

# Is Christian Persecution in America About to Reach a New High?

A New Jersey teacher was suspended for giving a student a Bible. A football coach was placed on leave for praying on the field. The Atlanta fire chief was fired for self-publishing a book defending Christian morality.

A Marine was court-martialed for refusing to remove a Bible verse on her desk. A senator castigated a political nominee for his evangelical theology. Christian groups like InterVarsity Christian Fellowship have been expelled from college campuses.

It's hard for evangelical Christians not to feel that our culture is increasingly antagonistic toward our faith and values today.

I raise this topic because of a fascinating report released yesterday. Sociologist George Yancey shows that those who oppose evangelical Christianity have become wealthier in recent years and thus have more money to bankroll their viewpoint. In other words, we can expect intolerance to continue and even escalate in coming years.

Obviously, American Christians should not compare the opposition we face with the persecution being suffered in countries such as North Korea, Somalia, and Iraq. But Mary Eberstadt is right: "Something new has snaked its way into the village square: an insidious intolerance for religion that has no place in a country founded on religious freedom."

How should we respond?

God wants his people to work for the common good regardless of

how society treats us. He instructed his people exiled in Babylon to “Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive” (Jer. 29:7). The apostles led a movement that met physical, social and spiritual needs so effectively that they won “favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47a).

Conversely, one of the ways God redeems persecution is by using it to remind us that this world is not our home: “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14). We are “aliens and refugees” in this fallen world ((1 Pet. 2:11) knowing that this life is a journey and heaven is our destination.

In *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis famously noted:

*The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure and merriment, he has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy.*

*It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bath or a football match have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”*

Paul called his ministry team “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). We courageously advanced the agenda of his King in distant lands while preparing every day to return home.

Whose agenda will you advance today? {eoa}

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