

# CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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## A Christian Response to Anger

by Michael J. Brooks

Road rage has been around for a long time. I've often thought about making citizen's arrests myself when I've witnessed irresponsible driving!

But now there's a new anger: desk rage.

According to a Reuter's story, nearly half of U.S. workers say they've experienced yelling and verbal abuse on the job, and almost one-fourth of workers say the abuse they've suffered has brought them to tears.

Some workplace anger erupts in property damage and can lead to physical abuse.

"It's a total disaster," said Anna Maravelas, author of "How to Reduce Workplace Conflict and Stress."

"Rudeness, impatience, people being angry--we used to do that kind of stuff at home but at work, we were professional," she said.

"Now it's almost becoming trendy to do it at work."

Anger is a natural emotion that we have when we feel disenfranchised or when we see others treated unjustly.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, "Anyone can become angry--that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way--that is not easy."

Anger isn't a sin. The gospels record Jesus was angry on three occasions. The apostle Paul actually encouraged the Ephesians to be angry. He wrote, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26).

Sometimes it's hard to deal responsibly with the anger we feel, but we have to set personal limits.

Anger resulting in violence against others is always off-limits. Counselors often talk about walking away or engaging in other activity until the anger subsides and we're thinking more clearly. It also helps to talk with trusted friends about our emotions.

Then we must find the best way to give expression to our anger.

Anger can be a positive driving force in social change. Anger brought about the abolition of slavery in America in the 19th century and child labor laws and woman's suffrage in the 20th century.

More recently Candy Lightner who founded "Mothers Against Drunk Driving," John Walsh of "America's Most Wanted" and Beth Holloway of "The International Safe Travels Foundation" were driven by their personal loss and anger to bring attention to injustice and to birth organizations making the rest of us aware of dangers.

We must ask for the peace of God in the midst of life's stressors, and for the wisdom of God to make appropriate responses to the aggravating circumstances we face on the road, at work and at home.

(Brooks is Professor of Communications, Assistant to the President for Public Relations, Judson College, Marion)

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources  
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

## A Grave and Growing Threat

Chuck Colson says: "Our founding fathers—even those who weren't Christians—believed, as I do, that without freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, all of our other freedoms aren't worth the paper they are written on. If government can dictate what we may or may not believe, or how we may or may not live out our beliefs, then we are no longer a free people."

The time may be fast approaching when Christians have to face the very real prospect of civil disobedience—when we will have to choose whether to obey God or government.

Whatever lies ahead, we must remember that God's Word supersedes man's law.

When the early disciples were forbidden to preach in the Name of Jesus by the Jewish authorities, they boldly said: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

*(Decision Magazine 03-2012 - a publication of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)*

## Increase Gambling Penalties

by Luther Strange

As the Attorney General, I have a sworn duty to enforce the law as it is written and as it is interpreted by the Alabama Supreme Court. Law enforcement officials across the state share that duty, but many times our jobs are made difficult when the penalties are so weak they do very little to deter the criminals. The worst example of this weakness is found in our criminal statutes that deal with illegal gambling.

In the wake of several announcements made by the owners of shuttered casinos that they will reopen, it is clear that Alabama will once again come under siege by gambling interests that are bent on causing our state to spiral back into the gambling problems of the past. Now more than ever, quick action needs to be taken by the Legislature to stiffen the penalties for illegal gambling offenses.

Law enforcement needs the tools to win this battle. Casino owners who stand to rake in millions of dollars from the gambling losses of working people are not going to stop until the law imposes felony prison time and heavy fines for promoting illegal gambling.

The Alabama Constitution strictly prohibits lotteries and games of chance. But over the years, narrow amendments have been passed to our Constitution in some counties that allow nonprofit organizations to play the traditional game commonly known as bingo in order to raise proceeds for their charitable causes.

The Alabama Supreme Court, however, has made it clear that none of the bingo amendments allow for-profit casinos to operate Las Vegas-style gambling facilities in thinly veiled attempts to skirt our laws against slot machines and other forms of illegal gambling. In addition, several criminal statutes in the Alabama Code make it a crime to possess slot machines or to promote illegal gambling. But the penalties for violating the criminal statutes are so weak that the criminals are willing to repeatedly engage in illegal gambling activity because they stand to make millions of dollars.

Alabama has a long history in dealing with the corruption that comes from illegal gambling. The illegal gambling that was allowed to exist in Phenix City in the 1940s and 1950s led to the murder of Attorney General Elect Albert Patterson. The governor was then forced to declare martial

law in the city and the National Guard was sent in to stomp out the corruption.

Just a few decades later, my predecessor stood by idly and allowed illegal gambling to spread across Alabama like kudzu in the form of so-called "electronic bingo." Of course, that "electronic bingo" is not bingo at all, but slot machines in disguise. The result in turning a blind eye led to more than 100 "electronic bingo" casinos in Alabama by 2008, with more than 50 being operated in one town alone.

Out of state gambling interests constructed and opened multi-million dollar casinos in absolute defiance of Alabama law. The confusion created by a lack of law enforcement action also led to the expansion of Native American Indian gambling on tribal lands in Alabama.

Another governor was once again forced to reestablish the rule of law with a task force to stop the illegal activity. This led to expensive and lengthy law enforcement actions followed by several trials. Along the way, state police encountered numerous local judicial officials, who issued outrageous restraining orders at the request of local casino bosses —orders that were overturned time and time again by the state Supreme Court. In the midst of the crackdown, the federal government also embarked on a lengthy investigation that resulted in several guilty pleas.

I never want to see those scenarios played out again, but I fear that is exactly what lies ahead if the Legislature fails to act quickly by passing a bill designed to deter large scale illegal gambling.

My duty is to uphold the rule of law, but the Legislature must provide law enforcement the ability to effectively deal with large scale illegal gambling. The fight against illegal gambling is not and should never be about politics. It is not about whether I believe gambling is good or bad. This is about the rule of law, pure and simple. But under current law, gambling interests stand to make millions of dollars in illegal gambling profits while risking only a slap-on-the-wrist misdemeanor charge.

*(Strange is the attorney general of Alabama)*  
ALABAMA VOICES, Montgomery Advertiser, April 9, 2012

# Obama's Attack on Religious Freedom

## What it means for abortion rights

by A. Eric Johnston

Psalms: 139:13-16



When President Barack Obama last month ordered religious institutions to provide and pay for birth control for employees, there was a public outcry. It was first by Roman Catholics and then Protestants. While Protestants normally find no objection to birth control, Catholics do. So why were Protestants concerned?

Birth control is not the only issue. Government violation of the Free Exercise Clause is the initial issue. Speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in February the week of Obama's proclamation, former Governor of Arkansas and former Baptist minister, Mike Huckabee, said we are all Catholics today. Tongue in cheek he said, during his preaching days back in Arkansas, he would never have foreseen standing before several thousand people and saying he is a "Catholic." But he did and that reveals the real significance of the problem.

As President, Barack Obama is increasingly criticized and found overreaching in his disregard of the United States Constitution. The theme of CPAC 2012 was "We still hold these truths to be self-evident." From appointing "czars" for virtually every function of government, to telling us what we must do even in disregard of our religious values, Obama has reached further into our lives than the law allows. While we may worry about the effects of Islam on our peace and order, we find a more immediate threat to our religious freedom.

Though the Obama Administration immediately attempted to quell the religious uprising, it did nothing more than show it was serious about its order and attempted to circumvent the objections and still accomplish its goals. Rather than admit its constitutional mistake and reverse its birth control requirements, the Administration changed it to say that religious institutions did not have to provide the birth control, but that their insurers would at no charge. That was not a correction of its error, but rather a further declaration of its goal of secular government control of reproductive rights issues and a frank statement that religious values of the majority of Americans are not important, much less, fundamental.

Obama's notion of abortion and reproductive rights is totally in line with abortion rights advocates. When he was running for President, he promised abortion rights advocates that he would pass the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA). FOCA would federalize all abortion rights, taking away states' rights to regulate and making abortion on demand permanent and without prospect of restriction or regulation. While he has not gotten FOCA passed, he has worked continuously to advance abortion and related reproductive rights.

Abortion and birth control are tightly wound issues. If you help one, you help the other. Birth control is easier to regulate. If you begin there, it is easier to move to protecting abortion rights. To demonstrate how intertwined and important this is, we need look no further than the Alabama Legislature where there is pending a "Personhood Bill." The dilemma is the wording of the bill – conception versus implantation. The pro-life community has consistently since 1973 stated life begins "at conception." This is when the process of the formation of a human being begins. However, with advances in medical science, issues of birth control and *in vitro* fertilization have complicated the issue. Generally speaking, some birth control removes the implanted egg, while *in vitro* fertilization involves fertilizing eggs in the petri dish and then implanting them in the womb. Consequently, if you declare by law that life begins "at conception," you outlaw some methods of birth control and *in vitro* fertilization.

So, we really have two issues: religious freedom and abortion rights. The threshold issue is religious freedom. If government can direct a "healthcare" requirement of a religious entity, it can require more and other regulation of religious activity. Religious freedom must constantly and consistently be protected. That is why the pilgrims and others came here and why we have the First Amendment religion clauses and the Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment. When government pushes the boundaries, we must respond.

Also, the sanctity of life and all related to it becomes an issue. If the Obama Administration can achieve the goals of FOCA by executive orders, without regard to the Constitution or the Congress, then FOCA's goals are accomplished. That may sound like an extravagant statement. However, if one can begin small and seemingly insignificant, one can move on to greater things without causing alarm.

James Madison said, "We are right to take alarm at the first experiment upon our liberties." To direct the Catholic Church on birth control is major, not slight. Defenders of Obama's actions say many Catholics do not follow birth control rights, so it is not a big issue. What the "faithful" do within the Roman Catholic Church is a church matter. It is the government's order to a church that violates the Constitution that is the real issue. And, in so doing, the abortion rights agenda is advanced. However, we are all still Americans and we have responded to the encroachment. It is not over and never will be. But, that is why we have our constitution and why Alabama's motto is, "We dare defend our rights."

*(Johnston is president and general counsel, Southeast Law Institute, Birmingham)*

## Citizenship & Religious Liberty Sunday - July 1, 2012

Jesus said we are to be "salt" and "light" (*Matthew 5:16*). We must let our faith season all we are and all we do, including our participation in the market place as well as in the dialogue of thoughts and ideas in the public square.

**In America, we have more than a right to let our faith shine forth; we have an obligation.**

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# FACTS & ISSUES

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## ABORTION AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

**FIRST-PERSON: The president, abortion & religious liberty in peril...**

The Obama administration's decision to require religious institutions to cover abortion-inducing contraceptives amounts to the trampling of religious liberty "under the feet of the leviathan state," says columnist R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

*Baptist Press, Feb. 6, 2012*

## HOMES UNDERWATER

**Will the foreclosure deal improve the housing market?**

The depressed U.S. housing market remains the key headwind to economic recovery, with an estimated 22% of homeowners owing more than their house is worth and with millions facing foreclosure. After 18 months of tortured negotiations, the five biggest mortgage servicers, 49 state attorneys general and the Obama Administration recently reached a settlement that may remove one obstacle to a housing turnaround: banks' fears of government lawsuits for reckless lending practices. The deal, announced Feb. 9, releases the country's largest mortgage lenders from state or federal liability for badly handled foreclosures and for pushing mortgages on borrowers who couldn't afford to pay them. In return, the banks agreed to pay nominal penalties to victims of mortgage abuse and to fund foreclosure mitigation. Both sides agreed to new, tougher mortgage-servicing standards. With an estimated \$700 billion in negative equity in American homes, the deal's \$25 billion price tag is unlikely to fix the market. But proponents say it's about time that homeowners—rather than just banks—got a bailout.

*Massimo Calabresi - Time Magazine, February 27, 2012*

## UNDERWATER MORTGAGES

22.8% is the percentage of U.S. homes with underwater mortgages - that is, owners owe more than their home is worth - in the fourth quarter of 2011, up from 22.1% the previous quarter.

*Time Magazine, March 26, 2012*

## WILL GAS GET CHEAPER?

**Not Likely!** U.S. Oil production is up, but rising need from countries like China means that global demand is outpacing supply. That's a recipe for high prices.

*Time Magazine, March 26, 2012*

## BINGE DRINKING: Seniors Engage Most Often, Says Study

Next round is on the seniors. A study released this week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), reveals that adults over 65 years old binge drink more often than any other age group.

According to the CDC, more than 38 million Americans binge drink around four times per month, knocking back as many as eight drinks in a sitting. While the study indicates that more young adults, ages 18 to 34, participate in binge drinking than any other age group, the over-65 crowd binge-drinks the most frequently: an average of five to six times each month. The study describes binge drinking as four or more drinks for a woman and five or more drinks for a man.

"Binge drinking by adults has a huge public health impact, and influences the drinking behavior of underage youth by the example it sets," said Pamela S. Hyde, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrator, in a statement. "We need to reduce binge drinking by adults to prevent the immediate and long-term effects it has on the health of adults and youth."

Seniors may be particularly susceptible to health risks from alcohol consumption, according to the National Institute on Aging. For example, alcohol may have an increased effect on older drinkers. Alcohol may also be dangerous when combined with certain medications -- such as pain killers, sleep aids, and anti-depressants -- so older people should investigate whether they can drink while taking any medicine. And alcohol may worsen or cause certain medical conditions that may afflict seniors, such as osteoporosis, stroke, memory loss and high blood pressure.

Binge drinking has also been found among the baby boomer population. A study published in "The American Journal of Psychiatry" in 2009 uncovered binge drinking in 22 percent of men and 9 percent of women who were 50 - 64 years old.

The prevalence of binge drinking in older adults isn't the only surprising finding from the CDC's study. Check out the slide show below to see what else the study revealed and to view the CDC's video on the health risks of binge drinking.

*TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. Huffington Post, January 18, 2012*

## INDIA

49.6% is the percentage of households in India that have a toilet. By contrast, more than 60% own a phone.

*Time Magazine, March 26, 2012*



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