHOTOS BY AP IMAGES





فد





"All Iraqis have problems." The fiction has become canonical among Iraqi Christian leaders, who maintain it to avoid inciting their tormentors. Many members of Iraq's clergy, for example, dismiss as gross exaggeration reports that tens of thousands of Christians have fled Iraq.

But, however much the clergy may deny it, Iraqi Christians suffer for their faith. Along with kidnappings and assassinations, church bombings—beginning with the destruction of five churches in August 2004—have become a staple of Christian life in Iraq. To disguise their faith, Christian women, particularly in Iraq's south, tuck their hair under *hijabs*, while fewer and fewer attend church, performing Mass in homes and sometimes, like their ancient Christian ancestors, in crypts instead. Even the Kurds, so often depicted as saints in Iraq's morality tale, have taken to pummeling Christians; the Kurdish religious affairs minister said last year that "those who turn to Christianity pose a threat to society." Commenting on a recent pogrom against Christian students in Mosul, Yonadam Kanna, the only Christian elected to Iraq's new parliament, says, "The fanatics blame us for doing nothing. They blame us for being Christian."

The blame accrues, in part, because of real and imagined ties to the West and to the Western power occupying Iraq. There is, in truth, a cultural affinity between Iraqi Christians, many of whom speak English (and, as such, account for a large percentage of the U.S. military's interpreters), and the mostly Christian soldiers occupying their country. "[Local Christians] were very supportive of having us in Mosul," says Colonel Mike Meese, who served with the 101st Airborne Division in the heavily Christian city. "They'd have our soldiers go to Mass with them." But, as soon as their American protectors departed, the city's Christians became targets—their churches sacked and their archbishop kidnapped. In Baghdad, too, insurgents routinely execute Christians who work alongside the Americans. Threatened by her neighbors, a Christian friend of mine who worked in the Green Zone quit her job and today rarely leaves her house.

To the lengthy indictment of Christians, their persecutors have also added the charge of proselytizing. Unlike American soldiers, who mean to save Iraqi lives, the American evangelicals who follow on their heels mean to save Iraqi souls. There is deference. Evangelizing to

Iraqis carries with it risks that evangelizing to, say, Latin Americans does not. The infusion of pamphlets and missionaries from organizations like the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention enrages Iraqi Muslims, who, Iraqi Christians leaders claim, increasingly conflate their congregants with "the crusaders"—and, too often, treat them as such. "The evangelicals have caused such problem for us," says Kanna. "They make the Sunni and Shia furious."

Even though Iraq's Christians suffer in the name of their American co-religionists, their fate seems not to have made

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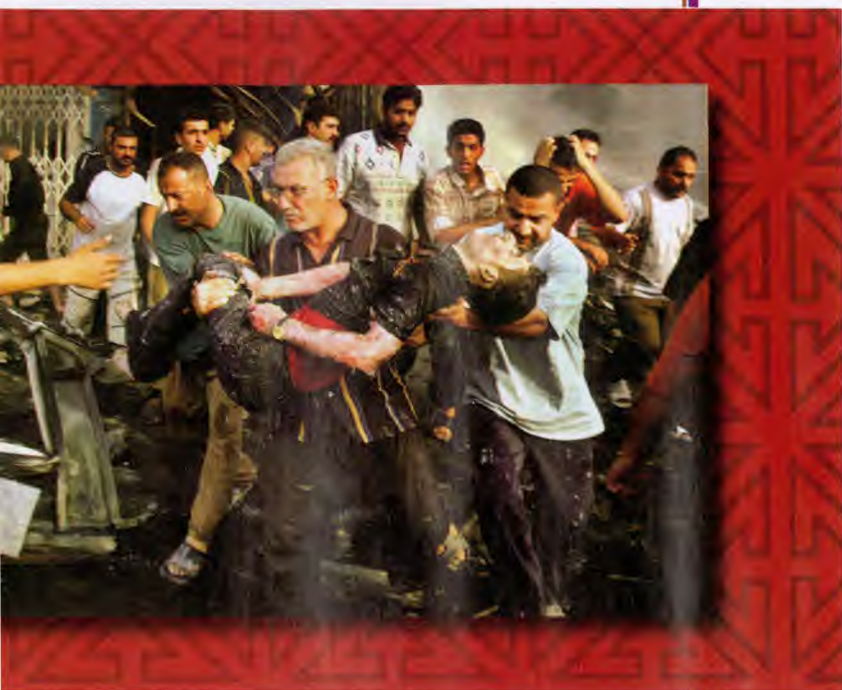
the slightest impression on much of the evangelical establishment. Their websites and promotional literature advertise the importance of creating new Christian communities in Iraq while mostly ignoring the obligation to save ancient ones. Nor, with a few exceptions, have mainstream church leaders in the United States broached the subject, either. Dr. Carl Moeller, the president of Open Doors USA, an organization that supports persecuted Christians abroad, pins the blame on Christianity's own sectarian rifts. "The denominations in Iraq aren't recognized by Americans," he explains. "The underlying attitude is, 'They're not us.'"

The abysmal plight of Iraq's Christians, needless to say, long predates the arrival of the Americans. Since the first century, when Christianity first came to Nineveh province, Iraqi Christians have been cursed by geography. With its fields of mud burnt red by the sun, much of Nineveh—the ancestral home to a large number of Assyrian Christians that runs from Mosul to the Syrian border in Iraq's northwest corner—resembles a Martian landscape. Thousands



of feet above the plains, a small U.S. outpost atop the Sinjar mountain range shines at night, a beacon to many of the Christians, Yazidis, and other persecuted minorities who populate the province below, a number of whom initially greeted the Americans as their saviors. But, having been massacred over the centuries by Ottomans, Kurds, and Arabs alike, most Christians know better than to rely on the goodwill of others.

Nor is this knowledge merely the result of their experiences under foreign rule. Even though the Christian presence in Iraq predates the arrival of Islam, in the Iraqi



Muslim imagination, Christians will always be emissaries of the West. Because they operate a disproportionate share of Iraq's liquor, music, and beauty shops—industries deemed sinful in various interpretations of Islam—insurgents accuse them of embodying the licentiousness of all things American and have burned hundreds of liquor stores to the ground. Where Iraq was once awash in pop music CDs sold by Christian vendors, a more recent CD circulating in Mosul features the beheading of Christians.

It was against this backdrop that Fadi's family raced to save his kidnapped nephew from a similar fate. Luckily, Fadi's father, a doctor, was able to produce the \$30,000 ransom. Eight days after his abduction, the captors released Fadi's nephew. But the ordeal shook his family so badly that, a month later, they spirited the boy off to Jordan. "If, today, we all had a place to go, tomorrow there wouldn't be a Christian left in Iraq," Fadi says.

As for Fadi himself, who first applied to leave Iraq in 1998 while Saddam Hussein was in power, last year's kidnapping made him even more anxious to flee. With the

doors to the United States sealed shut, he placed his faith in other Western countries. While over 40,000 Iraqi Christians have fled their homeland since the invasion, last year the United States permitted fewer than 200 Iraqis to immigrate. As for the thousands of remaining Christian refugees, until recently, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Refugees didn't even bother referring their cases to the United States, knowing we had no inclination to take them in.

Their case files amount to proof of Washington's callousness. There is the Iraqi American whose Christian sister saw her husband gunned down in the street. Following the assassination of two more family members, the sister fell into a crippling depression, unable to care for her two-year-old child. Caught up in a bureaucratic tangle, her American relatives have gotten exactly nowhere. Another sister of an Iraqi American, a Christian woman with four children, lost her husband, killed while serving as a U.S. military interpreter. Her family, too, has been reduced to pleading her case before unconcerned State Department officials. A heartfelt advocate for Iraqi Christians, Representative Jan Schakowsky, a Democrat from Illinois, calls embassies, by her account, "at all hours of the night," but "the policy since the war began is, 'We're not granting asylum.' ... There is no processing of refugees from Iraq." The reasons derive from post-September 11 security restrictions and, in the telling of a senior administration official, from the fiction that Iraqis, now liberated, no longer endure systematic persecution.

Fortunately for Fadi, other Western governments have offered a more candid assessment, and, after seven years of waiting, one just informed him he will be granted his visa. He can barely contain his glee. "I feel happy because I go to a new place where I feel free," he says.

But his case counts as a rare exception. Before leaving Baghdad last month, I got a taste of the desperation felt by Iraqi Christians left behind. Samira, a sad woman in her fifties who comes once a day to cook for an Iraqi friend, showed me a photograph of a woman in her thirties. She had a favor to ask: Would I marry her daughter? The proposition had nothing to do with me, per se. She simply wants to get her Christian daughter out of Iraq. Last year, insurgents murdered Samira's son. As a sign of respect, his Muslim friends transported the body to Najaf for burial in the Shia holy city. A kind gesture, to be sure, but Samira wants her son buried in a Christian cemetery. The son's Shia friends refuse to surrender his body, and, not being Muslim herself, there is no one to whom she can effectively—or safely—plead her case. Like most Iraqi Christians, she has nowhere to turn.





# AN OPPORTUNITY

*Religious freedom  
in Iraq and the  
Middle East...*

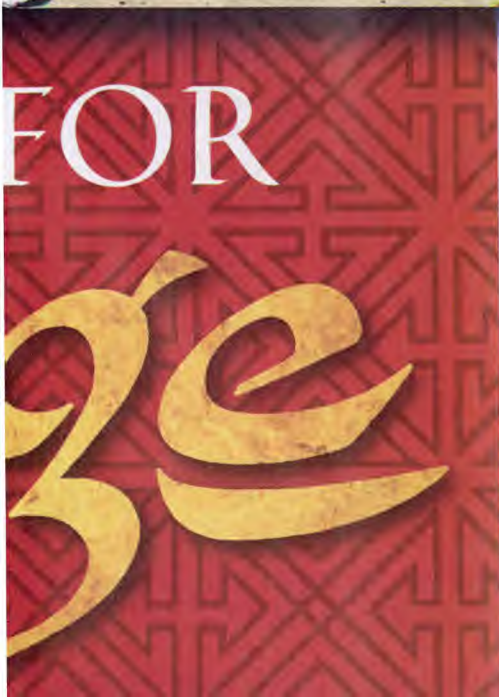
By GEORGE  
ANGELO

# Chan





Abdul-Rahman was on trial for his faith.



It was a global news event when Abdul Rahman, an Afghani Christian, was condemned to death for converting from Islam to Christianity. Under that country's Islamic Sharia-law-based constitution, the penalty for conversion is death.

Countries with troops in Afghanistan—the United States, Great Britain, and Italy—petitioned the Afghan authorities to release Rahman. Various religious groups raised a clamor, and Pope Benedict XVI appealed directly to Afghan president Hamid Karzai. The United Nations even sought countries that would grant Rahman asylum.

Responding to this global pressure, the state prosecutor for Afghanistan, who had initially demanded the death penalty, searched for a way to drop the charges. As a result, prosecutors claimed that Rahman was mentally unfit to stand trial. Eventually, despite protests from Afghani Muslim clerics, the government released Rahman. He was hustled away to asylum in Italy.

A number of Muslim clerics objected shrilly that “justice” had not been served and the Koran demeaned. The mental competency defense itself carried eerie echoes of Soviet treatment of religious dissidents. Abdul Rahman’s mental state notwithstanding, the world outcry clearly led to his freedom. Equally clearly, the call for religious human rights has established momentum. Now is the time to extend the call to Iraq.

Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish Muslim communities define Iraq. The challenge has been to create a constitution acceptable to the overtly Islamic Shiites; a constitution conducive to the relatively secular Kurds; and a constitution involving the once politically prominent Sunnis. There has been an urgency to this search, because delay has created conditions for all-out civil war.

Despite differences among these Muslim groups, they have come to agreement on Article 7 of the Iraqi constitution, which states: “Islam is the official religion of the State and is considered a source of legislation. The Law respects the Islamic identity and majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees religious rights of all individuals to freedom of belief and practice.”

Article 7 suggests religious liberty. However, freedom of religion based on Islamic law is not quite to international human rights standards. It is at best tolerance, not freedom of religion. True religious liberty must include the legal right to convert from one religion to another. The world spoke out against the penalty for religious conversion in Afghanistan...the world must now speak out for the right of religious conversion in Iraq.

Under Saddam Hussein the minority non-Muslim religious community enjoyed some significant freedoms. Hussein, always looking to strengthen his political support, even paid power and water bills for many Christian churches in Baghdad. On many Baghdad streets, Christians worshipped and attended services across from Muslim mosques. Even so, Christians were not permitted to evangelize, to share their faith with Muslims.

The irony now is that despite the reasonable religious liberty promised to non-Muslims under Iraq’s constitution, day-to-day life for religious minorities is challenging.

As John Robertson, professor of Middle East History, Central Michigan University, and author of *Social Tensions in the Ancient Near East*, states, “You see assurances of freedom of religion in the constitution, but you

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also see in the so called Shiite south strong actions by the more radical elements that have put different groups, Christians in particular, in fear of their lives."

After Hussein's overthrow Christian store owners in Basra, the country's second-largest city, located in southern Iraq, were attacked, had their stores burned, or were even killed for selling alcoholic beverages. Islamic law forbids drinking alcohol. Christian barbers suffered attacks because Islamic law forbids cutting of beards.

Professor Robertson states, "I wonder what will happen to minorities especially in the south as time goes on...laws will be based on Islam...[as] a fundamental source of law. As laws will be made they will have to be made in conformance with some group's idea of what Islamic principles are."

What does Islam as a source of legislation mean? Will non-Muslims now have less freedom of religion than under Saddam Hussein?

Judith Rood, associate professor of History and Middle East Studies, Biola University, explains, "It sounds like the constitution is going with a natural law theory, or natural rights theory based on the religion of Islam. This means adopting an Aristotelian approach to law adopted by many Islamic theologians who follow the teaching of Ibn Khaldun."

Born in the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun is one of the most important figures in history and sociology in Muslim history. According to Professor Rood, Khaldun believed that the interpretation of the law is affected by the moral and cultural context of its application.

It is illuminating to compare our natural law theory with Hanbali and Sharia law.

Hanbali law, the most conservative school of law in Islam and based on a literal interpretation of the Koran, considers Jews and Christians second-class citizens.

Sharia law, basically Islamic law, governs the public and private lives in the Muslim state. There is great debate among Muslim scholars as to what constitutes Sharia law. Some Muslim scholars believe it is based only on pre-nineteenth century legal theory and precedent based in part on the Hanbali school of law. Some believe Sharia law adapts and changes with cultural and societal norms.

Whatever the source of Iraqi constitutional law, as the Iranian constitution has repeatedly demonstrated, freedom is given or denied in the application.

Like Iraq, Iran names Islam the official religion of the State, and speaks of religious freedom. Article 13 of the Iranian constitution reads: "Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and

ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education." Even that allowance has severe ramifications, as shown by the recent Iranian edict requiring that members of these groups wear color badges denoting their particular faith—much as the Nazi regime required Jews to wear the Star of David.

Professor Rood comments, "These are the only other groups recognized by law, according to their own canons and beliefs. The idea is if you are ruled by and agree to be ruled by Muslims, pay your taxes, be a good subject, then you can continue to follow your practices as long as it is within the dictates of the system—this is not freedom or equality."

The biggest concern with the new Iraqi religious provision, says Professor Rood, is its practical interpretation. Professor Rood uses the Egyptian constitution as an example. That constitution proclaims all citizens equal before the law without discrimination due to religion. Yet "in Egypt, with the Coptic Christian population, the State is slow to attend to tormentors of Christians, who are usually accused of insulting Islam. Freedom of religion is very much dependant on the ruler or government on how they interpret that clause. All constitutions have pretty words, but if the State does not prevent the population from tormenting minorities, it is only religious rhetoric."

Discrimination, persecution, or violence against minority religions in Muslim states is not necessarily hate-or anger-based. Instead many Muslims believe protecting Islamic culture, society, and government from other religions is God's will. The intertwining of government and religion is a foreign concept in the West. But in the Muslim Middle East, Islam is a religio-political system in which "church and state" are united. The Muslim belongs to a community, in which he functions as a member. Detaching one from the community is like cutting off a body member. Many Islamic countries consider abandonment of Islam an act of disloyalty against the state.

As Rochester Institute of Technology professor of History and International Relations, Dr. Nabil Kaylani explains, "In Islam sovereignty belongs to God and the proper function of government is to realize the will of God and you can only realize the will of God by applying the law of God and the law of God is Islamic law known as Sharia. And therefore notice that every Islamists or Islamic party, the one thing common to them all is that they insist on the application of Islamic law, Sharia law, and they reject any kind of import from the West."

Dr. Kaylani believes Article 7 of the Iraqi Constitution involved a major, indeed historic, compromise. "If you say that legislation is based on Sharia law, then the law of the land is the Sharia law. But no, they are saying that Islam is an important source of legislation, not 'the' source of

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legislation as some Shiites wanted it initially. But the Kurds rejected that. The Kurds are more secular minded. The Shiites are more Islamists, and what we have in the constitution is a sort of compromise between these two factions to the exclusion of the Sunnis."

The Sunni faction in Iraq was closely associated with the Baath party under Saddam Hussein. That party, which still holds power in Syria, is a secular Arab nationalist party, whose ideology is freedom from foreign domination and the promotion of an Arab worldview.

According to Professor Judith Rood, "We hear in the news about the Sunni insurgency. This is misleading. It is really the Baath insurgency, supported internally and externally by those still adherent to Saddam Hussein's version of Baathism."

Blame the insurgents for most of the violence against religious minorities, says Dr. Kaylani, who believes religious persecution per se in Iraq does not exist. "What I am reading about Iraq, the small Christian community is exceedingly worried and has apparently been subjected to some discriminatory or brutal, violent acts; because increasingly the insurgents look upon the coalition forces as a Christian force occupying their country. And some of them, especially the more fanatic among them and the more bloody-minded among them have, begun to look with jaundiced eyes on the Christians in Iraq as being part of the whole equation that they are fighting against."

Violence against religious minorities is politically motivated, says Dr. Kaylani. "Religious discrimination, as I understand it, is when you persecute a group of people simply because of their religion and what they worship and how they worship. If that is what we are talking about, there is very little of that going on in the Middle East. Muslims consider Judaism, Christianity, and Islam the three great monotheistic religions, and therefore Jews and Christians deserve protected status under Islam. Now you might have fanatics that might not abide by that, and that has happened. But generally speaking if you look at Islamic history for five or six centuries, you have to say that Jews and Christians have been reasonably, and I emphasize "reasonably," well treated. I am not saying that they were treated equally or anything like that, but they were reasonably well treated."

Whether attacks on non-Muslims in Iraq are politically or religiously motivated or whether or not religious minorities have been *reasonably* treated in Muslim countries as opposed to treated *equally*, the question is: How can the concept of religious conversion be introduced in Iraq when non-Muslim religions seem to present a threat to the Muslim way of life? Can the United States alone persuade religious change in Iraq?

Professor Rood states, "We have a problem, we have a terrible reputation, some of it well deserved. We backed Saddam Hussein because of Iran, the hostage crisis, and radical Islam. We have made mistakes... We invaded Lebanon in 1958. Arabs are very sensitive and more concerned about their honor and their values than their lives."

According to Ivan Eland, senior fellow and director of the Center on Peace and Liberty, "Trying to impose freedom overseas at gunpoint creates a backlash against the U.S. because they are anti-U.S. They don't want this sort of thing. When we take freedom on the road at gunpoint, we might see less freedom of religion than what we had before; the opposite effect might happen that we did not intend." Mr. Eland reports that the city of Basra is becoming more theocratic; women are forced to wear veils; and the militia is enforcing Islamic law.

The right to religious conversion cannot be forced upon Iraq, but it should be encouraged. We must encourage the Iraqi government to adopt the religious freedom provision found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the United Nations in 1948, provides a common understanding of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The declaration recognizes the right to life, liberty, and security of person, including freedom of religion.


Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Although some Muslim states objected to the religious conversion provision, Iraq, along with 48 member states, ratified the declaration. And although the declaration has no legal power over a particular member state, it can be used to demonstrate how a particular country falls short of international human rights standards.

World opinion does matter—does make a difference. The opinion of one country did not free Abdul Raman. And the opinion of one country will not guarantee religious freedom in Iraq. The world must speak up and expect the Iraqi constitution to meet the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and include an express provision allowing Iraqi citizens the legal right to change religions.

Would the provision eliminate discrimination against non-Muslims in Iraq? Would the provision lead to equal treatment of minority religions? Would the provision allow Christian evangelism in Iraqi streets? As Professor Rood says, many constitutions contain pretty words but only practical application matters. So a religious conversion provision does not necessarily equal religious liberty per se.

But if greater freedom in the Middle East was one objective in overthrowing Saddam Hussein, then the United States and world has an opportunity and, indeed, a duty to establish religious freedom.

Dr. Nabil Kaylani points out that "sovereignty belongs to God, and the proper function of government is to realize the will of God; and you can only realize the will of God by applying the law of God." We need to insist on the law of God that includes man's freedom of will...the freedom to choose to believe or not to believe. It is hard to see God's will in the state telling men what to believe and what not to believe. 



KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

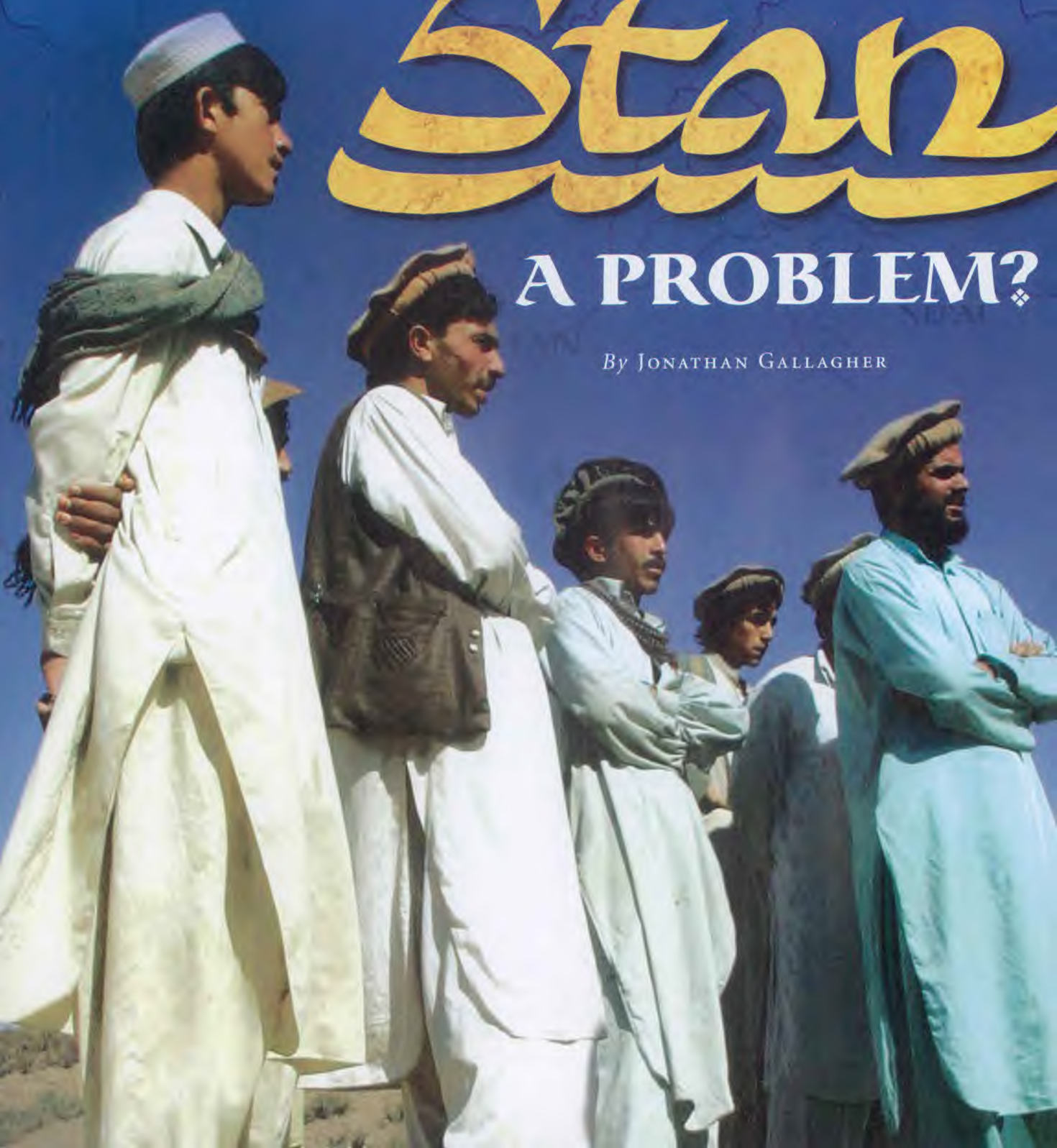
TURKMENISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

# WHY IS *Stan*

## A PROBLEM?

By JONATHAN GALLAGHER





The latest United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) report<sup>1</sup>, released in May of this year, identifies Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan as among the top abusers of religious freedom in the world. But this is hardly surprising. Nor is the fact that the same report calls on the U.S. Secretary of State to identify these three countries, along with eight more, as Countries of Particular Concern—the highest level used to describe the worst religious freedom violators. There is ample reason for concern here.

### The Worst Stans

Uzbekistan's latest crackdown against religions includes the closure of a Seventh-day Adventist church and another Protestant church in late April and early May. These are just the latest in a series of religious freedom violations that have included the denial of the right to pray for Muslim prisoners, the jailing of a Jehovah's Witness, the detention of Protestant Christians meeting in a private apartment, and the fining of Baptists for "illegal worship services."

According to the USCIRF: "Since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1992, fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, have been under assault. A restrictive law on religion severely limits the ability of religious communities to function in Uzbekistan, facilitating the Uzbek government's exercise of a high degree of control over religious communities, as well as the approved manner in which the Islamic religion is practiced... This has resulted in the imprisonment of thousands of persons in recent years, many of whom are denied the right to due process, and there are credible reports that many of those arrested continue to be tortured or beaten in detention."<sup>2</sup>

Pakistan is cited for its persistent sectarian violence and numerous attacks on minority faiths. The 2006 USCIRF report states: "Successive governments have severely violated religious freedom in Pakistan. Discriminatory legislation, promulgated in previous decades and persistently enforced, has fostered an atmosphere of religious intolerance and eroded the social and legal status of members of religious minorities. Government officials do not provide adequate protections from societal violence to members of the religious minority communities, including Shi'as, Ahmadis, Hindus, and Christians. With some exceptions, perpetrators of attacks on minorities are seldom brought to justice. In other instances, the government of Pakistan directly encourages religious intolerance. In March 2006, it was reported that, in an attempt to persuade people in the regions bordering on Afghanistan not to support Islamist militants, the Pakistani military dropped leaflets claiming that those militants were fighting against Pakistan 'in connivance with Jews and Hindus.'"

One example from the same report is especially noteworthy: "In November 2005, a mob of over 1,500 persons, incited by local Muslim clerics on the basis of a false accu-

sation of blasphemy against a local Christian man, set fire to and destroyed several churches, schools, and homes of Christian families in the town of Sangla Hill, in the province of Punjab."<sup>3</sup>

Afghanistan is now notorious for the Abdul Rahman case—a Christian convert imprisoned and threatened with death for converting from Islam. The U.S. Commission's comments on this case make the point forcefully: "Under Afghanistan's Sharia law, Rahman was to face the death penalty if found guilty of apostasy. The prosecutor in the case called Rahman 'a microbe [who] should be cut off and removed from the rest of Muslim society and should be killed.' The judge overseeing the trial publicly affirmed that if Rahman did not return to Islam, 'the punishment will be enforced on him, and the punishment is death.'"<sup>4</sup>

The good news is that Rahman was released after massive international pressure and then spirited out of the country to find sanctuary in Italy. On the other hand, the sad fact of this case is that the world's media treated it as if it were special and unusual—yet Christian converts in many nations face similar threats to their lives. As far as the U.S. Commission is concerned, despite the Afghan government having been primarily installed and supported by the U.S., Afghanistan is now on the "watch" list, because "conditions for freedom of religion or belief in Afghanistan became increasingly problematic in the past year.... Religious extremism—even in official circles—is an increasingly viable threat in Afghanistan."<sup>5</sup>

Worse still is the situation in another "Stan"—Turkmenistan. Ruled with an iron fist by former Communist leader and president-for-life Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan is the most extreme violator of human rights among the –stan countries. The USCIRF report boldly states: "Turkmenistan is among the most repressive states in the world today and engages in systematic and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief."<sup>6</sup>

Since the Turkmen government considers all unregistered religious activity as illegal, Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists and other Protestants, as well as the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Lutherans, the Jews, Hare Krishna communities, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is and others are under threat of arrest and imprisonment.

### Why?

The real question is why—why are these "Stan" persecutors able to get away with it? Despite the repeated demands that, for example, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan be placed on the U.S. Department of State's list of Countries of Particular Concern, as of this writing that has

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not happened. It was only very reluctantly that Saudi Arabia was recently listed. Why? Obviously because of the need for such countries to be seen as allies in the war on terror.

These countries, well adept at political maneuvers, have portrayed themselves as vital partners in this global endeavor. What does it matter, they argue, that our human rights record is a little suspect? We are only trying to deal with terrorists. And of course, terrorists are defined as whoever the state says they are, and if religious believers are viewed as problematic, then they too are terrorists.

This makes for challenges in the global world of *realpolitik*. Add to that the fact that some of these offenders are sitting on oil and gas reserves of some magnitude, and inevitably questions of national interest arise. Unfortunately, "considerations of raw power and refined national interest will, for states, always trump obligations that arise under international law."<sup>7</sup>

### The Way Forward

So what to do? Should we wring our hands in despair at the increasing violations in these countries of Central Asia? Should we back an all-out assault against their deplorable religious freedom policies? What is the best course?


How about *None* of the above? While protests are certainly essential, they must move beyond the naming and shaming that is often so counterproductively misused by some lobbying organizations. Rather, true engagement with such countries on these issues is the essential method. To counter the idea that security is best maintained by denying fundamental liberties requires evidence and persuasion. Changing mind-sets is difficult at the best of times, let alone when the recipient is suspicious and even hostile. To engage "Stan" in ways that help reduce the tendencies to oppress and persecute is a vital yet delicate task.

This positive engagement must take place. The evidence is there that it will work. For example: "Research I have been involved in suggests that religious freedom is not a freedom that stays quietly in the corner, but is instead a freedom that is 'fungible'—that is, a freedom that is readily translatable into other and wider forms of freedom. In other words, research shows that religious freedom can be the thin end of the wedge of the broader liberalization and democratization of societies. Conversely, research also suggests that the absence of religious freedom is almost always accompanied by broader systemic political repression as well as political instability and insecurity."<sup>8</sup>

Repression of religious expression in the name of security inevitably destabilizes society. It does not enhance security; rather it invites disharmony and even societal violence.

In their deliberations held at Leuven, Belgium, in 2003, the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) developed some guiding principles and recommendations on this subject that should be essential reading to all those involved in the interface between religion and security. In part it reads: "Religious freedom requires security, just as true security requires religious freedom. The two are interdependent, mutually reinforcing, not exclusive, and do not collide or conflict. Too frequently, responses to religion-based terrorism have involved efforts to enhance security at the expense of religious freedom. These responses have often proved counterproductive, and result in violations of international standards of human rights. Such violations, which diminish both security and religious freedom, must be opposed by governments, religious groups, people of faith, and all those who truly value human rights."

Consequently, the IRLA experts observe: "Respecting freedom of religion is more effective in gaining loyalty of citizens and in achieving peace and security than are weapons and coercive measures."<sup>9</sup>

Why is Stan so wrong? Because he, or rather they, do not understand the fundamental point that in order to have true harmony and stability in society, you must have freedom. The essential freedom is the freedom to believe, without threat or censure. Only then will any country, Stan or otherwise, begin to get it right. 

<sup>7</sup><http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/2006annualRpt.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.


<sup>13</sup> Laws of Nations by Peter Berkowitz. <http://www.policyreview.org/apr05/berkowitz.html>

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Shah, testimony, in "ANNUAL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 2004" AND DESIGNATIONS OF COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN. HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION. p.71. [http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations/109/96357.PDF](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/109/96357.PDF)

<sup>15</sup> IRLA GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECURITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. (Available at: [www.irla.org/documents/reports/leuvenreport.html](http://www.irla.org/documents/reports/leuvenreport.html))

*Repression of  
religious expression  
in the name of security  
inevitably destabilizes  
society.*





# Respect for Church & State

*"You cannot make religion a party and an actor in the halls of human legislation without infinite and incalculable evil—evil to religion, evil to the state. You inflame the rancor of party*

*politics by adding to it the fervor or religious zeal or that of sectarian fanaticism. Or else you do worse—you pollute and degrade religion by making her the handmaid or human power or the partisan of personal ambition."*

—ANSON PHELPS STOKES and LEO PFEFFER,  
*Church and State in the United States* (1964), p. 505





Left: (Left to Right) James Standish, Executive Director, North American Religious Liberty Association; Massimo Vicini, Embassy of Sweden; Caroline Vicini, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Sweden; Jonathan Gallagher, UN Liaison, SDA Church. Below: (Left to Right) W. Cole Durham, Professor of Law, Brigham Young University; Senator John McCain.



# Freedom HEROES

By  
MARK  
KELLNER

# Honored

*Liberty magazine dinner honors freedom workers*





**Above: (Left to Right) Senator John McCain; Jonathan Gallagher; Lincoln Steed, Editor, Liberty Magazine. Right: (Left to Right) Don Schneider, President, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists; Senator John McCain; Constacio Pinto, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of East Timor-Pinto.**



**M**ore than a capacity audience jammed the historic Senate Caucus Room, part of the U.S. Capitol complex, May 4, 2006, to honor religious freedom and give honor to those leading out in its advancement. The event was the fourth annual religious freedom dinner, sponsored by *Liberty* magazine, the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), and the North American Religious Liberty Association (NARLA)—three religious freedom outreaches sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"America truly is not like past superpowers, countries who sought territorial gain or imperial dominion," United States Senator John McCain of Arizona, the evening's keynote speaker, told attendees at the event.

"It's no surprise that the many Seventh-day Adventists here tonight seek the freedom to practice their faith—after all, Adventists have often faced serious discrimination around the world," McCain said in comments that preceded his formal presentation. "What is remarkable, what is truly impressive about your work, is that you seek freedom not just for people of your faith, but also for those of all other religions. Your work on behalf of religious freedom and human rights is vital, it is transforming, and it is inspiring. And for it, the world owes you a deep debt of gratitude."

Actually, Adventist religious liberty activists were in minority of the audience that evening. Making up the capacity event were representatives of many other faiths, including Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant groups.

Given the event's location, there were staff representatives from many Senate and Congressional offices, as well as media representatives. Given the international scope of the event, it was also appropriate that dozens of ambassadors and embassy staffers from a wide variety of nations were present.

"Every time a Chinese Catholic is jailed, or an Afghan convert is arrested, or a Hindu is killed in Kashmir, or a Tibetan Buddhist oppressed, it is not simply a tragedy. It is a call for action, one worthy of this country founded on the principle that every person, possessing inalienable rights, deserves to be free," Senator McCain told the international audience. (*See the complete text of Senator McCain's remarks following this report.*)

According to Dr. John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Seventh-day Adventist world church and IRLA secretary-general, the annual dinner has taken on a measure of importance as a valuable human rights forum.

*Mark A. Kellner is a freelance writer and newspaper columnist currently based in Rockville, Maryland.*





**Left: (Left to Right) His Excellency Sereyath Ek, Ambassador, Royal Embassy of Cambodia; Ali Suleiman Aujali, Minister, Libyan Liaison Office. Below: Senator McCain accepts an award from Dr. John Graz, Executive Director, IRLA.**

"This dinner has become a major event for religious liberty in Washington, which is the political capital of the world," Graz said. "It is an extraordinary privilege to make our message of religious liberty known among those who have responsibilities and can have an influence in the world today."

*Liberty* editor Lincoln Steed, in welcoming the guests to the event, reminded them of the track record of the magazine in defending religious freedom, and remaining unswerving in promoting the virtues of the separation of church and state. More than a century ago Seventh-day Adventist editor Alonzo Jones argued powerfully for it in the *Sentinel*, the precursor magazine to *Liberty*. Connecting to that heritage, a special presentation of the A. T. Jones medal was made to California flight attendant Deborah Fountain, who was suspended from her job with a major airline because of her refusal to work on Sabbath. She regained the position when the airline agreed to accommodate her needs.

Fountain, who did not know of the award before it was announced at the event, told the audience, "I stand before you tonight as someone who simply was willing to stand on my belief in God, and He has stood by [me]. I just thank you all for this honor."

Dr. Nathaniel Higgs, a 41-year veteran of Seventh-day Adventist Church work, has spent much of that time spearheading religious liberty issues in the southern region of the United States. On the eve of his retirement, Higgs received an award of merit.

"I have had many responsibilities," Higgs said of his



career. "But perhaps the most rewarding of all has been working with religious liberty, helping individuals with challenges in the workplace and with protecting and defending individuals' freedom of conscience."

Another longtime Adventist Church worker who was honored for his religious liberty work was attorney Robert Nixon, former general counsel for the world church, as well as for many years a religious liberty leader, and a former vice president and president of the IRLA.





**Left: Robert Nixon (left) accepts award from John Graz. Above: The banquet hall during Senator McCain's speech.**

"The 35 years that I have done religious liberty [work] really is one of the most satisfying parts of my whole life," Nixon told the audience. "Men and women, there is a battle between good and evil. The good support religious liberty," he declared.

Two other attorneys—one a law professor—were also honored at the event. Jeffrey A. Berman is a partner in Sidley Austin, LLP in Los Angeles, where his work for more than 35 years has centered on the special needs of faith-based hospitals.

"My appreciation of the value of religion and religious organizations didn't come early to me, as it did with most of the people in this room," Berman conceded. But his experience with church-sponsored hospitals taught him that there was something different about these institutions.

"In order to remain special, they need to operate in a manner that is consistent with the teachings of their sponsoring religion and consistent with their mission," Berman said. "I have also learned that some governmental efforts to intrude into those workplaces can cause them to lose what makes them special."

Noting that sometimes decisions are not in favor of the institutions involved, Berman urged persistence and patience: "Don't lose heart. As with many things, this too shall pass," he said.

Brigham Young University law professor W. Cole Durham, Jr., was the other attorney-award recipient, honored for his contributions to religious freedom and support of various IRLA conferences. Graz paid tribute to Professor Durham's dedication: "You are a great ambassador for your


country around the world, for your university and your church, and beyond that you are a fabulous ambassador of religious freedom," he said.

In response, Durham praised the IRLA: "One of the great privileges of my life has been to be associated with IRLA and work with people like John Graz and Bert Beach, and too many others to mention," he said.

Durham said he had just returned from a meeting in Amman, Jordan, with Iraqi leaders anxious to help that nation maintain religious freedom. "While the challenges vary from country to country, we are all involved in a race not very much different from that in Iraq," he pointed out. "Can we actualize the values of religious freedom faster than their achievement is unraveled by the course of human events and man's inhumanity to man?"

Durham added that members of the IRLA are also interested in the cause of liberty: "I have felt how the shared commitment to freedom of religion or belief overcomes distance, so I can say of many in the field, this is my brother or this is my sister," he said.

Also speaking at the event was U.S. Representative Roscoe Bartlett, Republican of Maryland, a Seventh-day Adventist who was honored for his religious freedom efforts. Bartlett said he believed America's unique status in the world stems in part from its commitment to individual liberty.

"One of the reasons we are such a great nation is because there is no other country, there is no other constitution, there is no other Bill of Rights, that so supports the rights of the individual," he told the audience. 



# No freedom WITHOUT FREE



It's no surprise that the many Seventh Day Adventists here tonight seek the freedom to practice their faith—after all,

Adventists have often faced serious discrimination around the world. What is remarkable, what is truly impressive about your work, is that you seek freedom not just for people of your faith, but also for those of all other religions. Your work on behalf of religious freedom and human rights is vital, it is transforming, and it is inspiring. And for it, the world owes you a deep debt of gratitude.

The world owes you thanks not simply because of your active promotion of liberty, but also because you remind us that the freedom of conscience represents the core of any democracy. A government fails if it imposes on its people a predetermined way of approaching the world, a forced path to meaning in life. Freedom from such shackles prompted America's first immigrants to abandon their European shores; it animated the passions of our forefathers and found expression in the Constitution's First Amendment. "Every man," said our first President, "conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

George Washington spoke of the newly formed Union, but his words are no less true today, when the world is by necessity within the scope of our ambition. The promotion of democracy, human rights, and religious freedom has been a much debated focus of our diplomacy in recent years, with

some arguing that America should return to a more "realistic" foreign policy that deals with societies as they are—and avoids using our influence to shape their internal behavior. As you will see in the course of my remarks tonight, I reject this view. Surely pragmatism has a role in foreign affairs, but I believe that the object of American power should not be limited to our own protection and economic self-interest. We must seek a better world, one respectful of the rights we believe to be the universal province of all people. To do less would not simply threaten the very interests we seek to protect; it would also mean abdicating American leadership at this unique moment in history.

There are many who disagree with this proposition. These individuals doubt that a system of government that works in prosperous countries with Western traditions can ever function in places that lack our traditions and advantages. They are reluctant to intervene in the domestic political arrangements of other countries, by force or by diplomacy. They argue that it is simply American arrogance to suggest that a system which works for us can work everywhere.

But advocates of a human rights focused foreign policy have never suggested that a country without previous experience with democracy should govern itself in ways identical to our experience, with a bicameral legislature, nationally elected chief executive with a four year term, full separation of church and state, and a two party system. All we claim is that people no matter where they live, no matter their history or religious beliefs or the size of their GDP, all people share a basic desire to be free; to make by their own choices and industry better lives for themselves and their children. And furthermore, that it is in the security interests of the United





# RELIGIOUS DOM

*An address given by  
Senator John McCain at  
the 4th annual Liberty  
Awards Banquet,  
May 4, 2006.*

States and is inseparable from the moral foundation of our national character that we should do all that is practical to help them wrest their rights from regimes that do not govern with their people's consent.

Concern for the rights of all human beings must be a significant and enduring element of American foreign policy, informing our relations with all countries. While human rights will never constitute the sum total of our foreign policy, which by necessity concerns itself with myriad other issues, from counterterrorism to weapons proliferation to trade policy, we fail ourselves as Americans if we do not consider how our actions—or our failure to act—impact those who are as yet unblessed with our freedoms.

No one can claim ignorance of the basic rights all humans should possess. They include the right to life and liberty; protection against cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment; basic political rights; the right to choose one's religion or to change it; and the freedom to manifest one's belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. The world summarized these and other rights in 1948 when, after the most destructive war in human history, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This remarkable document begins simply but powerfully, asserting that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

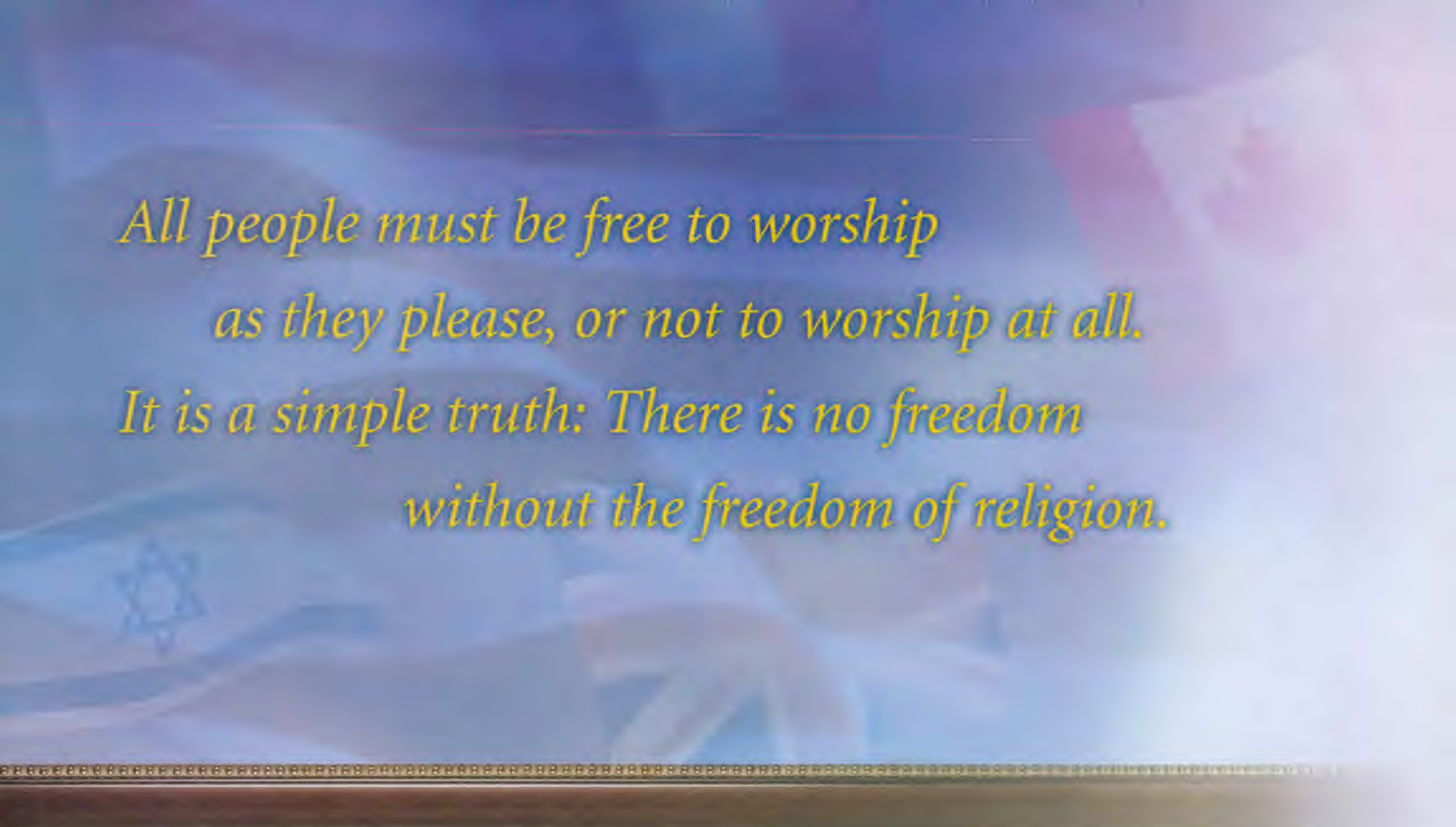
The first word of the document's title is important—these human rights are not an invention of America or of the western world, nor do they reflect standards which particular cultures or religions can reject. They are universal. But it's worth spending a moment to reflect on where these rights come from.

I believe that the genesis of these rights lies in the origins of the human spirit. As long as reflective people have lived, they have identified those universal liberties that separate us from the animals. Look at the earliest Greek philosophy and you will see emerging the concept that all human beings are created equal. The great Judaic and Christian teachers held that certain rights are endowed unto all people by the Creator. And to simplify John Locke a bit, governments are formed explicitly to protect the natural rights of its citizens, and thus rule only with their consent. "The State of Nature," he said, "has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone...that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty and Possessions."

Our founding fathers were wise to shape our political system on Locke's ideas. The rights to which he refers exist above the state and beyond history; they can not be rescinded by one government any more than they can be granted by another. They inhabit the human heart, and from there, though they may be abridged, they can never be wrenched.

Jimmy Carter once said that "America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, human rights invented America." Our Founding Fathers, having felt the weight of colonial oppression, forged a new kind of government, one that existed not to protect a regime or a class or a religion but to protect the people's rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The promotion of those rights is the most authentic expression of our national character. To accept the abridgement of those rights for other societies should be no less false to the American heart than to accept their abridgement in our own society. Injustice and tyranny





*All people must be free to worship  
as they please, or not to worship at all.  
It is a simple truth: There is no freedom  
without the freedom of religion.*

abroad should be as intolerable to Americans as they are intolerable here.

Promoting human rights abroad can serve our national interests in profound ways. In the 1970s, the military government in South Korea twice planned to execute dissident Kim Dae Jung. In both cases the United States intervened, saving his life. Years later, he became the president of South Korea, and his warm feelings toward our country endured. In 1986, when the United States condemned Ferdinand Marcos' sham reelection, we earned the abiding gratitude of the Philippine people, who promptly threw out the dictator. Our continuing good relations with the Philippines have enabled us to collaborate on numerous fronts, including counterterrorism and counternarcotics. Throughout the Cold War, America condemned human rights abuses and promoted religious freedom throughout Eastern Europe, and today troops from many of these same Eastern European nations stand beside ours in Iraq. In 2004, in refusing to accept bogus elections in Ukraine, we earned friends among the organizers of the Orange Revolution, and now its leader is better known by his title, the President of Ukraine. And today we stand with Aung San Suu Kyi, a woman of undaunted moral courage, and with the people of Burma as they oppose a brutal dictatorship. They will prevail someday, and America must be part of their success. And when they do succeed, America will have a new partner, linked by common values.

History shows that standing with democrats pays dividends far greater than collaborating with dictators for short term gain. How many times must we learn this lesson? Time and again we have embraced dictators who pledge their love of America while oppressing their citizens at home. Batista

in Cuba, the Shah in Iran, Somoza in Nicaragua, the House of Saud today—in each case the repressed people of these countries identified America with their corrupt rulers. And, in the end, each case had dire implications for our security and economic interests.

It does not take a revolution to see that promoting human rights serves our interests in other ways. Where there are abuses, despair often grows, sometimes morphing into extremism and terror. In countries where the rule of law is arbitrary, corruption and other vices breed—such as the trafficking of narcotics, weapons, and even human beings. Human destruction, oppression, and religious prosecution prompt refugee flows and instability across borders, and foster disease and criminality.

But perhaps the foremost way in which promoting human rights serves America's national interests lies in this unique moment in world history. The United States is the only superpower on the globe today, but history teaches us how other countries traditionally react to the rise of a single great power. In the past this phenomenon has prompted other states to combine, acting to balance against perceived threats and to limit the preeminent state's influence. Since the demise of the Soviet Union we have seen few concrete examples that the world is attempting to diminish American power, but we would be wise to be wary. In so doing, we should also sense a great opportunity.

For America truly is not like past superpowers, countries who sought territorial gain or imperial dominion. We wish to free, not to enslave; to trade, not to steal; to enlighten and learn, not to dominate and convert. But however certain we may be about our own motives, the impressions of



people abroad are the ones that count. Should they sense a truly imperial impulse, they will speed their efforts to limit America's reach. But should they detect a truly humanitarian motive behind American action, they are much more likely to welcome a powerful United States, rather than oppose it. Our moral standing is directly tied to our ability to maintain America's preeminent leadership in the world.

Don't underestimate the influence of this effect. America's traditional identification with democracy and human rights constitutes a critical element of our soft power. While our military can preempt and prevent threats, and our economic power can be used to promote or punish, our soft power is the power of attraction. It was not only the traditional metrics of national might that helped the West win the Cold War, it was also the deeply attractive nature of our way of life—a way of life that included freedom, democracy, religious liberty and economic prosperity. Only with the credibility that accompanies the union of words and action will the world's people believe what we believe: that America wishes good for all, not for some; that we seek security, peace, and justice, not land and oil. And above all, they must see that we strive to respect human rights at home.

This last point is critical, because our credibility suffers a grievous blow from human rights abuses by Americans. The disgrace at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq set back our national cause and our international ambitions, and similar cases undermine our foreign policy. Because we hold others to a standard, we must be even more scrupulous in our own affairs. This does not mean that America has always been perfect. Nor does it mean that we are perfect today. But we must strive for perfection, whether it means interrogating enemy detainees in accordance with our values or treating immigrants as individuals possessing of certain basic human rights. Only by acting in accordance with our values can we further the interests we seek abroad.

This is not to say that our interests and our values are always identical. Sometimes our interests and our values point us in different directions, and balancing these can be the most difficult task policymakers face. How hard should we push President Putin, for example, on his rollback of democracy? All of us seek a fully democratic Russia, but we also hope for a Russia that cooperates with us to confront Iran's nuclear ambitions. Should we press the Chinese to loosen their restrictions on the Catholic Church and other faiths, while simultaneously pressing Beijing on currency issues and its military buildup? Should we threaten military action to stop ongoing genocide in Darfur while trying to force the Sudanese government to fulfill its peace commitments with the autonomous south?

In making these tough choices, it has long been axiomatic that interests trump values. But we should not be so quick to discount our ideals. Is tolerating a lack of democracy in Egypt helping to settle the hostility and dangerous instability of the Middle East? Or does it breed terrorists by depriving people of any lawful means to change their lives?

America is number one—but for what? What is the object of American power and wealth? Is it only to garner more power, to grow richer, and to eliminate threats of every kind? If this were a different time, or if America were a different country, that concept of our national mission might satisfy. Today it does not.

I have long believed that the true worth of a person is measured by how faithfully we serve a cause greater than our self-interest, that encompasses us but is not defined by our existence alone. The same holds true for the conduct of nations, particularly in this unique era, when America stands astride the world with unmatched power. None of us knows for how long the United States will dominate international affairs, but we do know that history has handed us a unique opportunity. The U.S. could choose to pursue narrowly defined national interests—internal and external security, economic prosperity at the cost of others, perhaps even territorial domination. And yet we choose—we must choose—a very different path.

We must use our power and influence not only for security and prosperity, but to promote the concepts we hold dear, including democracy and the panoply of human rights. By doing so we help create a world of recognized norms and rules and if we are successful, we will have established a set of expectations for domestic behavior that will endure long after the so-called “unipolar moment” has passed.

One of these norms must be the basic right to freedom of religion. Choosing one's faith is the most personal of choices, a matter of individual conscience. That is why we cherish it as part of our Bill of Rights. That is why Franklin Roosevelt listed as one of his four freedoms the right of everyone to worship God in his own way, everywhere in the world. And that is why people fleeing religious persecution continue to find safety in our country. All people must be free to worship as they please, or not to worship at all. It is a simple truth: There is no freedom without the freedom of religion.

Until recently, as Freedom House has said, religious liberty has been “the orphan child” of the human rights movement. It is not any longer, and humanity is the better for it. Congress and the administration have taken great strides to promote religious freedom abroad, but I don't have to tell this audience that we have a long, hard way to go. Every time a Chinese Catholic is jailed, or an Afghan convert is arrested, or a Hindu is killed in Kashmir, or a Tibetan Buddhist oppressed, it is not simply a tragedy. It is a call for action, one worthy of this country founded on the principle that every person, possessing inalienable rights, deserves to be free.

And should we be tempted to look away, to ignore the trials of those lacking the rights we so safely enjoy, let us recall the words of John Donne, when he said no man is an island. With singular elegance, the great poet tells us that in thinking about the value of human lives in far away places, we just as well might think of our own: “Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” □



**D**uring the night of March 27, 2005, large graffiti was written on the walls of the Adventist Theological College in Belgrade, Serbia, with these words: "Death to Adventists" and "Death to Sabbatarians." In 2004, 26 Adventist churches and institutions were attacked. In all, more than 100 incidents targeting religious minorities were recorded that year.<sup>1</sup> Similar attacks have been recorded in Euro-Asia, in Georgia, and in Russia, where religious minorities have been targeted by religious nationalists, with the support of the media and the passivity of the police. In March 2005, in the city of Eisk, Krasnodar Region, Adventists were accused by the media and religious authorities of undermining the morality of the society because they do not believe in the immortality of the soul.

A contact in the area reported that "a local TV channel stated that Adventists made a sacrifice of children."

In some states in India, Christians are regularly attacked. A report from *Compass Direct* (New Delhi, June 21, 2005) says that "eleven Christian families who were physically attacked in Jamanya village, Jalgaon district, Maharashtra state, on May 16, now face social ostracism after they accused Hindu villagers of sexual assault."

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*Dr. John Graz is Executive Director of the International Religious Liberty Association and Secretary General of the Christian World Communion. He writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.*

By  
JOHN GRAZ

# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE THIRTI



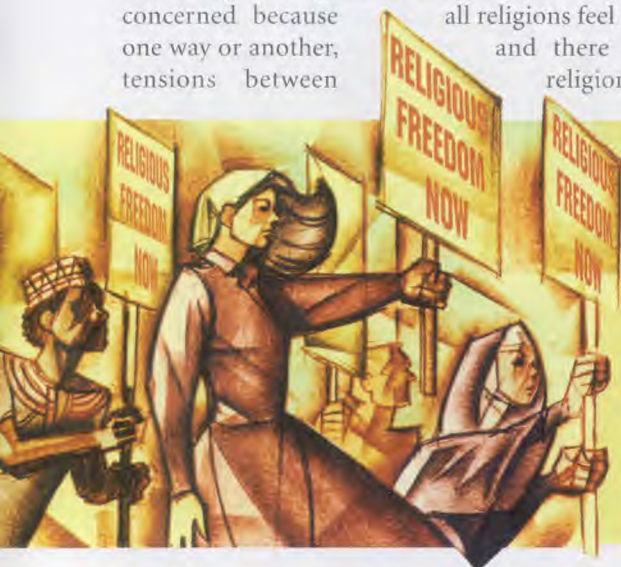




## How are religions interacting in the world today?

In his controversial book<sup>2</sup> *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of the World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington writes: "In the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps the central, force that motivates and mobilizes people." About 40 years ago religion did not play a major role in world affairs. That is not the case today. Religion affects politics and international relations. Religious forces can destabilize a country and create a major problem for peace. Religious leaders are playing a growing role in society at large. The riots in England a few years ago, and later in France, led to civil authorities asking religious leaders for help in calming the violence.

Yes, religion and religious leaders are playing a growing role today. Having stated that, we should be particularly concerned because all religions feel threatened in one way or another, and there are growing tensions between religions.



The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been seen by many in the Muslim world as an attack by Christians. We have the same reactions in India with the fundamentalist Hindus and in Sri Lanka with the nationalist Buddhists.

Inside the "Christian world" the same feeling of invasion is shared by the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe and Russia and by some Catholics in Latin America. Traditional religion feels under attack from Protestants or new religious movements. The Christian family also feels under attack when it comes to immigration in traditional Christian countries. An article entitled "Relations With Islam," by Daniel Williams and Alan Cooperman<sup>3</sup>, says: "Many people in the Vatican view Christianity as under siege in parts of the world. They say that Christian populations are shrinking in countries in the Middle East in part because of long-term discrimination and repression by Muslim majorities." It is very clear that there are more and more mosques in traditional Christian countries and fewer and fewer churches in Muslim countries. It is impossible to build a church in the territory of Saudi Arabia, but Saudi Arabia has financed construction of mosques and schools in Europe, including in Rome.

Paradoxically, the Western concept of church-state separa-

ration, which gives such strength to religious practice in the United States, and which has become the creed of secular countries, is making Christianity the least-defended religion in the world on a geopolitical level.

Islam is the religion of the majority in 44 countries. In 22 countries, Islam is the official religion, and 10 countries are Islamic states according to their constitution.<sup>4</sup> At least 4 countries have Buddhism as the state religion. Most of the traditional Christian countries are now secular. Christianity does not have a geopolitical visibility. As an example, the United Nations adopted without any question the idea that anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are a violation of human rights and should be sanctioned. It was far more difficult for the nations represented to accept that Christian phobia is also a violation of human rights.

Anthony Browne, in an article "Church of Martyrs," writes that "rising nationalism and fundamentalism around

## WE MUST BE READY TO PLAY OUR DEFENDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHAMPION THE PRINCIPLE OF

the world have meant that Christianity is going back to its roots as the religion of the persecuted."<sup>5</sup>

Just think about the thousands of Christians who have been killed in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia, the 5 million Christians who live as an underclass in Pakistan, and the Christians under the oppression of the Sharia law in 12 states of Nigeria. In Sri Lanka, according to Christian leaders I met on a recent visit, about 150 Christian churches were attacked in 2004. Pending anti-conversion legislation in that country has as its real aim a restriction of Christian activity.

In some states of India anti-conversion legislation has been passed, and some pastors have been beaten and others killed with the purpose of terrorizing the Christian community.

The blasphemy law in Pakistan aimed essentially at Christians, establishes systematic religious discrimination, and promotes a culture of intolerance.

Christians are seen as pro-American and promoting pro-Western culture, indeed as potential spies, in many parts of the world where they are a minority.

According to Paul Marshall, senior fellow at the Centre for Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., 200 million Christians face violence because of their faith and 350 million face legally



sanctioned discrimination in terms of access to jobs and housing.<sup>6</sup> Today, all religions may feel threatened, but we can say that Christianity, even though it is not without resources, is probably the least-defended religion on a geopolitical level.

### Where are we going?

The concept of "clash of civilizations" is a little simplistic when it comes to reality, but it stimulates our understanding of the current situation. A religious war on a planetwide level is very difficult to imagine, but extremists already have enough power and influence in several countries to change politics and increase the level of discrimination for religious minorities.

Religious cleansing is the not-so-hidden goal of all religious extremists. We seem headed for more tensions between religions. And persecution is the by-product of that tension. We may also have religious wars in parts of the world such as India and Nigeria. In cases of deep crisis, we can imagine that

religious discrimination is not good politics. Involvement is healthy. In his article "The Politics of Persecuted Religious Minorities," Philip Jenkins writes: "The more they (minorities) are excluded, the more they will devote their loyalties and efforts to the religious subculture, and the more they will be seen as clannish, separatists, or subversive."<sup>7</sup>

If you believe in religious freedom, don't give up; we need you.

If you believe that religious freedom is far more than freedom of worship or religious tolerance, don't give up; we need you.

## LIBERTY DECLARATION of PRINCIPLES

# HISTORICAL ROLE IN ALL. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION.

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.

the scapegoat of every society will have a religious dimension.


Christians are becoming the scapegoats in the Middle East and Asia. They are a minority, and they have links with the West and especially with the powerful America that is seen as a Christian nation.

Muslims can be the scapegoats in America and Europe because of their links, real or imagined, with terrorism. We have many examples of innocent Muslims being harassed, arrested, and detained.

### What can we do?

The global trends are not in favor of religious freedom in the world today. It seems there is a great battle to come, and we must be ready to play our historical role in defending religious freedom for all. I believe we should champion the principle of church-state separation. We must build a strong international network to defend religious liberty—the International Religious Liberty Association is one such network. We should work in partnership with others on specific issues or cases and encourage inter-religious dialogue. More and more we have to explain to governments, through such means as our interventions at the United Nations and in meetings with officials, that

### The world needs you.

Don't give up. Be proactive. Be the voice of the voiceless—the millions persecuted for their faith. We need your commitment. We need to promote, defend, and protect religious freedom for all peoples. Freedom is truly a gift from God. 

<sup>1</sup> Forum 18 News Service, by Branko Bjelajac: "Serbia: Increased Attacks on Religious Minorities", June 10, 2005, p 2.

<sup>2</sup> A Touchstone book, Published by Simon & Schuster, New York, 1997, p 66.

<sup>3</sup> Washington Post Foreign Service, April 12, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> See Tad Stahnke and Robert C. Blitt, *The Religion-State Relationship and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Predominantly Muslim Countries*, USCIRF, research@uscirf.gov, March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Europe Correspondent of *The Times*, 2005 copyright, *The Spectator*, 56 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LL, 26.03, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> See Anthony Browne, op cit.

<sup>7</sup> In *Religion & Security, The Nexus of International Relations*, Edited by Robert A. Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, Lanham, Maryland, 2004, p 33.



With all the sincerity of that recent box-office superstar, Chicken Little, Abraham D. Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith came out swinging against so-called evangelical Christians who support Israel. The tolerant sky, he says, is falling!

These largely conservative, Bible-oriented believers who want to "Christianize" America, Mr. Foxman asserts are bent on "converting" Jews by any means necessary.

# WHY NOT SUPPORT

Mr. Foxman is entitled to his opinion, of course, but several critics have noted that his viewpoint is a bit removed from the facts. Thundering that groups such as Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, and the American Family Association "had built infrastructures throughout the country" through which they "intend to 'Christianize' all aspects of American life," he ignores an inspiring point about this very nation: In America, we have what is known as the "public square." In it, we each and we all have a right to advocate for our viewpoints, which may be accepted—or rejected—by the majority.

In fact, it can be argued that Mr. Foxman has constructed his own "infrastructure": his 40-year career with the Anti-Defamation League has seen him emerge as a major spokesman on Jewish issues, as well as interfaith relations. He has spearheaded educational projects on tolerance, most recently one where clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch have cosponsored a diversity program called "A Campus of Difference."

But while Mr. Foxman is happy to preach his own message, it would seem that woe betides the evangelicals who want to preach theirs. That's unfortunate, but it's not unusual: Mr. Foxman's interfaith harmony seems to begin and end with those Christians willing to ignore Jesus' own mandate to "preach the gospel to every creature,"<sup>3</sup> which is amplified by Paul, who said the good news should go "to the Jew first."<sup>4</sup>

In 2001 a group of Jewish believers in Jesus ran newspaper ads and offered a video that each highlighted the stories of Holocaust survivors, Jews, who found Jesus to be their Messiah. The ADL was quick to condemn this freely expressed speech, with Mr. Foxman himself a Holocaust survivor whose life was hidden by a "righteous Gentile," leading the charge.

"Jews for Jesus is trying to distort Jewish identity as part of their deceptive and offensive campaign to impose Christian beliefs on Jews. By emphasizing the Holocaust, Jews for Jesus is using the darkest chapter in the history of Judaism—the persecution and annihilation of European Jews—to attempt



By  
MARK A. KELLNER<sup>1</sup>

# I sra

*What a friend they have  
His American, conservat  
But does that support ha*

to mislead survivors and their children about their history and faith. It is impossible for a person who is Jewish to worship Jesus Christ. That is the fundamental distinction that sets these faith systems apart."<sup>5</sup>

I'm not quite sure who made Mr. Foxman the arbiter of what is and isn't possible for a Jew to do or believe in, but his statement suggests a narrow-mindedness that far outstrips anything Focus on the Family chief James Dobson has been accused of promoting. In a secularized American Jewish community where Jews are "free" to follow any free-form Judaism they prefer, from ultra-orthodox to ultra-liberal, Mr. Foxman has decreed Messianic belief off limits—if the Messiah in question is Jesus.

It would be nice if Mr. Foxman would remind his audiences of his position when tub-thumping against the so-called "Christian Right." Such context would help his hearers



place such comments in perspective: Mr. Foxman is not particularly separationist; he seems to be anti-evangelism, and particularly "anti" Jewish evangelism.

As a Jew who believes that Jesus is the Messiah, that gives me some pause, as it should anyone who believes the gospel is for all humanity, and who cherishes the notion that such a message should be freely preached to all willing to hear.

In all my witnessing to others, including Jews, I've never—not once, not ever—tried to compel anyone to believe anything. In observing the evangelistic outreaches of many people, in my own denomination as well as in other churches, I've never seen even a hint of compulsion. Mr. Foxman's argument that either Jewish or Gentile believers in Jesus want to

is, I believe, deserving of condemnation for his call to "wipe Israel off the map." America, which was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel in 1948, should be honored for those among its citizens who support Israel, not attacked.


But support of Israel—a concept that should be key to Mr. Foxman's beliefs—is not enough where evangelical Christians are concerned, or so it seems. If a Christian wants to support Israel and advance a moral agenda in a free society, watch out!

I'm not suggesting Mr. Foxman is amoral or immoral—far from it. But his concern over the legitimate actions of free people in a free society to advocate for their principles seems a bit overstated, as many, including some Jewish leaders, felt about his earlier alarm over Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*.<sup>7</sup>

So what's a believer in religious liberty to do?

### Believe in religious liberty!

Personally, I like this formulation: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."<sup>8</sup>

Sound familiar? It's Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those who support Israel, I believe, are most consistently in support of Article 18. To belittle or ignore their goodness because we may disagree with their political stance doesn't augur well for those wanting to retain their freedoms. 

*Mark A. Kellner is a freelance writer and newspaper columnist currently based in Rockville, Maryland.*

<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this article are his alone and are not intended to speak for any organization or publication.

<sup>2</sup> Press release, "ADL & Abercrombie & Fitch Join to Bring Innovative Anti-Bias Programs to Campus this Fall," August 9, 2005, accessed at [http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Education\\_01/4772\\_01.htm](http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Education_01/4772_01.htm) on November 14, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus, as quoted in Mark 16:15, Authorized Version.

<sup>4</sup> Paul, Romans 1:16, Authorized Version

<sup>5</sup> Press release, "ADL Says Jews for Jesus Ads are Deceptive and Offensive," April 27, 2001, accessed at [http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Rel\\_ChStSep\\_90/3817\\_90.asp](http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Rel_ChStSep_90/3817_90.asp) on November 14, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Minnery, quoted in E.J. Kessler, "ADL Urges Joint Effort Against Right," Forward, Nov. 11, 2005, accessed at <http://www.forward.com/articles/6856> on November 14, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> As noted in Kessler, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> on November 14, 2005.

*This opinion piece by Mark Kellner is his response to the article "Jews and the Christian Right," by Clifford Goldstein, writing in our March/April 2006 issue. Both Mark and Clifford look at the topic from a Jewish perspective—yet they come to very different conclusions. What seems inescapable however is that the eschatology of many in the Christian Right influences U.S. policy toward Israel. EDITOR.*

# el?

us! Or, at least, in  
lowers!  
price?

"impose" or "mislead" anyone into anything is very difficult to accept—it just doesn't square with what I've seen.

There's another, even more concerning, side to Mr. Foxman's denunciation of groups on the so-called "Christian Right." The people he demonizes also happen to be among the most fervent supporters of the state of Israel and its right to exist. Seeing that support ignored in a debate over moral issues may not be the way to win friends and influence people.

"If you keep bullying your friends, pretty soon you won't have any," Tom Minnery, Focus on the Family vice president of government and public policy, told the *Forward*, a national Jewish weekly newspaper, on November 11, 2005.<sup>6</sup>

During a season when the elected president of a United Nations member country, Iran, calls for the "elimination" of Israel, it would seem irresponsible—even foolish—to lash out against your political allies. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad





### Rocky Science

The Science or Religion? issue arrived today. I have had time to read only your editorial and Timothy

G. Standish's piece. The topic is certainly timely. Both you and Tim presented fine arguments. I have always wondered why on the issue of Intelligent Design the analogy to Stonehenge is not discussed. No scientist approaches Stonehenge to exclaim "What a marvelous example of chance." All begin a quest for the intelligent designers. Yet when the same scientists approach the human eye, they immediately begin to trace the history of sensory organs—placing them in ascending order and call their work a magnificent roll of dice!

Unfortunately, my librarian (Medical College of Georgia) had discarded the book I ordered in 1967 entitled "The Mathematical Challenge of the Neo-Darwinian Theory." The book was authored by a group of mathematicians from MIT who had worked with a group of biologists from Harvard on the evolutionary concepts in current usage. They then created a computer model to test the probability of an organ or organ system occurring by chance alone. They concluded, and I paraphrase, "We believe in evolution. However, given the time frame you at Harvard suggest, there is not enough time to develop a human eye let alone a human being. We conclude that the Neo-Darwinian theory as presently formulated is faulty in the extreme."

Nevertheless, I look with more awe on the human eye than I do upon Stonehenge!

"I know in whom I have believed, and I know He is able!"

*Liberty's* position should be to take all speculation about origins out of the curriculum, not trying to get any pet notion in! I think that is what you are trying to do, but not in any overt manner.

TOM ZWEMER,  
Georgia

### Oops!

Your magazine never fails to delight me. The articles are well researched and well written. That is why I am writing. I found an error in your May/June 2006 issue on page 10 where it states that the famous Scopes trial was in 1927. I checked a reference book and verified that the date of the Dayton, Tennessee, "monkey trial" was 1925.

Thank you for letting me set the record straight.  
BRIAN  
Norton, Kansas

### Intelligent Choice

I was unable to find the issue of your magazine that had a story about the persecution endured by a science student, Samuel Chen, in a Dover area school in Pennsylvania when he tried to get an Intelligent Design speaker to talk at his school.  
RICHARD,  
E-mail

*"Darwin's Dictatorship" appeared in the Mar/Apr '05 issue of Liberty. In addition, we had several articles on the Evolution/Intelligent Design issue in our May/June 2006 issue of Liberty. Editor.*



### Remember the Chaplains

I appreciated the article telling serviceman Joel Klimkewicz's story, but was sorry to

see that there was no mention of the chaplain who led him to Christ—Lt. Santiago Rodriguez, CHC, USN. Not only did Chaplain Rodriguez lead Joel to Christ and the Seventh-day Adventist message, but he has continued to act as his spiritual mentor and advisor throughout this ordeal. Chaplain Rodriguez acted as his primary denominational representative/spokesman during Joel's most recent judicial review, when his dishonorable discharge was upgraded to a general discharge.

Chaplains are not leaving the ministry as some think, but are choosing to serve God in a unique field of ministry.

Time and again Adventists in the military and the denomination as a whole have benefited from the dedicated service of Adventist chaplains. On a host of issues (from non-combatancy status and Sabbath observance to dietary needs) Adventist chaplains have the inside track on helping their fellow Adventists in uniform. They are also in a position to witness to a group of extraordinary men and women who might not otherwise get the chance to hear the Three Angels' Message.

Thank God for all Adventists who faithfully serve their God and country in the United States military.

MICHAEL TOMLINSON  
Crownsville, Maryland

### Liberty and the Law

I have been receiving *Liberty* magazine for years, and I often refer my students in Education Law to articles in the magazine.  
ANN PROFFITT DUPRE  
Professor of Law,  
University of Georgia,  
Athens, Georgia



### Pray for Peace

Thanks to Mr. Goldstein for his thought-provoking piece on Jews and the Christian Right. Your cau-

tions regarding evangelical Christian interpretations of Bible prophecy are compelling. However, let me encourage you to be more precise in your identification of Christians who hold to this specific interpretation which includes a future Jewish Holocaust preceding the return of Christ.

You see, I am an evangelical who rejects this interpretation of prophecy. There are many of us. I am critical of many of Israel's policies regarding the Palestinians, as I am critical of Palestinian terrorism and violence. I see Israel as just another nation among nations, nothing more or less special than any other nation. Israel has a right to exist, as do other nations, and for good or ill, the Palestinians have a right to form themselves into a nation. Jews and Palestinians will simply have to learn to get along and coexist. Period. This requires compromise on both sides.

Only Christian fundamentalists hold to the extreme form of Bible prophecy you describe. While it is true that all fundamentalists are evangelicals, not all evangelicals are fundamentalists. This kind of interpretation is prominent among various Baptist and independent Bible churches. It is not prominent among conservative Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Anglicans, all of whom could rightly be described as evangelicals.

One other observation: The fissure you describe regarding



evangelicals' sagging support for Israel may be due more to the fact that the kind of Bible interpretation you describe is on the wane in the academic colleges and seminaries in evangelicalism. Some of us actually have brains and think for ourselves. I pray for peace in the Middle East for all the nations there.

JAY HERSHBERGER  
Moorhead, Minnesota

### Life or Death

In *Liberty* article "Jews and the Christian Right," it was pointed out that many Jews are not happy about the fact that the Christian Right is prophesying that millions of Jews in Israel are going to die. I would like to point out that many in the Christian Right (that includes me) are prophesying the destruction of America before the arrival of Jesus. So Israel may lose a few million people, but America may lose 250 million people. Do you think that this will make Jews feel better?

MATT WILSON,  
E-mail

No! Editor.

### A Supremely Important Issue

Editor Steed: I just read an article by you on the Supreme Court issues. I have to agree with almost everything that you wrote. We as a nation should keep church and state extremely separate. It seems the more I read about the court and religious freedom, we still have that wall of separation. But I also believe that we are more and more losing some of our freedoms. I ask you to keep us informed and educated regarding the pros and cons of our reli-

gious freedoms.  
PAULA WEISBARD,  
E-mail

Thanks. Keep reading *Liberty*.  
Editor.

### Want to Support Liberty

I am interested in sending a donation to *Liberty* magazine. I have been receiving *Liberty* for some years now. Once in the past (maybe 5 years ago) I paid for a year subscription and it's been coming since.

MANUEL,  
E-mail

Well, Manuel, someone has been paying for your subscription. *Liberty* is often "sponsored" by people wanting to inform others on this vital topic of religious freedom. You can subscribe for yourself at the low price of \$7.95 a year or send donations to enable us to send it to others. Supply a name for every \$7.95 or we will be happy to send it to someone on our priority list.  
Editor.

I want to not only subscribe but send your magazine to "100 influential leaders" or something along those lines that I've seen advertised in *Liberty* donor requests. The problem is, I can't figure out how to do so from your Website! Unless I'm missing something, I would suggest you put a way on there where people can do the above and also give you donation.  
GREG KING,  
E-mail

The [www.libertymagazine.org](http://www.libertymagazine.org) site should have adequate information on doing just what you want. However, we will try to tweak it

to be even more user-friendly. However, we welcome donations sent to us at *Liberty* Magazine, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904. Thank you and remember, donations are tax-deductible. Editor.

### Sunday's Coming?

I recently heard that the Catholic Church is trying to get a larger scale (larger than blue laws) Sunday law enacted in the U.S. Is there any truth to this? Or is there any truth that some kind of Sunday law is being considered in the US?

JEREMY GLASS  
Winnsboro, Texas

When *Liberty Magazine* first appeared in 1906 it was in the context of strong efforts by groups such as the National Reform movement to pass Sunday laws that went beyond typical "blue" laws that restricted commercial activity on that day. *Liberty* has always held that a Sunday law is unconstitutional

and opposed to biblical principles; both of fact (Sunday is not the Sabbath of the 10 Commandments) and the methods God uses in communicating to His creation. The state can only usurp the role of God if it takes it upon itself to require obedience to religious edicts. In various documents the Roman Catholic Church has given the impression that it has renounced its enforcement of religious edicts through state power during the Middle Ages. However, in the document *Dies Domini* Pope John Paul II did call on the faithful to work toward legislation upholding Sunday sacredness. But while many Sunday-keepers, Catholic and Protestant, would no doubt wish for Sunday laws, there is no current legislative initiative for them. We pray that people of faith and integrity—those with a biblical and constitutional sensitivity—will continue to argue that like other elements of faith, the day of worship is a matter of personal commitment, not state interest. Editor.

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# The Tragic Flaw

Just a few days ago I walked alongside my father as hospital orderlies wheeled him into the operating room for rather serious surgery\*. He had been very ill for a week or two and I don't think he had much sense of current world events. But his mind was active and he couldn't stop talking about places and people from the past.

He could still laugh about the time in Nice, France, when he persuaded a petulant Jacques Cousteau to rejoin the International Drug Prevention Convention which my father had organized. The explorer re-entered the hall and promptly gave his speech—in English—to the largely French audience. "What an insult," hissed one of them. Freedom Fries, anyone!

As we covered those few yards of hospital vinyl, my dad was reliving the contacts of decades. Many of those contacts were in the Middle East. The same Middle East in flames again on many television screens in rooms throughout that hospital.

I remember taking some of those trips with him. I remember standing on one of the peaks that surround Kabul, Afghanistan, and looking down on the city and toward the Intercontinental Hotel where we would soon hold another International Conference. That was way back before the

Communist puppet regimes and the horrors of the Taliban, but it struck me as a world apart—to be understood only in the mirror of its culture and religion. And I still remember the cascade of small pebbles against the car as we drove along the road past hostile children.

I remember walking down one of the main boulevards in Tehran, Iran. There were huge portraits of the Shah hanging from many buildings. But it seemed an overlay on the real culture of the city. I remember more clearly the handholding, giggling crowds of teenage boys who followed us at a not too discreet distance—I think my sister was the main attraction for them! I remember pausing out front of the U.S. Embassy gates and looking in and away to the main building; remote and silent, and soon to be occupied by student activists and hostages. And I remember the clear yet wavering call of the Muezzin to prayers.

I remember many of the sessions of those conferences. Hundreds of delegates gathered from across the known and not so known world. (What was it that Mark Twain wrote about wars being God's way of teaching Americans geography?) I particularly remember the Saudis. Often dressed in flowing robes, they

always projected an air of earnest religious fervor. No politics were ever spoken, but the conversation was always of moral reform—always on our shared goal of educating people away from the destructive habits of drug and alcohol use. I noticed that the logic of their argument derived from a spiritual goal and not from a public health point of view. And, of course, as Christians, we had much the same inner call to help our fellow men.

I particularly remember one public meeting, when there was a discussion about where to hold the next conference. Among other offers there was a strong lobby from the Arab nations to hold it in their region—Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were the two locations put forward. In the to and fro, pro and con of the debate, some questioned the logistics and expense of having it in those places. But the Saudis and Kuwaitis were insistent that it would work and that we would have the full support of the civil authorities. And I will never forget the clincher argument given by one of the government ministers for Kuwait: "Don't worry," he laughingly said, "there is no such thing as separation of church and





state in our countries, so it will be easy to do." We all smiled, but in the years since, and since the war on terrorism has picked up, I have seen this as far more than something to smile about. It is the tragic flaw of the Islamic world. And the beckoning horror that the Christian West must avoid as it responds.

As the recent situation in the Middle East blew out of any semblance of sanity to non-political outside observers, a colleague of mine sent an e-mail in which he wondered if this might be the beginning of the Biblical battle of Armageddon. Probably not, I told him, but it got me thinking.

It's fine to read such things in holy writ and interpret world events in light of prophecy. It's

intended that such musings lead the reader to a closer personal faith dedication. Where things get badly out of sync for all mankind is when such musings become elements of public policy.

When Iranian leaders see conflict with Israel and the United States as a necessary precursor to the hoped appearance of the Fifth Imam, we all have trouble. When and if the United States sees Biblical Armageddon as inevitable and a necessary prelude to world peace, we also have trouble.

The reality is that in both the "Christian" West and the Islamic world there are many adherents who see apocalyptic, bloody confrontation as necessary passages to their heavenly peace. Whether right or wrong in their interpretation, such thinking allied to civil power can bring only the Crusades, the Inquisition or the human apocalypse.

The last time the West fell prey to religious incitement to use secular power in the Middle East the result was nearly two centuries of military Crusades—or "wars of the Cross." They are well remembered in the Middle East—and in Rome too, to judge by the late Pope John Paul II apology for the sack of Constantinople. (A perfect illustration of how religious wars have a habit of turning back upon themselves.) And the Islamic world has been stirred before by the spirit of conquest that took it to the gates of Vienna and threatened the survival of Christian Europe.

I believe that the rapid rise of religious extremism is foretold in Biblical prophecy. By extremism I am including all the major faiths. After all, let's not delude

ourselves, a hard edged militant "Christianity" that yearns for political power is at our own door. But, I can't expect that every reader of *Liberty* will agree with me. We live in a free society and my view of religious liberty, which I also derive from the Bible, has to allow you equal right to believe what you want.

What I must insist upon and enlist your aid in maintaining is a principle: the separation of church and state. It is biblical. It is historically proven. It is Constitutionally mandated.

Look into the flames of religious conflict. Look into the cauldron of post 9/11 paranoia. Tell me if there is any hope without a reassertion of the separation of church and state. Without it we have the Tragic Flaw writ large on a wall in blood red characters.

*\*Ernest H. J. Steed, the editor's father and a pioneer in communicating faith-based drug prevention ideals to governments around the globe, died in Orlando, Florida, July 25, 2006.*



**Lincoln E. Steed**  
Editor,  
*Liberty Magazine*

Please address letters to the editor to  
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