

October 30, 2009

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS – I have worked all over the world on ministry missions and for the sake of religious freedom, and this gives me a very different view than that of many pundits who express their views in the media.

During the 1980's I owned and operated a tour company inside the Soviet Union. It was the very first "public" company allowed to operate as a competitor to Intourist, which was the government run tour company. The offices of my company were located just a block from the Kremlin in Moscow and my principle business was to bring evangelists and pastors to the Soviet Union with large groups, to spread the Gospel message. At one point I was chartering huge wide body jets to bring in groups. I established the first Bible publishing company in the Soviet Union since the bloody communist takeover in 1917. The paperback New Testaments were given out at huge public evangelistic events in Kiev, Minsk, St. Petersburg, Moscow and other cities.

During this period the Religious Freedom Coalition was born, and while spreading the Gospel in the Soviet Union we assisted Jews in moving from their rather persecuted situation in Russia and the Ukraine, to Israel. The repression of the church was ending, but alcohol and prostitution had largely replaced God and the family. In the mid 1980's in St. Petersburg more than half of high school girls responded to a poll saying they looked forward to a career in prostitution.

I didn't have much trouble dealing with the communists who ran the Soviet Union at the time. Their nation was as bankrupt as the ideas of Karl Marx. For decades the Soviets had spent money they did not have. Without private enterprise as an economic engine, their managed economy at most could just print money. As a result Soviet citizens had plenty of cash, but there was nothing to buy. Medical care was "free" -- if you could get it. People with money paid doctors cash under the table to get medicines for their loved ones who were ill. These medicines were "free," but they were not available except on the black market.

I also worked in Central American nations during Ronald Reagan's "Contra wars," with an organization called Amigos de Libertad (Freedom's Friends) and we dealt with the repression of the church there. I have also been to China on mission trips, and on fact finding missions to Muslim nations including the Sudan, where I had dinner with murderous dictator Omar al-Bashire in his home located in the middle of an army base.

From all of this I have a clear understanding that freedom of speech and freedom of the press are liberties that spring forth only from one primary liberty, and that is freedom of religion. Thomas Jefferson clearly made the argument that religious freedom is the first liberty. Without religious freedom there can be no freedom of speech; no freedom of assembly; and no freedom of press. Religious freedom is the primary liberty from which all other freedoms come forth.

Every foreign nation the United States has ever fought was one that curtailed religious freedom. After the Revolution, our first war was against the Muslim pirates based in Tripoli who had attacked merchant vessels and taken female slaves for their harems from nations as far north as Ireland. The European solution was to try to pay the Muslims enough money not to attack their ships. President Thomas Jefferson decided to put the Muslim pirates who attacked our merchant ships out of business. This was the first foreign battle of the Marine Corps, and today we are fighting the despotic Taliban in Afghanistan and Islamic militants in Iraq.

THE GAY WAR ON FREE SPEECH – Leftists (some call them liberals), cannot tolerate a free press primarily because they cannot tolerate freedom of religion. The left wing of the Democrat Party, allied with powerful homosexual groups, is in a fierce battle to censor the clergy in America. This very clergy was instrumental in bringing about the birth of the nation. The battle began in 1954 when Senator Lyndon Johnson, who later became president, altered the tax code to forbid churches and other non-profit groups from expressing political opinion. From that first attack on freedom of religion the left has expanded its attack to the “hate crimes” laws just passed by the House and Senate that could indeed jail pastors for promoting marriage between heterosexual couples. Groups like Moveon.org and the ACLU now monitor church services in an attempt to bully pastors who hold traditional views on marriage, homosexuality and abortion.

Homosexual groups now obtain the names and addresses of those who support traditional marriage and orchestrate attacks on their homes and businesses. Moveon.org, which is funded by billionaire George Soros, also obtains the names of individuals who support conservative causes for the sole purpose of public attacks against them and boycotts of their businesses. Major corporations are intimidated into contributing funds to the far left social agenda and actually support the Nazi tactics of the far left. That is where we are in America today. It is about to get worse.

“DON’T CRY FOR ME ARGENTINA” – These are more than words from a song. Mary Anastasia O’Grady, a member of The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board recently wrote: *“One way a president can boost poll numbers in a bad economy is to wrest control of the central bank and start printing lots of pesos. There’s nothing like cheap financing to restore the market’s enthusiasm for buying all sorts of stuff—from stocks to houses—already on sale at fire sale prices.*

The great reflation will make people feel rich again. A weak currency will also be a short-term boon to exporters, whose profits can then be taxed at ever higher rates. Complainers can be denounced for their greed.

Of course this perpetual motion machine will eventually conk out and when it does, a government that expects to survive will find it necessary to silence its critics. Just ask Argentines, who are living all of this in real time.”

In four South American nations, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela, freedom of religion along with freedom of speech and freedom of the press are vanishing. In Argentina a husband and wife team, the Kirchers, took power in 2003. First the husband was president, now the wife. They “fixed” the economy by printing a lot of money to stimulate growth. This allowed the value of the currency to drop, creating exports and jobs – for a while. As the fix becomes a nightmare, those who are outspoken (the church and the press) must be silenced. Now the Kirchers are threatening the only media group that disagrees with them by invading their headquarters with a large number of agents for a “tax probe.”

In Brazil the far left and extremely pro-homosexual president has made it a virtual crime to even think that homosexuality is sinful. In Bolivia the press is threatened and intimidated, and in Venezuela radio and TV stations have been shut down. (See below)

All four of these governments have two things in common: they were all freely elected while the nations were democracies; and all of the leaders claim to be religious while at the same time attacking the church and freedom of religion.

THE FOX WARS –Venezuela had a free press until just a few years ago. At first Hugo Chavez, the far left Fidel Castro-loving president of Venezuela, criticized the media that opposed him. Then his supporters arranged advertising boycotts. Then the news studios were invaded by Chavez sympathizers. Then Chavez shut down radio stations that "lied" about him. Then entire TV and radio stations had their broadcast licenses revoked. MEANWHILE: in the USA President Obama and other White House officials have been critical of Fox News and have refused to appear on any Fox News programs. Leftist supporters of Obama have called for advertising boycotts against Fox News programs such as the Glenn Beck Show. It follows a pattern, a pattern of the left which always moves to censor what it does not want the public to hear. It is a pattern in other former democracies, that we appear to be following

THOUGHT CRIMES PASSES CONGRESS - A total of 131 Republicans voted against the Department of Defense Authorization bill because of the far left social legislation in this bill, including "hate crimes" legislation. The vote was not enough to stop this radical social agenda from being added to a bill that should have done no more than fund our troops in the field. Senate Democrats followed radical House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in adding "Thought Crimes" legislation to the Senate version of a must-pass military spending bill. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) said, "The inclusion of the controversial language of the hate crimes legislation, which is unrelated to our national defense, is deeply troubling." And Senator Jim DeMint, (R-SC) said the bill would "serve as a warning to people not to speak out too loudly about their religious views."

If signed into law by Obama, this radical anti-Gospel law will be tested by thousands of religious leaders in the United States, including me, who will preach a message that homosexuality is immoral. We will see how many Obama can jail.

THE LEFT LOVES TO CENSOR - I have reported on conservative Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders and his film [Fitna](#), which reveals the dark side of Islamic violence. He was refused entry into Great Britain because of the "hate" he exhibited by quoting verses from the Koran. (He won that case and entered the UK last month.) Liberals who support radical Islam showed up at Temple University last week to shout down and boo him. His greatest sin, as seen by liberals, was saying that "our Western culture is far better than the Islamic culture and we should defend it." Often liberals will show up at campus events for the sole purpose of censoring conservative speakers, many times with violence. Strangely, many who showed up to jeer Wilders for supporting Western values were homosexuals, who are publicly hung in Muslim nations.

LIBERALS GIVE BAD REVIEWS OF BOOK BEFORE IT'S RELEASED - Check out "The Right Hook: From the Ring to the Culture War" by my friend Matt Barber at Amazon.com and you will see all sorts of negative reviews written by left-wingers. Only one problem: this conservative pro-family book has not been released yet, and those writing these reviews could not possibly have read it! Many of the attacks on the book are actually personal attacks on Barber, which figures, because liberals are incapable of debating ideas and concepts. This is yet another form of censorship by the radical left. Conservatives promote the free exchange of ideas because they know their arguments are Biblically based and superior. Unable to argue on the issues and concepts, the radical left has to resort to personal attacks, lies and outright censorship.

NOT IRAQI ENOUGH -Not wanting to admit that Iraqi Christians were persecuted, the Bush Administration gave immigration status to ten times as many Iraqi Muslims as Christians. While Christians lived in fear and poverty in Iraq, Jordan and Syria, Muslim Iraqis were given an entrance to America. One of the results: an Iraqi Muslim father ran down his daughter in Arizona because of her "Western values." The media in Arizona refused to refer to Islam and instead said the act was because she wasn't acting "Iraqi" enough. Well, Christian Iraqis moving to the USA don't seem to have problems like this. When will the government recognize what has happened and help those who need help -- the Iraqi Christians?

SPECIAL IRAQI REFUGEE UPDATE - Our ministry partner from Jordan will be in Washington, DC during the second week of November. Arrangements have been made to visit several congressional offices while he is here. One of the meetings arranged at the Senate will include several Chiefs of Staff of Senators. A presentation will also be made to a gathering of other non-profit organizations in the hope of securing more support for our programs to supply food and medicines to Iraqi Christians who have fled to Jordan.

The Religious Freedom Coalition is also preparing a large shipment of medical supplies to be sent back to the clinic we support in Jordan, enough to last through March of next year. The total value of the shipment should be in excess of \$50,000 and we hope to ship prior to December 1st.

The situation with the Iraqi Christian refugees is not good. The media did very little coverage of the refugee situation and virtually none specifically on Christian refugees. I have talked to Senators who did not even know there was a large body of refugees who had fled Iraq. Having virtually no media coverage makes fund raising very difficult.

Because our ministry partner in Jordan only assists Christian refugees, we cannot accept any government funding, which we have been offered. If we accept food shipments, medical supplies or funds from a government agency we must abide by their rules. That means that like the Catholic Relief Agency in Jordan we would be forced to give more than 90% of the aid to Muslims. Since over half of the refugees are Christians this is unfair and we will not participate.

SUMMER CAMP – This year we raised funds to supply water to a Christian children's summer retreat camp in Jordan that is near the border with Israel. Our program was very successful and we raised the funds to supply the water in a short period of time. But the camp has other needs. It has been attacked and burnt to the ground twice since it first opened. If rebuilding had not been needed it would be far larger and able to accept more young people. Over the next several months the Religious Freedom Coalition will consult with camp directors to assess what we can do next year to enhance the camp experience for Christian youth in the Muslim nation of Jordan.

Please pray with us that the Christians of Jordan, particularly the children, and the Iraqi Christian refugees will find comfort in the Lord and a better life in the coming year.

William J. Murray, Chairman