

This Is Hillary Clinton's Progressive Vision of Religious Freedom

The 2016 debates are history, and although nearly every topic was hammered to heaven, one was not broached at all: a First Amendment guarantee that makes us uniquely American.

Freedom of religion represents the proverbial canary in the coal mine and the evidence shows it may gasping. Let's take a look.

Hillary Clinton is a lifelong self-described Methodist, but her words and actions suggest that her belief in Almighty God also comes with a dedication to state power and willingness to restrict religious liberty. That is a threat from which our Founders sought to protect us when they spelled out the First Amendment to our Bill of Rights:

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.

The difference between the language in the Constitution and language now used by President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton ought to be of interest to Americans who attend a church or synagogue. Gallup puts that number as high as 122 million (37 percent) weekly in 2015, while the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion put it as low as 72 million (22 percent) in 2005. High or low, freedom of religion is a right practiced regularly by a quarter to a third of our population.

Our heritage guarantees the free exercise of religion, but an attorney who worked on *Zubik v. Burwell* (more colloquially

known as the *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Obama*) points out that since 2013, President Obama has used “freedom of worship” rather than the more traditional “freedom of religion” in his speeches. Hillary Clinton has adopted the same wording.

What’s the big deal? The phrase “freedom of worship” is code for religious freedom within an enclosed, non-public space, such as a religious structure, residence or vehicle. Eventually, the progressive view could mean, for example, that roadside billboards advocating a pro-life stance might disappear. And so might our right to have religious symbols displayed upon our persons.

If you think I’m paranoid, think again. The 2016 Democratic Party platform says:

We support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.

Consider carefully the words “*support a progressive vision of religious freedom ... and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.*” How can a political party support a “vision” other than the Constitutional freedom we are now guaranteed? What exactly is a *progressive* view of religion? What if a church declines to embrace the LGBTQ agenda? What will “Clintonians” do when they believe a religion is not sufficiently progressive or when they believe that Christians stand in violation of certain goals of the LGBTQ agenda? Would those Christians be judged to be misusing their religion to discriminate?

A large part of the answer appeared in a speech by candidate Clinton herself. In April 2015, at the Women’s World Summit, she said, “Laws have to be backed up with resources and political will. And deep-seated religious beliefs have to be changed.” As a public or private position, that’s scary. Match those words with her party’s platform and think about our

future, especially in religious denominations professing pro-life beliefs.

What's missing from the DNC platform, most notably, is the exception appearing in the 2012 platform, which "allowed physicians and other medical professionals to excuse themselves from performing or assisting in abortions if to do so would violate their religious beliefs" (according to the Religion News Service). That means, in the "progressive view of religious freedom" going forward, that a President Hillary Clinton would appoint judges who will reverse or water down the March 2016 victory in *Zubik*.

Even before the transformation of SCOTUS, Hillary Clinton would, like Barack Obama, act to change deep-seated beliefs by executive fiat (see the HHS mandate). Many of us justifiably fear that in Hillary Clinton's America, doctors and nurses could be forced to participate in partial-birth abortions and full-term abortions, even in religiously affiliated hospitals. She has certainly done nothing to convince us otherwise. So, in Hillary Clinton's America, belief in God would be in accord with subservience to the state.

Hillary Clinton is a candidate who has not had a presser in eons and has avoided journalists' questions like a plague. If real journalists would ask the right questions, might they be tempted to ask Mrs. Clinton to more fully explain her progressive view of religious freedom and what she means by the need to change deep-seated views?

I strongly object to those who trivialize my free exercise of religion, privately or publicly. And if Hillary and her progressive allies can narrow my religious practices, what will they do with free speech and the right to bear arms and other civil liberties enshrined in the Bill of Rights?

Will this election be like the Affordable Care Act, as infamously described by Nancy Pelosi? Will we elect Hillary

Clinton and only then find out what's in it for us? {eo}

John P. Warren is a guest commentator for the Center for Vision & Values and is the author of Turnover and TurnAround.

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