

# The Erosion Of Religious Freedoms

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Ever since the United States Supreme Court ruled against prayer in the public schools in 1962, religious freedom has been under assault, despite the fact that the Bill of Rights clearly states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The government, under the guise of the "separation of church and state" principle—which it perverted just enough to widen the scope of its attacks—has steadily barred religion from the public square, twisting the phrase, "freedom of religion," to "freedom *from* religion." Christianity, the primary religion of Americans, has been the chief target.

The tempo of the march against religious freedom has sharply increased in the last several years, particularly under the Obama administration. The following examples of blows against the free exercise of religion have occurred within the last five years:

- After a Christian photography company in New Mexico was sued for declining to photograph a homosexual couple's commitment ceremony, the state's Supreme Court held that the law compels the owners to compromise their religious beliefs. The business had to be closed.
- The city of San Diego pressured four Christian firefighters with disciplinary action if they refused to take part in its "Gay Pride" parade, during which the firemen were subjected to verbal abuse and sexual gestures. Winning their lawsuit, they were awarded \$30,000 in damages.
- A day after a visit from Federal Reserve employees, an Oklahoma bank was forced to remove Bible verses from its website, crosses from teller stations, and buttons carrying a Christian Christmas message.
- A Missouri university threatened to withhold a Christian student's degree after she refused to write a letter to the state legislature in support of homosexual adoption.
- Under Obamacare, the Department of Health and Human Services mandated that all organizations (except churches) that offer group health insurance to provide for abortifacients such as Plan B (the "day-after pill") and Ella (the "week-after pill").
- In New Jersey, a second-grade public-school student was forbidden to sing "Awesome God" in an after-school talent show. Another girl in Port Charlotte, Florida, was barred from singing "Kum Ba Yah" at a Boys & Girls Club talent show because the song included the words "Oh, Lord."
- Despite a previous written agreement to respect a pro-life nurse's religious convictions, a New York hospital threatened her with termination and loss of license if she refused to participate in a late-term abortion.

- Florida withheld grant money from students attending Florida Christian College because the college did not satisfy the state's "secularity checklist." A lawsuit forced the state to reverse its policy.
- The Centers for Disease Control fired a Christian counselor because she refused to lie about why she was referring clients with same-sex relationship problems to other counselors.
- A third-grader in Plano, Texas, was forbidden to include a religious message in the goodie bags that he was bringing to the "Winter Party" to share with his classmates.
- A Cisco employee was summarily fired for his belief that marriage should be between a man and a woman, though he had never mentioned his view at work, but only in a book that he had written.

From just this sampling of infringements of religious liberty, it is plain to see that the trend is widespread. Christians, especially, are seeing their religious freedoms limited by federal, state, and local governments; schools and universities; institutions and corporations; and community groups. Liberty Institute, "a nonprofit legal group dedicated to defending and restoring religious liberty across America," has documented a list of nearly 1,200 incidents of bigotry against religion in the U. S., most having occurred in the past ten years (<http://www.libertyinstitute.org/pages/survey-of-religious-hostilities>). While various courts found many of these occurrences to violate the First Amendment, too many have become legal precedent and the law of the land.

Another inference from the above list is that many of them involve Christianity's stances against homosexuality, homosexual adoption, homosexual "marriage," and abortion, all sexual-freedom issues. American values have been so turned on their heads that today, sexual freedom, which receives no mention in the Constitution or Bill of Rights, trumps religious freedom, which is specifically named. Moreover, as the New Mexico photography case shows, a Christian, protecting his conscience, cannot even politely say, "No," to a homosexual without being hauled off to court for discrimination and losing his business along the way.

Many Christians and churches have tried to "stand in the breach" to uphold biblical moral values, but they have only delayed the crumbling of all barriers to sexual expression. Lately, all opposition has seemed ineffective, as California, for instance, now requires public schools to allow self-perceived transgender students, regardless of their birth gender, access to whichever restroom and locker room they wish to use. Clearly, the cultural trend in America is toward "anything goes" and nothing being stigmatized—or else.

And who but Christians would denounce "anything goes"? Thus, Christians have been targeted as enemies of "progress," and every effort is being employed to stifle, ridicule, or delegitimize Christianity's voice in society. So far, anti-Christian attacks have mostly been legal maneuvers, designed to marginalize Bible-believers, not yet reaching the level of outright persecution. However, Scripture warns repeatedly that true Christians will suffer intense persecution in the end time (see Luke 21:12-19; II Timothy 3:12-13; Revelation 6:9-11; 12:17; 13:7, 15; 17:6). To paraphrase our Savior, these incursions against our religious freedoms are just the beginning of sorrows.