

# Breaching the Freedoms of AMERICA

Americans seemingly revere their great twin freedoms—Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Speech. At the same time, they are setting the course for their destruction.

Freedom of religion is highly touted as enlightened tolerance toward all religions. It insists on a red carpet welcome to every kind of belief system, and for every promotion of the same in America. In this politically correct age, who would be so narrow-minded as to think one belief system better than another? Wouldn't a country do just as well under many gods, rather than an entrenched but outdated Christianity? Thus many are drawing friendly parallels between religions (Christianity and Islam for example), as though vague similarities should render the differences moot. This also includes the notion that various world religions really do worship the same God, but under different names.

Meanwhile freedom of speech has expanded its territory unchecked into unimaginable depravity. Americans pride themselves for the notion of accepting whatever self-expression one can imagine, and crank out our shame for the whole tech world to see. Yet by focusing on “free” without regard for what is being destroyed, in the corruption of speech, appearance, and behavior, the rising sewer has corrupted the very fountains of freedom. This is true in politics, in education, and in entertainment. It corrupts the morals of the young and dims the vision of the aged. It has polluted the foundation of law and order and perverts the courts of justice.

Perhaps most disturbing is the dumbing down of theology in the church (a remarkable parallel to education). As a result, the average person in the pew has very limited knowledge of the Bible and Christian living. This means that people imagine that God cannot tell us how to live. That is as though the sewage has inundated the control room of the purification plant.

Americans have forgotten that unrestrained freedoms are sure to self-destruct. Such destruction can proceed right before our eyes. The “woman's right to choose” has opened the door to the execution of millions whose rights are never even considered. The favoring

of the homosexual agenda has facilitated the deaths of millions around the world. We may save a few people from death through myriad health and safety regulations, only to help them to an early grave by endorsing sexual practices that nature itself abhors.

Past failures in not allowing the truth to limit our freedom brings serious questions about any collective wisdom we might bring into our current debates on free speech and religion issues. It appears that our so-called freedoms undermine even our own survival.

The irony of the present Islamic/mosque building debate is that most world religions are diametrically opposed to freedom of religion. Some are quick to claim every legal right of speech and religion extended them in America. However, their idea of returning the favor would be to eradicate us from the earth. You don't go into Islamic nations, passing out Bibles and building churches. Proselyting is not tolerated, and conversion to Christian faith often comes with a death warrant.

Here it is profitable to consider the history of freedom of religion in America. Doubtless, many European settlers came to America for rugged challenges and boundless opportunities. But a good number came for a far different reason—to escape religious tyranny in the various “Christian” governments in European nations. These nations' particular versions of Catholicism or Protestantism were imposed on every citizen. The Reformation leaders themselves, Luther and Zwingli, showed no mercy and gave no room for individual conscience. Thus the Protestant Reformation spawned freedom of religion only negatively—through those whose conscience was not for sale, and who were willing to pay the price in persecution for their faith.

Quaker and Anabaptist groups believed that coercion and Christian faith were incompatible, that one's standing with God is an individual, voluntary matter.

How did governments in America come to embrace such a radical departure from established practices of Europe, embracing the cause of the religious outcasts? I can only speculate. For one thing, there was no prevailing denominational preference among the framers of the Constitution. Those leaders were themselves of varied Christian persuasions (a few of none). Also the stalwart, peace-loving Quaker, William Penn loomed large, both in England and America. Above all, I choose to believe that this freedom was God's will.

Today this freedom is under threat, not primarily from without as with Islam, but by the internal abuse of that freedom. The basic tenets of Christian faith have been banned as the checkpoint of freedom. Thus the Christian faith, which once was the foundation for freedom, is eyed with suspicion as being the problem in the present dilemma.

The “Wall of Separation” which Jefferson invoked to assure the Danbury Baptists of protection from government meddling, has been turned on its head, to banish Biblical truth from the public square. Children brought up in such an environment may have more teaching on the “evils” of fossil fuels and homophobia, than they do about lying, cheating, or committing fornication.

The modern rewrite of freedom of religion, lauding all religious views as having equal merit, has nothing in common with the hope for religious freedom among the early settlers in America. Not for a moment did they embrace the equality of religions. They didn't come to toss their religious meat into a common pot. They came because they were not expected to do so. In fact, one strength of America has always been with strong churches and families who respected government, but needed no government regulation to lead lives of integrity. Both their hope and their fear was in God. Christians can never be the light of the world and the salt of the earth by being stirred into the kettle of the common culture.

Ironically, it is these same Christians who refrain from coercing peoples of other religions in matters of faith. They believe that only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can change the hearts of men, and that force has no power to extend the kingdom of God. They love their enemies. Thus they will suffer torture, prison, and death for their beliefs, but they can never build prisons for those of other beliefs, even dangerous ones. (Consider how much faithful Christians are suffering, under regimes of terror around the world, and that churches and homes are ransacked and destroyed, Bibles burned, pastors imprisoned, and thousands of Christians put to death every year.)

The tragic but inevitable rewrite of religious freedom now comes from an America that has typically rejected the Biblical God of our creation and the Jesus Christ of our salvation, and is now captivated with the claims of Eastern Mysticism, the religion of Mohammed, Marxism, and even atheism. This is the embrace of a conglomerate of errors that contribute nothing to our souls or our bodies. Thus have we shredded the nourishment of Biblical morality into a religious stew devoid of truth. There is poison in the pot.

God is dishonored when people turn from the truth they either once embraced, or at least could have known. Any people who exchange truth for multiplied errors will have ample opportunity to multiply error when there are foreign challenges to their freedoms.

Only in Jesus Christ can we know and find the truth and experience genuine freedom. Jesus said: *"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31, 32).

~Lester Troyer