

The Freedoms Christians Might Lose In This Election

by Dr. John Ankerberg

How will this election impact your religious freedom right here in America? The simple truth is that our next President and the Supreme Court Justices that he will appoint could radically change the way you practice your religion. Consider these examples:

You will not be able to teach all that the Bible says in your church.

Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, has written an article entitled “Criminalizing Christianity: Sweden’s Hate Speech Law.” He explains what has already happened in Sweden:

Ake Green, pastor of a Pentecostal congregation in Kalmar, Sweden, was sentenced to one month in prison on a charge of inciting hatred against homosexuals. Pastor Green was prosecuted for his sermon in a January hearing, where he was found guilty of “hate speech against homosexuals” for a sermon preached in 2003.

According to press reports, Pastor Green condemned homosexuality as “abnormal, a horrible cancerous tumor in the body of society.” His comments were delivered as part of a sermon, drawn from biblical texts, dealing with the sin of homosexuality. In Sweden, biblical preaching is now a crime....

The Swedish church newspaper *Kyrkans Tidning* reported that the prosecutor in this case, Kjell Yngvesson, justified the arrest and prosecution of Pastor Green on these grounds: “One may have whatever religion one wishes, but this is an attack on all fronts against homosexuals. Collecting Bible citations on this topic as he does makes this hate speech.”

This is one of the most shocking and revealing statements uttered by any legal official in recent times. This prosecutor has the audacity to argue that one may hold to “whatever religion one wishes,” so long as one does not preach from the Bible and address the issue of homosexuality from a biblical perspective. The simple practice of reading biblical texts teaching the sinfulness of homosexuality is now against the law in Sweden.¹

But this is not confined to Sweden. Mohler continues with a warning for America and the rest of the world:

The recent expansion of hate crimes laws in Canada, intended to outlaw all criticism of homosexuality, is convincing proof that **these trends are not limited to Europe**. The logic of restrictions on free speech is clear. The issue of homosexuality has also become a test case for American civil liberties. Where homosexual behavior was once characterized as sodomy and thus criminalized, some now openly call for the criminalizing of all “hate speech” addressed to homosexuals. Earlier this year, the **U.S. Senate passed a hate crimes provision** attached to a defense appropriation bill. Sponsored by senators Ted Kennedy [D-MA] and Gordon Smith [R-OR], the law would have levied fines against anyone found to have committed a crime that is “motivated by prejudice based on the race, color, **religion**, national origin, gender, **sexual**

orientation, or disability of the victim.” The provision passed the Senate, but died in the conference process with the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, the fact that the bill passed in the Senate sends the nation an urgent warning, and the logical jump from “hate crimes” legislation to codes against “hate speech” is small indeed.²

If this law is passed, which it will be in a very short time if Christians do not act, even witnessing for our Lord Jesus Christ will be a crime in America, as it is already in several countries around the world.

Christians cannot pray or hold Bible studies in certain places in America.

This is the next step in a growing trend in America. A little history might be in order. School prayer was effectively banned on June 17, 1963, in the *Murray vs. Curlett* case. The Supreme Court rendered this opinion:

Once again we are called upon to consider the scope of the provision of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which declares that “**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof....**” These companion cases present the issues in the context of state action requiring that schools begin each day with readings from the Bible. While raising the basic questions under slightly different factual situations, the cases permit of joint treatment. In light of the history of the First Amendment and of our cases interpreting and applying its requirements, we hold that the practices at issue and the laws requiring them are unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause, as applied to the States through the Fourteenth Amendment.³

In June, 2000, the Supreme Court banned even student-led prayer before sports events:

“We recognize the important role that public worship plays in many communities, as well as the sincere desire to include public prayer as a part of various occasions so as to mark those occasions’ significance,” Justice John Paul Stevens wrote for the majority.

“But such religious activity in public schools, as elsewhere, must comport with the First Amendment,” he added....

“Even if we regard every high school student’s decision to attend a home football game as purely voluntary, we are nevertheless persuaded that the delivery of a pregame prayer has the improper effect of coercing those present to participate in an act of religious worship,” he wrote.⁴

The Government and the Courts decide when children in the womb can be killed—the most dangerous place in America is your mother’s womb!

We live in a time when our government is permitting the killing of innocent babies in the womb. In January 1973, The Supreme Court passed the “*Row vs. Wade*” decision, which reads in part:

...the State does have an important and legitimate interest in preserving and protecting the health of the pregnant woman, ... and that it has still another important and legitimate interest in protecting the potentiality of human life. These interests are separate and distinct. Each grows in substantiality as the woman approaches term and, at a point during pregnancy, each becomes “compelling.”

With respect to the State’s important and legitimate interest in the health of the mother, the “compelling” point, in the light of present medical knowledge, is at approximately the end of the first trimester. This is so because of the now-established medical fact, ... that until the end of the first trimester mortality in abortion may be less than mortality in normal childbirth. It follows that, from and after this point, a State may regulate the abortion procedure to the extent that the regulation reasonably relates to the preservation and protection of maternal health. ...

This means, on the other hand, that, for the period of pregnancy prior to this “compelling” point, the attending physician, in consultation with his patient, is free to determine, without regulation by the State, that, in his medical judgment, the patient’s pregnancy should be terminated. If that decision is reached, the judgment may be effectuated by an abortion free of interference by the State.

With respect to the State’s important and legitimate interest in potential life, the “compelling” point is at viability. This is so because the fetus then presumably has the capability of meaningful life outside the mother’s womb. State regulation protective of fetal life after viability thus has both logical and biological justifications. If the State is interested in protecting fetal life after viability, it may go so far as to proscribe abortion during that period, except when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother....

A state criminal abortion statute of the current Texas type, that excepts from criminality only a lifesaving procedure on behalf of the mother, without regard to pregnancy stage and without recognition of the other interests involved, is violative of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁵

However, we have elsewhere argued extensively that both science and the Bible agree human life begins at the moment of conception.⁶ Therefore, at any point during the pregnancy, terminating that pregnancy ends a human life.

Tragically, Judie Brown, who at the time of this interview was President of the American Life League, told us about some papers found following the death of Justice William O. Douglas which relate to the Supreme Court decision in *Row vs. Wade*:

There is also a memo that Justice Blackmun sent to Justice Douglas in which he pointed out that his aim, through *Row vs. Wade*, was going to be to legalize abortion, no matter what steps he had to take. He wanted to minimize the damage to the judicial process, however, in such a way that he would come up with the most logical argument that the Justices could possibly use. But they *had* to legalize abortion. And so they knew, when they took the case, *Row vs. Wade*, and *Doe vs. Bolton*, that they were, in fact, going to legalize abortion. The only question that was in their minds was how to do it. This is why the Justices chose, in 1972, when they heard the arguments, to eliminate all medical discussion from the hearing. There were no pieces of evidence allowed in that courtroom with regard to the humanity of the child in the womb.⁷

Since the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand in 1973 we have permitted 44,670,812 babies to be killed in the womb via abortion.

You cannot display or teach the Ten Commandments in schools—or any public building.

On October 4, 2004, the *Associated Press* reported the final step in Alabama Judge Roy Moore’s fight over the Ten Commandments monument. They said,

The three-year legal battle over ousted Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore and his Ten Commandments monument ended quietly Monday when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected Moore’s final appeal.

The high court made no comment in declining Moore’s request to reverse his expulsion last year by a state judicial ethics panel for refusing a federal judge’s order to remove the 5,300-pound monument from the Alabama courthouse.

Moore said in a statement that it was hypocritical for the “liberal Supreme Court” to turn down his appeal even though the justices begin each session with the phrase, “God save the United States and this honorable court.”

“Obviously, when they open their courts this way the majority of the court doesn’t really mean it,” said Moore, whose appeal to keep the monument in the courthouse was rejected by the court last year.⁸

And of course, we can no longer post the Ten Commandments in our schools. We can’t teach these moral principles to our students. It’s no wonder children kill each other in school when they are never taught “Thou shalt not kill”.

Homosexual unions, formerly a crime in America, will now be given the same legal status as marriage. Students will be taught that homosexuality is a natural and acceptable alternative lifestyle.

Our courts are opening the door to legalizing homosexual marriage. It has already happened in Canada, Sweden, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands.

Why should American Christians be concerned about this issue? I asked Glenn Stanton, Senior Analyst for Marriage and Family at Focus on the Family, "How does someone's gay marriage threaten your family? Here's what he said:

Every time I debate this issue publicly, my opponent asks me that question. "How will my gay marriage, my gay relationship, hurt your family?" And my answer to that is real simple: If we were just talking about you and your partner, then no real harm. But what we are talking about is you asking all of us to dramatically and radically change our own definition of marriage so that husband and wife, mother and father do not matter. And that's where it harms my family: your same-sex family, whether lesbian or gay, will teach my little boy and my little girl that they, as gendered beings, male or female, do not matter for the family, and that their mother and father do not matter for the family. And I will never allow anybody to teach my children that lesson.⁹

Your church's tax-exempt status will be revoked if you teach and preach biblical Christianity.

Do you realize that your church could very well be pressured to perform same-sex weddings or lose some or all of its privileges? When courts find same-sex marriage to be a constitutional and fundamental human right, the American Civil Liberties Union can and will convincingly argue that the government is underwriting discrimination by offering tax exemptions to churches and synagogues that only honor natural marriage. Glenn Stanton describes the scenario:

It's important to understand what Bill C-250 is in Canada. It wasn't too long ago that Canada passed same-sex marriage, and then just a couple of months after that they passed Bill C-250, which criminalized hate speech against homosexuals. It says that if you say something that could be deemed mean or hateful against homosexuals, you could spend up to two years in prison. Two years in prison! Not for physically harming anybody or slandering anybody, but simply saying something that is unfashionable against homosexuals.

And we could deal with the same thing here. It's really quite simple how that would happen, and you laid it out very nicely. If same-sex marriage is seen as a fundamental human right, then there are going to be activist couples who go to your church and say, "Pastor, will you marry us?" And you're going to say, "No, I'm sorry, we don't believe in same-sex marriage. You'll have to go elsewhere."

They're going to go straight down to the local ACLU office and they're going to say, "Doesn't Church XYZ on the corner have tax-exempt status from the federal government?"

"Well, yes, they do."

"Well, they denied us our fundamental human rights!"

The ACLU is going to be on you so fast! And the churches are going to be threatened with losing their tax-exempt status because they do not endorse and do not perform same-sex marriages. It's going to happen. And it's already happening around the world.¹⁰

By who you choose to be President, you are also picking the next three or four Supreme Court justices.

We have shown you how the nine justices on the Supreme Court made decisions such as

banning prayer in schools, legalizing abortion, and even, recently, overturning a Texas law that criminalized sodomy.¹¹ During the next four years, experts say the new President will appoint at least three, possibly four, new judges to the Supreme Court.

What other freedoms will Americans lose if three or four more liberal judges are appointed? Do we want more decisions such as the ones we've seen?

Christians in America have a chance to decide, to a certain extent, how the country, and the Supreme Court will go.

How? Christians need to stand up, to **actively confront the culture with truth** and to **take our stand through voting**.

Notes:

¹ Albert Mohler, "Criminalizing Christianity: Sweden's Hate Speech Law," <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler/?cal=go&adate=8%2F5%2F2004>

² Ibid., emphasis added.

³ <http://www.atheists.org/courthouse/prayer.html>, emphasis added. Doesn't it seem odd that the Supreme Court would decide prayer should be banned on the basis that the free exercise of religion should not be prohibited?

⁴ Raju Chebium, "Supreme Court bars student-led prayer at high school football games," <http://www.cnn.com/2000/LAW/06/19/scotus.schoolprayer.01/>

⁵ <http://www.tourolaw.edu/patch/Roe/>

⁶ See, for example John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *When Does Life Begin?* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1989).

⁷ The John Ankerberg Show, "Interview With Former Abortionists," program transcript, p. 17.

⁸ Kyle Wingfield, "Supreme Court won't hear Alabama Ten Commandments case," <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/news/archive/2004/10/04/national1024EDT0510.DTL>

⁹ The John Ankerberg Show, "The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage," program transcript, pp. 33-34.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 5

¹¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/06/26/scotus.sodomy/>