

RELIGION

The Ongoing Persecution of a Christian Baker

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Baker Jack Phillips, decorates a cake in his Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colorado, September 21, 2017. (Rick Wilking/Reuters)

What is it with the pissant totalitarians in Colorado?

Jack Phillips is a baker. He is also a Christian. He declined to bake a wedding cake for a homosexual couple, who, instead of going to the bakery down the street, brought in the state government to try to force him to.

Commission had, in targeting Phillips, acted on a foundation of “religious hostility on the part of the State itself.” A second action against Phillips was dropped when the outlaw baker countersued.

Autumn Scardina, who was the complainant in the second action against Phillips, is now pursuing a third, having asked for a birthday cake to celebrate a gender transition.

That is three legal attacks on a man for the purported offense of conducting his bakery business in accordance with his own views and values. We are reminded of William F. Buckley Jr.’s observation: “Liberals claim to want to give a hearing to other views, but then are shocked and offended to discover that there are other views.” American liberals have almost entirely abandoned liberalism, with its tenets of generosity and tolerance, and now insist on conformity and homogeneity — to be enforced at the point of a government bayonet, if necessary, or through financial ruination, or whatever other means of coercion is near at hand.

The legal doctrine of “public accommodations” first came to prominence as a civil-rights matter in the case of racial segregation at a time when African Americans could hardly travel in much of the country as a practical matter. The exclusion of black Americans from public life, when piled on the legacy of slavery, severely circumscribed the lives and opportunities of African Americans. While there is still rank bigotry directed at homosexuals, the situation of gay Americans in the 21st century is not very much like that of African Americans in the 1940s. To accommodate the religious principles of those with traditional views of marriage in this matter requires only a trivial and largely symbolic concession: It is a lot easier to find a gay-friendly caterer in Colorado in the 21st century than it was to find a hotel open to African Americans in Alabama in 1937. These are not of equal moral weight.

earlier era — is not to provide for the integration of gay Americans into civil life or to enable them to organize their own affairs on their own terms and to engage in the pursuit of happiness in the way that seems best to them. Instead, the point of this harassment — and it is only harassment — is to bully and coerce dissidents into obedience and conformity. That “dissident baker” is a genuine political category speaks eloquently to the insanity of our times.

This is persecution, and it is unjust. It should be addressed with whatever legal and political means are necessary to bring it to a stop.

And a few people in Colorado should grow the hell up.



THE EDITORS comprise the senior editorial staff of the National Review magazine and website.