

Theocracy Alert

Capital crimes in a theocracy

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July 27, 2005—At 10 AM on July 19, 2005, Ayaz Marhoni, age 18, and Mahmoud Asgari, age 16, were publicly hanged in Edalat (Justice) Square in downtown Mashad, in northeastern Iran. Both teens had been lashed 228 times before they were executed. Death is the penalty prescribed by Islamic law for homosexuality.

Iran's theocratic rulers not only justified but praised the murder of the teens: "These individuals were corrupt. Their sentence was carried out with the approval of the judiciary and it served them right"—and then patted itself on the back for protecting the "interests of the state."

Following the executions, Ali Asgari, a member of the Majlis Legal Affairs Committee, complained, "Instead of paying tribute to the action of the judiciary, the media are mentioning the age of the hanged criminals and creating a commotion that harms the interests of the state" (italics mine).

How many times have you heard the leaders of America's Christian Right claim homosexuals pose a lethal threat to society and "the interests of the state?" When gay and lesbian Americans sought to reaffirm civil equality and social commitment by getting married, theocratic politicians quickly sounded the "interests of the state" alarm. While advocating the Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution, Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA)—with eyes rolling—said on the floor of the U.S. Senate, "The future of our country hangs in the balance because the future of marriage hangs in the balance. Isn't that the ultimate homeland security—standing up and defending marriage?"

Mr. Santorum's counterparts in Texas reaffirmed the theocratic "interests of the state" in their 2004 political platform: "The Republican Party of Texas affirms that the United States is a Christian nation."

Iran's theocracy and its definition of "capital crimes" are based on the Qur'an. What would constitute "capital crimes" in a theocracy based on the Bible?

Leviticus 24:10 clearly states, "Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him." Leviticus 24:11-16 call for a community gathering in order to stone to death those who plant two different crops in the same field or wear garments made of two different kinds of threads. Leviticus 20:10 states that "if a man commits adultery with the wife of another man both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death."

Deuteronomy provides a veritable litany of capital crimes. Chapter 22 verse 21 states that unless the parents of a bride can provide proof of her virginity, "then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death." Deuteronomy 22:22 reinforces Leviticus: "If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman." Deuteronomy 22:23-24 states "If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death."

Obviously, women are a prime target in “God’s” Old Testament laws, and although Yeshua seemed to respect and treat women as equals—a violation of “God’s law” the reigning Pharisees found most egregious—early Christian leaders reverted to the old ways. In the New Testament’s First Timothy, the Apostle Paul admonished Christians “suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” because, as Paul stated, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.”

When a religion’s definition of “sin” becomes synonymous with “crime” against the state, and when religious dogma underwrites civil law, civil rights—and civility itself—cease to exist.

How far are we along that road? Too far. Just keep track of the number of times you see, hear or read “anti-Christian” applied to secular, political matters.

Rev. Louis Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition has decreed that anyone who opposes or even questions the nomination of John Roberts to the Supreme Court is “[anti-Christian](#).” But then again Sheldon believes anyone who thinks critically and independently is “anti-Christian,” as he defines “Christian.” He’s probably right about that. Americans who like to think for themselves and lives their lives as they see fit *are* a threat to the interests of the theocratic state Sheldon advocates. Perhaps that’s why this “Christian” leader suggested rounding up all gays and lesbians and putting them in [concentration camps](#).

Because the American Civil Liberties Union is involved with school districts initiating programs to educate teachers and staff about discrimination against and bullying of gay and lesbian students (education the Christian Right vehemently opposes), Robert Knight of the [Culture and Family Institute](#) proclaimed that the ACLU is “best described as the ‘Anti-Christian Legal Unit.’” When did protecting children in school become “anti-Christian”?

The “anti-Christian” theme will no doubt figure prominently in Justice Sunday II: God Save the United States and this Honorable Court,” which is scheduled for August 14, 2005, in the Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. This is the sequel to the April 24, 2005, “[Justice Sunday](#): Stop the Filibuster Against People of Faith.” Like the original, “Justice Sunday II” is being organized by [Tony Perkins](#)’ of the Family Research Council and will feature Focus on the Family’s James Dobson and Bill Donohue from the Catholic League. A quick flashback to the original previews what’s to come in the sequel.

During the original “Justice Sunday” simulcast, fire and brimstone were called down upon anyone and everyone who objected to the evangelical Christian Right’s attempt to control the judiciary. The 90-minute simulcast from the Highview Baptist (mega)Church in Louisville, Kentucky was truly Kafkaesque.

When trying to assure the “anti-Christian” enemies of righteousness that he wasn’t advocating a theocracy with himself and the other leaders of the Christian Right as its controlling Taliban, James Dobson said, “Folks, you can’t make somebody else’s dog do what you want it to do.” And what do “folks” like Dobson do to a disobedient or offending “dog?” Dr. Dobson is a child psychologist who began his career writing Christian guidebooks for parents that advocated spanking: physical violence inflicted on a loved one in the name of “Christian love.” Can anyone—especially “[gay dogs](#)”—targeted by his violent views expect any less?

From the Justice Sunday stage, Tony Perkins said he believed independent jurists in an independent judiciary posed “a greater threat to representative government [than] terrorist groups.” Were these the words of someone who believes in the Constitution’s checks and balances, or someone who advocates a theocratic state?

At the Louisville Justice Sunday event, Bill Donahue of the Catholic League asked a self-identifying question: “What are we, the Taliban?” Prominent Southern evangelical leader and fellow performer Rev. Albert Mohler confirmed the identification and reaffirmed the American Taliban’s intent: “We’re going to save this civilization and uphold righteousness,” as “righteousness” is defined by the leaders of the

Christian Right just as it was by the leaders of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and just as it was by the religious court in Iran that ordered the torture and murder of two teenagers.

Rev. Mohler is also on record stating that “any belief system [leading] away from the cross of Christ and toward another way of ultimate meaning, is, indeed, wicked and evil.” That would make everyone not wearing the mark of the American Taliban is “anti-Christian,” “evil,” and a threat to the “interests of the state.”

That the theocratic leaders of the Christian Right are so [gung-ho](#) about the [Roberts](#) nomination should sound a deafening [alarm](#). Their holy grail is a *de facto* fundamentalist Christian state in which different religious views, different moral and political perspectives would be worse than irrelevant. They’d be “[anti-Christian](#)” and, therefore, subversive: a threat to the very existence of “God’s” government. The [Constitution Restoration Act](#) makes that abundantly [clear](#). It asserts “God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, [and] government.” The legislation is avidly supported (and “sponsored”) by homophobe extraordinaire Rev. Lou Sheldon and his Traditional Values Coalition, as well as other leaders of the Christian Right and their pocketed politicians: Senators Richard C. Shelby (R-AL), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), and former Senator [Zell Miller](#) (D-GA),, and Representatives Robert B. Aderholt (R-AL) and Mike Pence (R-IN).

How would “capital crimes” be defined in a theocracy based on “God’s” laws as dictated in the Bible and advocated by the American Taliban? Would they also say about transgressing women and homosexuals, “These individuals were corrupt. Their sentence was carried out with the approval of the judiciary and it served them right”?