

When Religion Governs

Political Dominion

The battle for political dominion among the different religious believe systems is heating up around the world. In almost every religious war, it has been said that the sectarian interests are battling for political dominion over the population.

This article describes the political efforts of religious organizations to control the secular political body of the United States and around the world.

SECULARISM: Exclusion of religion from public affairs - Religion and religious bodies should have no part in political or civic affairs or in running public institutions. Rejection of religion or its exclusion from a philosophical or moral system.

“Ref: Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999”

In the United States, political dominion by sectarian interests takes the form of legislative efforts to impose regulatory obstacles to provision medical care for women seeking to prevent or end pregnancies, curtail the free exchange of medical information and services for women, stop the interstate transportation of minors for medical services in contradiction of state parental notification laws, create useless medical notification procedures concerning women’s health, dictate the sexes of the parties to a secular marriage contract; end the role of courts in assuring the rights of minorities in religious proselytizing cases, establish biblical instruction in science biology courses for schools districts throughout the nation, and subject children in secular public schools to sectarian proselytizing.

Sectarian groups have been and are now actively engaged in rewriting the nation’s history in order to fulfill their political ambitions. Likewise, these groups are actively engaged in stopping public funding for medical and scientific research. Their self avowed stance is that the majority should rule rather than, as the U.S. Constitution provides, the minority is to be protected from rule by the majority and they proclaim themselves to be the majority.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

One of the most serious condemnations of religious organizations comes from examples of child abuse and neglect that include severe beatings, rejection of medical care, starvation, forced marriages, child labor, slavery, isolation, exorcism rituals, and sexual molestation as religious practices. The following information was obtained from Children’s Healthcare is a Legal Duty, Inc. (CHILD, Inc.)

CHILD, Inc. reports that the following religious organizations engage in the practice of rejection of medial care:

Faith Assembly
Followers of Christ
Christian Science
Church of the First Born
Faith Tabernacle
End Time Ministries
The Believers' Fellowship
Faith Temple Doctoral Church of Christ in God
Church of God Chapel
Jehovah's Witnesses (forbids blood transfusions)
Jesus through Jon and Judy
Christ Assembly
Christ Miracle Health Center
Northeast Kingdom Community Church
'No Name' Fellowship
The Source

Amy Hermanson, 7, died in 1986 in Sarasota, Florida. A talented little girl, she took piano, violin, harp, and art lessons, and excelled in academic subjects also. Many teachers and employees at her mother's business observed Amy's weight loss and lethargy over a four-week period, but did not report to Child Protection Services (CPS). They did not know she had diabetes. Some assumed the parents were providing medical treatment. One employee said she did not report to CPS because she knew the Hermansons were Christian Scientists and they were "signing [her] paycheck." A neighbor urged her mother to take her to a doctor, but the mother refused. A few minutes later, Amy crawled in from another room on her hands and knees and begged her mother to take her home. Her aunt said that she was incoherent and unable to focus her eyes the day before she died.

The Hermansons were convicted of felony child abuse and third-degree murder. In 1992, however, the Florida Supreme Court overturned their conviction on fair notice grounds. Citing a religious exemption in Florida's civil code, the Court said, "The statutes have created a trap that the legislature should address." Nine years later, however, the Florida legislature still has not done so. (1)

WAR

"Intolerance breeds injustice. Injustice invariably leads to rebellion and retaliation, and these will lead to escalation on the part of both making reconciliation almost impossible. It would appear that during times of stress, despair and frustration, people become increasingly irrational, and they do things which they never think they are capable of. And so we see hideous brutality perpetrated by the most gentle people."

"Once started religious strife has a tendency to go on and on, to become permanent feuds. Today we see such intractable inter-religious wars in Northern Ireland, between Jews and Muslims and Christians in Palestine, Hindus and Muslims in South Asia and in many other places. Attempts to bring about peace have failed again and again. Always the extremist elements invoking past injustices, imagined or real, will succeed in torpedoing the peace efforts and bringing about another bout of hostility." Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, addressing the World Evangelical Fellowship on May 4, 2001.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia was describing religious politics throughout history and the world. Although

we see a mixture of economics, race, ethnic, and other factors, religion is substantially or completely responsible for the injury, death, and destruction from the wars described below.

Afghanistan is home to radical fundamentalist Muslim terrorists. Osama Bin Laden is the leader of Al Qaeda (The Source) in Afghanistan. They were supported by the Taliban, the Muslim political party that controlled the country. Death tolls for Al Qaeda include bombings of African U.S. Embassies, USS Cole, and the destruction on September 11, 2001, in New York City, NY, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.

In Bosnia, peacekeepers are trying to keep a fragile peace between Serbian Christians and Muslims.

The Côte d'Ivoire security forces for the government of President Gbagbo started in 2000 cleansing their nation of Muslims and traditional local religions in the North. In 2002 there was a military uprising.

Then, it turns out that Mrs. Gbagbo, the president's wife, who is known to support the armed gangs and death squads that have done so much damage in Abidjan, is an evangelical Christian. What she really wants is to turn Ivory's internal conflict into a holy war against Muslims. (2)

Cyprus has been a battle ground between Christians and Muslims for generations and the UN is currently keeping the peace on the partitioned island. While the Christians control the larger and better part of the island and are wealthier than the poor and smaller portion of Cyprus controlled by the Muslims, the Christians refuse to tolerate or act with charity towards their Muslim neighbors.

In mostly Roman Catholic East Timor, when the country was taken over by Indonesia, mostly Muslim, 20% of its population, about 250,000, died by murder, starvation or disease. Muslim militias engaged in a program of genocide, religious cleansing, and near total destruction of the country's infrastructure.

Ambon Island in Indonesia experienced extensive war between Christians and Muslims in 1999.

Halmahera in Indonesia experienced 30 people known to have been killed, 2,000 Christians were forced to leave and their homes and churches were destroyed.

India is home to extensive conflicts between Animists, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. (3)

Kashmir continues to be fought over by Pakistan and India because Pakistan is predominantly Muslim and India predominantly Hindu.

The religion/ethnic cleansing in Kosovo involved the same sectarian players as in Bosnia, above.

Kurdistan is home to the Kurds who are the largest ethnic group in the world without a homeland. The history of religious violence involving the Kurds and the Muslims in whose countries they reside is extensive. Kurdistan is part of Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

Christians and Muslims are continually at war in Macedonia, Nigeria, Philippines, Chechnya, the Sudan and Uganda. In Uganda, the Lords Resistance Army is attempting to create a Christian theocracy based on the Ten Commandments. The Christians are accused of kidnapping 2,000 children a year and raping and enslaving them.

Christians are accused of killing hundreds of witches every year in South Africa.

The minority Tamil Hindus battling the majority Buddhist population is responsible for nearly 65,000 dead in Sri Lanka. (4)

U.S. ADMINISTRATION

The Center for Reproductive Rights reported in July 2003 on the Bush Administration decision to reinstate the Reagan era ‘Mexico City Policy’ in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) population program. The Mexico City Policy is also known as the ‘Global Gag Rule’ to promote an abstinence only approach. It is reported that 78,000 women die each year from unsafe abortions. This number could be drastically reduced if women were allowed to receive appropriate health information or services and the laws were reformed.

The Global Gag Rule applies to all and any Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) involved in family planning that receives USAID or U.S. State Department funds. NGOs are prohibited from spending not only U.S. taxpayer funds, but even their own funds for helping women in third world nations plan their families. The effect has been devastating. Take Nepal for instance. So many women die each year in child birth, nearly half from unsafe abortions, that in September 2002, the King of Nepal signed a law legalizing abortions on broad grounds. The law though has had little effect because most family planning efforts for low-income and rural women come from NGOs who cannot provide appropriate health information or services to the women due to the Bush Administration’s policy. (5)

Science and the Potential Benefit of Embryonic Stem Cell Research

“Many scientists believe that embryonic stem cell research may eventually lead to therapies that could be used to treat diseases that afflict approximately 128 million Americans. Treatments may include replacing destroyed dopamine-secreting neurons in a Parkinson’s patient’s brain; transplanting insulin-producing pancreatic beta cells in diabetic patients; and infusing cardiac muscle cells in a heart damaged by myocardial infarction. Embryonic stem cells may also be used to understand basic biology and to evaluate the safety and efficacy of new medicines.” (6)

Still the Administration stopped further public funding for embryonic stem cell research based entirely on sectarian and not scientific grounds potentially adversely affecting 128 million Americans as the Administration recognized in the quote above.

The Administration has been investigated and a report found that Faith Based Initiatives produce significantly misleading and wrong information to children on abstinence-only sex education material. The executive summary states that the U.S. Federal government will spend \$170 million on abstinence only education programs in 2005. In 2003, over 80% of the abstinence-only curricula used by over two-thirds of the grantees contained false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive information. (7)

U.S. 109TH CONGRESS

S.B. 520, A bill to limit the jurisdiction of Federal courts in certain cases and promote Federalism was introduced by Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) on March 3, 2005. It is currently cosponsored by Senators

Wayne Allard (R-CO); Jim Bunning (R-KY); Richard Burr (R-NC); James Inhofe (R-OK); Sam Brownback (R-KS); Conrad Burns (R-MT); Larry Craig (R-ID); Trent Lott (R-MS). The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It states that it may be cited as the “Constitutional Restoration Act of 2005”.

This legislation states that:

‘Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the Supreme Court shall not have jurisdiction to review, by appeal, writ of certiorari, or otherwise, any matter to the extent that relief is sought against an entity of Federal, State, or local government, or against an officer or agent of Federal, State, or local government whether or not acting in official or personal capacity, concerning that entity’s, officer’s, or agent’s acknowledgment of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government.’ (emphasis added)

H.R. 1070 is the identical bill to S.B. 520 introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL4) and currently enjoys 38 cosponsors.

H.J.Res. 7 is the Prayer in School Amendment. This one was introduced by Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO8) on January 4, 2005, and after six months, still has only one cosponsor, Rep. Roger Wicker (R-MS1). H.J.Res. 7 has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Constitution.

H.R. 235 is titled ‘to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect the religious free exercise and free speech rights of churches and other houses of worship.’ It was introduced on January 4, 2005, by Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC3) and after six months, still does not enjoy any cosponsors. This legislation will allow houses of worship to act in politics without the limitations currently in place by the IRS to remove their tax deferments as religious organization.

H.R. 27 is the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005. It was introduced on January 4, 2005, by Rep. Howard McKeon (R-CA25). This legislation not only authorizes faith based initiatives in job training, but more importantly it amends the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) by exempting religious organizations from discrimination provisions in hiring under WIA.

S.B. 396 prohibits taking minors across State lines in order to circumvent a State’s parental notification laws. H.R. 748 [bold name of bill] is the House version of the same legislation.

H.R. 777 prohibits any Federal official from expending any Federal funds for any population control or population planning program or any family planning program, irrespective of whether the program is domestic or foreign.

S.B. 51 and H.R. 356 is the Senate and House versions of the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act of 2005. S.B. 51 enjoys 34 cosponsors while H.R. 356 currently has 121 cosponsors. Pregnant women must sign a statement that they are aware that Congress thinks a fetus, 20 weeks after fertilization, feels pain and whether or not they want it to have pain medication.

S.J.Res. 1 and H.J.Res. 39, Marriage Protection Amendment provides:

“Article

SECTION 1. This article may be cited as the ‘Marriage Protection Amendment’

SECTION 2. Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman.”

Pertaining to Science of Life

Does your child’s biology science text contain the following disclaimer? Does it need to?

“This book offers Intelligent Design as an explanation for life on earth. Although this book has a really cute animal on its cover, the author is a lunatic with a faith-based approach to logic. Please consider the book with an open mind, and then quickly move your children to a different school district.”

STATE LEGISLATION

Alabama: H.B. 716 is the third anti-evolution bill introduced in Alabama this year. On April 5, 2005, Rep. Scott Beason (R-St. Clair, Shelby) introduced House Bill 716. The bill is dubbed the “Academic Freedom Act” and is a near-copy of a previous pair of anti-evolution bills (HB352, SB240) introduced in February 2005. The same language was introduced last year in legislation in Alabama and died. HB 716 was referred to the Education Committee.

Florida: H.B. 837 [bold name of state and bill], Student and Faculty Bill of Rights Bill extends protection to faculty who want to introduce their own religious views into their classrooms. The legislation was referred to three committees: the Colleges and Universities Committee, the Choice and Innovation Committee, and the Education Council. It was withdrawn from the first, was approved by the second, and is now (as of April 15) under consideration by the third. Its Senate counterpart, Senate Bill 2126, was introduced in the Florida Senate on March 7 and referred to the Education Committee and the Judiciary Committee; it is now on the agenda of the former.

A committee on academic freedom and tenure of the American Association of University Professors describes this Florida bill as “improper and dangerous,” adding, “Not only is the Academic Bill of Rights redundant, but, ironically, it also infringes academic freedom in the very act of purporting to protect it.”

Missouri: H.B. 35 , Biology Textbooks and Curricula, sponsored by Rep. Cynthia L. Davis. This bill requires that all biology textbooks for public schools explain the difference between testable theories and philosophical claims in a chapter containing critical analysis of origins. Controversial topics such as evolution should have a curriculum that helps students understand the full range of opinion, why the topics may be controversial, and how scientific discoveries affect society.

Pennsylvania: H.B. 1007 has 12 sponsors in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and was introduced on March 16, 2005. This legislation states:

Section 1516.2. Teaching Theories on the Origin of Man and Earth.--(a) In any public school instruction concerning the theories of the origin of man and the earth which includes the theory commonly known as evolution, a board of school directors may include, as a portion of such instruction, the theory of intelligent design. Upon approval of the board of school directors, any teacher may use supporting evidence deemed necessary for instruction on the theory of intelligent design.

Similar legislation pertaining to the teaching of biology and origin of life is pending in New York and Texas.

Meanwhile, Kansas is getting most of the media attention because of the high profile elections taking place to elect a state school board sympathetic to the teaching of religion to Kansas schoolchildren.

(Congressional legislative information accumulated from Thomas, Library of Congress; state legislative information accumulated from Capital Advantage.)

“To myself, there remains no doubt, that the religious establishments of Massachusetts, and all state establishments of Christianity in the World, are all of them, ANTI-CHRISTOCRACIES.” John Leland (1754-1841) Baptist preacher.

Notes:

(1) <http://www.childrenshealthcare.org/>

(2) Chaos in Ivory Coast: Roots and Consequences, by Daniel Chirot, The Seattle Times, November 17, 2004.

(3) India Braces After Attack on Holy Site, New York Times, July 5, 2005. Report of two hour fire fight involving Hindus/Muslims at the Hindu Temple in Ayodhya.

(4) http://www.religioustolerance.org/curr_war.htm

(5) http://www.crlp.org/pub_fac_ggrbush.html

(6) August 9, 2001, White House Fact Sheet

(7) see The Content of Federal Funded Abstinence-Only Education Program, prepared by U.S. House of Representative’s Committee on Government Reform - Minority Staff Special Investigations Division, December 2004, for Rep. Henry A. Waxman

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ASUSA's objective is to help steer public opinion away from faith-based government and back to governance based on secular principles. ASUSA members strongly support the concept of separation of religion and government, as intended by the Founding Fathers of the U.S. Constitution. This includes freedom of religion as well as freedom from religion. In accord with a secular approach to government, ASUSA holds that government and society at large should be run on a rational basis, without an appeal to the supernatural.

Thus, the purpose of the organization is to recapture the territory of the secular mind (now claimed by religious extremists) for societal benefit by making the knowledge of alternatives to religion public and ubiquitous.

ASUSA invites all who share our concern with the trend away from the "separation doctrine" to join with us. We are not concerned over the private practice of religion, only with those who are moving the U.S toward theocracy.

Please join us in our effort to help steer public opinion back to support for a government run on a secular basis, one that is concerned with the public welfare of all citizens. For more info:
www.ReligionRealityCheck.org