

Check It Out: Victory Over Massachusetts Library's Anti-Christian Witch Hunt

For much of American life, witch hunts and shunning were something in the distant past – lost in the mists of medieval Europe. The latest example we had was the Salem witch trials. But a public library in Massachusetts had its own form of secular banishment, denying religious groups the right to use the public library “for the sake of proselytizing” (that is, preaching the Gospel). The Lawrence facility would allow groups to use its public meeting room, but only if they were planning a church picnic or counting the tithes in the offering place. Its official policy stated, “Religious groups may use the library’s meeting rooms for administrative purposes but shall not be allowed use for the sake of otherwise influencing people to a particular belief or point of view.” A federal court has overturned the policy as an unconstitutional limitation on free speech in a public place. It took the court only a month to make its ruling after Liberty Counsel filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Lawrence, Massachusetts. “Public libraries are a marketplace of ideas. Government cannot censor religious viewpoints from the marketplace,” the lawyers contended. “Public libraries cannot exclude religious viewpoints from common meeting rooms that are open to the public,” said Mat Staver, Liberty Counsel’s founder and chairman. “Of all places, public libraries should welcome religious viewpoints. Telling members of the public they can talk about any topic but must exclude religious viewpoints is as absurd as it is unconstitutional.” This is an outstanding example of how secularism uses the guise of tolerance to create intolerance. Hats off to Liberty Council and the federal courts.