

Religion in the News: July 2003

by Mister Thorne

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July was one more fascinating month in the annals of Religion in the News. A man who started an organization that reached just about every person on this planet went to another world. The Pope signed onto the idea that it's more important to make sure that sexual deviants don't get married than it is to make sure perverts don't rape children! A competing religious organization decided it's better to follow the teachings of Christ than the ravings of his original director of sales. You can hear God's plans if you can afford to: \$380 an hour. The House of Representatives passed important legislation: the Anti-Heretic and Infidel Association Act. The president nominated a judge to a U.S. circuit court of appeals but the judge claims he has no idea where our laws come from. And there were exciting developments regarding the posting of ancient laws in public places – even where kids might see them.

The World Less Bright

Two years ago, the founder and head of the largest evangelical ministry in the world – with over 25,000 employees, over 225,000 volunteers and nearly \$500 million in annual revenues – told Time magazine, "If I die, I'm going to heaven." On 19 July, Bill Bright set off on that journey when he died of supernatural causes at the ripe old age of 81.

Bright was born on the family ranch outside a small town in Oklahoma in 1921. He grew up on that ranch, raised by a prosperous family that turned crude oil into hard cash. His mother believed in certain spirits – just a small group of them – and she catered to their likes and dislikes. His father did not, and the young Bright took after his father: completely disinterested in things supernatural.

After graduating college in 1943, Bright moved to Los Angeles and started a business selling candies and other confections. According to those who knew him, Bright's future was bright: he was positive, energetic, and hopeful, and he devoted long hours to the success of Bright's California Confections. They say he was a very attractive young man, that he enjoyed the night life and the company of attractive young women.

One evening, just by chance, he was invited to a dinner hosted by an up-and-coming evangelist: Dawson Trotman, founder of the evangelical group known as the [Navigators](#). After dinner, Bright attended a party hosted by the son of a well-known evangelist, Charles E. Fuller, a pioneer in spreading the Gospel through radio. That evening would start Bright to thinking about the commercial potential of spirituality.

Bright was living in a rooming house, and the elderly couple who ran it kept encouraging him to attend church with them. After the encounter with Trotman and Fuller, Bright went to visit the church, and he discovered it was a good place to meet attractive young women. He attended the church – the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood – on a regular basis, and that's where he met the church's famed Director of Christian Education: Henrietta Mears.

Unlike Bright, Mears inherited her mother's religion when she was young, before she started school. By first grade, she knew the bible like other kids knew the alphabet. When she was only seven, she told her mother she wanted to surrender her life to Christ. When she was just 12, she started teaching Sunday school, something she would do the rest of her life. She became a soldier in the war against sin, the battle to save souls.

Quite unlike most women of the time (she was born in 1890 in Fargo, North Dakota), Mears went to college. She studied chemistry, and she continued teaching Sunday school classes. After she graduated in 1913, she took a job teaching chemistry at a high school. In addition to chemistry, she taught her students about her religious beliefs, about the likes and dislikes of a small group of spirits.

After 14 years of teaching high school chemistry (and the likes and dislikes of certain spirits), Mears took a sabbatical, toured Europe, and spent the winter in Los Angeles. That's when she started attending the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood.

She'd met the senior pastor of 'Hollywood Pres' when he visited her church in Minnesota and preached there a few years earlier. She decided to visit his church and listen to him preach again. He'd heard that Mears was quite an orator, and so he asked her to come back and witness to the congregation. She did. Impressed, the pastor asked her to consider leading the church's educational efforts. She accepted.

Mears transformed Sunday school. Public schools grouped children according to age; why not do likewise with Sunday school? Why not have grade levels? Public schools used a structured curriculum. First you learn addition and subtraction, then division and multiplication, and then you move on to fractions. Why not do the same with Sunday school? Why not have different study materials for different grade levels? Why not use pictures to explain things to youngsters? Mears put her teaching experience to work and created new study materials for children. Other Sunday schools started ordering her materials, and in 1933, Mears started a publishing company – Gospel Light Publications – that sold bible-study materials to Sunday schools throughout the country. In 1939, she started Gospel Light International to sell her bible-study materials for kids all around the world.

While Mears was producing and selling books to evangelize children, her good friend, Charles E. Fuller, was broadcasting a radio show: *The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour*. The show was carried by stations around the nation, and then by stations around the world. Rather than evangelizing in person to one tent full of people, Mears and Fuller were using mass communications to spread the Gospel to people all around the country and around the world. They had an army of evangelists at their disposal. Mears had her Forest Home Conference Center where many evangelists – including Billy Graham – learned their trade. Fuller had his Fuller Evangelistic Foundation, sort of a trade association for evangelists, and then he started the [Fuller Theological Seminary](#) to train more troops for the war against sin, the battle to save souls.

Bill Bright first heard Mears speak at 'Hollywood Pres' in 1945. He was impressed by her passionate call for Christians to drop everything else and fight for the 'Cause of Christ,' to convert all the world to a handful of core beliefs.

The next year, he heard Mears preach the 'Cause of Christ' at Forest Home. He, along with a few others, attended an all-night prayer meeting hosted by Mears. This passage from Mears' biography – *Dream Big* – describes the meeting:

“As they knelt together, they were overcome by a sense of helplessness and inadequacy. They prayed on into the late hours of the night with much weeping and crying out to the Lord, confessing sin, asking God for guidance and seeking the reality and power of the Holy Spirit. At times no one prayed as God spoke to them.

“Then, the fire from heaven fell, for God answered their prayer with a very real vision. Before them, they saw the college campuses of the world, teeming with unsaved students who held in their hands the power to change the world. Yes, the college campuses – they were the key to world leadership, to world revival.”

Bright said that when he was young, he was “an agnostic and a happy pagan,” despite the contradiction in terms. Now he saw the light; he enrolled in seminary school. He attended Fuller's Theological Seminary in Pasadena and started preaching to the students of UCLA. He honed his skills as an evangelist and, in 1951, Bright started his own evangelical ministry: Campus Crusade for Christ. Bright promised to be a “slave of Jesus Christ,” and claimed that God told him to prepare young men and women to serve in the “front lines of spiritual warfare.” He gave up selling candy and accepted the serious task of rescuing college students from evil forces in the war against sin.

Bright's approach used a simple formula for salvation. The formula – the Four Spiritual Laws – goes like this:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
2. Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life.
3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life.
4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

The formula was a hit on campus and billions of little copies of it were printed. Another big hit was a film that Bright made based on the Gospel of Luke. Campus Crusade for Christ claims the film – *Jesus* – is the most widely viewed film of all time, that it's been shown over 5 billion times. And Bright claimed his ministry had reached over six billion people: damned near everyone on earth!

Vatican Prioritizes Sex Sins

Making sure that homosexuals don't get married appears to be a higher priority than stopping priests from molesting kids, at least that's the impression the Vatican is making.

On 31 July, the [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) – responsible for guidelines for exorcisms as well as the Vatican's answers to moral questions – released a document titled [Considerations Regarding Proposals to give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons](#). The document, approved by the Pope last March, says:

1. Homosexual behavior is immoral.
2. Lawmakers have a moral duty to oppose legislation that allows same-sex marriage; it would be “gravely immoral” for a lawmaker to support such legislation.
3. Same-sex marriages would be a “grave detriment to the common good.”
4. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law.”
5. Allowing same-sex couples to adopt children would do “violence to these children.”

The document also warns against exposing young people to homosexuality, which would only “contribute to the spread of the phenomenon.”

Critics were quick to note that the Vatican never called for strong action against priests who molest children, tried to shield such priests from prosecution, and even allowed pedophile priests to continue to pursue their perverted passions with one child after another.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith was founded in 1542 and was originally called the Congregation of the Inquisition (more commonly known as the Roman Inquisition). It is most famous for the trial, torture, and execution of Giordano Bruno, and the subsequent trial of Galileo.

Episcopalians to Decide if a Sin is OK

Is homosexuality a sin like adultery, or is it OK? That's the big question confronting the U.S. faction of the Anglican Communion. On 29 July, the [74th General Convention](#) of the Episcopal Church USA got underway in Minneapolis. Representatives to the convention will consider two issues related to homosexuality: 1) they'll consider adopting an official blessing for same-sex unions, and 2) they'll decide whether to confirm a homosexual as bishop.

For all the talk about allowing homosexuals to become priests, there was none about following the law as set forth in Leviticus 20: homosexuals, like adulterers, are to be stoned to death.

There is speculation that the church may split into two factions over the issue of homosexuality: one larger than the other; one more conservative.

Bush Says We're All Sinners, Just Like Them

At a press conference on 30 July, President Bush was asked about same-sex marriages. The president said that marriage was for people of the opposite sex, and that's it. He added that homosexuals had something in common with everyone else: we're all sinners.

God's Plans Revealed (for \$380 per hour)

If you could convince people that you regularly met with the only god left, that you knew what it likes, dislikes, wants, loves, and hates . . . if you could tell a personal story about your relationship with that god, about how it came to you and spoke to you and told you what to do to end all your suffering and pain . . . if you could inspire others with details about the god's plans . . . well then, you could make big bucks.

Consider Angela Passidomo Trafford, spiritual columnist for the Naples Daily News, (from the Naples along the Gulf of Mexico, not the Naples along the Tyrrhenian Sea). She earns \$380 an hour revealing the last god's preferences and plans to folks like Doris Reynolds, food columnist for the Naples Daily News. Now Angela is going to be paying that kind of money to an attorney.

Why? Because Doris is suing the pants off of Angela. Why? Because Angela got Doris to write her a check for \$95,000 for spiritual self-healing treatments, but Angela didn't provide the treatments.

Doris, who suffers from depression and anxiety, has been getting treatments (literally) from Angela for years. In April, Angela told Doris that she'd have to fork over \$150,000 if she wanted the treatments to continue. Doris was short of cash (food columnists usually are), so she wrote a check for \$95,000. At Angela's request, she marked it as a gift so Angela wouldn't have to pay income tax on the money (Angela's a conservative spiritualist).

Fine. Then, all of a sudden, Angela stopped treating Doris, "without explanation or reason" according to the lawsuit Doris filed against Angela. So, there's Angela with a nice, fat check marked as a gift, and there's Doris with her aggravated state of depression and anxiety. Some lawyers are going to have to explain it all to a jury, and the jury's going to have to decide whether Angela bamboozled Doris or whether Doris suffers from a serious form of stupidity in addition to depression and anxiety.

Doris claims she paid Angela several millions of dollars since 1996. Her suit accuses Angela of constructive fraud, unjust enrichment, and civil theft – the sort of charges typically leveled against those offering spiritual self-healing treatments. Stay tuned.

House Passes the Anti-Heretic and Infidel Association Act

[Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, national origin, sex, or religion. On 25 July, the U.S. House of Representatives carved an exception to the Act when it passed another act that said certain employers could discriminate on the basis of religion. If those employers don't want to hire Jews, they don't have to. If they want, they can post Help Wanted signs that say, "Jews need not apply."

Which employers? Head Start providers. If the [School Readiness Act](#) becomes law as is, Christian groups that provide services under the Head Start program can openly and actively discriminate against Jews. For instance, they could fire employees who don't believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. President Bush supports the legislation.

Representative Lynn Woolsey (D – California) warned of the consequences. "Not only could prospective teachers lose job opportunities, but much-beloved long-time teachers could be fired simply because they don't share the religious affiliation of their employer," Woolsey said.

Representative Barney Frank (D – Massachusetts) expressed amazement. "What is this, the Taliban?" He suggested the bill be renamed "the Anti-Heretic and Infidel Association Act."

This past May, the House passed the [Workforce Reinvestment and Adult Education Act](#) which allows certain organizations that receive federal funds to discriminate against Jews. Last December, President Bush issued an executive order authorizing federal agencies to discriminate against Jews.

The Ideal World of Judge Roy Moore

If Roy Moore had his way, it would be illegal to be a Buddhist or a Hindu, an Atheist or an Agnostic. Homosexuals and adulterers would be executed. The whole country would shut down once a week. There would be a day when trains wouldn't run and planes wouldn't fly and hotel rooms wouldn't be cleaned . . . you wouldn't even be able to call an ambulance or take your kid to the emergency room. Such is the ideal world of Roy Moore and those who see Moore as their hero.

In 1995, Roy Moore was a judge on the Alabama State Circuit Court. He hung a wooden plaque bearing the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. The ACLU and the Alabama Freethought Association filed a lawsuit to get Moore to remove the plaque. That lawsuit was dismissed, but the issue remained: was it a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment for a judge to post the Ten Commandments in his courtroom? Of course not, or so thought Governor Fob James and Attorney General William Pryor. They filed a suit against Moore, the ACLU, and the Alabama Freethought Association so they could get a court to settle the matter once and for all.

Instead of a trial, all the parties agreed to have another judge – Judge Charles Price of the Montgomery County Circuit Court – decide the issue. At first, Judge Price ruled in favor of Judge Moore. He ruled that the plaque was part of an historical and educational display and so it did not violate the Establishment Clause. The ACLU asked Judge Price to come to Judge Moore's courtroom to see the plaque, to see that it was blatantly religious. Even Judge Moore said that Judge Price's ruling was wrong, that the plaque wasn't educational or historical, that it was there, quite simply, to promote religion.

So, Judge Price went and looked at the plaque and decided that Judge Moore was right: it was a religious display and it did violate the Establishment Clause. Price advised Moore that all he had to do was post some historic documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Bill of Rights near his plaque, and all would be well. Moore refused, just as he refused an earlier order from Price to stop having clergy open court sessions with Christian prayers.

On 10 February 1997, Price gave Moore ten days to remove the plaque. Moore refused. He said he'd rather go to jail than remove the plaque, and that made him a hero to the people of Alabama. They admired his defiance, his refusal to yield his principles.

Public sentiment in Moore's favor didn't go unnoticed. A state legislator introduced a bill to "legalize" the Ten Commandments so it could be safely placed in classrooms and courtrooms. An amendment to the state constitution was proposed that would reintroduce prayer to the public schools. A resolution was offered asking the U.S. Congress to support the display of the Ten Commandments in public places, and two days later, the U.S. Congress obliged with a vote of 295 to 125. Senator Trent Lott called Moore and congratulated him for defying the court order.

Governor James threatened to call in the National Guard to prevent anyone from carrying out the court order to remove the plaque. He vowed that attempts to remove the plaque from the courtroom would be met with "the force of arms." The governor warned that, "we're not going to have those Ten Commandments stripped from the courtroom, because I believe it's in violation of the Constitution that I swore to uphold."

The legal issue became moot when the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that the governor and the attorney general couldn't sue Moore if they agreed with him. The court stayed Price's order to remove the plaque and dismissed the case. That was it, and it remained an open question as to whether a judge could post the Ten Commandments in a courtroom without running afoul of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

Moore capitalized on the attention he received. He campaigned to become the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court. The campaign featured Moore as the "Ten Commandments Judge," a judge who would work to preserve those god-given freedoms that were under persistent attack from liberal civil rights groups like the ACLU. In 2000, he was elected Chief Justice by the people of Alabama.

In his campaign, Moore promised the people of Alabama that, if elected, he would post a copy of the Ten Commandments in the State Judicial Building. After all, he was the "Ten Commandments Judge" and they could expect him to continue to display the rebel defiance that had brought him to their attention to begin with. But after he became Chief Justice, Moore was slow to live up to his promise. Rather than post his Ten Commandments plaque in a courtroom, he hung it in his office, out of view to those touring the building. This was not the sort of bold defiance his supporters were expecting, and they demanded a return on the money they had donated to his election campaign. Some even accused Moore of just using all the attention for political gain.

On 1 August 2001, Moore gave his fans just the sort of thing they had hoped for. He unveiled a 5,280-pound, granite monument designed by him and engraved with the Ten Commandments. There it was, prominently displayed in the rotunda of the building for all to see. The Ten Commandments Judge was a man of his word. Soon, people came from all over the state to see the monument and pray before it.

Wouldn't you know it? The ACLU filed a lawsuit on behalf of three attorneys who frequented the building. The lawsuit demanded that Moore get rid of the monument.

Rather than file the suit in state court, the ACLU filed this suit in a federal district court. That way, a judge elected by the people of Alabama – 80% of whom approved of Moore's monument – wouldn't be deciding the case. In response, Attorney General William Pryor vowed a "vigorous defense of the Ten Commandments" and he deputized Moore's lawyers as assistant attorneys general.

Last November, the federal judge who heard the case issued his ruling: the monument had to go (see [Religion in the News: November 2000](#)). Moore appealed that decision to the 11th U.S. Court of Appeals.

Moore told a three-judge panel of the appeals court that his oath of office requires him to uphold the U.S. Constitution not as others interpret it, but as he sees it. And the Chief Justice has an unusual way of seeing things. First, he argued that placing the monument in a public building is not a law, so it can hardly violate the First Amendment which limits the sort of laws that Congress can enact. Second, he argued that the district court judge who heard the case erred when he went and looked at the monument even though Moore's lawyer asked the judge to look at the monument. Third, he argued that the district court erred by psychoanalyzing him and dissecting his heart and mind. Fourth, he argued that the Ten Commandments are not religious, even though he claims that the reason he put the monument in the building was to remind everyone of "God's overruling power over the affairs of men." Finally, he argued that a federal court cannot order him to remove the monument.

On 1 July, the appeals court affirmed the district court's ruling that Moore remove the monument. The court told Moore that he'd best follow court orders. It informed him that his position as head of one branch of a state government didn't mean he could ignore a federal court order.

On 22 July, the Chief Justice said he plans to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case.

In related news:

On 23 July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to prohibit U.S. marshals from enforcing the court order to remove Moore's monument. If passed by the Senate, the stage could be set for a showdown between the U.S. Congress and the appeals court, which has vowed that the district court's order to remove the monument will be enforced.

Also on 23 July, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the nomination of Alabama Attorney General William Pryor to a seat on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, the same court that told Moore that he'd best follow court orders.

Pryor has been a firm supporter of Moore in his legal battles. Back in 1997, when Moore was defying the court order to remove his Ten Commandments plaque from his courtroom, Pryor had this to say at a rally in support of Moore: "God has chosen through his son Jesus Christ this time, this place for all Christians – Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox – to save our country and save our courts." Pryor offered no details on how he acquired this revelation.

Graffiti from God

There were a number of other developments regarding the legality of posting ancient Jewish laws (and other such things) in public places:

1. In Everett, a town just north of Seattle, Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court to have a six-foot tall slab of granite engraved with the Ten Commandments removed from in front of the town's police station. The monument was given to the city in 1959 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles.
2. In Kansas, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City voted 8 to 0 to move a monument bearing the Ten Commandments from in front of the Wyandotte County courthouse to a nearby Catholic church. The monument – donated to the county by the Fraternal Order of Eagles – has been sitting in front of the courthouse for 40 years. The decision to move the monument was in response to a threat from the ACLU for legal action.

3. In Arizona, Governor Janet Napolitano says she will take no action to remove a six-foot marble monument engraved with the Ten Commandments from a public park. The monument – donated by the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1964 – stands in a park near the state capitol. The governor’s statement was in response to a demand by the ACLU that it remove the statue.
4. On 9 July, the U.S. National Park Service took down three bronze plaques that contain Bible Quotes. The plaques were located in the Grand Canyon National Park and were donated to the park in 1970 by the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary. The plaques were taken down after the park received an inquiry about them from the ACLU. An official with the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. ordered the plaques to be put back up.
5. On 28 July, a federal judge ruled that a plaque bearing the Ten Commandments that has hung outside the Allegheny County Courthouse in Pittsburgh since 1918 can stay right where it is. The judge’s ruling was based, in part, on a ruling by a federal appeals court last month in a similar case involving a Ten Commandments plaque posted on a courthouse outside Philadelphia. [get the details]
6. In West Virginia, gubernatorial candidate Sarah Minear said she would sign a bill mandating the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools (even the Supreme Court has ruled that to do so is a violation of the Establishment Clause.) According to Minear, “Our country was founded on the Ten Commandments, believe it or not.” In a [poll](#) conducted by the Charleston Gazette, 70% of the respondents said the Ten Commandments should be posted in classrooms and courthouses. In the last gubernatorial election, posting the Ten Commandments in classrooms became a heated issue in the campaign.
7. On 23 July, the Board of Commissioners in Barrow County, Georgia met to discuss a lawsuit threatened by the ACLU. Last month, the ACLU asked the commissioners to remove a Ten Commandments poster from the county courthouse: either that or face a lawsuit. The commissioners have decided to duke it out with the ACLU and have asked the American Center for Law and Justice for assistance.
8. On 12 July, officials in Franklin County, Georgia, voted to post the Ten Commandments in the county courthouse. They plan to avoid legal action by making the commandments part of a display of historic documents, including the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights.

Commentary

A myth can become so pervasive and deep-seated that it becomes fact, even to those who should know better. Such is the case with the myth, vigorously promoted by the likes of Roy Moore, that U.S. law is based on the first ten Mosaic laws: the Ten Commandments. It’s a myth that defies history and reality. It’s a myth that requires one to believe that our laws come not from the founders of Western civilization – the Greeks and the Romans – but from a small tribe of Asians.

History

However much Roy Moore might believe that the Ten Commandments are the beginning of all law, we know otherwise. Before the Ten Commandments, there was the Code of Hammurabi, the law that set out the concept of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” Before the Code of Hammurabi, there was the Code of Ur-Nammu, and before that was Urukagina’s Code. Truth is, written law predates Mosaic law by at least 1,000 years.

So – it might be asked – if our laws don’t come from the Old Testament, where do they come from? Try English common law. Isn’t English common law based on the Ten Commandments? Heck, no.

A touch of history. We go back to ancient Rome, long before there is a Roman Empire, to a time when the Greeks are spreading their culture throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the region is dotted with city-states. In the city-state of Rome, there were those who had power (the Patricians) and those who served them (the Plebians).

In 449 B.C., the Plebs reacted against the old system of law that favored the Patricians. Among their many complaints was that the Patricians refused to codify and publish the law. To settle matters – the Patricians couldn't afford a revolt by the Plebs – the old system of law was revised, and the new system of law was codified and published as the Twelve Tables.

The new law introduced some of the most basic elements of our modern system of law:

- *Everyone is equal before the law*
- *The accused is innocent until proven guilty*
- *The accused has a right to defend himself and to know his accuser*

300 years later, Palestine comes under Roman control. By that time, the Roman system of law is well established. There is no evidence that Roman law was influenced in any way by Mosaic law.

Great! But what does this have to do with English common law?

Not long after the Romans take control of Palestine, they try to control Britain. The Romans are fighting for control of Gaul (now France and Belgium and parts of Germany), but the Celts in Britain – cousins to the folks in Gaul – are proving troublesome, providing aid to their kinsfolk across the Channel. So, Julius Caesar invades Britain (55 B.C.), but the effort is only half-hearted, the Celts maintain their independence, and Gaul remains a battleground for the Romans.

A century later and Gaul is under Roman control. Emperor Claudius decides it's time to deal with those pesky Celts and so he invades Britain. He has considerable success. After just a few years, Rome controls much of the island. The Romans continue to expand their control, but they never control the most northern part of the island, present-day Scotland. Emperor Hadrian builds his famous wall (120 A.D.), and that marks the northern limit of Roman control.

A hundred years after Hadrian erects his wall, things are going badly for the Romans. Invaders are pounding on the Empire's borders. Cracks are forming in the political structure. Rather than one Caesar, there are several and the Empire is splitting in two: East and West. Even the age-old state religion is under attack. A new religion – Christianity – is gaining in popularity and it threatens to replace all the old gods with one: the only remaining god of the Jews.

The Romans pack up and pull out of Britain. They need to defend Gaul, and they can no longer afford to maintain the island province. After the Romans leave, a new group of invaders from across the Channel begin showing up. These are Teutons – Jutes, Angles, and Saxons – and they evict the Celts from the southern part of the island.

These new invaders make a new world of the island. They bring along their culture, and they create a new civilization. They give the land a new name – England, land of the Angles. They settle into numerous, small principalities. Over time, largely through warfare, the principalities evolve into a few kingdoms. Feudalism becomes the order of the day.

The Middle Ages have arrived. The mighty own whatever land they can, the commoners work the land for their lords, and the lords serve their kings. The commoners fight in their lords' armies, trading military service for peace and protection, and the landlords offer their armies to fight in the causes of their kings.

What's the law in England? It's whatever the king says it is. The situation is pretty much the same across the Channel. The western half of the Roman Empire has dissolved, replaced by a patchwork of feuding kingdoms. Feudalism becomes the social-economic order, the commoners work the land and – as kingdom fights kingdom – the commoners fight on behalf of their lords' kings. The kings are running things, including the law.

The situation is different in the East. The eastern half of the Roman Empire – the Byzantine Empire – maintains itself for another 1,000 years. One of its rulers was Justinian, and he is a very important figure in the development of the law that exists in Europe to this day.

By the time Justinian came to power, the law had become unwieldy. Justinian reorganizes the law so it can be readily consulted and understood. The effort is a great success, and when Justinian manages to regain control of the Western Empire, Justinian's Code becomes the law throughout the Empire, East and West. It becomes the basis for law throughout Continental Europe that exists today.

The point is this: the law in Continental Europe originates in ancient Rome. The people of Palestine have no hand in it, and their laws mean nothing to anyone but them. When the Romans develop the Twelve Tables, they don't even know about the Jews.

Back to England. Did the Anglo-Saxons somehow base their law on ancient Jewish law? Not at all. Before William the Conqueror showed up in 1066 A.D., there was no set law in England. There was a king of all England, and there were courts of law, but laws were local. The laws and the courts were controlled by wealthy landowners, and clerics ran the courts for them. But each court had its own way of doing things, and its own laws to enforce. Then William showed up, made himself King, and started getting things organized: to be a nation, England needed a common, national law. William began that effort.

One thing he did was to restrict the importance of the clergy in matters of law. There would be Canon law (the clergy would be free to regulate the affairs of the church and to establish rules for things like marriage and divorce), and there would be a separate, secular law beyond the control of the church.

Almost forty years after William arrived in England, his son – Henry I – became the King of England. He set up a system of royal courts throughout the country. At first, the royal courts didn't rely upon written law to decide matters. Instead, judges (mostly clerics, the only people educated enough to preside over a royal court), were directed to be fair and reasonable, to use good sense in arriving at their judgements. They established the common-law tradition of having courts determine the law where there was no written law.

Later, Henry II continued the reforms that his grandfather – Henry I – started. The royal courts grew in importance and the feudal courts – the independent courts controlled by powerful landowners – became less and less important. Henry II also put the church in its place: subordinate to the secular authority. He made clerics subject to the same laws as everyone else, he forbade any appeals from the royal courts to the papal court, and he decided that he would appoint the bishops in his kingdom (modern-day England and France).

Henry II accelerated what his grandfather started: the development of a law common throughout the entire kingdom in place of local laws. Centuries later, English common law would become the law of the English colonies, including the thirteen colonies in North America.

Did either Henry I or Henry II rely on the bible as a source of law? Nope. Turns out that the law of the bible – the law that Yahweh gave to Moses – had no influence in the West at all. The Western world derives its law from the Romans, and indirectly from the Greeks who influenced the Romans.

The only places where biblical law has any weight today are places controlled by Muslims. Even in Israel, the bulk of Mosaic law is disregarded except among a few, small religious sects like the Karaites (who are prohibited by national law from following the Mosaic laws that pertain to crimes, morality, and slavery).

Of course, there's no denying that Christianity had a profound influence on Western civilization, including the law. We're reminded of that whenever someone swears an oath in a court of law. Typically, the oath is taken with one hand on the Bible, and it concludes with this very familiar phrase: "so help me God." But it's one thing to say that Christianity influenced the law; it's quite another to say that our law is based on the Ten Commandments. Without doubt, it is not.

All that Roy Moore and his kind (e.g., William Pryor) have to do is take a course in the history of Western civilization. Then they can rid themselves of the belief that we inherited our law from a small tribe of Asians. We did not. We inherited it from a bunch of powerful Pagans.

Reality

In the U.S., we don't follow Mosaic law. We don't execute homosexuals or adulterers; we don't execute people who work on Sunday; we don't execute kids who curse their parents; we don't allow slavery; we don't stone people to death, we don't sacrifice goats and sheep, when we invoke the Fifth Amendment, and we don't call priests when we find mildew in our homes, as required by biblical law. If there's any similarity of our laws to the Mosaic laws, it's only because all societies arrive at similar laws (just try to find a society that doesn't have a law equivalent to the 8th Commandment.)

Mosaic law contains elements that are extremely foreign to us. For instance, Mosaic Law #1 prohibits honoring any other god but Yahweh. U.S. law has no equivalent. Mosaic Law #2 prohibits making pictures of birds and fish. U.S. law has no equivalent. Mosaic Law #3 prohibits any misuse of Yahweh's name. U.S. law has no equivalent. According to Mosaic law, it's fine to have slaves, so long as you follow the laws regarding slaves. Not so in the U.S. Want to marry a virgin? Just go and rape her, give her father some money, and she's all yours, according to Mosaic law. Not so in the U.S.

According to Mosaic law, a woman cannot get married unless she's a virgin, even if she was previously married. But if her husband dies, her brother-in-law is supposed marry her even though she's not a virgin (and even though he's already married). Mosaic law is so poorly constructed that in a number of instances, you really can't follow the law, no matter how much you might want to.

Certain violations of the law require the violator to pony up a female sheep or goat to be sacrificed to Yahweh. Those who can't afford a sheep or a goat have to come up with two pigeons. Those who can't come up with two pigeons have to come up with two kilos of flour. Is there a law anywhere in the U.S. that carries such a penalty?

Other violations of Mosaic law call for punishments that we find abhorrent. One of the more popular punishments is being stoned to death by your neighbors. They just keep throwing rocks at you until you die. What sort of violations call for such a cruel punishment? Homosexuality; adultery; working on Sunday. In the U.S., we have capital punishment, but we certainly don't execute people who work on Sunday, as required by Mosaic law.

Imagine this: imagine that the good people of Roy Moore's town decide to implement Mosaic law. Suppose they find a couple of homosexuals packing fudge and they stone them to death in public. Guess what? The good people of Roy Moore's town are going to find themselves in a courtroom, charged with violating the real law.

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