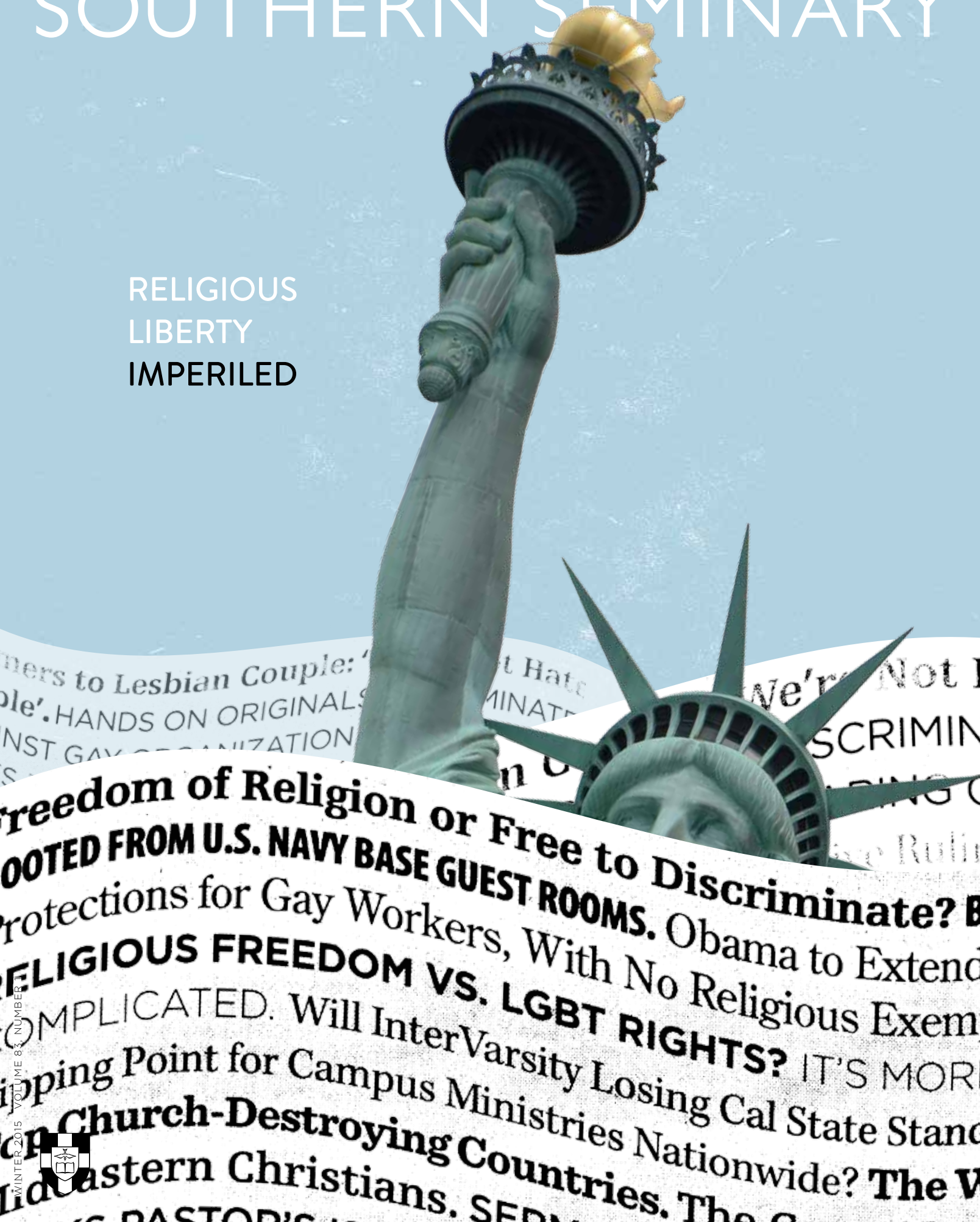


# SOUTHERN SEMINARY

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WINTER 2015 VOLUME 83 NUMBER 1



# Register for Boyce College Preview Day

Preview Day is a unique college experience that allows you to tour our historic campus, meet professors, sit in on classes, hang out with current students, have dessert and conversation with President R. Albert Mohler Jr. in his home, and more.

Boyce College will provide two nights of lodging in our on-campus hotel and meals on Friday. This will be a great time for you to experience the mission, purpose, and life of Boyce College. The cost of attendance is only \$25. Don't miss out.

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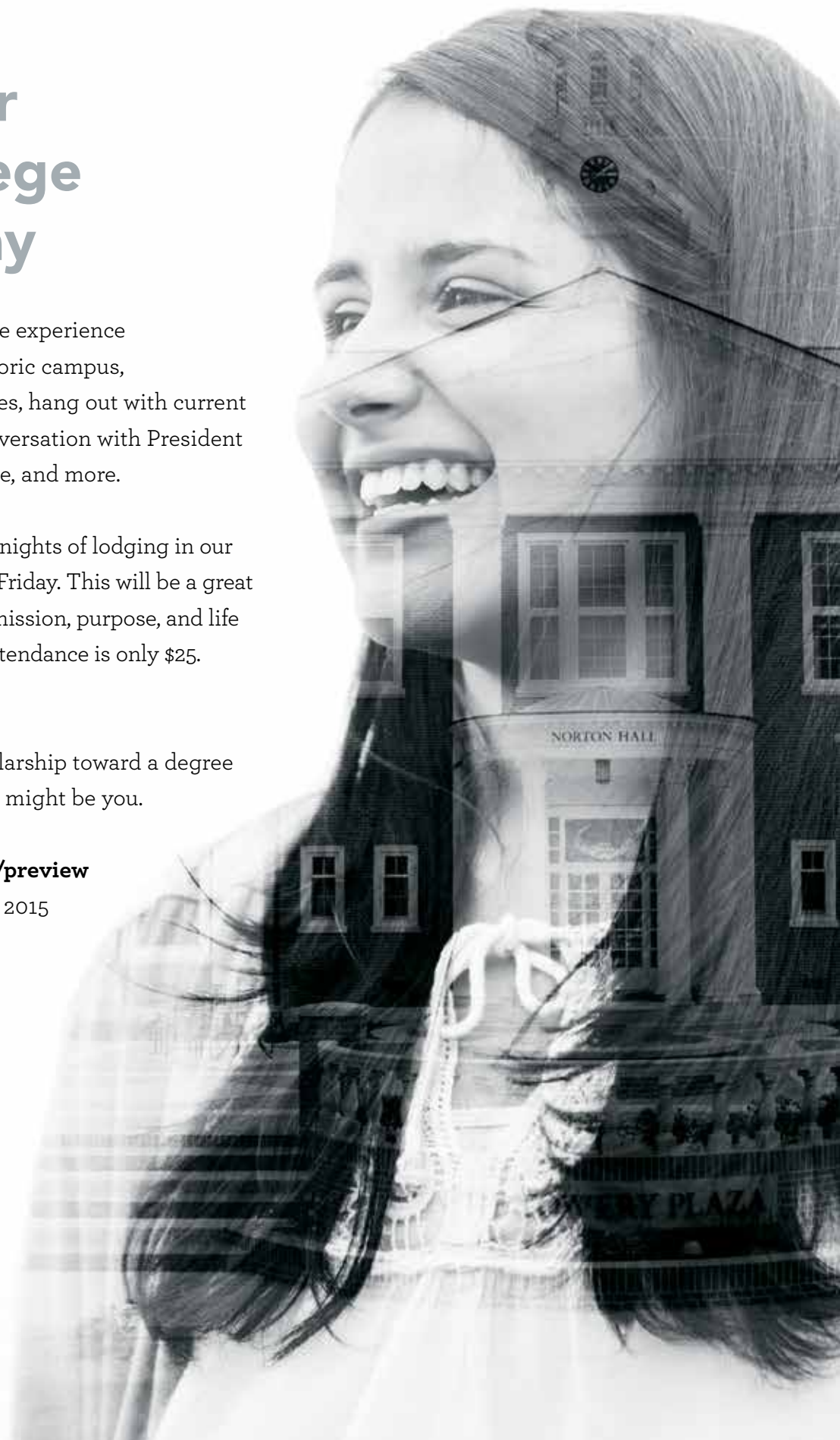
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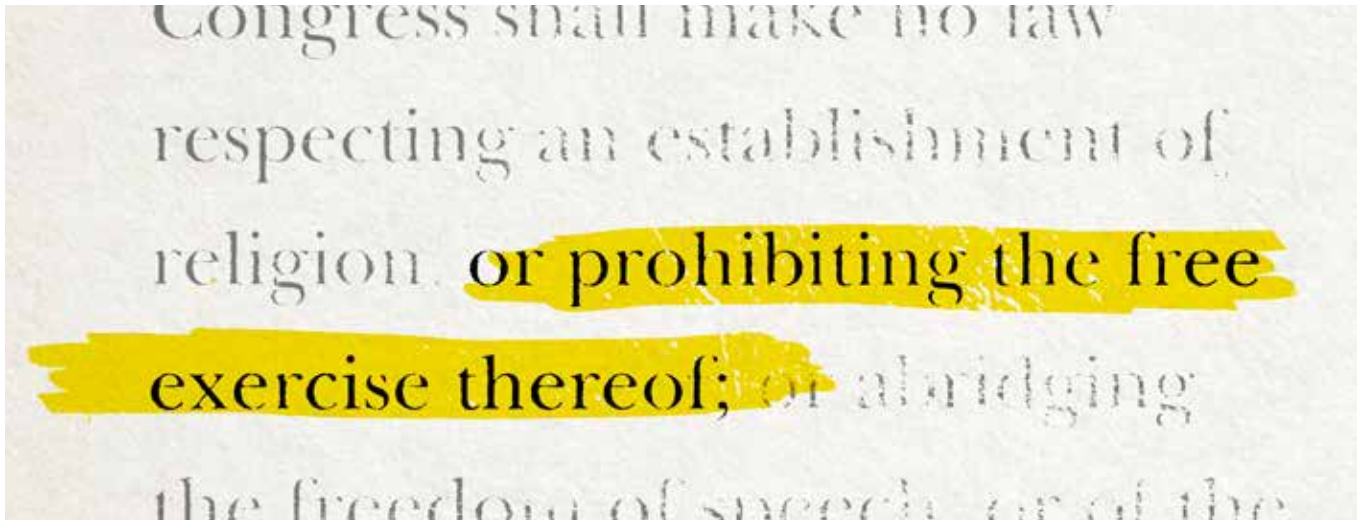
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## The moral revolution threatens religious liberty

Religious liberty is one of the hallmarks of the American constitutional order and a matter of Christian conviction. Far too many Christians fall into the trap of believing religious liberty is somehow granted by the United States Constitution. The framers of that Constitution understood, to the contrary, they were merely recognizing a right that had been granted by our Creator. In 1808, President Thomas Jefferson stated the matter clearly: “I consider the government of the United States as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises.”

Baptists have always had a unique commitment to religious liberty, forged in the crucibles of experience and conviction. One of the most famous Southern Baptists of the 20th century, Southern Seminary alumnus Herschel Hobbs, noted “religious liberty is the mother of all true freedoms.” E.Y. Mullins, the seminary’s fourth president, was a staunch defender of religious liberty during a time of war when some in our nation’s government sought to infringe upon the nation’s “first freedom.”

The Christian affirmation of religious liberty is grounded in the affirmation that

every single human being is made in the image of God, endowed with the right of religious liberty precisely because we are the only creature made with a religious capacity. And yet, threats to religious liberty are increasing rather than decreasing. This is due in part to the increasing secularization of the culture which makes religious

norm by whatever means they deem necessary. The inevitable conflict between religious liberty and our new legal and moral contexts was made clear at a recent symposium when a preeminent legal authority indicated she could not envision one instance in which religious liberty should be more highly valued than the new sexual freedom.

We are living in challenging times. This issue of *Southern Seminary Magazine* focuses on issues of religious liberty. Religious liberty is not merely a political issue;

***Religious liberty is not merely a political issue; it is a theological issue. Ministers of the gospel, therefore, must give careful and rigorous biblical and theological reflection to this topic.***

liberty a privilege rather than a right. In the eyes of secularists, religious liberty is to be valued only until it runs into direct conflict with a more important liberal value.

This points to the second most direct threat to religious liberty in our time: the moral revolution. The revolution over human sexuality which has now led to the redefinition of marriage and the family presents an unavoidable conflict between erotic liberty and religious liberty.

At this point, religious liberty is being threatened by secular authorities seeking to coerce obedience of the new moral

it is a theological issue. Ministers of the gospel, therefore, must give careful and rigorous biblical and theological reflection to this topic. Christians cannot ignore these controversies raging in the public square for the simple reason that our Lord commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. The urgency of these issues underlines the importance of the mission entrusted to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Furthermore, it points to our greatest challenge: producing a generation of moral revolutionaries who will not only cherish religious liberty but deploy it.

# Features

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 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280

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*Southern Seminary Magazine* is published quarterly by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280. Periodicals Postage Paid at Louisville, Ky., and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: Free. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Southern Seminary Magazine*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280 • USPS 025-619

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## News



## Southern celebrates BGS anniversary during Heritage Week

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry during its annual Heritage Week, Oct. 13-16.

Thom Rainer, the founding dean of the Billy Graham School, delivered a sermon on evangelism and SBTS President R. Albert Mohler Jr. read a congratulatory letter from the Graham family at a chapel service marking the anniversary, Oct. 14.

Mohler read the letter from Will Graham, grandson of Billy Graham, who sent greetings from the Graham family on the occasion of the BGS anniversary. The nearly 96-year-old world-renowned evangelist is “homebound today, frail and weak, but confident in heart about the promises of eternity and the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” his grandson wrote.

Introducing Rainer, Mohler said he is “one of the great denominational statesmen of our age” and said “the story of the Billy Graham School is inseparable from the story of Dr. Thom Rainer and his leadership of the Graham School for many years.”

Rainer served as the founding dean of the Billy Graham School, 1994-2005. Before he spoke, Rainer received the E.Y. Mullins Distinguished Denominational Service Award, one of the seminary’s highest honors. Rainer was recognized for his “remarkable legacy of leadership” as pastor, scholar, teacher, and founding dean of the Billy Graham School, as well as for his role as author, speaker, and president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Rainer preached a sermon, “We Are Unable to Stop Speaking,” on the imperative of evangelism from Acts 4:13-22.

Rainer presented four truths in the passage which lead to bold evangelism: the power of the gospel is sufficient for

evangelism; Christians will always face persecution; right theology leads to evangelism; and gospel-powered evangelism cannot help but speak.

“Don’t just talk evangelism, don’t just program evangelism,” he said. “Let it be so much of who you are that you cannot help but speak about what you have seen and heard.”

On Wednesday, Mohler preached a special chapel message about opposition to Christianity in today’s society.

“Opposition from the world is an opportunity to witness,” said Mohler, preaching from John 15:18-27. “The opportunity of greatest Christian witness is not when we think the world loves us, but when the world quite openly hates us.”

Mohler concluded with observations on how the growing threat of persecution in America could alter the purpose of Southern Seminary.

“Maybe the mission of this school is actually to train up a generation of preachers, missionaries, and evangelists who will be martyrs,” Mohler said.

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, concluded Heritage Week by urging students to complete the Great Commission in this generation.

He preached from the Great Commission texts in the New Testament to emphasize Jesus’ command for Christians to go and make disciples.

Floyd told students to think about their part in the Great Commission, whether it is overseas in closed countries or in hostile neighborhoods in the United States.

“Let us go to places where the gospel has never been,” he said. “We must complete the Great Commission in our generation, and we need to make a commitment together that their spiritual death will not happen on our watch.” —SBTS COMMUNICATIONS

Audio and video from Heritage Week is available online at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).



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## Trustees accept gift of Wisconsin university campus

Trustees of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary unanimously accepted the gift of a Christian university campus in Wisconsin as a new extension campus of the seminary and Boyce College during its fall meeting, Oct. 13-14.

Northland International University, an evangelical Christian school located in Dunbar, Wisconsin, will become the first campus outside of Louisville for Boyce College, Southern's undergraduate school. The action is effective Aug. 1, 2015.

"The fact that there will be a Boyce College and Southern Seminary campus located in Wisconsin on a campus of this stature is an enormous step forward for Southern Baptists," said Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. "I can only imagine what the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention would think to know that the reach of the SBC and its mother seminary is now of this magnitude in the upper Midwest."

Daniel Patz, president of Northland since 2013, attended the meeting and told trustees, "This is a gift from Northland to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. But really, I feel almost, even more so, it is a gift to us in order for this legacy and this mission to continue; it is the greatest mission in the world, to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth."

Paul Patz, the grandfather of Daniel Patz, founded Northland in 1958 as a camp and expanded it in 1976 to become Northland Baptist Bible Institute. One

year later, Northland became an undergraduate college, adding a graduate program in 1988. Throughout its history, the school has continued to operate Northland Camp & Conference Center, which hosts camps, Bible conferences, and other ministry events. Northland has produced nearly 2,900 alumni serving in ministry across the world.

In addition to its academic expansion of Boyce, the Northland campus will provide an ideal location for youth camps, church planting training, faculty retreats, and other events on its 660-acre campus located about 90 minutes north of Green Bay, Wisconsin, officials said. Northland trustees have approved the gifting of its campus and school.

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**"I can only imagine what the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention would think to know that the reach of its mother seminary is now of this magnitude in the upper Midwest." —R. Albert Mohler Jr.**

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Mohler added, "This is important not just for Southern Seminary and not just for the cause of Christian higher education, but for the cause of Christ and the future of the Southern Baptist Convention. This is exactly the kind of development that Southern Baptists should celebrate. In particular, Southern Baptists should be both humbled and deeply encouraged by the fact the trustees of Northland entrusted the future of their hopes and dreams in Southern Seminary and Boyce College precisely because of the theological commitments made at such cost by the

Southern Baptist Convention."

Trustees also elected three professors and granted sabbatical leaves to four members of the faculty.

Elected, effective Jan. 1, 2015, were Adam W. Greenway, dean of the Billy Graham School and William Walker Brookes Associate Professor of Evangelism and Applied Apologetics; Denny Burk, professor of biblical studies; and Donald S. Whitney, professor of biblical spirituality.

Trustees granted sabbaticals to Burk for Feb. 1-July 31, 2015; Jim S. Orrick, professor of literature and culture, for Aug. 1, 2015-July 31, 2016; Peter J. Gentry, Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, for Feb. 1-July 31, 2016; and Michael A.G. Haykin,

professor of church history and biblical spirituality, for Feb. 1-July 31, 2016.

Trustees responded to two referrals from the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting on biblical tithing and reduced fees for online education. Trustees affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message statement on tithing, which is "taught in faithfulness and in fullness at Southern Seminary," and expressed appreciation for Southern Baptists' CP support "that makes this pricing structure the wonder of the evangelical Christian world." —JAMES A. SMITH SR.



## Southern Seminary partners with ERLC for specialized ethics Ph.D. program

A partnership between The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention will allow students to pursue a modular Ph.D. in Christian ethics with an emphasis in public policy, with classes beginning in spring 2015.

“Public theology at the intersection of the church, the gospel, and the culture will represent one of the greatest challenges to the coming generation,” said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary.

The 48-month modular degree allows students to take courses in ethics, public policy, and theology, while completing six courses and two colloquia in Louisville, and two seminars and colloquia in Washington, D.C., and Nashville,

Tennessee. The application deadline for fall 2015 enrollment is Jan. 15, 2015.

“As Christians, we are called to engage the culture with the gospel, and this includes being a prophetic voice in the public square,” said ERLC President Russell Moore. “I am hopeful that this degree program will be a service to the church in raising up a corps of future pastors and professors trained at the highest academic level to be a gospel-focused voice in the academy and on Capitol Hill.”

A Master of Theology with an emphasis in Christian ethics and public policy is also available — 26 hours as research Th.M. or 24 hours as ministry Th.M.

“I’m excited to study ethics and public policy at the highest level and better understand how they integrate and inform our thoughts on cultural issues,” said Andrew Walker, director of policy studies at the ERLC and Ph.D. student at Southern Seminary. “The degree promotes the truth that the gospel is a public reality that demands a public witness.” —S. CRAIG SANDERS

## 400 prospective students attend Southern, Boyce preview days

The Southern Seminary community welcomed nearly 200 prospective students on Oct. 17 for Southern’s Preview Day and 214 students on Oct. 31 for Boyce College’s Preview Day. Prospective graduate students attended faculty lectures, while prospective Boyce students attended classes. Students mingled with faculty over meals, and both groups of prospective students

ended the day with a dessert reception at Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.’s home.

Several prospective seminary students stayed an additional day to participate in the Great Commission Race 5K sponsored by the Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization. Boyce prospective students also attended a late night event with Student Life. —HAYLEY SCHOEPPLER







## Southern Seminary hosts first Aiming High clay shoot

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary hosted 24 participants at the inaugural Aiming High Sporting Clay Shoot at Jefferson Gun Club in Brooks, Kentucky, Oct. 31. Proceeds from the tournament, which was sponsored by Chick-fil-A Glenmary, Station Park Honda, and Remington, went to the Southern Seminary annual fund, which helps lower student tuition. The winning team consisted of David Harrell, Steve Tufts, Larry Anderson, and John Anderson.

“Aiming High was a wonderful event,” said Troy Lawson, a foundation board member from Bardstown, Kentucky. “It

offered a unique way to introduce others to Southern and to raise funds to lower student tuition. I hope next year I’m able to give more and shoot better.”

Student Steve Tate said Aiming High was a “fantastic event for those of us in the Southern Seminary community who appreciate and enjoy hunting and shooting sports.”

A silent auction in conjunction with the tournament featured a basketball signed by University of Kentucky head coach John Calipari and a Southern Seminary custom-engraved Ruger Shotgun. —ROBERT CHAPMAN

## Events



## MacArthur, Charles promote primacy of expository preaching at annual summit

Leading evangelical pastors John MacArthur and H.B. Charles Jr. joined Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. to promote expository preaching at the third annual Expositors Summit, Oct. 28-30.

MacArthur, pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, delivered the prestigious E.Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching in conjunction with the conference. He became the first person to participate in the lectureship a third time, having previously lectured in 2002 and 2006. The lectureship was endowed by E.Y. Mullins, the fourth president of Southern Seminary.

“Parables are Jesus’ theology of salvation in stories,” said the 75-year-old MacArthur, focusing on Gospel parables as his lecture theme. “We can see those parables for what they are,” he added, but for unbelievers “they are nothing but riddles, stories without meaning.”

Examining the “ominous” turn in Jesus’ preaching ministry in Matthew 13 with the introduction of parables, MacArthur took issue with the modern appropriation of Jesus’ teaching as a model for storytelling in the place of expository preaching.

Parables, MacArthur said, are not “open-ended journeys into the imagination,” but divine judgment in concealing the truth from unbelievers.

“Jesus taught on the parables as a judgment,” MacArthur said, “a judgment on those who consistently over years rejected his clear, biblical, propositional, theological, reasonable truth.”

While Jesus only spoke in parables for the purpose of judgment in public settings, MacArthur noted that they provided an opportunity for teaching when Jesus explained the meaning to his disciples.

“All parables are doctrinal. All parables are theological, soteriological, propositional truth when explained,” MacArthur said.

Building on his concept that “all parables are salvation stories,” MacArthur stressed the Good Samaritan is not an allegory, nor is it about kindness or social justice. Instead, the parable is an example of “how to evangelize a legalist” and is at the “heart of the very gospel we preach.”

“This is the point of Jesus’ story: this is love so lavish you’ve never done it,” MacArthur said. “You do not love your neighbor as yourself, and therefore you do not love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And guess what? You need forgiveness.”

In the opening session of the summit, Mohler preached on “The Binding of Isaac” in Genesis 22, reading the story through the lens of gospel revelation. Mohler emphasized the historicity of the account and highlighted elements of the narrative pointing to Christ. Mohler argued that reading any part of Genesis as mere myth undermines the authority and integrity of the entire Bible.

“If it’s just a story, it’s a terrible story,” he said. “On the other side, if it’s the truth, then we’re saved.”

Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, preached two sermons from Ephesians, showing how prayer is a reflection of God’s glory and God works sovereignly in raising people from spiritual death.

Prayer works because of God’s absolute sovereignty, he said, not because of anything intrinsically valuable about prayer itself. “You don’t learn how to pray by studying prayer. You learn how to pray by studying God.”

The whole salvation program, Charles argued, finds its ultimate purpose in the broad display of the “immeasurable riches of [God’s] grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

“Christianity is not about your best life now, but your best life forever,” he said. —S. CRAIG SANDERS AND ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Audio and video from the Expositors Summit are available at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).





## Cross-cultural value of expository preaching lauded at Southern's African-American pastors' conference

Christ-centered expositional preaching is cross-cultural, according to speakers at Southern Seminary's African-American pastors' conference, Oct. 27. The conference, held in conjunction with this year's Expositors Summit, featured African-American preachers Thabiti Anyabwile, H.B. Charles Jr., and Victor Sholar.

"We want to preach in such a way that opens the understanding of our people so that their rejoicing is really in the truth," said Anyabwile, church planting pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Anyabwile opened the conference with a cultural and biblical defense for expositional preaching. He addressed popular objections to expositional preaching, models for expositional preaching, and how expository preaching answers the objections.

Sholar, senior pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, discussed how preaching is both doctrinal and devotional, and expository preaching challenges how pastors preach because "Christ has a holy passion about how your sermon affects people."

Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, preached an expository sermon from Psalm 113. True worship, like what the psalmist exhorts God's people, inevitably involves praise and is always about God, he said. —RUTHANNE IRVIN

Audio from the conference is available at [sbts.edu/resources](https://sbts.edu/resources).

## Racial reconciliation at 'pivot place' for evangelicals, says Perkins in Southern Seminary lecture

A new generation of evangelical Christians is on the verge of racial reconciliation in its churches, said John M. Perkins in the Julius Brown Gay Lecture on Christian Ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Oct. 27.

"We're at a pivot place in history," said Perkins, 84. "This is the first generation of people who are beginning to understand that and values diversity."

The Julius Brown Gay Lectures are among Southern Seminary's most prestigious lectureships. The lectures have brought some of Christianity's most significant figures to the seminary campus, most notably Martin Luther King Jr. in 1961.

Perkins lectured on "Theology and Race in American Christianity" to a standing room-only crowd. He stressed that racial reconciliation and justice are fundamental aspects of Christ's redemptive work.

"Anything outside of developing a multicultural church is a disgrace to the gospel," said Perkins. "It's a slap in the face of a God who created from one human being all the nations and a gospel that its intention was to reconcile people to God and to each other."

Perkins, a Mississippi native, fled to California as a teenager when his brother was murdered by a town marshal. After he professed faith in Christ in 1957, Perkins returned with his wife and children to Mississippi, where he established a ministry to provide both Bible training and community development programs. In 1989, Perkins help found the Christian Community Development Association to spread this philosophy of rebuilding poor neighborhoods with biblical principles.

"The big issue is an economic issue. Justice is how we manage the earth's resources," Perkins said. "There is no biblical trace that God gives us ownership. The earth is the Lord's, and he gives it to us as a stewardship."

After the lecture, Perkins was part of a panel discussion on gospel-centered racial reconciliation. Joining Perkins were Southern Seminary professors T. Vaughn Walker and Jarvis Williams, and Kentucky Baptist Convention leader Curtis Woods.

—S. CRAIG SANDERS

Audio and video of the lecture and panel discussion are available at [sbts.edu/resources](https://sbts.edu/resources).







## Impoverished nations need free enterprise, scholars say at Commonwealth Conference

The Bible provides a blueprint for impoverished nations that gives hope for flourishing, said Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus at Southern Seminary's Commonwealth Conference, Sept. 26-27.

"Our message is that there is hope for poor nations," said Grudem, research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary. "The Bible supports a nation producing its own products and building its own [economic health]."

The conference theme, "The hard work of human flourishing," arose from Grudem and Asmus' 2013 book *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution*, which argues a biblical case for a free enterprise economy.

The presence of Christian faith is a central factor for the growth of a nation, said Asmus, senior economist at the National Center for Policy Analysis. Poverty-stricken nations such as Haiti and India have suffered economically for generations because the dominant religions in those countries resist progress.

"Christianity is progress-prone," Asmus said. "Most religions are progress-resistant. You can start to see countries recover economically and begin to flourish where Christianity is introduced."

Grudem built a biblical case for human flourishing, arguing that the eighth commandment — "You shall not steal" — provides a theological basis for humans producing goods and owning private property.

The Commonwealth Project on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing, funded by the Kern family, is an academic initiative at Southern Seminary to foster a theology of work and economics. —JEFF ROBINSON

Audio and video from the Commonwealth Conference are available at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).

## Wells calls for biblical vision of God's 'holy-love' in Gheens Lectures

A holistic vision of God forms the center of Christian life, freeing us to be "God-centered in our thoughts, God-fearing in our hearts, and God-honoring in our work," said David F. Wells in the Gheens Lectures at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Sept. 24-25.

Wells, distinguished research professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and author of numerous books on evangelicalism and culture, lectured on "the holy-love of God," the central idea from his most recent work, *God in the Whirlwind*.

Wells presented his vision of a fully Godward identity, centered on the union of his holiness and his love. While God's love cannot be fully comprehended without his wrath and judgment, Wells said, his holiness similarly is not completed without his love.

The second lecture focused on the holy-love of God expressed in the revelation of the crucified Jesus Christ, where "God's love provides what God's holiness requires."

His third and final lecture explored the relationship between God's holy-love and the workplace. Invoking Luther's robust theology of vocation, Wells argued that Christians are not meant to retreat from daily life, but are called to work out their faith in the workplace.

"Whatever your calling, give yourself to people," Wells said. "If you do this, you'll find that work is not an interference with your spiritual life." —ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Audio and video from the Gheens Lectures are available at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).





## Scholars celebrate tricentennial of Whitefield's birth in annual Fuller Center conference

Thousands flocked to the Bruton Parish Church in colonial Virginia on Sunday, Dec. 16, 1739, to hear a young preacher they called the “heavenly comet.”

Despite his youth, 25-year-old George Whitefield had attained an arguably unmatched level of popularity in Britain and colonial America. Turning to his text, Matthew 22:42, Whitefield asked the congregation a classic question: “What think ye of Christ?”

By the time Bruton Parish received instructions from the Church of England to bar Whitefield from its pulpit, he was already journeying through the colonies for “the greatest preaching tour of any preacher since the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul,” said Steven J. Lawson, president of OnePassion Ministries in Dallas, Texas.

Lawson, who wrote *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield*, delivered a plenary address at the eighth annual conference for the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on “Whitefield and the Great Awakening,” Oct. 21-22. The two-day conference honoring the tricen-

tennial of Whitefield’s birth featured key scholars such as Thomas S. Kidd, professor of history at Baylor University and author of the recent *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father*, and David Bebbington, professor of history at the University of Stirling and author of notable works on modern evangelicalism.

Whitefield angered Anglican authorities, Lawson said, because he used sermons like “What Think Ye of Christ?” to diagnose what he believed to be “the chief spiritual plague of the day: unconverted church members and, worse, unconverted ministers.”

Whitefield’s preaching style was remarkable because he needed no electric amplification to project his voice to thousands, and his background in theater empowered his inflection.

“Whitefield has been remembered as a preacher who might have graced the stage as much as the pulpit,” said Bebbington.

Whitefield’s content, however, was marked by rich Calvinist theology and a confrontation of sinners, both of which have carried on his legacy to the present.

His establishment of the Calvinistic Methodist Association in 1742 and decades-long theological controversy with John and Charles Wesley are evidence that Whitefield rooted his evangelistic ministry and promotion of the new birth in the tenets of Calvinism.

Whitefield saw sincere Christians in every denomination, and filled pulpits

for Presbyterians and Congregationalist ministers like Jonathan Edwards.

Often considered a pioneer of ecumenical cooperation, Whitefield “drew sharp theological lines when it came to the doctrine of the new birth, as well as the doctrines of grace,” Kidd said. “He believed that no one could preach a full, biblical gospel while neglecting Calvinist principles.”

Whitefield’s Calvinistic legacy extends beyond the Great Awakening to a significant theological turn in the 20th century, said Bebbington. While distaste for Calvinism marginalized Whitefield’s legacy in the centuries after his 1770 death, “his Calvinism was an active agent in subsequent history” through the efforts of Banner of Truth Trust and the ministry of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Bebbington said.

Whitefield’s evangelistic ministry remains a model for preachers today, according to Lawson. “The need of the hour is for spirit-empowered preachers of the Word of God,” said Lawson, who called for “an army of Whitefields in this land and around the world” to proclaim the nature and necessity of the new birth.

Other topics covered in the two-day conference included Whitefield’s piety, his Anglican convictions, friendship with the Wesleys, and the hymnody of the Great Awakening. —S. CRAIG SANDERS

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Audio and video from the Andrew Fuller Conference are available at [sbtn.edu/resources](http://sbtn.edu/resources).

## Sufficiency of Scripture essential to counseling, speakers say at Counsel the Word Conference

Affirming the sufficiency of Scripture in biblical counseling is a “radical idea,” said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at the school’s first Counsel the Word Conference, Sept. 18-19.

The conference, co-sponsored by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), featured popular practitioners Paul David Tripp, David Powlison, and Heath Lambert during the two-day event.

Commenting on how few counselors commit to the sufficiency of Scripture, Mohler said, “If we’re going to think about biblical counseling and we’re going to understand that it must be premised upon the sufficiency of Scripture, we must recognize what a radical idea that is.”

Tripp, popular author and founder of Paul Tripp Ministries, offered four words for use in personal reflection and counseling others: gaze, remember, rest, and act. He encouraged listeners to remember their identity in Christ while gazing on the beauty of the Lord, calling their hearts to rest in God and also to act “because God is wise and is all that he is for you by grace.”

Powlison, executive director of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) and editor of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, said that Scripture is sufficient for identifying important decisions in a person’s life, to inhabit reality, and to equip Christians for ministry.

Lambert, president of ACBC and counseling professor at Boyce College, emphasized the necessity of counseling with a sufficient Word as the source of the counselor’s authority.

The conference also featured a panel discussion and breakout sessions about counseling topics like anxiety, bipolar disorder, brain injuries, anger issues, and homosexuality. —RUTHANNE IRVIN

Audio and video from Counsel the Word are available at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).



## SBTS hosts Doxology and Theology conference

Music ministers are given the task to teach their congregations theology through song, said speakers at the Doxology and Theology conference, Nov. 13-15, hosted on Southern Seminary’s campus.

The conference featured well-known musicians and music ministers, including Keith Getty, Matt Papa, Bob Kauffin, Matt Carter, Harold Best, and Matt Boswell. The seminary’s Norton Hall Band, Indelible Grace, and other musicians led worship at the conference.

Getty offered suggestions for how music ministers can bridge the gaps in their ministries. He encouraged songwriters to “aim to write hymns you can carry with you through life.” Hymns that endure time are not only rich with theology but with a melody that transcends time, he said. “If we’re going to be critical about our theology we have to be critical about our art, too.” —RUTHANNE IRVIN

More information about Doxology and Theology is available at [doxologyandtheology.com](http://doxologyandtheology.com).







## ‘Timeless’ ministry of Spurgeon examined in Alumni Academy

More than 125 alumni of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary attended a two-day Alumni Academy, Oct. 9-10, devoted to the life and ministry of the great British pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

“The ministry of a man like Spurgeon is timeless,” said Thomas J. Nettles, who wrote *Living By Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. “His attentions and affections were focused on things that were not merely ephemeral, but were eternal. The longevity of interest in him is something that certainly commends him to all of us.”

Nettles, who retired from full-time teaching at Southern Seminary in May, served as the main lecturer for the conference. He taught on Spurgeon as a pastor-theologian, Spurgeon’s biblical preaching, his writing as a pastoral discipline, his commitment to benevolent ministry, and his involvement in theological controversies.

In his lectures, Nettles argued that God’s work through Spurgeon began during his teenage years. Nettles identified early lessons Spurgeon learned that established the foundation for his ministry, including the interpretation of his life in light of God’s providence, a conviction of Baptist ecclesiology, and commitment to Scripture as the bedrock for his preaching and writing.

“Spurgeon believed a man whom God calls to preach the Word must have a resolute confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture and must be committed to the exposition of it,” Nettles said.

Southern Seminary professors Michael A.G. Haykin and Donald S. Whitney also lectured on Spurgeon’s view of the Holy Spirit in ministry and his personal piety. —JEFF ROBINSON

Alumni Academy provides free ongoing instruction for alumni and prospective students of Southern Seminary. To find out more about the program, visit [events.sbts.edu](http://events.sbts.edu).

## In McCall Lecture, Hewitt examines leadership examples from political leaders

Successful leaders need a strong will and disciplined life, said broadcaster Hugh Hewitt in the fourth annual Duke K. McCall Leadership Lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Nov. 6. The lecture, Hewitt said, is important because of the mission of the seminary to send out leaders into the world with the Great Commission.

“I know what the mission of this institution is: it’s a volcano of leadership and it throws out leaders across the world,” he said. “Long it’s done that and long may it do so.”

Hewitt, a broadcast journalist and lawyer hosts the Hugh Hewitt Show with more than two million listeners each week, lectured to the seminary community about the need for strong leaders in today’s society. He examined three leaders he esteems as important from personal experience, and character qualities that he believes make each of them good leaders.

Hewitt discussed leadership qualities from Richard Nixon, whom Hewitt worked for on his writing staff; his former Reagan coworker Chief Justice John Roberts; and 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Hewitt also spoke about George W. Bush’s presidency and his leadership skills during his time in office.

Hewitt offered students five practical tips for growth in leadership qualities: be physically prepared to endure the hardships that accompany leadership positions; spend ample time with spouse and family because leaders can never do it too often; read consistently and widely, both for growth and enjoyment; embrace social media with discipline and purpose; and be deeply involved with politics. —RUTHANNE IRVIN

Audio and video from the lecture is available online at [sbts.edu/resources](http://sbts.edu/resources).



## *Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah*

(Holman Reference 2014, \$12.99), James M. Hamilton Jr.

Would you preach sermons from Ezra and Nehemiah? I have spent my entire life in Southern Baptist churches, and only remember hearing five sermons from Nehemiah — three during revival week as a teenager and two this summer at Sojourn Community Church. That means I have listened to roughly 1,500 sermons in my lifetime and only five of them, to my recollection, explicated the text of Ezra and Nehemiah.

“By faith Ezra and Nehemiah were used of God to advance God’s kingdom by provoking, preserving, and adding to the hope for a glorious eschatological restoration when the Messiah would reign,” writes James M. Hamilton Jr. in his new book, *Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah*, which seeks to rectify the lack of faithful biblical exposition on these seemingly insignificant Old Testament narratives.

Hamilton, associate professor of biblical theology at Southern Seminary, contributed to the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series with sermons he delivered in 2010 at Kenwood Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, where he is the senior pastor. Hamilton’s edition is comprised of seven sermons from Ezra, nine sermons from

Nehemiah, and a closing sermon on the messianic hope evident in both books.

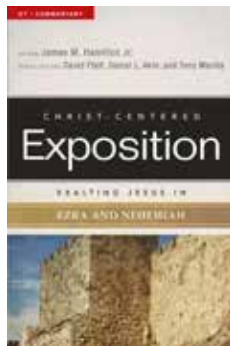
Each chapter includes a main idea, structural outline of the passage, historical context, exegesis, application, and discussion questions. The accessible arrangement and the clarity of Hamilton’s writing provide the reader with not only a helpful study guide but also an instructional model for sermon preparation.

The book’s most endearing trait is not

Hamilton’s precise exegesis but the wide breadth of his illustrations — ranging from fantasy-fiction, classical music, and history — which attests to his voracious reading and creative application.

Hamilton’s work is an affordable commentary on two neglected books of the Bible, and can function either as a study guide for

group discussion or a handbook for a minister determined to preach through these difficult texts. *Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah* alters the perception as to the significance of these biblical texts, demonstrating that they are indeed integral in setting the stage for Jesus Christ in the big story of the Bible. —S. CRAIG SANDERS



### Excerpts from the book:

## 1

“No method, program, or initiative — not even a Great Commission Resurgence — can be more effective than the living and active Word of God.”

## 2

“God has always been pleased to choose the weak things of the world. ... God chose Ezra and Nehemiah, who for all their standing in the Persian court, in the grand scheme of things, were not that important in themselves. And God chooses people like us and churches like ours for the manifestation of His glory and the advancement of His kingdom on the earth.”

## 3

“If you desire significance, what will make you significant is not something about you. It’s the Word of God, the promises of God ... If you want significance, the way to attain it is by trusting the promises God has made.”

## 4

“That desire to know God, to be in His presence, to walk with Him all our days—that is the desire that will enable us to overcome sin. The safest place in the world to be is in the obedient worship of God because to worship God in obedience to His Word is to be in His presence. To be in the presence of God brings the feelings that result in the joyful shout that will be heard far away (Ezra 3:13).”

## Preaching Christ in Ezra and Nehemiah: James M. Hamilton Jr. discusses new commentary

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Below, James M. Hamilton Jr., associate professor of biblical theology at Southern Seminary, discusses his new book, *Exalting Jesus in Ezra and Nehemiah*, with Southern Seminary Magazine managing editor S. Craig Sanders.

**CS:** You say that you didn't preach this for a building project. What role did this sermon series play in building "a church of seemingly insignificant people with normal lives and normal problems?"

**JH:** Some people regard Ezra and Nehemiah as relatively insignificant books in the big story of the Bible. You've got

two books of the Bible where a little city, an outpost of the Persian Empire, is repopulated and then has its walls reconstructed. How significant is that? You can almost look at this and say, "This is what God is doing in the world? This is God's program? That little city of Jerusalem? That's nowhere."

We could say this about any church, in any city, in any country in the world. So, I find it tremendously encouraging to look at this from a worldly perspective: this insignificant thing that God does through these two men, Ezra and Nehemiah. This is where from a biblical and spiritual perspective, God is at work in the world. This is how God is advancing his kingdom.

I think it's encouraging for us because when we find ourselves in what seems to be out-of-the-way, insignificant places, we can be encouraged that we're really in good company.

**CS:** You demonstrate that the Word of God played a central role in helping Ezra and Nehemiah accomplish their task; it allows people to prosper. How do we lose sight of the Word in the midst of methods, programs, and initiatives?

**JH:** I think what happens is we slowly drift away from the Bible, and the world and its concerns slowly, incrementally, begin to eclipse the significance of the Bible in our own lives.

What's remarkable about people like Ezra is that he set his heart to study, to follow, and to teach the Bible. Here's this Persian diplomat whose priorities are not political networking, ladder-climbing, or diplomacy according to the world's standards. His priorities are, "I'm going to study the Bible; I'm going to obey the Bible; and I'm going to teach the Bible."

That is profoundly encouraging because we can look at our own situation and say whatever my calling in life might be, I can adopt Ezra's priorities and I can study and obey and teach the Scriptures just like Ezra did.

**CS:** What is your method for preaching a Christ-centered sermon from the Old Testament?

**JH:** A holistic understanding of Old Testament theology, and ultimately biblical theology, enables us to see how the Messianic hope or the Christ-centeredness of the document is actually functioning.

From Genesis 3:15 forward, the people of God are looking for this seed of the woman that's going to defeat evil by crushing the head of the serpent and thereby re-open the way to Eden. Therefore, the concern to record the history of God's people is a concern to keep track of what God has done in the outworking of that ultimate purpose of God: to overcome evil and reopen the way to Eden, reopen the way to God's presence. The concern for that figure is always lurking just under the surface, even if he isn't being discussed on the surface.

When preaching a Christ-centered sermon from the Old Testament, it's not like a Gospel where they're telling you the story of Jesus. However, it is giving you the history of people who are looking for a perspective of someone who's looking for that future coming king from the line of David.





## *Understanding Your New Life in Jesus Christ: Letters to a New Believer*

(Rainer 2014, \$9.97), George H. Martin

In the study of history, letters are some of the greatest artifacts that remain for our education. We write letters to friends, family, husbands, wives, children, even future employers. Scripture is full of letters to churches and disciples, freezing the words in time for generations to come.

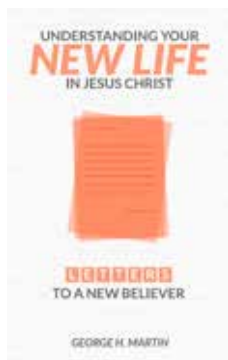
George H. Martin recently published a collection of letters he wrote to new converts in his church during a season of his pastoral ministry. In the book, *Understanding Your New Life in Jesus Christ: Letters to a New Believer*, Martin, Southern Seminary professor of Christian missions and world religions, published letters he wrote to new believers in his congregation on a regular basis, encouraging them in their new faith and instructing them about important biblical doctrines.

“The design of this little book of letters,” he writes, “is to speak to those who seek assurance, and who wish to know more about their salvation and how they are to live.”

The book contains 11 letters to “Matthew,” a new believer who Martin writes to about topics like justification, sanctification, repentance, faith, adoption, assurance of salvation, church member-

ship, and how to continue faithfully as a new believer.

He focuses two chapters on sanctification by reiterating Matthew’s new identity in Christ. “The ultimate goal of the work of sanctification is the elimination of all sin from your life and your complete conformation to the image of God’s Son,” he writes. “That is, the ultimate goal is to be holy as the Lord is holy.”



Martin emphasizes each aspect of these doctrines, writing, “If we err on these fundamental matters, we will not know the salvation that Jesus brings to sinners.” Martin hopes to encourage believers with these letters, whether old or young, new to the faith or giants of the faith, and he does this through gently and thoroughly explaining what it means to follow

Christ everyday.

This book can be used as a resource for discipleship or a refresher on critical Christian doctrines. Readers will benefit from the easy-to-read format and tone of Martin’s writing that encourages believers of all ages in their relationship with Christ. —REVIEW BY RUTHANNE IRVIN

### Excerpts from the book:

## 1

“God has given us his Word as a sure guide, and it is to the Scriptures that we must ultimately look. Through the centuries, however, to his church he has also given his ministers, who have explained and applied the Scriptures in ways that have spoken to the hearts of believers and given them great comfort. The design of this little book of letters is to speak to those who seek assurance, and who wish to know more about their salvation and how they are to live.”

## 2

“The ultimate goal of the work of sanctification is the elimination of all sin from your life and your complete conformation to the image of God’s Son. That is, the ultimate goal is to be holy as the Lord is holy.”

## 3

“First, you are a child of God, not because of something you have done, but because God has created new life in you. You have been born of God’s Spirit and not by any human works (John 1:12, 13).”

## 4

“Though you will experience the painful awareness that sin still remains, as for Paul, there must be a constant and increasing realization that it no longer has the mastery over you as it once did.”

## Settled in the faith: George Martin publishes letters for new believers

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *In what follows, George H. Martin, professor of Christian missions and world religions, discusses his new book, Understanding Your New Life in Jesus Christ, with Southern Seminary Magazine news writer RuthAnne Irvin.*

**RAI:** In the book you say that you originally sent these letters to new believers earlier in your pastoral ministry. Why did you do that?

**GM:** I wanted to have that direct, personal contact with them as they began to understand more clearly what had happened to them by coming to Christ. There's a number of ways you can do that. You can set up appointments, meet with them — you can go to their homes.

And I would do both of those. I would talk with them in my study, I would talk with them in their homes, and just in the hallway. I thought this offered a personal, more systematic, intentional approach.

**RAI:** How did you see the letters benefit the new believers you sent them to?

**GM:** One thing the letters often did was to encourage conversation. It was very common for someone to say, "Ah, George, I got another letter from you this week." And I might say, "Well, what did you think about such and such in the letter?" It encouraged and continued conversation with these new believers. They just need that nurturing relationship. I think the letters provided them with some specific biblical, theological, and practical information that they needed to grow in Christ.

**RAI:** If the primary audience is new believers, how do you see older believers benefiting from this book?

**GM:** Sure. It is not uncommon that as we grow older chronologically we begin to reflect on our initial salvation experience. And as the years go by, that initial experience sort of fades in our memories and we begin to wonder, "Wow, what really happened back then?" The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to examine themselves to make sure they are in the faith. Peter wrote to his readers and instructed them: make your call to the election sure. This is a task not only for the new believer, but for the middle-aged believer, the elderly believer, the one who's walked with Christ for many years. It's a lifelong task that we're commanded to take on. So these letters, though addressed out of a pastor's heart to new believers, benefit anyone who has walked with Christ for any number of years.



## Thoughts

## Daniel and the faithful in the hands of a saving God

By Oren Martin

The book of Daniel has much to say about the unrivaled sovereignty of God. He is the God of history and the King of kings, and his dominion is an everlasting dominion. It also has much to say about the faithfulness and courage of those who live under his sovereignty in the face of rival claims — claims that are still made today. For this reason, then, Christians must prepare to remain faithful in the face of opposition.

As the book opens, Daniel is under pressure to become a good Babylonian. He is immersed in Babylonian culture, but when he draws the line and resolves not to defile himself with the king's food, God gives him favor and success in the eyes of the king. Later, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow down to the king's statue and disobey God by committing idolatry, for they were confident that God would rescue them. Perhaps even more astonishingly, they are courageous in the

face of fiery death even if it means not being rescued (3:17-18).

In these accounts, Daniel and his companions are models for Christians today who face increasingly secular establishments that want to reduce the autonomy of religious institutions and limit the influence of faith in the public square. As our forefathers recognized, ideas have consequences and, on a societal level, every government operates according to its own worldview. Christians, then, must think and act wisely because biblical faith cannot be limited to a strictly private or individual affair. It is, after all, an obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26) — and we must obey God rather than men. It's not only what we do on Sundays, as important as that is in the lives of Christians. We follow Jesus, who, last time I checked, is not just open for business on Sundays. We follow the crucified and risen King to our death — even death for idolatrous compromise — so that his resurrection life might live in us.

So we should pray for Christians who are working to protect the exercise of religious freedom, and consider getting involved ourselves. We should hold fast our convictions when threatened to compromise, while allowing others to hold theirs when they differ from our own. We should pray for our Christian brothers and sisters across the globe who have never enjoyed the religious freedoms we have been given.

In the end, history tells us that, for the most part, God's people remained in exile despite Daniel's faithfulness and courage. In fact, God's people still live in exile. The call for Christians to remain faithful and courageous is true nonetheless. Ultimately, our rescue, like Daniel's, will come not with our faithfulness and courage but with the faithfulness and courage of another, one like a son of man who will come with the clouds of heaven and will bring with him those who are faithful to the end. His kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed (7:13-14).

Oren Martin is assistant professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary and Boyce College.



Image: Gustave Doré





## Religious liberty, political engagement, and the future of ministry

By Bryan Baise

There is much that is abuzz in evangelicalism with a theology of work. We are thinking clearly, eloquently, and deeply about how God honors our work and what he calls Christians to be in their vocation. I cannot praise this enough. It is a wonderful step in the right direction of seeing how the gospel touches all aspects of our lives. If God is concerned with how we work, I think he is also concerned with how we engage in politics. We have wandered into what seems like a new land, without a Moral Majority, political mandate, or cultural momentum swinging in our direction. Indeed, the cultural tide has shifted beneath our feet faster than you can say, “Allons-y!” Indeed, college students and young adults are feeling the effects of this, and lament Paul Simon’s words: “Who’ll be my role-model, now that my role-model is gone?”

The Moral Majority is no more, and it has left many students wondering whether we should just “duck back down the alley” and leave the politics to the pagans. I think that would be a mistake, and a serious one at that. Students would be well served by developing a theology of politics, and in particular how your future ministry will be shaped by how or if you engage, politically, with the society around you. Christians are not called to pull back into our enclaves. Furthermore, apathy about political engagement is not a Christian virtue — quite the opposite. God is intimately concerned with not only the church’s life and doctrine, but also how his sword is wielded for the good of a society (Romans 13.1-4). *Government* wields that sword. In other words, God cares not only for his people who have covenanted with him in Christ but also for those who care very little for him yet carry

the sword of justice he has provided. This includes how government cares for the least of these, the poor, those who’ve fallen on hard times, and religious liberty.

The daunting trajectory of religious liberty is one that will not only befall Christians in American society but also our fellow neighbor, whom we are called to love as ourselves (Matthew 12.28-34). Love for religious liberty is, in part, love for neighbor. As future pastors, teachers, and leaders, we need to be aware of the daunting task before us. We need to be willing to speak truth to power, and stand alongside those with whom we disagree on non-essentials to defend the essentials.

“It is no crime to be ignorant of economics,” Murray N. Rothbard once opined, “but it is totally irresponsible to have a loud and vociferous opinion on economic subjects while remaining in this state of ignorance.” Depending on the reader, this may be condemnatory or you may find yourself in complete agreement. Indeed, this may be precisely why you have shown little interest in politics or have never sought to study it further. Certainly, you have a “loud and vociferous” opinion, whether it’s about the corruption of politics, or why we should have less concern for political engagement and more concern for the purity of the church. But it is one thing to have such ideas; it is another thing altogether to have *informed* ideas about political engagement. Like apathy, ignorance is not a Christian virtue.

A healthy gag reflex toward the political drama is good for the Christian, I think. Eschewing the process altogether is not. Learn about the nature of God and government, read widely the ideas that shaped our nation. Think hard about religious liberty and the church. You’ll find, I think, that your current and future ministry will reap the fruits of such labor.

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Bryan Baise is assistant professor of worldview and apologetics and director of the worldview and apologetics program at Boyce College.

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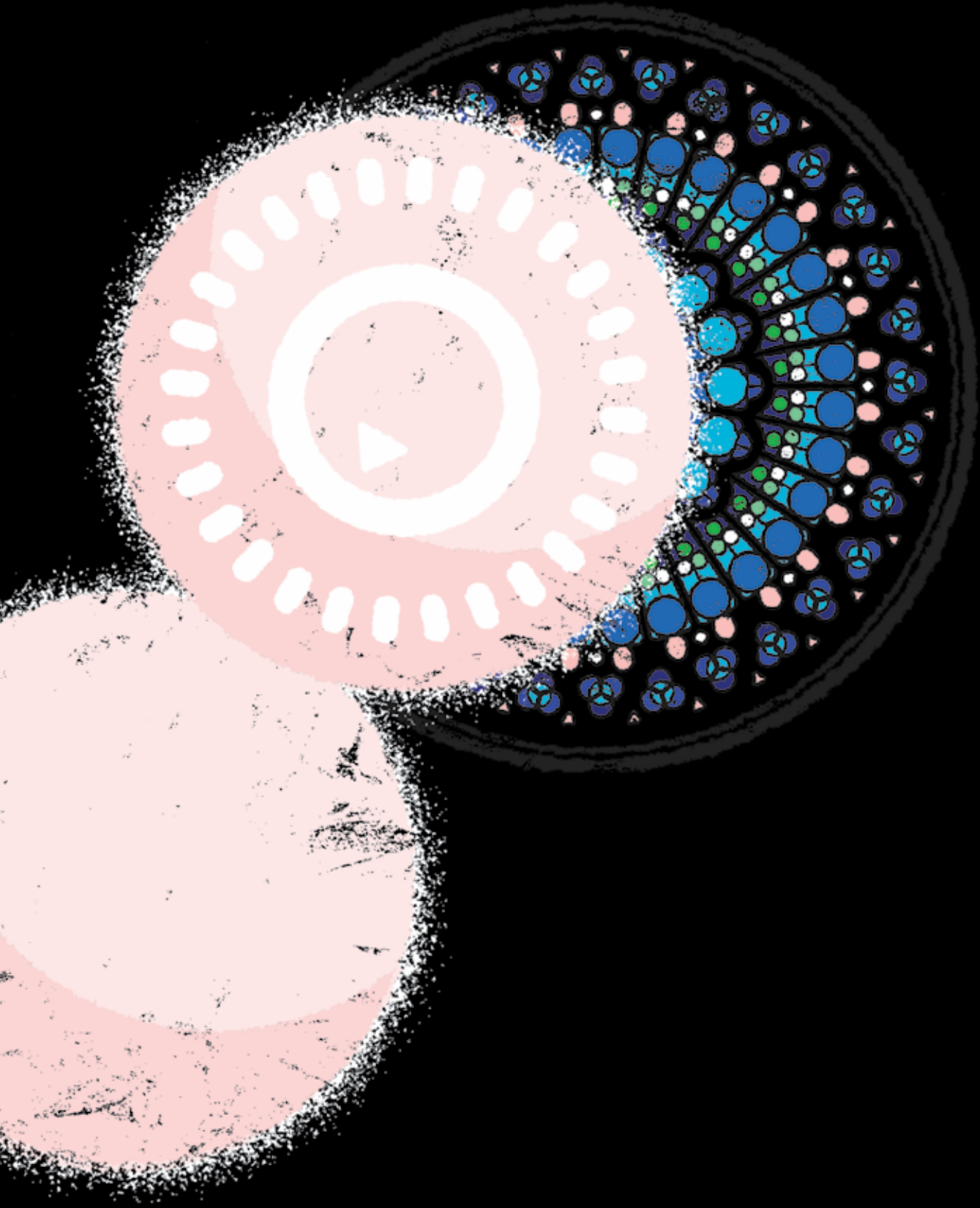


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# Erotic liberty v. religious liberty

HOW THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION IS ECLIPSING THE FIRST FREEDOM

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

In the context of acute and radical moral change, we now face an inevitable conflict of liberties that is excruciating, immense, and eminent. The conflict of liberties means that the new moral regime, with the backing of the courts and the regulatory state, will prioritize erotic liberty over religious liberty.

Over the course of the last several decades, we have seen this revolution coming. Erotic liberty has been elevated as a right more fundamental than religious liberty. Erotic liberty, foreign to the founders of this nation, now marginalizes, subverts, and neutralizes religious liberty — a liberty highly prized by the builders of this nation and its constitutional order. We must remember that the framers of the Constitution did not believe they were creating rights within the Constitution, but rather acknowledging rights given to all humanity by “nature and nature’s God.”

Erotic liberty emerges directly from arguments made in opinions handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In *Griswold v. Connecticut*, Justice William O. Douglas’ “finding” of the right to privacy, and thus a right to contraceptives within the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, laid much of the groundwork for the advancement of erotic liberty. As Douglas acknowledged, this right is by no means explicit or even present in the text of the Constitution but is drawn from “penumbras” emanating from the Constitution.

Similarly, in the *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* decision on abortion in 1992, Justices Sandra Day O’Connor, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter declared, “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

A direct line can be drawn from *Casey* to the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision striking down all laws against sodomy. In his majority opinion, Kennedy said, quoting from *Casey*:

These matters [personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education], involving those most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, choices central to personal dignity and autonomy, are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of

existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State.

Kennedy added, “Persons in a homosexual relationship may seek autonomy for these purposes, just as heterosexual persons do.”

In the Proposition 8 (*Hollingsworth v. Perry*) and Defense of Marriage Act (*United States v. Windsor*) cases in 2013, the line was extended to advancing the momentum toward the total normalization of homosexuality and the legalization of same-sex marriage. In *Windsor*, Justice Antonin Scalia announced that the imposition of legalized same-sex marriage coast-to-coast was now inevitable. He accused Justice Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion, and his colleagues of failing in their willingness to state this boldly. As Scalia anticipated, all we are waiting for now is for the other shoe to drop.

On Oct. 6, 2014, that shoe effectively has dropped. This day in U.S. legal history will be remembered for many years to come as a landmark day toward same-sex marriage. It was the day the nation’s highest court took one of the lowest paths of least resistance. It now seeks to maintain its prestige by avoiding the backlash the Court experienced in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. It wants to have its victory without taking further risks to its reputation.

Consistent throughout all of these legal arguments is the assumption that erotic liberty is central to the project of defining “one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life,” as Kennedy found in *Casey*.

The use of that language demonstrates how erotic liberty typifies the freedom most cherished by the culture and most respected by the courts in the context of the secular age. A liberty that did not even exist when the Constitution was written now supersedes protections that are explicit in the Constitution. This explains the trajectory of court decisions and developments in the law and, at the same time, reveals the trajectory we can expect in the future.

In his withering dissent in *Lawrence*, Scalia argued that Kennedy set the stage for the legalization of same-sex marriage,

**The challenge we now face consigns every believer, every congregation, and every religious institution to an arena of conflict where erotic liberty and religious liberty now clash.**

which Kennedy denied. Scalia clearly found no joy in being right when the *Windsor* decision struck down the federal government's law defining marriage exclusively as the union of a man and a woman.

Otherwise prescient in his analysis of the law, Scalia was incorrect about one matter. Scalia argued the succession of cases representing the progress of the gay liberation movement effectively meant the end of all morals legislation.

But it does not. The present trajectory of the courts only means the end of all morals legislation recognizable to American society just a matter of decades ago. Indeed, we can anticipate *new* morals legislation put into place that will reinforce the significant gains made by the sexual liberationists. Christians and other religious citizens will have to pay careful attention as these new laws are established, for religious liberty will be at stake and at risk in each of them.

The "take no prisoners" approach now demanded by the moral liberationists and increasingly accepted by the courts means that any exceptions are likely to be tenuous and very narrow, even when laws and regulations supposedly allow "religious exceptions." We have already seen this in the contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act. Obama administration authorities spoke of religious exemption only in terms of "houses of worship," demonstrating the determination to narrow even allowed exceptions.

The aftermath of the Supreme Court decision siding with Hobby Lobby against the contraception mandate — an important exception to the rule of erotic liberty trumping religious liberty — nevertheless demonstrated that large sectors of American society and American political life have shifted their position in the contest of liberties.

Just two decades ago, legislation known as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) was put in place. That act required the federal government to respect religious liberty by demanding that all laws or restrictive regulations serve a legitimate and rational social purpose and be crafted so as to avoid conflict with the religious conscience of every citizen. That law, co-sponsored in the U.S. Senate by Orrin Hatch and Edward Kennedy, passed in the House of Representatives without a single dissenting vote and with 97 votes in the Senate. The fact that a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat co-sponsored the legislation indicated the comprehensive support for RFRA represented at the time.

In the Hobby Lobby decision, Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the majority, cited RFRA to show that Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties had a religious liberty right that trumped the contraception mandate. In response, Harry Reid, the Democratic leader in the U.S. Senate, advocated legislation, supported by a large number of Democratic senators, to repeal RFRA or amend it so that it no longer had any legal teeth.

The challenge we now face consigns every believer, every congregation, and every religious institution to an arena of conflict where erotic liberty and religious liberty now clash. This poses no danger to theological liberals and their churches and denominations, which have accommodated themselves to the new morality and find themselves quite comfortable within the context of the new moral regime. Furthermore, some of these liberal denominations and churches style themselves as defenders of the new morality and actually advocate legal modifications that restrict the religious liberty rights of more conservative churches and denominations.

The arenas of conflict are already numerous and multiplying. Christian colleges and universities will face the immediate threat of being further marginalized in the larger culture. Some will be threatened with the denial of accreditation and labeled outlaws simply because they remain true to historic Christian conviction and biblical accountability. Given the fact that





## Sermons ‘fair game’: A ‘very clear signal’ from Houston

Houston Mayor Annise Parker rescinded on October 29, 2014, subpoenas issued to five evangelical preachers for sermons and other forms of communications related to a campaign to repeal a gay rights ordinance. Parker’s action came after a national firestorm over the subpoenas which came to light two weeks earlier — and after an insufficient revision of the subpoenas that supposedly removed sermons from their scope.

The sermon subpoena controversy arose in the midst of a legal fight over a citizens’ referendum. In May, the mayor narrowly pushed through the city council a gay-rights ordinance that included a provision permitting transgendered persons in public facilities use of whatever restroom they demanded and that if they were not accommodated they could then file suit or file charges. Houstonians upset about that ordinance collected petitions in order to get the issue before voters by referendum. But after collecting more than enough signatures, the city attorney invalidated many of the signatures, turning back the referendum attempt. The lawsuit currently pending is from citizens in Houston suing the city government for that ruling; and that’s what led to the subpoenas and the current controversy.

“The goal of the subpoenas is to defend against a lawsuit and not to provoke a public debate,” Parker said in announcing she was rescinding the subpoenas. “I don’t want to have a national debate about freedom of religion when my whole purpose is to defend a strong and wonderful and appropriate city ordinance against local attack. And by taking this step today we remove that discussion about freedom of religion.”

I think by this action, Parker indeed hopes she can get out of the mess she created for herself and her city on the issue of religious liberty, but that is not a well-placed hope. The fact that the subpoenas were later withdrawn doesn’t remove at all the fact that they were at first issued. And furthermore, they weren’t just issued by attorneys working on behalf of the mayor and the city — they were defended by the mayor and the city attorney. Parker infamously tweeted in her initial response to the controversy that sermons are “fair game.” And the city attorney said if these preachers were talking about issues he

deemed political, then their own speech was not going to be protected.

Parker said the subpoenas were withdrawn because the issue had become a national controversy over religious liberty, which she said was not her intent. But here’s the problem: the subpoenas were issued to pastors for materials that were germane to their pastoral ministry. This was a controversy of the mayor’s own making.

Christians should surely be glad that the subpoenas were withdrawn. But we can’t forget that the subpoenas were issued, representing a form of intimidation not only against the pastors whose sermons were first subpoenaed but also to any preacher who will teach or preach on the terrain that some civic official will call political.

**Christians should surely be glad that the subpoenas were withdrawn. But we can’t forget that the subpoenas were issued, representing a form of intimidation ... to any preacher who will teach or preach on the terrain that some civic official will call political.**

This is a real warning shot showing how close we are to real infringement on religious liberty. A very clear signal has been sent, and we will have to watch this and other situations closely.

This incident underlines just how close to us actually are very real infringements and threats to religious freedom. It is undeniably a news story that these subpoenas were withdrawn, but that pales over against the significance of the news story that the subpoenas were ever issued.

—R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.

**A review of the religious liberty challenges already confronting the conscience, conduct, and belief rights of convictional Christians shows us how daunting all this really is. We can be sure this is not the end of our struggle. It is only the beginning.**

accrediting agencies and organizations such as the NCAA are identified as voluntary associations, they can make a legal claim to discriminate on that basis. But the “voluntary” nature of organizations such as regional accrediting agencies is undermined by the fact that, in many jurisdictions, colleges and universities are required to have such accreditation in order to have legal authority to conduct their programs.

The church’s freedom is not only the freedom to preach and teach within the confines of its worship service. Even as there are those now arguing to restrict or sanction speech by preachers, the more pressing threat is that the ministry of the church will be constricted by means of other regulations and discriminatory policies. Christians in the business world must watch very carefully as legislation such as the Employment Nondiscrimination Act comes into view. Without protection for religious liberty and Christian conscience, these laws will be used in a way that requires many Christians in business to decide between compromising conviction or going out of business.

Employees and executives in many corporations and American institutions already face this threat. They must either endorse the new moral regime or get out of the way. Christian humanitarian organizations face being cut off from access to ministry, unless they endorse the new sexual morality and operate by its precepts. Students in public schools face the denial of religious liberty rights, free association rights, and religious liberty rights as speech, thought, and conduct are increasingly defined in accordance with the new sexual morality. Christian couples may well face severe headwinds as they attempt to adopt children. As the revolution continues, they may find a host of secular family experts threatening to invade the sanctity of family life by asserting a moral authority contrary to that of the parents.

These are not idle threats or issues of hypothetical concern. Every one of these threats is rooted in arguments already made in the public square or political and legal processes already in play.

Interestingly, one of the early advocates of gay marriage warned his fellow moral revolutionaries that they must be careful lest they trample upon the conscience rights of their adversaries. In his book, *Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought*, Jonathan Rauch said:

Today, I fear that many people on my side of the gay-equality question are forgetting our debt to the system that freed us. Some gay people — not all, not even most, but quite a few — want to expunge discriminatory views. “Discrimination is discrimination and bigotry is bigotry,” they say, “and they are intolerable whether or not they happen to be someone’s religion or moral creed.”

Rauch counters: “I hope that when gay people — and non-gay people — encounter hateful or discriminatory opinions, we respond not by trying to silence or punish them but by trying to correct them.” Very few signs, however, are signaling that Rauch’s hope is being heard.

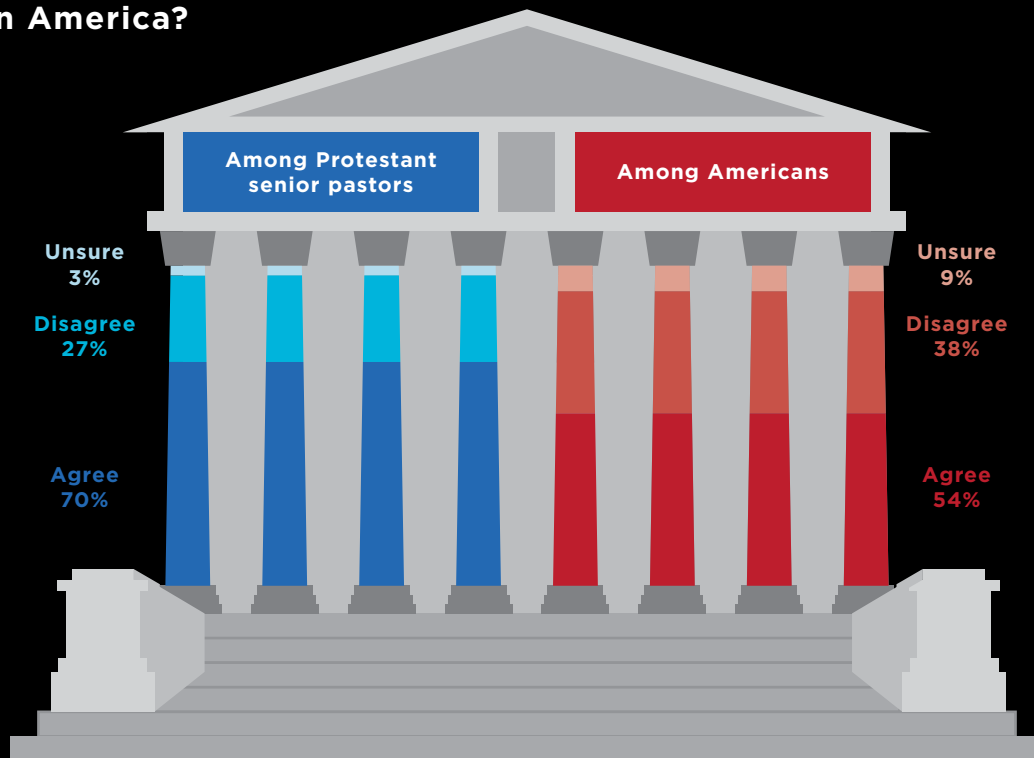
A review of the religious liberty challenges already confronting the conscience, conduct, and belief rights of convictional Christians shows us how daunting all this really is. We can be sure this is not the end of our struggle. It is only the beginning.

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R. Albert Mohler Jr. is the 9th president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book, *Aftermath: Life, Love, and Liberty in the Wake of a Sexual Revolution* (Bethany House, September 2015).

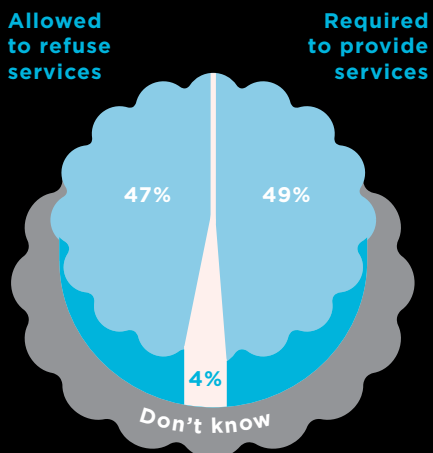
# AMERICA'S CHANGING ATTITUDES ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND GAY MARRIAGE

Is religious liberty on the decline in America?



Data above from "Pastors Believe Religious Liberty on Decline in U.S.," published Feb. 20, 2014, on LifeWayResearch.com.

Should wedding-related businesses be required to provide services to same-sex couples?



Trend in support for same-sex marriage



Data from bottom two graphics from surveys conducted Sept. 2-9, 2014. From Pew Research Center.



# Russell Moore: Extending John Leland's religious liberty legacy for Southern Baptists — and everyone else

Story by James A. Smith Sr.

Photography by Emil Handke

WASHINGTON — Separated by more than 200 years of history but in lockstep with the same convictions and commitments, Russell Moore is extending the legacy of American colonial Baptist preacher John Leland as he vigorously defends and seeks to advance religious freedom.

“Without religious liberty there is no other freedom,” said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. “That’s because religious liberty is not simply a political issue or simply a cultural issue. But at its foundation, it is a gospel issue.

“If you really believe that the gospel comes through the new birth, then no state can compel belief and no state can restrict belief,” Moore said, summarizing Leland’s argument. “If we really believe that every person stands before the judgment seat of Christ, then we cannot outsource that accountability to bureaucrats or to tyrants.”

In a September interview with *Southern Seminary Magazine* in his modest office in Leland House — the ERLC’s Washington, D.C., headquarters named for the Baptist great — Moore

reflected on the imperilment of religious freedom, the biblical and historical basis of the first freedom, and how the ERLC is working to defend the freedom of conscience.

The ERLC is the SBC agency charged with educating Southern Baptists about moral and religious liberty issues and advocating to policymakers the SBC’s convictions. Moore was elected ERLC president in 2013 after serving at Southern Seminary since 2004 as School of Theology dean, senior vice president of academic administration, and professor of Christian theology and ethics. Today, he is distinguished professor of Christian ethics at Southern.

The presence of Leland is unmistakable in Leland House, a three-story building on Capitol Hill, just a few blocks from the Capitol and Supreme Court buildings. The colonial preacher is present from artwork depicting his pivotal 1788 encounter with Founding Father James Madison to *The Writings of John Leland* prominently displayed on Moore’s desk.

But more than the name on the building, office décor, and reading material, the legacy of John Leland continues through



the work of Moore — a modern-day champion of religious liberty facing challenges similar to those of his colonial Baptist ancestor.

On the first anniversary of his inauguration as the ERLC's eighth president, Moore spoke passionately about religious freedom, calling it the ERLC's "number one priority." He noted how his doctoral studies at Southern Seminary prepared him to voice concerns for religious liberty on behalf of Southern Baptists by being immersed in the writings of Leland and other Baptist advocates of freedom of conscience.

"Religious freedom is imperiled in America right now, and I think the situation is much worse than what the church knows or recognizes," he said. "I think we face the greatest challenge to religious liberty now that we have seen since the adoption of the First Amendment."

In light of that challenge, almost every other issue he addresses has a "religious freedom component," Moore said, citing as examples: marriage and family, human dignity and the right to life, and helping the poor and vulnerable.

### LELAND AS MODEL

"John Leland was significant because he was a fiery gospel preacher who believed the Bible and sought to see people won to Christ, but he didn't want the government paying for it and he didn't want the government restricting it," Moore said.

Leland was a Baptist leader in colonial Orange County, Virginia, when states were considering the United States Constitution. Concerned that the charter failed to explicitly protect religious freedom — among other rights — Leland threatened to oppose James Madison, the primary author of the Constitution, in his bid to represent Orange County to the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

In exchange for Leland's support of his candidacy, Madison promised to offer what became the First Amendment during the inaugural session of Congress, to which Madison was later elected. Madison fulfilled his promise, and the amendment was adopted as part of the Bill of Rights.

The Leland-Madison Memorial Park today is located in Orange County near the place of the historic "interview" in 1788 in which the agreement was secured, memorializing just one of Leland's most noteworthy actions

advancing religious freedom.

"Leland never acted simply as a union rep for Baptists. He was advocating for religious liberty across the board for everybody," Moore said.

Such was Leland's universal commitment to religious liberty, Moore noted, that he insisted it applied to "Turks" — as Muslims were known — even though there were virtually none in colonial America.

"We have to start getting in the mindset right now that we are not the people in this country who are dispensing out favors of conscience and religious liberty. Religious liberty is not a favor; it's a right given by God. It's not dispensed by the state, and it's not dispensed by whoever happens to have the most people in their church pews."

While Leland was willing to "make alliances" for the common good, he was "never



Russell Moore speaks in September on a panel about religious liberty at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. (lower right). Leland House, the ERLC's headquarters, is located a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court buildings (above).







willing to turn the church into a political action committee,” Moore said.

As he advocates for religious freedom in modern American society, Moore often cites Leland in debates with Obama administration officials about its abortion/contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act.

Although making common cause with others for the sake of good public policy is important, Moore said Leland is also a model to believers today because he never “spiritualized those alliances.”

“I think that there’s been a tendency in evangelical life in the 20th century to ask who our allies are and then to baptize them as spiritual heroes,” even when their theological beliefs are unbiblical, he said.

The challenges to religious freedom faced by American evangelicals today are similar to those of Leland and his contemporaries, Moore said, but they may be more like those faced by Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Baby-

lon. Both the Hebrew patriarch and prophet lived in pagan societies and worked closely for their rulers over long periods of time before persecution began.

“I think we’re somewhere between Daniel advising the king and the fiery furnace,” Moore said. “I don’t think we have the historical perspective yet to know exactly where we are in that timeline.”

But for Christians and other religious minorities around the world, the state of religious freedom is “dire,” he said.

“Global persecution and marginalization of Christians and religious minorities all over the world is such an enormous reality,” he said, noting that it has received more attention, both by government officials and believers, especially in the wake of the atrocities of the so-called Islamic State.

“The church is starting to recognize what’s happening around the world, prompting more Christians in America to do what the book of



### Is it becoming more difficult to be religious in the U.S.?

*In recent years in U.S., has it become more difficult to be \_\_\_\_\_?*

	Evangelical Christian %	Catholic %	Person w/ no religion %
Has become more difficult	34	18	18
Has become easier	8	8	31
Hasn't changed much	53	73	60
Don't know/refused	5	1	2

*Survey by Pew Research Center conducted Sept. 2-9, 2014.*

Hebrews tells us to do: to pray for our brothers and sisters in chains around the world,” Moore said.

#### JAIL TIME DUTY

Moore said he has “two seemingly contradictory jobs” as ERLC president: keeping Baptists out of jail and preparing them to go to jail. “There’s one thing worse than believers going to jail and that’s believers staying out of jail because they’ve negotiated away the gospel,” he said.

As important as the public policy battles are, Moore said the greater urgency is educating Christians today to “live as the people of Christ in a culture that doesn’t understand them. ... We have to be prepared to bear witness and to give testimony to Christ in a world where we seem strange. My primary burden is that we embrace the strangeness. I want us to be strange but not crazy.”

The job of the ERLC staff, Moore said, is to be the “Paul Reveres of religious freedom, which means not only educating Southern Baptists about threats that are happening right now, but preparing them for threats that don’t yet exist. And that means helping churches to shape consciences to understand why religious liberty matters.”

Moore is concerned that most Southern Baptists fail to appreciate the seriousness of the threat to religious liberty in America. While many pastors may fear being required to perform a gay marriage, Moore said the more likely current threats come in a “whole host of other issues” like school





Phillip Bethancourt, ERLC executive vice president, and Russell Moore visit outside the U.S. Supreme Court building. A two-time graduate of Southern Seminary who previously served as vice president of Academic Services, Bethancourt continues to serve as a member of the seminary faculty in the School of Theology.



accreditation, charitable organizations, and workplace discrimination.

Meanwhile, many Christians have a “very superficial understanding of what it will take to turn it around,” believing elections are the primary fix, Moore said. “But there’s a much bigger cultural and political tide that’s happening right now that I don’t think most Christians see.”

While the New Testament clearly teaches Christians should expect to be persecuted, Moore said American believers need to understand their silence may collaborate in persecution.

“The sword of Caesar is given in our system of government ultimately to the people as a

whole,” he said. “So if we’re not advocating for religious liberty, it’s not simply that we’re willing to be persecuted, we’re turning the sword of persecution on other people.”

Further, American evangelicals should be careful not to equate mere opposition to the Christian message with persecution, Moore said.

“Hostility often carries itself over into persecution, but we can trivialize persecution with theatrical outrage that tends to burn over the ground. And I think that’s one of the big problems we have right now with religious liberty.”

## SECOND DRAFT OF DISSERTATION

In 2002, Moore wrote his Ph.D. dissertation at Southern Seminary on the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the social witness of the church. “In some ways, I think my life right now is a second draft of my dissertation,” he said.

“Seeking first of the Kingdom of God doesn’t mean withdrawal and isolation,” he said. “It means seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and his justice. Those two things are held together.”

Moore said his time at Southern Seminary as a student, faculty member, and senior administrator is “significant and important to me,” especially his early Baptist studies under historian Tom Nettles. “I wouldn’t be able to do this job if it hadn’t been for that.”

Known at the seminary and beyond for his love of country music legend Johnny Cash, Moore was asked how one of Cash’s late-in-life songs, “The Man Comes Around,” may inform a Christian understanding of religious liberty.

The title track of a 2002 album, released a year before Cash’s death, “is a lyrical representation of the Book of Revelation in which God is saying to every human authority, ‘You do not have the final authority,’” Moore said.

“I think that song is a word of hope for those in Christ — that there’s a greater Kingdom on the cusp of history. And it’s also a word of warning to those who would seek to hold it back.” >■

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James A. Smith Sr. is executive editor and chief spokesman for Southern Seminary. He served as the first ERLC Washington, D.C., staffer in Leland House, 1989-1995. Emil Handke is lead photographer for Southern Seminary.



# The colonial ‘spirit of Massachusetts’ stirring anew in America

By Gregory A. Wills

**B**aptists in colonial America learned what it meant to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). They experienced various kinds of persecution because they rejected infant baptism and the authority of the state to coerce in matters of religious duty. Many Baptists refused to pay taxes imposed to support religion, or to pay fines that punished their religious convictions, for doing so acknowledged the state’s authority to judge matters of religious duty. Baptists suffered persecution primarily in the southern colonies and in New England. Massachusetts, however, excelled the rest.

On September 5, 1651, a magistrate led Obadiah Holmes to the whipping post in Boston, Massachusetts, before a crowd of spectators. He was guilty of baptizing a believer and of leading a small worship service of Baptists. Holmes came to Boston on business from Rhode Island in company with two other Baptists, Newport pastor John Clarke and a layman named John Crandall.



When Massachusetts leaders learned that the three were holding a worship service in a private home on Sunday, they arrested them.

Massachusetts Bay leaders aimed to halt the spread of Baptist “errors” by punishing the three severely. Opposing infant baptism jeopardized society, they believed. Ipswich pastor Thomas Cobbett explained that rejecting infant baptism overturned “our very fundamentals of civil and sacred order here in New England.” John Cotton, the colony’s most prominent pastor, told the court that “denying infant baptism would overthrow all,” and therefore, Baptists were “soul-murderers” and deserved death.

The court found them guilty of contravening the established order of church and state, but imposed heavy fines rather than death. Clarke and Crandall gained release after benefactors offered to pay the fines, but Holmes could not in good conscience permit the payment of his 30-pound fine — an amount roughly equivalent to half a year’s professional salary. The court therefore ordered Holmes’s whipping.

The executioner made Holmes release his New Testament, pulled off his clothes, and tied him to the post. He then spit on his hands to be sure of a firm grip and whipped Holmes with a three-corded whip 30 times “with all his strength.” Holmes prayed. As the lashes flayed his skin, he did not flinch or groan. Christ granted him “joyfulness in my heart and cheerfulness in my countenance,” he recounted. Throughout the episode, Holmes expressed love and patience toward his persecutors, and prayed that “the Lord would not lay this sin to their charge.”

Toleration of different forms of religion was dangerous, New England Puritans said, because it would permit false teachers to sow error, which would result in divisions, disagreements, and the gradual subversion of true religion. Increase Mather, president of Harvard College, warned that “the antichrist hath not at this day a more probable way to advance his kingdom of darkness than by a toleration of all religions and persuasions.” God required the state to use its coercive power to establish and protect true religion, because true religion was essential to the welfare of society.

Baptist appeals to religious liberty and the rights of conscience made no sense to most colonial Americans. Baptists were false teachers — generally ignorant and always obstinate. New England Puritans distrusted and despised Baptists. Baptists undermined all order.

Even after Parliament enacted toleration in Great Britain in 1689, Massachusetts authorities used their laws to injure and intimidate Baptists. Massachusetts leaders initially ruled that legal toleration did not apply to Baptists — it applied to the legally established Congregational churches alone. In 1728, pressure from England forced Massachusetts to grant Baptists legal toleration and freedom from paying taxes to support the ministers and meeting houses of the established church. But this law and its subsequent revisions in practice afforded little protection. They entangled

the Baptists’ right of exemption in such requirements that it was a simple matter for assessors and judges to deny their claims to legal exemption.

Assessors consequently taxed Baptists contrary to law. When challenged, judges and juries generally ruled against the Baptists, alleging either that the law had no force in the particular instance or that the terms of the law were not validly fulfilled. Some judges fixed upon any excuse, however implausible, to dismiss Baptist complaints. Baptists appealed these rulings in the courts, and when these failed, they filed petitions for relief with the Massachusetts assembly.

In the meantime, in many cases, the assessors threw the Baptists in prison for failure to pay the taxes they had illegally assessed. They seized the Baptists’ land, oxen, cows, hogs, horses, tools, or pewter — whatever valuable possessions they owned — and sold them at auction, sometimes for as little as one-tenth their value. Authorities intimidated, threatened, and falsely accused Baptists who resisted these unjust proceedings. Baptists had no choice but to spend considerable time, effort, and money defending themselves trying to preserve their personal liberty and the livelihood of their families.

In 1774, Baptists petitioned the Continental Congress for relief from New England establishment laws. A delegation that included Massachusetts congressmen John Adams, Samuel Adams, and Robert Treat Paine agreed to hear the Baptists’ grievances. For four hours they dismissed Baptist concerns. They claimed that the establishment in Massachusetts was a “very slender one” that was “hardly to be called an establishment” at all. Baptists in fact had “no cause to complain.” Their complaints had nothing to do with conscience but only with “paying a little money.” Those who complained, they suggested, were fanatics with a martyr complex who sought to divide the colonists in their conflict with King George. The solar system would change, John Adams said, before they gave up their religious establishment.

Adams was wrong. Massachusetts finally disestablished in 1833. The state, in fact, is not capable of producing true religion. Taxes and coercion cannot produce faith in Christ, which is the only basis of true religion, but rather punish those whose conscience is bound to pursue obedience to Christ.

The spirit of Massachusetts nevertheless is stirring anew. Ignorant and obstinate religion must again be restricted to prevent injury to our society. Individual religious conscience must yield to the general good of society, enforced if necessary by taxes, fines, and imprisonment.

Will we fear “those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do” (Luke 12:4)? Or like Obadiah Holmes, will we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us? ➤

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Gregory A. Wills is dean of the School of Theology and professor of church history at Southern Seminary.

# Religious liberty and persecution: A global perspective

By David Platt

Eerie.

That's the only word that comes to mind when I think about standing a hundred yards away from North Korean soldiers who were staring right back at me with weapons in their hands.

I was in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a small strip of land that cuts the Korean peninsula in half. Approximately 150 miles long and 2.5 miles wide, it serves as a buffer between North and South Korea and the allies they represent. Ironically, it is the most heavily militarized border in the world.

I stood in what is called the Joint Security Area, the only part of the DMZ that allows North and South Korean forces to stand face-to-face with one another. Years ago, this small village was designated as the location where negotiations between the two countries would take place. In the center of that area is a small blue building where international meetings occur. I walked into the building, where I saw a conference table with a white line running down the middle of it. During official discussions, South Korean officials sit on one side of that line while North Korean officials sit opposite them.

What was most eerie for me, though, was not coming out of that building and looking across the border at these North Korean soldiers whose eyes were fixed on my every movement (along with the few others who were with me). Instead, what was most eerie was contemplating the condition of people, and particularly Christians, living behind those soldiers.

## PRESSURE ON ALL SIDES

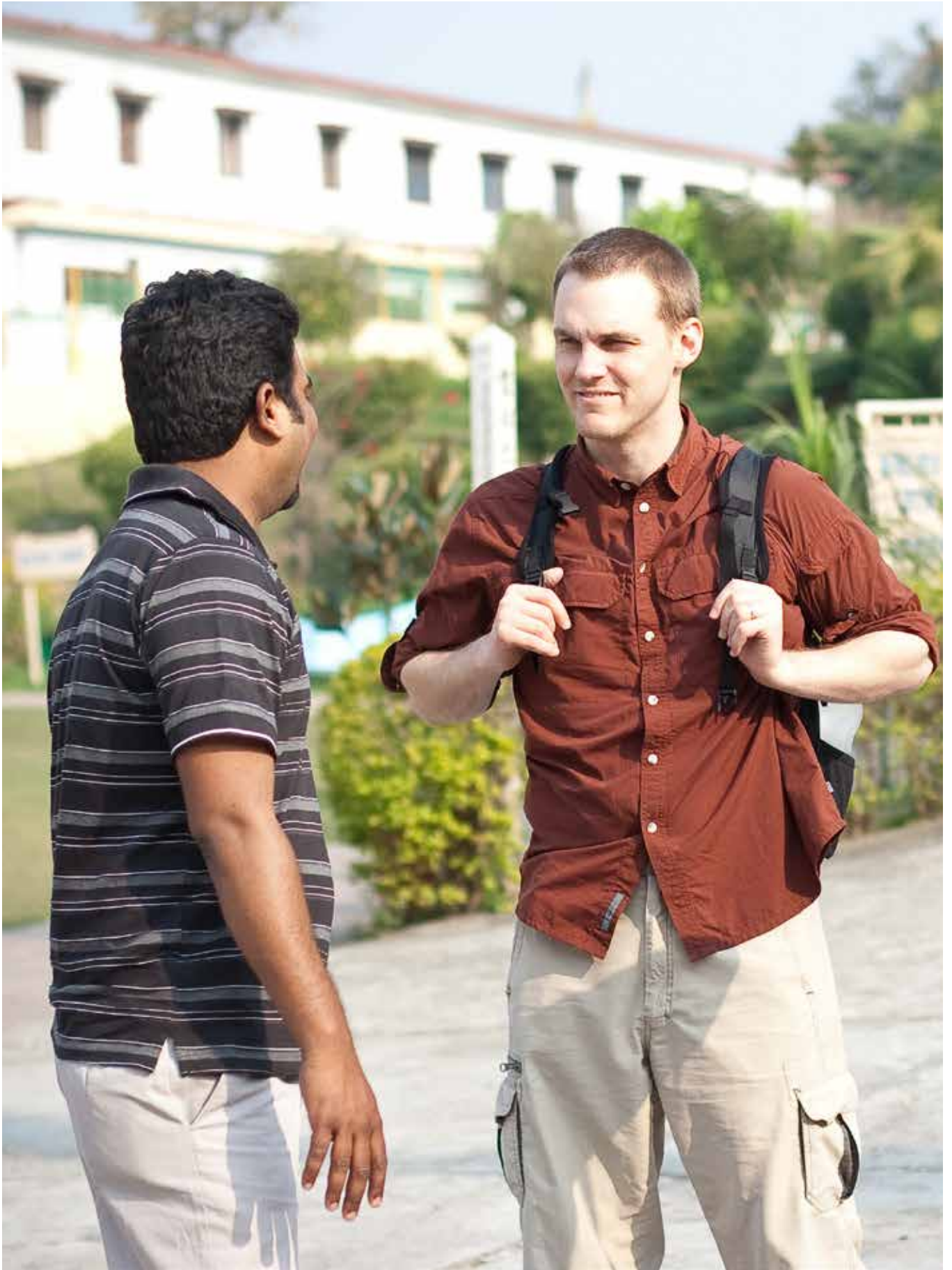
For many Christians in North Korea and in other countries where Christians are persecuted, societal pressure follows closely on the heels of government regulation as family, friends, religious fanatics, community leaders, and criminal mobs intimidate, threaten, harm, or kill men, women, and children who profess a certain faith. Such pressure accounts for much Christian persecution today. Syrian rebels disproportionately target Syrian Christians, abusing, raping,

murdering, and beheading them. During one month alone in Egypt in 2013, 38 churches were destroyed, 23 others were vandalized, 58 were burned, 85 shops were looted, seven Christians were kidnapped, and six Christians were killed. The following month witnessed the worst attack on Christians in Pakistan's history as suicide bombers exploded shrapnel-laden vests outside All Saints' Church in Peshawar, murdering 81 church members and wounding more than 100. All of these stories, reported by The Gospel Coalition, represent persecution of Christians by people outside the official governments of these countries.

According to Open Windows, on the whole, an average of 100 Christians around the world are killed every month for their faith in Christ (and some estimates have this number much higher). Literally countless others are persecuted through abuse, beatings, imprisonment, torture, and deprivation of food, water, and shelter. Each occurrence of religious oppression represents an individual story of faith tested amid fire and trial. But these are not merely stories on a page for me. These are my friends. And I praise God for how they have endured the fire faithfully.

I think of Sahil in South Asia. He and his wife both grew up in Muslim homes. She came to Christ first, and then she introduced Sahil to Christ. As soon as their families discovered they had become Christians, Sahil and his wife were forced to flee their community. In the years that followed, they grew in Christ and in their desire to see their family know Christ. Slowly they renewed contact with their family members. Slowly their family members began to respond. They eventually welcomed Sahil and his wife back to their community, and from all appearances things were going well, until one day Sahil dropped off his wife for a meal with her family while he went to be with his family. His wife sat down at the table with her family and began to drink and eat. Within moments she was dead. Her own parents had poisoned her. When I met





David Platt visits the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. Joining him in the photo below is American evangelical leader Francis Chan and South Korean pastor Jae Chung (right) from Seoul with a South Korean soldier on duty at the DMZ.

Sahil, I met a man who had lost his wife, but he had not lost his faith. He now works as a church planter in his country.

### BECOMING LIKE JESUS

These stories are not surprising when you consider the words of Christ in the Gospels. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus told his disciples. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Matthew 5:10-12). On a later occasion, when he sent these disciples out like “sheep in the midst of wolves,” he promised them that persecution would come. “Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.” He concludes, “You will be hated ... for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:16-18, 22). Even a cursory reading of Gospel passages like these reveals that the more we become like Jesus in this world, the more we will experience what he experienced. Just as it was costly for him to counter culture, it will be costly for us.

Surrounded by the global reality of religious persecution,

and driven by our love for God, we must act. We must pray and work for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. When one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers (see 1 Corinthians 12). In a land of religious liberty, we have a biblical responsibility to stand up and speak out on their behalf.

Moreover, in a country where even our own religious liberty is increasingly limited, our suffering brothers and sisters beckon us not to let the cost of following Christ in our culture silence our faith. May we not sit back and accommodate our culture in relative comfort while they stand up and counter their culture at great cost. May we realize with them that privatized Christianity is no Christianity at all, for it is practically impossible to know Christ and not proclaim Christ — to believe his Word when we read it in our homes or churches, and not obey it in our communities and cities.

And may we remember with the great cloud of witnesses that has gone before us that while our citizenship officially belongs to a government, our souls ultimately belong to God. ➤

David Platt is president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. This essay is adapted from his forthcoming book, *Counter Culture*, (Tyndale, February 2015).



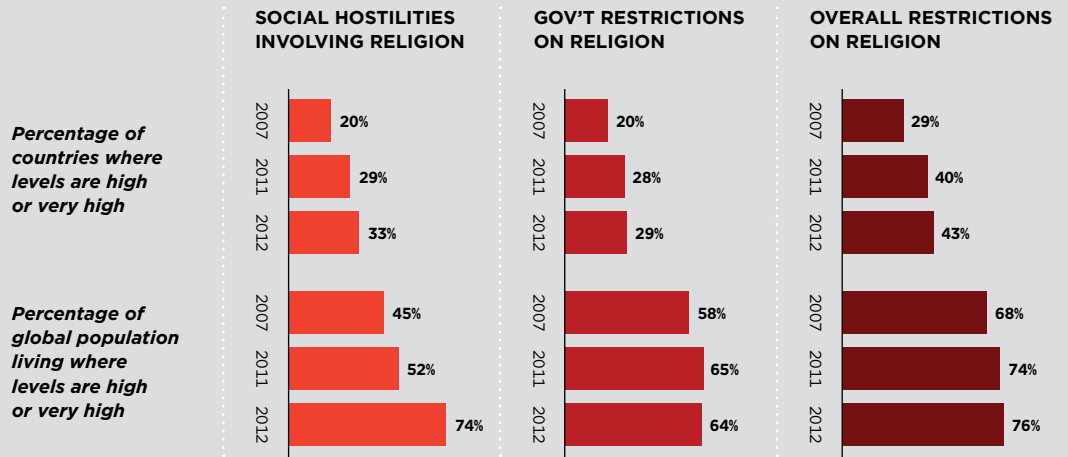


# Religious liberty around the world

The percentage of world population living with high or very high levels of religious persecution has grown to 76 percent in 2012, according to a January 2014 study by the Pew Research Center. A third of the 198 countries and territories included in the study had high religious hostilities in 2012, up from 20 percent in 2007.

## RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGION BY YEAR\*

High or very high levels of restrictions



## RANKING OF COUNTRIES WHERE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS IS MOST SEVERE\*\*

North Korea	1	Sudan	11	Laos	21	Bhutan	31	Bahrain	41
Somalia	2	Eritrea	12	Egypt	22	Algeria	32	Comoros	42
Syria	3	Libya	13	Myanmar	23	Mali	33	Kenya	43
Iraq	4	Nigeria	14	Brunei	24	Palestinian Territories	34	Morocco	44
Afghanistan	5	Uzbekistan	15	Colombia	25	United Arab Emirates	35	Tajikistan	45
Saudi Arabia	6	Central African Republic	16	Jordan	26	Mauritania	36	Djibouti	46
Maldives	7	Ethiopia	17	Oman	27	China	37	Indonesia	47
Pakistan	8	Vietnam	18	India	28	Kuwait	38	Bangladesh	48
Iran	9	Qatar	19	Sri Lanka	29	Kazakhstan	39	Tanzania	49
Yemen	10	Turkmenistan	20	Tunisia	30	Malaysia	40	Niger	50

\*Data are for years ending in June 2007, December 2011 and December 2012.  
 \*\*Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High," January 2014  
 Pew Research Center  
 \*\*From Open Doors 2014 World Watch List

## PERSECUTION IN NORTH KOREA

According to Open Doors, an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Christians suffer daily in North Korea's prison camps.





In 2011, Iranian pastor Behnam Irani was imprisoned for six years due to his conversion to Christianity. Recently, Iranian authorities leveled a new charge at him — “spreading corruption on earth,” an indictment rooted in the Quran (Q 7:56). Another high-profile case involving apostasy from Islam to Christianity in the same country is that of the Iranian-American pastor Saeed Abedini, who was detained and charged with apostasy in 2012 while attempting to open an orphanage in Iran. In 2014, Mariam Ibrahim was released after a long court battle in Sudan over her status as an apostate and adulterer. The charges stemmed from the fact that she was born to a Muslim father but married to an American Christian man. Although her Orthodox Christian mother had raised her, under Shariah law children born to a Muslim father are considered Muslims regardless of the religion of the mother. Thus, her status as a “Muslim” in the eyes of the law rendered her marriage to a Christian man illegal and adulterous.

Cases like these raise numerous questions regarding the compatibility of Shariah law with fundamental human rights like religious liberty. This is particularly the case in countries that afford traditional Islamic law a dominant role in shaping its legislative decisions, but it is also pertinent in the West where some Islamist groups are increasingly calling for the implementation of Shariah in their communities. Globally, the question of Shariah compatibility with religious freedom is relevant for two groups in particular: non-Muslim minorities residing in majority Muslim nations and converts out of Islam to other religions like Christianity. For the first group, their status in these countries has a long history dating back to the emergence of Islam.

When Muslim armies spread out of the Arabian peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries and captured lands inhabited predominantly by Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, there developed agreements between the minority Muslim rulers and their majority non-Muslim subjects known collectively as *ahl al-dhimma*. These agreements pro-

vided certain protections in exchange for the payment of a penalty tax (*jizya*) levied on those who refused to convert. Other penalties included exclusion from service in the military as well as the upper echelons of civil service.

Moreover, though they were allowed to maintain existing places of worship, they were not allowed to build new ones or repair old ones without special permission. Additionally, on occasion, their status as *dhimmīs* entailed systematic humiliation such as wearing special clothing, houses that were required to be more modest than Muslim houses, riding mules instead of horses, and ritual humiliation.

Over the period of several centuries, policies of this sort understandably contributed to the increase in conversions to Islam. Conversion elevated one’s standing in society, thereby entitling that person to enjoy wider freedoms than his previous status as a *dhimmī*. Theologically, it is possible to trace the development of this perspective on non-Muslims from

the Quranic notion of Islamic supremacy (Q 3:19, 85, 110; 9:29, 33). Traditionally, this belief went beyond simply asserting Islam’s truth and entailed the Muslim’s right to rule over non-Muslims. For most of Islamic history, this was the Muslim perspective on non-Muslim minorities. However, beginning in 1839, under the influence of Western nations, efforts were undertaken by the Ottomans to reform the law. As a result all religions came to be viewed as equal and all the various inhabitants of the empire were considered “citizens” versus “subjects” based on religious affiliation.

Muslim responses to apostasy likewise have a long history dating back to the emergence of Islam. After the death of Muhammad, several Arab tribes are reported to have revolted against Muhammad’s successor, Abu Bakr. Some did so for financial reasons (refusing to pay taxes) while others chose to follow a different prophet. Abu Bakr’s campaigns against the apostates became known as “wars of apostasy.” Though the Quran

# Islam and religious liberty

BY J. SCOTT BRIDGER





Muslim organizations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) urged their imams to emphasize Islam’s advocacy of racial equality. While racial equality is a teaching that virtually every major religion would affirm (and thus no indicator of superiority or truthfulness), what groups like CAIR fail to address is the legacy of Islamic supremacy that is incompatible with basic human rights like religious liberty. That legacy continues to exert influence in the political domain where there can be resistance to power-sharing in Muslim majority countries, and in the legal realm where it impacts the treatment of non-Muslims and converts out of Islam.

For Baptists, our commitment to religious liberty is rooted in the teaching of Scripture. We believe that all humans are created equal in God’s image. This is an equality that transcends race or religious affiliation (Genesis 1:26–27). But we are also responsible human agents who will give an account for our response to the gospel. Part of ensuring that humans are given the freedom to respond to the gospel is the establishment and protection of a constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. Such a guarantee is rooted in the teachings of Jesus himself (Matthew 22:21), and forms the foundation for any society committed to protecting freedom of faith and conscience. ➤

seemingly defers judgment of apostates to the hereafter (Q 16:106), scholars from both Sunni and Shiite schools of law have traditionally been unanimous in prescribing death for apostasy. Their rationale stems from Q 2:217, which states that the works of apostates are worthless “in this world and the hereafter,” and the precedents set by Muhammad’s successors and companions.

Thus, for most of Islamic history a consensus has existed regarding the

fate of those who convert out of Islam. Recently, some Muslim scholars, mostly those residing in the West, have sought to offer different interpretations of apostasy rooted in the Quran’s ambiguity on this subject. For now many tradition-minded scholars view these efforts as “innovation” (*bid’a*), tantamount to heresy in Islam, which is also an offense punishable by death.

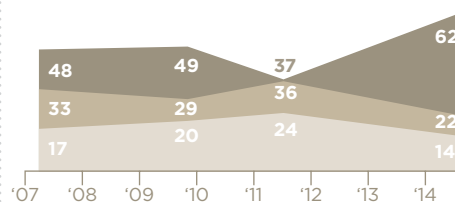
During the unrest over the tragic death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri,

## More say they are ‘very concerned’ about rise of Islamic extremism

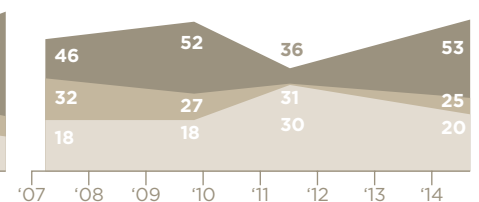
Percent who are \_\_\_ concerned about the rise of...



Islamic extremism around the world



Islamic extremism in the U.S.



Survey by Pew Research Center conducted Sept. 2-9, 2014. “Don’t know” responses not shown.

# From bombings to bobblehead income

THE DIVERSITY OF PERSECUTION IN NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

By Greg Cochran

According to the New Testament, persecution occurs in various forms — from beatings (Acts 5:40), stonings (Acts 7), and imprisonment (Acts 16) to insults (Matthew 5:11), slander (Acts 14:2), and lies (Luke 26:59). The New Testament does not define persecution by the *kind* of action taken against Christians. Rather, the New Testament defines persecution by the *nature* of the hostility. Simply put, the New Testament labels any hostile action against Christ or his righteousness a form of persecution.

Listen to the instruction Jesus gave his first followers concerning persecution:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10-12, ESV).

Notice from Jesus' own description that persecution includes slanderous words and false accusations. Often, when Christians in America speak of persecution, they mean only suffering of the more fantastic varieties such as torture, imprisonment, and death. To be sure, a great deal of that kind of persecution is happening around the world. But there is also a great deal of persecution of the less dramatic kind happening as well.

The truth is, persecution is more about the presence of Jesus than it is about the tactics used to silence his followers. Persecution is ultimately a retaliatory action against the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ. Christ is the ultimate target

of the persecution, even if the most immediate objects of the persecutor's wrath are his followers.

Understood this way, persecution happens when an individual or group lashes out against a Christian in word or deed to silence, control, or punish him for what he has said or done in Christ's name. The issue is Christ and his righteousness. Love Christ and conform to his teaching displaying the righteousness of God, and you, too, will be persecuted (according to the



**Persecution happens when an individual or group lashes out against a Christian in word or deed to silence, control, or punish him for what he has said or done in Christ's name.**

Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12).

The practical application of this definition is much needed in our day. Quite a lot of confusion surrounds incidents of retaliation against Christians. The title of this article alludes to a couple of these recent incidents, which illustrate the need for Christians to speak with clarity concerning the definition of persecution.

Bombings and other forms of killing have taken place regu-



larly in the northern tier of Nigeria since 2009. The Islamic terrorist group responsible for the bombings, Boko Haram, has killed more than 5,000 Nigerians — 2,000 of those people dying in 2014 alone. The majority of those killed have been Christians. As a result, the term “persecution” has been kicked around like a political football.

On one side is the government of Nigeria, headed by President Goodluck Jonathan — who professes to be a Christian. On the other side of the persecution debate are those churches and leaders who comprise the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). President Jonathan claims that Christians in Nigeria are not facing persecution. In his favor, he points out that Boko Haram has killed many Muslims as well as Christians. He says the killings are not religious in nature, but political.

President Jonathan’s statements were unsettling to the churches of CAN. They refuted the reports and pointed out that while it may be true that Muslims are being killed as well as Christians, the fact remains that no mosques have ever been targeted for bombing. The bombs target Christians as they gather for worship. CAN leaders also quote Boko Haram operatives who have acknowledged Muslim deaths, but declared them to be unintentional consequences of targeting Christians.



The issue gets very complicated because a host of political clashes are involved as well as the more obvious spiritual battles. What must be determined is not what kind of hostile action is being taken — bombing or stabbing or lying — but who is the target of the hostility. Is it the mere presence of Christ or Christians which is fueling the fire of persecution? Are people being persecuted on account of belonging to Jesus Christ? In this case, it does

appear that the bombings are targeting Christians as they gather together for worship. One cannot blame President Jonathan for trying to diffuse religious tensions in his country. But Christians must stay with biblical definitions for persecution.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the case in the U.S. of Phil Robertson, the “redneck millionaire” from *Duck Dynasty* fame. Robertson was suspended from the show by the A&E network in 2013 ostensibly because of Robertson’s Christian beliefs. By his own admission, Robertson has not always spoken with charity. His coarse descriptions of the sexual proclivities of homosexual, as well as heterosexual, men are cringe worthy. Nevertheless, nationwide controversy ensued following Robertson’s effort in *GQ* to defend the biblical condemnation of homosexual behavior.

As it turns out, because of a huge backlash against A&E’s decision to suspend Phil, the network reinstated him. However, the original suspension may well have been an example of Christian persecution. Why? Because it appears that the offense was the righteousness of God. The network was not offended by how Robertson spoke against homosexuality; rather, the network was offended by the very fact that he believed the Bible’s prohibition of homosexual intercourse. The statement made by A&E made clear that Robertson’s beliefs were the problem. The network suspended him originally for believing the Bible’s teaching.

What this means is that Phil Robertson did suffer a loss of employment, even if it were temporary. Perhaps he lost additional income from sales of merchandise. According to Michael Daly at *The Daily Beast*, the price of Phil Robertson bobblehead dolls dropped by 20 percent during the fiasco. Robertson certainly was maligned on thousands of websites and social outlets for weeks as unloving and homophobic. Slanderous words were surely spoken against him abundantly on account of God’s righteousness revealed in Scripture. For these reasons, he seems to have been persecuted according to Christ’s instruction to His first disciples.

These examples — from bombings to potentially losing money on the sale of bobbleheads — demonstrate why Christians in America need clear thinking when it comes to persecution. Obviously, these two examples illustrate a vast difference in the *degree* of persecution — bombing being intensely more deadly and more costly than losing Bobblehead revenue. Yet, each of these two examples is rightly termed *persecution*.

As persecution continues to intensify, Christians will need to be clear on how it is classified so that blessings are not mislabeled as curses. You are blessed when people persecute you on account of Christ, as was the case with the bombings in Nigeria; and you are blessed when people insult you and say all kinds of evil against you on account of righteousness, which was the case with Phil Robertson. ➤

Greg Cochran, a doctor of philosophy graduate at Southern Seminary, is director of the Bachelor of Applied Theology program in the School of Christian Ministries at California Baptist University. He writes widely on Christian persecution and is an advocate of the persecuted church.

**NIK RIPKEN**

M.Div., School of Theology (1979); D.Min., Missions (1990)

**ANDREW WALKER**

M.Div., School of Theology ('10); Ph.D. candidate

"A biblical theology of suffering says resurrection is preceded by crucifixion," said Nik Ripken, who uses a pseudonym to protect persecuted Christians. He is a leading expert on the persecuted church and the author of *The Insanity of God*. "The church in persecution often says do not pray for an end to our persecution, but pray that we will be faithful and obedient through our persecution."

#### **What have you learned about the value of religious liberty, and even the value of persecution?**

Seventy percent of believers today practice their faith in an environment of persecution. So if you look for normal Christianity, it's in China, the former Soviet Union, and places where persecution is your daily bread.

Persecution is a reflection of harvest, and Satan's activity is in reaction to what God is doing. Persecution is neither good nor bad, it is just the way the fallen world is. You don't run away from persecution and you don't run towards it. And when Jesus honors us to suffer as he did, our job is to find joy, witness, and start churches in the midst of that.

In regards to religious freedom, we have got that twisted biblically according to people in persecution. We are as free to share Jesus in Saudi Arabia as we are in South Carolina. There is no place on the planet that will stop you from walking there, getting off a bus or plane, and sharing the love and salvation of Jesus. They cannot stop you from doing that, they can only punish you for doing that. It's not about freedom, it's about obedience, and Jesus commands us to go to all the nations and people groups.

#### **How would you encourage seminary students to prepare for the persecution that seems to be coming to America?**

I see us training people to be shepherds of the sheep, but I don't see us getting out amongst the wolves very often. The persecution is coming because we have failed to witness in the marketplace. So I'm deeply concerned that we have people who have trained to be pastors and teachers, but have not trained to be sheep amongst the wolves where the wolves are the majority.

My fear is that we are so caught up in social issues, that we are known for what we are against rather than the Jesus that we lift up. I think the suffering and persecution that is coming to America because of our failure to be in the marketplace is going to be defining moments for churches when we lose our tax exemption and have to get out of our buildings. I don't pray for persecution, but I do pray for obedience.

Andrew Walker believes that his time at Southern Seminary helped him learn to think deeply about the integration of theology and everyday life. "Attending Southern was one of the most significant decisions of my life. I have no idea what my life, worldview, ministry, and role as a spouse and parent would look like without Southern," he said. "It was so influential to me not because it was just academic but because of its robust vision for integrating theology in every area of life."

Today, Walker serves in Nashville, Tennessee, as director of policy studies with the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the Southern Baptist Convention's entity tasked with addressing moral, ethical, and social issues. Working with the main ERLC office in Washington, D.C., and like-minded coalitions across the nation, Walker's job is to be aware of what specific policy issues are driving debate and affecting Christians and churches. Walker speaks at different conferences and churches about issues related to integrating the Christian worldview in today's culture. He also writes regular commentaries on cultural issues for publications such as *First Things* and *National Review*.

Walker's ministry advocates for and equips the body of Christ to embody a social witness that loves God and neighbor. He believes that there is currently no greater issue than religious liberty and how it is regarded in the future. It is part of the Christian mission to engage these issues, he said. He serves at the ERLC "because the issues plaguing society aren't just political or social, but are rooted in a cosmic conflict," he said.

"If Christians don't engage, someone else will. We have the opportunity to design our statecraft, which is a blessing and a historic anomaly measured against the weight of history," Walker said. "Christianity, not civil religion masquerading as Christian, but an authentic, gospel-preaching Christianity, is a positive force for society, and Western civilization owes the themes of liberty and dignity largely to a lexicon that belongs to Christianity."

He believes the professors at Southern equipped him to think critically about how to integrate the truths of the gospel toward a badly broken world, saying that "a degree from Southern is infused with the truth that the gospel is a public reality that demands a public witness for the sake of humanity and for the glory of God."



## John Folmar: ‘The gospel must go out’ to Dubai

**F**rom the dusty plains to the towering cityscapes of the United Arab Emirates, John Folmar ministers to show people the glorious aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a country where fear and misunderstanding are common still, Folmar encourages his church to build friendships with Muslims in order to share the gospel with them.

Folmar lives on the border of Saudi Arabia and about 70 miles offshore from Iran. In Dubai, UAE’s most populous city and emirate, Sharia law applies to all local citizens, but the UAE is more stable and peaceful than many of its neighbors. By God’s grace, the leaders of the country granted the church land and invited

the congregation to meet in public. His church, United Christian Church of Dubai, strives to present the gospel to non-believers of all backgrounds and religions during their Friday morning service where more than 700 people gather to worship and hear God’s Word preached.

“We have to be prepared on the one hand to explain the gospel to a Muslim, and on the other hand try to bear witness to a Brit who grew up going to church, and rejected what he thinks he knows about church. So the cultural landscape is quite complicated here. We have 60 nationalities in our church,” he said.

While at Southern Seminary, Folmar and his wife began to grow in their inter-

est in the Muslim world. Folmar took a course on Isaiah with Old Testament professor Peter J. Gentry and “began to see the impulse in the Scripture, the gospel must go out to the nations and the glory of the Lord will cover the earth like water covers the sea,” he said.

Folmar believes his time at Southern Seminary, where he earned a master of divinity in 2003, gave him a solid theological foundation for his ministry in the Middle East, especially as he dealt with church reform early in his ministry.



“I’m indebted to Southern because of its theological and biblical foundations that were strengthened for me there,” he said. “In the regular ministry of exposition, I regularly draw from things I learned there. My whole understanding of Scripture, pastoral ministry, and preaching has been informed by what I learned at Southern. I regularly draw from those lessons.”

Those lessons also help him as they work against materialism, lethargy, and fear, he said, encouraging people toward the gospel. “The way that we try and do that is to hold up a glorious Christ, preach Christ and him crucified, and cause people’s affections to be elevated so that people can’t help but tell their neighbor about the way of salvation,” he said.

Folmar and his wife, Keri, and their three children, Ruth, Chloe, and Andrew, love where they live and what God is doing in their ministry, despite the difficulties.

“The Lord has sovereignly brought believers here so that we will make an impact on the nations,” he said. “Our ultimate aim is that the Emirati people, the gulf Arab people, who are currently unreached with the gospel, will come to know Christ through the witness of our church.” —RUTHANNE IRVIN



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## Student relationships a priority for the St. Johns

Since they moved to Louisville, Southern Seminary Foundation Board members Marvin and Nancy St. Johns have made it a point to attend seminary chapel services regularly. They said it helps them feel connected to the school, and gives them numerous opportunities to meet and interact with students. They will arrive at Alumni Memorial Chapel as much as a half-hour before the service begins, listen to the students talk about their school experience, and “pick their brains a little bit,” Marvin said.

After sitting in the same place for a period of time, they befriended a whole group they talked with regularly, one of whom was Rafael Bellos, an M.Div. student at the seminary. The St. Johns quickly took to him, and when he returned the following school year from his native country Brazil newly married to his wife Josi, the relationship between the two couples deepened.

Soon the St. Johns were spending time with the Bellos outside of chapel, hosting them for dinner and taking them to Huber’s Farm in southern Indiana and the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky.

“We just love them, and we love to be around them,” Nancy said. “We get a whole lot more out of it than they do.”

The Bellos said one of the best lessons they have learned from the St. Johns is the importance of godly hospitality. Nancy beautifully cultivates an orderly and open home, and cares for her husband, Josi said. Citing Titus 2:3-4, Josi said Nancy embodies Paul’s teaching that the “older women ... train the young women to love their husbands and children.”

“There’s a difference between being nice just for the sake

of being nice, and really caring,” Rafael said. “They really care about us.”

The Bellos said the St. Johns also exemplify Christlike character and patience. Despite dealing with recent health issues, Marvin and Nancy never complain, the Bellos said, and are always smiling and encouraging.

The relationship between the two families has grown significantly throughout Rafael’s time at Southern Seminary. The St. Johns are planning to host a graduation party for Rafael and his family visiting from Brazil when he finishes his M.Div. program in December.

When Rafael was accepted into the Ph.D. program at Southern, Marvin was the first person he called. While others were asking Rafael academic questions, the first thing Marvin asked him was what Josi said.

“I said, ‘You better ask her!’” Marvin recounted, pointing out that Josi had only been in the United States for two years and was away from her family for the first extended period of time. “That’d be a good idea. Her momma ain’t happy, no one’s happy!”

The Bellos are among as many as 20 young people the St. Johns have worked hard to befriend, including students from both Southern and Boyce College. Students can quickly forget what life is like away from dorms and cafeteria food, the St. Johns said, so they want to give them a place to call home.

“We’re not any big, hot story, really,” Marvin said. “Just these two old country bumpkins from Illinois just trying a little bit to do what the Lord wants us to do; that’s all.” —ANDREW J.W. SMITH



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## From the Foundation



**Craig Parker** is the vice president for institutional advancement and executive director of the Southern Seminary Foundation.

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## Faithful stewardship

**A**s I consider the blessings of the past year — upon the record number of students, completion of the Mullins Complex renovations, the opening the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam, and the graduation of more than 500 students this past academic year — I'm struck by how much the Lord has done among us. You simply cannot look at 2014 without seeing God's hand at work.

But as I consider all the gifts we have received from the Father, I'm also reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus: "To whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48). We have been assigned as stewards of God's richest gifts to this seminary — the students themselves. We have a responsibility to care for them.

The thousands of students at Southern Seminary are not merely a number, but real lives which have committed themselves to the work of Christ. I wish you could meet the students with whom my wife Selwyn and I regularly spend time. I think of so many wonderful young

men and women, many of whom have made significant financial and personal sacrifices to dedicate a season of their lives to intensive theological study.

I think of Chris Hurley, the recipient of the Bordas Scholarship at this year's Heritage Golf Classic. He and his

Across the 155-year history of Southern Seminary, devoted friends have committed their personal finances in support of Southern and our students. The sacrifices of gospel-minded patrons have made it possible for students to afford to come to Southern, and we ought

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***The sacrifices of gospel-minded patrons have made it possible for students to afford to come to Southern, and we ought to rejoice in that. ... Could you be a patron to enable more students to come to our campus?***

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wife Kaki moved their seven children to Louisville so he could study at the seminary. The sacrifices they have made to equip his calling are enormous. It's on us to respond, and help more people just like Chris prepare for the ministry. The burden they shoulder is great, and the friends of Southern Seminary have been given the wonderful privilege to support these faithful men and women who have responded to God's call.

to rejoice in that. But consider with me how many additional students could come here if we had even greater support. Could you be a patron to enable more students to come to our campus?

I really believe that there's no better and more faithful theological education available anywhere than at Southern Seminary. Prayerfully consider helping us train as many people as possible, for the glory of Christ.



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