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THE REVIEW

Religious Liberty and the Supreme Court's Decision on Marriage

By Pastor Al Harris, Moderator IBFNA

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court handed down its decision in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case and declared that same sex marriage is to be the law of the land.

In doing so they (1) disregarded the First Amendment of the Constitution that states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances"; (2) mandated a new law that is not the role of the court but of the legislature; and (3) overturned the religious and civil precedents of centuries to rewrite the social structure of society at the expense of marriage, which is the bedrock of our social order and was God's first institution given to man after creation.

It has been clear that liberal media and social activists have been pushing to rewrite the social order of society in this way by not just demanding that society tolerate this perversion of marriage, but also that it accept this unnatural union and endorse it as beneficial.

This decision sets the courts, our federal government, and their social activists on a direct collision course with Bible Christianity. Unfortunately, like many of the issues in the past (evolution, abortion, the place of God in public discourse, etc.), many liberals and evangelicals are already voicing that they will embrace the new law as if it is not a violation of God's law. For true Bible believers, this is not something we will be able to avoid or to be silent about. The LGBT community is very aggressive, and it will seek to make sure that this new order becomes the norm.

Churches have already been sued for refusing to perform a marriage for a homosexual couple. The writing of this opinion in law by the Supreme Court will increase such suits and pressures.

What can we expect in the future? It is difficult to predict the future, but it seems clear that pressure to accept the philosophies of liberal social activists is going to increase. Since "alternate-life-styles" and "same-sex marriage" have been advocated and taught in our government schools for more than a decade, many of our young people are readily accepting of this philosophy.



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IBFNA
6450 Hope Way
Hanover, PA
17331
(717) 633-1479
www.ibfna.org

What can we expect in the future? I will try to give a few things that we can expect from the government and social activists.

1. The government will force all governmental and legal secular entities to endorse homosexual marriages.

2. The government will force all businesses that are not strictly religious to insure and to treat homosexual marriages as they do all other marriages.

3. Social activists and judges will scrutinize all complaints made by the LGBT community with a sensitivity that will make the accused guilty until proven innocent.

4. Initially, the government and courts will try to work out ways for the LGBT community to get married rather than confront the rights of churches to continue to exercise their Biblical faith (there is some evidence that there is already a backlash against the action of forcing churches to deny their long held beliefs). However, this will not be done for a long period of time. The social activists are so intent upon their goals that they will be seeking a test case that can be used against Bible believers and that can force religious entities to change their beliefs or lose their tax exemption.

5. I believe that persecution will intensify shortly after this.

6. The climate in society will make speaking for the biblical truth of marriage and against homosexuality a culturally unacceptable position. They will seek to intimidate Christians into silence. Then they will force Christians to accept their philosophies or lose their promotions, jobs, or positions.

The four dissenting judges, Chief Justice John Roberts, Justice Antonin Scalia, Justice Clarence Thomas, and Justice Samuel Alito, all wrote dissenting opinions, rebuked the social activism of the majority, and warned of dangers to come.

Justice Roberts wrote in part, "Today's decision . . . creates serious questions about religious liberty. Many good and decent people oppose same-sex marriage as a tenet of faith, and their freedom to exercise religion is – unlike the right imagined by the majority – actually spelled out in the Constitution. Amdt.1."

Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, "A system of government that makes the People subordinate to a committee of nine unelected lawyers does not deserve to be called a democracy."

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote, "The majority's decision threatens the religious liberty our Nation has long sought to protect. It appears all but inevitable that the two will come into conflict, particularly as individuals and churches are confronted with demands to participate in and endorse civil marriages between same-sex couples.

"The majority appears unmoved by that inevitability. It makes only a weak gesture toward religious liberty in a single paragraph. And even that gesture indicates a misunderstanding of religious liberty in our Nation's tradition. Religious liberty is about more than just the protection for "religious organizations and persons . . . as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths." Religious liberty is about freedom of action in matters of religion generally, and the scope of that liberty is directly correlated to the civil restraints placed upon religious practice."

Justice Samuel Alito wrote, "I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools."

So what do we do? A true believer will first look to the Lord and pray for wisdom, courage, and the guidance of God. We cannot change what God has established without giving up the very nature and essence of our God.

1. Make sure that your statement of faith and church constitution have articles in them that spell out your position on all these issues, and that they have been passed by the congregation and are anchored in Scripture.

2. Have clear policies regarding the people for whom you will perform marriages and for individuals and groups who are permitted to use your facilities.

3. Teach your people about the issues, and show them how to stand and the manner in which to present their beliefs.

4. Be alert, and work with other pastors and church fellowships to stand for truth. We have the tendency to be isolated and to fail to work together. This will make it easier for individuals and churches to be attacked.

5. Work with a First Amendment attorney to be prepared before these attacks come.

When darkness rules in the society, there is no way to guarantee justice or righteous judgment. Our

trust is in the Lord, not in civil government. There have been many Christians down through the centuries who have stood for God against the ungodly practices of the age and who paid a heavy price. If God tarries, this may be our lot. Our reward is the "Well done" from our Heavenly Father.

The Scriptures remind us in Proverbs 29:2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

Remembrances of a Fellow-Soldier

By Pastor Chick Dear et al.



Dr. Ralph Colas went home to be with the Lord on October 22, 2015. A founding fellow-soldier of the IBFNA, Dr. Colas served as the Executive Secretary of the American Council of Christian Churches for nearly 24 years, "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints" (www.accc4truth.org). *The Review* presents the following remembrances with thanksgiving for our dear brother's labors for the Lord.

Pastor Chick Dear:

"I will miss the telephone calls and the gravelly voice saying, 'Hello friend, can you talk?' Before computers and internet, we would exchange information, gathered from far and near, and he would tell about his travels for the ACCC, what he had seen and heard, even before he got to publish his reports on them. It was a unique friendship between two preacher's kids, something we rarely discussed be-

cause there were more important issues beyond our family histories.

"His ministry was a model of what it means to bear the sword and trowel. It was a ministry born in the 20th century, when there were so many changes in churches and church organizations and apostate personalities advocating a Social Gospel in departure from the historic doctrines of the faith.

"On the one hand, he traveled extensively to be a witness to and reporter of the rampant apostasy being led by the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. With sharp discernment and clarity in writing, Ralph would also describe the inevitable politics of the Conventions and the resulting loss of spiritual power in their churches. He also gave insight to the encroaching government intervention into the ministries of Bible-believing churches and institutions through regulations that continue to multiply today.

"On the other hand, Ralph was a builder and encourager to pastors and others, as he would faithfully preach the whole counsel of God. While I cannot speak to his several pastoral ministries, he was a favorite speaker for conferences. Wherever he was in the pulpit, his was the calm voice of absolute confidence in the truth and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. As he would develop a text and its application, it was clear that he wasn't there to tickle the ear or entertain anyone. Yet, in person, Ralph was an encourager to men in the ministry. He would try to direct good men to open pulpits and counsel with men and churches in need. There was nothing about him that was superficial or contrived.

"The man I first knew as a country preacher in Pennsylvania has left us his legacy of both sword and trowel. It is a mantle that was worn with honor by those who have faithfully served our Lord Jesus Christ before us, who now have entered into His presence. It falls to us now, to take up the challenges we face in our generation and to be found faithful.

"'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ' (1 Cor. 11:1)."

Dr. Clay Nuttall:

"In one lifetime we meet a few people who mark our lives in a permanent way. Dr. Colas was one of those saints. His benefit was not just about the warehouse of information that he shipped to us. The impact was not just about his ability to communicate truth or even the fact that I knew he would not point me in the wrong direction. The real mark on my own life came from who he was. This kind of a saint reaches beyond the mind to your heart. His constant reminders of our friendship, the emails, cards and letters were personal, and I knew he loved me in the Lord. While he was a brilliant man, I never felt like he was talking down to me. Somehow beneath his exterior was that deep warm heart that wrapped itself around you. We have been blessed through him and heaven is richer now."

Dr. L. Duane Brown:

"Brother Colas was three years older than I, so he was always my superior. When I was President of Denver Baptist College and Seminary, Ralph was Chairman of the Trustee Board. However, I beat him in retirement as I retired 20 years ago. He kept on the go even after he was stricken with cancer. He never gave up! Rom. 14:4 has a phrase in it about keeping a believer standing (Eph 6:11) because 'He is able.' For a number of years he suffered, but he stood up for the truth of God's Word.

"He finally fell to the weakness of the flesh. He went ahead of me and those still waiting for the rapture. When we enter heaven, he will be there to welcome us with a smile and say, 'The Lord is able!'"

"This is why Ralph Colas never gave up, but he stood up for the Lord and His Word."

Dr. Thomas Nieman:

"In the gracious providence of God, men are given to those of us who love our Lord and wish to honor Him. My life was wonderfully blessed to know Ralph Colas. He was a gift to those who loved the truth as he courageously defended the faith. While we rejoiced in his steadfastness, even in his journey with cancer he continued to serve. In reality, his God has won!

"The positive adjectives that could be employed to describe our brother are obviously immense. Ralph was obviously a gifted and gallant warrior. He could continue to defend the truth in spite of disappointments and even betrayal. Yet, he could be so incredibly tender and kind as he often ministered to those who were hurting and even to those who had lost those dearest to them. When he was personally suffering, he would travel great distances to conduct memorial services and minister to others. While many have changed and even have given up in the battle for truth, by the grace of God Ralph persevered. Once again, through His servant, God has won!"

Editor's note: The Review expresses its appreciation for these contributions, noting that Dr. Nieman's contribution appears here only in part. We regret that we do not have space to include here many other kind sentiments and remembrances received from Brothers Dan Cleghorn, Paul Connor, Craig Griffith, Paul Gustine, Jerry Johnson, Fred Moritz, Bob Payne, and Mark Strangman.

Two American Sins and Freedom

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

The first African-American man to address Congress was the pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C. He was a former slave named Henry Highland Garnet, and he titled

his sermon that day, "Let the Monster Perish." He preached it to the 38th Congress on Sunday, February 12, 1865, just days prior to their adoption of the 13th amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which

banned slavery.

The monster Garnet decried was slavery, and his text was Matthew 23:4, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." He spoke forcibly about the incompatibility of American freedom with this American original sin.

Garnet clearly loved American freedom and affirmed that its blessings came to our land from heaven. Describing freedom-loving Americans, many of whom had been slave-owners, Garnet explained what they had correct:

They are intelligent and well-informed, and can never say, either before an earthly tribunal or at the bar of God, "We knew not of ourselves what was right." . . . They acknowledge that there is a just and impartial God, and are not altogether unacquainted with the law of Christian love and kindness. They claim for themselves the broadest freedom. Boastfully they tell us that they have received from the court of heaven the Magna Charta of human rights that was handed down through the clouds and amid the lightnings of Sinai, and given again by the Son of God on the Mount of Beatitudes while the glory of the Father shone around him. They tell us that from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution they have obtained a guaranty of their political freedom, and from the Bible they derive their claim to all the blessings of religious liberty. With just pride they tell us that they are descended from the Pilgrims, who threw themselves upon the bosom of the treacherous sea and braved storms and tempests that they might find in a strange land and among savages free homes where they might build their altars that should blaze with acceptable sacrifice unto God. Yes! They boast that their fathers heroically turned away from the precious light of Eastern civilization and, taking their lamps with oil in their vessels, joyfully went forth to illuminate this land, that then dwelt in the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death. With hearts strengthened by faith, they spread out their standard to the winds of heaven, near Plymouth Rock; and whether it was stiffened in the sleet and frosts of winter, or floated on the breeze of summer, it ever bore the motto, "Freedom to worship God."

Freedom-loving Americans did this much well, said the preacher. Americans have struggled to be free, especially free to worship. But there is sad irony in this description of American freedom, for underneath these sacrifices and heroics lies a horrific evil that threatened to undermine the liberty they achieved. Though it were deified by many, Garnet boldly exposed American slavery's satanic origins.

Let us view this demon, which the people have worshipped as a God. Come forth, thou grim monster, that thou mayest be critically examined! There he stands. Behold him, one and all. Its work is to chattelize man; to hold property in human beings.

It is that last line that defines the transgression of this American demon. *Chattel* is the possessions of a man, which he disposes of as he wishes. It was the faith of this preacher that human beings should not be held as personal property, and the object of this preacher's faith was the revelation of the Christian religion found in the Old and New Testaments. Garnet believed that man was made by the Bible's Creator in the image of that God. Therefore, he should not be treated like chattel.

Great God! I would as soon attempt to enslave Gabriel or Michael as to enslave a man made in the image of God, and for whom Christ died. Slavery is snatching man from the high place to which he was lifted by the hand of God, and dragging him down to the level of the brute creation, where he is made to be the companion of the horse and the fellow of the ox.

It tears the crown of glory from his head and as far as possible obliterates the image of God that is in him. Slavery preys upon man, and man only. Why? Because a brute has not reason, faith, nor an undying spirit, nor conscience. It does not look forward to the future with joy or fear, nor reflect upon the past with satisfaction or regret.

Few would have argued against this line of reasoning in Garnet's day. That freedom was a virtue worthy of the sacrifices of our forefathers and that man is created in the image of God were tenets of faith believed by nearly every American leader listening to the preacher on that occasion. That the former tenet, freedom, required the later tenet, man as the biblical Creator's creature, for its validity was also plain, as the preacher proclaimed.

Our poor and forlorn brother whom thou hast labeled "slave," is also a man. He may be unfortunate, weak, helpless and despised and hated; nevertheless he is a man. His God and thine has stamped on his forehead his title to his inalienable rights in characters that can be read by every intelligent being. Pitiless storms of outrage may have beaten upon his defenseless head, and he may have descended through ages of oppression; yet he is a man. God made him such, and his brother cannot unmake him. Woe, woe to him who attempts to commit the accursed crime.

The Civil War had executed the preacher's woe on our land. America's original sin, slavery, could not coexist with American freedom. Garnet gives the reason - God gives men freedom, and God stamped all men with equal humanness. No man is more an animal than another. Says the preacher, "He is a man. God made him such, and his brother cannot unmake him." Men are made men, not animals or chattel. Evolution was beginning to deny this. Advocates of eugenics in the generations to come would deny this. But Garnet's woe still stands. Woe to him who attempts to commit the accursed crime of unmaking a man as God made him to be. No man can unmake a man as he is made by God.

Having suffered the effects of the preacher's woes against our original sin, Americans learned the hard way that American freedom is incompatible with an American sin that denies what man is by virtue of creation. Today, the warning of that same woe is beginning to echo again down the corridors of time as modern America has officially adopted at its highest levels of jurisprudence a new sin in the name of American freedom, a sin that is no more compatible with this freedom than slavery was years ago, a sin that denies what God has made man to be, just as slavery did.

The anthropology of Pastor Garnet teaches that God put His stamp on man, that this stamp is essential to his freedom, that this stamp is scriptural, and that this stamp cannot be undone by him. Scripture is clear that this stamp also includes heterosexuality - maleness and femaleness (Gen. 1:27-28, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply'"). In the words of the abolitionist Presbyterian, these facts of humanity are written into man "in characters that can be read by every intelli-

gent being." Though man may try, "God made him such, and his brother cannot unmake him." The heterosexuality of the human being is simply an incontrovertible fact of Biblical revelation, human anatomy, and human reproduction. It is part of the Creator's stamp upon us.

In Garnet's day some tried to make American freedom co-exist with American slavery. He understood that it could not, because he knew that his God did not design man that way. Today, our nation's highest halls of jurisprudence have ruled to make American freedom co-exist with American homosexuality. We are finding that it cannot for the same reason.

Soldiers, fire chiefs, florists, bakers, photographers, county clerks, shirt makers, pastors, and more have lost their American freedom of conscience to America's newly approved modern sin. Soon churches and other ministries will know the oppression of governmental taxation for failure to comply with this policy enacted by those who are attempting to unmake what God has made man. The price of freedom is becoming the denial of what man is. Oh for the return of Garnet, whose cry is so needed in this hour! "Woe, woe to him who attempts to commit the accursed crime!"

America's original sin and her modern sin hold much in common. Hear the preacher's words.

It is the highly concentrated essence of all conceivable wickedness. Theft, robbery, pollution, unbridled passion, incest, cruelty, cold-blooded murder, blasphemy, and defiance of the laws of God. It teaches children to disregard parental authority. It tears down the marriage altar and tramples its sacred ashes under its feet. It creates and nourishes polygamy. It feeds and pampers its hateful handmaid, prejudice.

It has divided our national councils. It has engendered deadly strife between brethren. . . .

It seals up the Bible and mutilates its sacred truths, and flies into the face of the Almighty, and impiously asks, "Who art Thou that I should obey Thee?" Such are the outlines of their fearful national sin.

The apostle Paul says many of the same things about America's modern sin, homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-32). Garnet quoted Moses against America's

original sin, "Moses, the greatest of all lawgivers and legislators, said, while his face was yet radiant with the light of Sinai, 'Whoso stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.'" Could the preacher not also quote the prophet's Book against America's modern sin? "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman-kind; it is abomination" (Lev. 18:22).

Pastor Garnet, a brave American, had suffered many years of bondage in the cause of freedom against America's original sin. Perhaps the believer's calling today is to do no less against America's modern sin. If it must be so, and the high court of the land seems to have said that it must, we will need the courage that comes from the divine vision of this great forerunner patriot.

The Lord hath bowed His heaven, and come down! Now, in this latter century of time, once more His tent is pitched on Sinai's crown! Once more in clouds must Faith to meet Him climb! Once more His thunder crashes on our doubt and fear and sin — "My people! Come ye out!"

From false ambitions and base luxuries; from puny aims and indolent self-ends; from cant of faith and shams of liberties, and mist of ill that Truth's pure day-beam bends: out, from all darkness of the Egypt-land, into my sun-blaze on the desert sand!

Show us our Aaron, with his rod in flower! Our Miriam, with her timbrel-soul in tune! And call some Joshua, in the Spirit's power, to poise our sun of strength at point of noon! God of our fathers! Over sand and sea, still keep our struggling footsteps close to Thee!

Then before us a path of prosperity will open, and upon us will descend the mercies and favors of God. . . . Thus shall we give to the world the form of a model Republic, founded on the principles of justice and humanity and Christianity, in which the burdens of war and the blessings of peace are equally borne and enjoyed by all.

God's call is certainly never to abandon one sin in favor of another. Bigotry and cruelty are never His will for His people. To the contrary, after our loving Him first, He desires next that we love our neighbors as ourselves. What does this mean for a Christian freeman's relationship with the neighbor who claims

to be a homosexual? Were that friend to claim to be less than equally human, to belong as a slave among the chattel and possessions of another, we would know how to love him. We would say in the name of the Creator God of heaven, "You are a man, equal with other men, by virtue of God's stamp upon you. No one, yourself included, can unmake what you are." We would treat such a one with the dignity belonging to what he is by virtue of the Creator's stamp, a man equally human before God.

In much the same way, were another friend to claim to be less than equally heterosexual, to belong to a classification called homosexual, we would know how to love him. We would say in the name of the Creator God of heaven, "You are a heterosexual, as is all mankind, by virtue of God's stamp upon you. No one, yourself included, can unmake what you are." We would treat such a one with the dignity belonging to what he is, a male or female equally heterosexual before God. It is impossible for us who recognize every person as a dignified heterosexual creature made in God's own image to discriminate against those creatures on the basis of their homosexuality. Such homosexuality simply does not exist.

Of course, every equally human and equally heterosexual person created by God is fallen in nature and corrupted by sin. The Christian freeman must always discriminate against sinful thoughts and behaviors, both his own and those of others, seeking for all the only path to mercy and forgiveness in the Redeemer's shed blood and glorious resurrection. The sister florist will provide beautiful flowers for everyone's Mother's Day celebration, for everyone is a dignified heterosexual made in the image of God, but she cannot be part of adorning a celebration of homosexuality, and that for the very same reason.

As with our nation's original sin, many Americans may need to endure a number of years of woe under the oppression of America's newly authorized modern sin before our nation can see that new day dawn that Pastor Garnet began to see in his day. Be that as it may, let every American Christian live inspired by those who have suffered for freedom before us, looking for that day when it can be enjoyed equally again by all, with eyes fixed on the Lord of heaven and Sinai and Calvary, fearing not him who can destroy the body, but fearing Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America
6450 Hope Way
Hanover, PA 17331

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