

Ten Tortured Words, Part 3

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • December 27, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2020
Scripture Reader and Reading: Jake McNeil – First Timothy 2.1–7
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – No Suggestions

Prelude:

I. What Thomas Jefferson wanted on his tombstone:

**“Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the
Declaration of Independence
Of The
Statute of Virginia
For
Religious Freedom
And Father of The
University of Virginia
Born April 2, 1743 O.S.
Died July 4, 1826”**

A. Mansfield explains in an endnote:

“The letters “O.S.” appearing after dates stand for “Old Style.” In 1752, the Julian or Old Style calendar was replaced in England and her colonies by the Gregorian or New Style calendar, which is still in use today. This added eleven days to the date to bring the calendar year into step with the astronomical year. Thomas Jefferson’s birthday, then, which was April 2 under the Old Style calendar, is now celebrated on April 13.”

– Stephen Mansfield. “Ten Tortured Words.”

B. Pardon me, Mr. Jefferson, but were you not also:

1. Governor of Virginia,
2. Minister or Ambassador to France,
3. A member of Congress,
4. Secretary of State,
5. Vice President, and

- a) what was that other one?
- b) PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!

II. However, he wanted to be remembered for three things:

- A. That he wrote the Declaration of Independence,
- B. That he wrote the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and
- C. That he was the Father of the University of Virginia.

- 1. I would guess that most Americans
 - a) do not remember him for those three things or
 - b) the others that I mentioned.
- 2. Most people remember him for a phrase that he coined,
 - a) although they do not know the context and
 - b) although they have reversed completely his original meaning.
- 3. They remember him for saying:

“wall of separation between church and state.”

- D. He wrote those words in a letter to a Baptist Association,
 - 1. assuring them that he would not interfere in their affairs, because
 - 2. the Constitution, namely, the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights
 - a) forbade him from doing such, since
 - b) it had erected a wall of separation between church and state,
 - (1) meaning that the state could not encroach on the church,
 - (2) whereas, today it is used to silence the church.

III. In that 1947, Supreme Court case to which I made reference two weeks ago,

- A. they virtually made Jefferson’s words the law of the land.
- B. When university professors, national journalists on television, politicians, judges, public school staff, et al.,

1. read the First Amendment,
2. they read it as Jefferson's words,
 - a) although without Jefferson's meaning.
 - b) A private letter of a president has become the law of the land.
 - (1) I think this has been a major, if not *the* major,
 - (2) cause of silencing religion in America more than anything else.

IV. Let us now read the letter that the Baptists wrote to him and his reply.

V. Jefferson was like all of us.

- A. He grew.
- B. He abandoned beliefs.
- C. He acquired new beliefs.
 1. He became stronger in old beliefs.
 2. One of his stronger beliefs was that government should support religion.
- D. Here is why this is important.
 1. For a time, Jefferson's beliefs were not all in line with biblical thinking.
 2. He did not think very much of established religions.
 - a) He thought that religion was good for peace and order.
 - b) He saw Jesus merely as a great moral teacher.
 - c) He thought that the Bible needed editing.
- E. In 1803, while still a deist, Stephen Mansfield says this:

“In 1803, Jefferson recommended to Congress the passage of a treaty that provided a stipend of \$100 annually to support a Catholic priest in ministering to the Kaskaskia Indians.¹⁷ Similar treaties were enacted with his endorsement for the Wyandot Indians and other tribes in 1806 and the Cherokee in 1807. Another act that originated in 1787 ordained special lands ‘for the sole use of Christian Indians’ and reserved land for the Moravian Brethren ‘for civilizing the Indians and promoting Christianity.’ When this act was renewed, it bore the title ‘An Act regulating the grants of land appropriated for Military services and for the Society of the United Brethren

for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen.' Three times during his administration, Congress extended this act and Jefferson signed it into law. Not once did he even consider vetoing it on the basis that it violated the First Amendment or his own 'wall of separation' metaphor."

– Stephen Mansfield. *Ten Tortured Words*. Page 45.

F. He grew even stronger in these beliefs.

1. He began proclaiming that he was a Christian.
2. Then he started doing something that he had never done before.
 - a) He started attending worship services.
 - b) That may not sound like a big deal,
 - (1) until you hear where he attended those services.
 - (2) It was not just at the local community church.
 - (a) He attended worship services in the House of Representatives!
 - (b) This was the man whom people now use to forbid such.
 - i) Jefferson, who wrote of the separation of church and state,
 - (1) worshiped in the House of Representatives.
 - (2) He did not see it as a violation of the First Amendment.
 - (3) He did not see it as a violation of his commentary.

G. It is not just that Jefferson engaged in such, but

1. amazingly, a church met in a federal building.
2. Worship services had already started taking place in Washington
3. before the government set up in Washington in 1800.
 - a) In 1795, a Boston newspaper reported:

"City of Washington, June 19. It is with much pleasure that we discover the rising consequence of our infant city. Public worship is now regularly administered at the Capitol, every Sunday morning, at 11 o'clock by the Reverend Mr. Ralph."

– *Ten Tortured Words. Page 46.*

- b) Such services continued at the Capitol until 1866.
 - (1) For about 70 years there were church services in the House of Representatives.
 - (2) There was no objection, of which I am familiar.
 - (a) Our Founding Fathers understood how doing such
 - (b) did not constitute a national church.

H. Now get this further.

- 1. Do you know when was the first time that Jefferson attended that church?
- 2. He attended that church in the House of Representatives
 - a) two days after he wrote that letter to the Danbury Baptist Association!
 - b) Now tell me what he meant in that letter.
 - (1) See, people today have twisted his phrase to mean
 - (2) that there should be laws against mentioning religion.
 - (a) That would be like interpreting John 3.16,

16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

– **John 3.16**

- (b) to mean that he actually hates the world.
 - i) I could see someone actually doing that with John 3.16.
 - ii) They would argue that those who do *not* believe in Jesus,
 - (1) will perish.
 - (2) Therefore, God hates the world.
 - (a) You know that is not what Jesus taught and

(b) you know that Thomas Jefferson did not believe

(c) the government should be antagonistic to religion.

I. Anyway, Thomas Jefferson continued to worship

1. with that church in the House of Representatives

2. for the next 7 years.

a) Therefore, his wall of separation figure of speech

b) could not have meant that government cannot support religion.

3. Listen to this:

“An early Washington insider reported that ‘Jefferson during his whole administration, was a most regular attendant. The seat he chose the first day Sabbath, and the adjoining one, which his private secretary occupied, were ever afterwards by the courtesy of the congregation, left for him. He became a fixture at the meetings and gained a reputation for attending even through violent weather.’”

– Stephen Mansfield. *Ten Tortured Words*. Pages 47–48.

a) John Quincy Adams was a senator during those days.

b) He also worshiped there.

(1) The place was filled with people.

(2) In 1857, 2,000 people filled the place.

(a) We would call that a megachurch today.

(b) A megachurch assembled in federal buildings!

J. Jefferson approved of churches meeting in

1. the War Office and

2. the Treasury building.

a) During those days, a church even began meeting

b) in the chambers of the Supreme Court!

K. One time as Jefferson was walking to church services,

1. Ethan Allen,

- a) farmer, businessman, land speculator, philosopher, writer, lay theologian, American Revolutionary War patriot, politician, and one of the founders of Vermont,
- b) had this exchange with Jefferson:

“Which way are you walking, Mr. Jefferson?” Allen asked.

“To Church, Sir.”

“You? Going to Church, Mr. J? You do not believe a word in it!”

“Sir,” said Mr. Jefferson, “no nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion. Nor can be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has been given to man and I as chief Magistrate of this nation am bound to give it the sanction of my example. Good morning, Sir.”

– Stephen Mansfield. *Ten Tortured Words*. Pages 49–50

2. In spite of all that evidence,

- a) people still see Jefferson as antagonistic toward religion, and
- b) they still believe that government should be antagonistic toward it.
 - (1) I hope that I have educated you now in this truth about our nation.
 - (2) Learn to see
 - (a) how Christianity helped to form our nation and
 - (b) that our government was meant to support it.

VI. Jefferson thought of his example.

A. Should we not think of our example as Christians?

B. Since you are here tonight,

- 1. you see the value of being here, but
- 2. you probably also know that the world is watching you.
 - a) New Christians are watching you.

b) Weak Christians are watching you.

- (1) Do not back down on your example.
- (2) Let people see how you live:

**12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
– 1 Timothy 4.12**

**11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.
– 1 Peter 2.11–12**

- (a) Whether you know it or not,
- (b) you have already affected people.
 - i) Many new Christians have told me
 - ii) of the lives they see in members of the church.
 - (1) You helped in their conversion.
 - (2) You have helped the youth to grow up as Christians.