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Bonhoeffer realized the dangers of justifying a political move with Christian or theological reasoning.



Family of Bonhoeffer Denounces Misuse of Ideals in Recent Film

A feature film about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous German Lutheran pastor involved in a plan to assassinate Adolf Hitler, was recently released. Bonhoeffer was a recognized anti-Nazi dissident and vocal opponent of Hitler's euthanasia program and the persecution of Jews. He was also the author of the modern classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Though his life and writings are clearly worthy of attention, viewers of the new movie will want to watch with awareness.

Both Bonhoeffer's family and scholars are speaking out sternly against certain slants in the movie, as well as its use by some as a platform for politics, both in America and Germany. Used in conjunction with "violent political rhetoric, the legacy of German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer is being invoked ... on behalf of [politics]," began a letter from collective scholars. "It is a dangerous and grievous misuse of his theology and life. As an international group of Bonhoeffer scholars, we

warn against it."

"As direct descendants of the seven siblings of the theologian and resistance fighter executed by the Nazis, we can testify based on what we learned from our families that he was a peace-loving, freedom-loving humanitarian," notes the pastor's family. "At a time when intolerance, antisemitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia, nationalism, and authoritarianism are on the rise around the world, we believe it is important to clarify publicly: Dietrich Bonhoeffer fought narrow-mindedness, oppression, and exclusion throughout his life."

The family continues, "Any attempt to invoke Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his resistance against Hitler as a reason to engage in political violence in our contemporary context must be strongly opposed," the scholars say. "Moreover, while Bonhoeffer supported the coup, he refused to offer a Christian or theological justification for it. He understood the dangers of such a rationale."

Inmate Gets New Trial, Messianic Jewish Case Settled

Two determinations involving religious liberty issues for Jewish plaintiffs were recently made.

New trial

A prison escapee in Texas who had been sentenced to death for the murder of a police officer during a store robbery after their escape will receive a new trial. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals determined that the original trial judge was biased against the man because he is Jewish. The judge's private and

semi-private antisemitic statements were reported by witnesses, and determined to be long-standing.

Accommodation

A settlement has been agreed on in an EEOC case on behalf of a Messianic Jewish employee who was not accommodated after requesting his schedule be changed for his religious observance days.

Center One and Capital Management, related companies, were part of the Title VII lawsuit filed in 2016 after

Center One refused to accommodate an employee when he couldn't provide certification from a religious leader or organization. He explained that he was not a member of a congregation, but they brought disciplinary points against him which forced him to resign.

In settlement, the companies will pay the man \$60,000, and they agreed to not deny reasonable accommodations in the future, nor to demand certification as a precondition for accommodation.

NEWS OF THE WORLD

Freedom Violations Rife in Iran

There has been an upswing in "persistent egregious violations of religious freedom" in Iran, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Following are just a few examples.

- A 20-year-old Jewish man who killed a Muslim man in self-defense, was recently executed, tied to his Jewish identity.

- A female student at Tehran's Azad University was arrested after removing her outer clothing in protest of the mandatory hijab laws.

- Denial of medical care for religious freedom advocate and Nobel Laureate N. Mohammadi continues.

- Three Baha'i businesses were shut down, and many Baha'is are being arrested for

their religion.

- There is regular sexual and gender based violence

against religious prisoners of conscience, often resulting in hospitalization.

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- A federal appeals court ruled unanimously that California cannot exclude Jewish private school children with disabilities from federal funding, because they "easily conclude[d] that the nonsecular requirement fails the neutrality test" required by the Constitution. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ensures that children with disabilities receive an education that meets their needs.

- In Louisiana, a federal district court determined that House Bill 71, which requires the Ten Commandments to be posted in every public school classroom state-wide, is unconstitutional because the plaintiffs in *Roake v. Brumley* showed "a real and substantial likelihood of coercion."

- A church's former pastor filed suit against off-duty city police officers who assisted the congregation in physically removing him after his dismissal from the position by threatening him with arrest. The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal of his suit, *Couzens v. City of Forest Park, Ohio*, concluding his free exercise of religion rights had not been infringed.

Adventist Wins Employment Case About Sabbath Work After 10 Years

An appeals court in California has found in favor of an Adventist refused employment specifically because of the need to accommodate her Sabbath keeping.

Ten years ago, Teresa Brown applied to work as a corrections officer with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Her husband is a police officer, she had previously worked in a local prison, and CDCR was hiring 8,000 officers statewide, so the odds were in her favor.

She was able to take the test on an alternate day from Saturday, and passed with high marks. A written inter-

view asked about availability, and she noted her need for Sabbaths off. Months later she received a letter saying she was rejected because of not having 24-7 availability.

Convinced that this was not right, she contacted the Church State Council, a legal services ministry of the Adventist Church in the southwest, who agreed to represent her, along with Stanford University Law School's religious liberty clinic and an established trial lawyer.

The case came to trial in 2018. Despite witnesses testifying they'd never worked on Sabbath; information revealed that vacationing of-

**Brown's
case was
featured
in a video
promoting
the *Liberty*
magazine
fundraiser.**

ficers or officers who "had been watching football on a Sunday afternoon and downed a six pack of beer" were excused from reporting; and Brown's own testimony that she would work in case of emergency, the judge still ruled against her.

Two appeals later, in mid-September 2024, three judges heard arguments from both sides and ruled decisively in favor of Brown. The case will return to court in the future, though, to decide damages, the economic loss to Brown, and whether the state is willing to hire her if she so desires.

"There is joy and celebration," says Alan Reinach, executive director of Church State Council. "A small measure of justice has been achieved."

COVID Cases Settled

Two cases recently settled highlight the difference in seeking accommodation for religious reasons vs. personal preference.

A Catholic woman in Michigan was awarded \$13 million. Lisa Domski was fired by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan in 2021 after refusing the COVID-19 vaccine on religious grounds. This was following 38 years of employment for BCBS.

Domski filed on the basis of religious rights violation after she submitted a written statement from her priest explaining the conflict of her Catholic beliefs. Though the Pope supports vaccines as "an act of love," some Catholics are concerned over the use of cell lines from abort-

ed fetuses in historical vaccine development.

Meanwhile in Kentucky, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit by a former department manager at University of Kentucky who was denied religious accommodation to be exempt from the UK policy on COVID vaccination. She felt she was being coerced, and "[t]rying to manipulate somebody into doing something to attain a result that you want by holding something over them" is "not right behavior." She did not, however, make a connection with any religious principle, and the court found that her "secular values" didn't establish a religious conflict.

State Opens Tax-paid Religious Office

The State of Oklahoma has opened the taxpayer-funded Office of Religious Liberty and Patriotism at the Oklahoma Department of Education, intended to investigate cases where religious freedom has been attacked. Ironically, they do this at the same time they are attempting to require Bible study in school curriculums.

The office is intended to promote religious liberty and patriotism by protecting "parents, teachers, and students' abilities to practice

their religion freely in all aspects" and will also "oversee the investigation of abuses to individual religious freedom or displays of patriotism," according to Ryan Walters, superintendent of public education.

Walters is also the author of a mandate to require the placement of Bibles in every classroom, as well as to teach from the Bible as part of history classes — which could violate the religious liberty of members of other faiths.

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A graphic illustration showing two hands holding a torch with a bright flame. The background is a warm, abstract blend of yellow, orange, and red. In the top left corner, there is a red square with a white 'L' logo followed by the word 'LIBERTY' in black. At the bottom, the text 'RELIGIOUS LIBERTY OFFERING' is written in white capital letters.

LIBERTY

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THE LIGHT
GO OUT**



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