



Canadian Church Ordered to Close, Congregation Meets Outside

Fear of COVID has led to multiple violations of civil liberties in the United States, and also in other nations. In Canada, Ontario Superior Court Justice Bruce Thomas ordered congregants out of the Aylmer Church of God building during church services, and last Friday, new locks were placed on the exterior doors. Additionally, Thomas fined the church \$117,000 — a figure above what the church has the ability to pay.

But then Sunday morning, a large crowd assembled outside the building and listened to the church's pastor, Henry Hildebrandt, preach his sermon on a loudspeaker. Fortunately, the weather was pleasant as Hildebrandt addressed the circumstances that had forced the church to meet outside.



YouTube

This is an important point. While it is popular to refer to the building as “the church,” the word actually refers to the assembly itself. In the New Testament times, Christians did not meet in church buildings, as that would have made them targets of the government, but rather in private homes, outside, or in the catacombs — burial sites underneath the city.

Western civilization — of which the United States and Canada is a part — was largely built on the foundation of Christianity. And yet, this foundation is increasingly under attack from secularists who despise Christians and use various excuses to undermine religious liberty, or, in this case, public-health concerns.

The media generally sides with the secularists against Christians and religious liberty in this country, in Canada, and in the United Kingdom. For example, the *London Free Press*' coverage of the episode illustrates this bias against biblical Christianity: “Residents in this quaint town of 7,000 are reacting with relief after authorities padlocked the doors of the Church of God.”

One might note that it is highly unlikely that the entire town of 7,000 agrees with padlocking a church building, but that was the impression given in the article. The *London Free Press* quoted a resident, Renate Laidlaw, who said, “It should've been done a long time ago. It's ridiculous. Our town is on the map because of these Church of God people.”

Apparently, this woman views the town's reputation as of greater importance than individual liberty. In an interview with *Rebel Press*, Pastor Hildebrandt said, “We are making a mockery out of our law system,” charging that Canadians are now under a “medical dictatorship” of unelected public health officials who have been invested with the power to trample on individual rights. He noted that these



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on May 21, 2021

public health dictators offer no scientific evidence to support for their decrees.

Appealing to the Canadian Constitution, Hildebrandt explained that the Constitution “was created for the people, not the government.” While Canada has a bill of rights —the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, adopted in 1982 — and it gives lip service to the concept of freedom of religion, it has loopholes that sound much like the words of President Joe Biden. Biden, it might be recalled, said that the freedoms protected in the U.S. Bill of Rights are “not absolute.”

Hildebrandt also charged that the media were “little puppies” for the government, which sounds much like the U.S. media (except when someone such as President Donald Trump is in office who opposes their secular-progressive agenda).

While it is true that congregations such as Pastor Hildebrandt’s can meet outdoors (especially when it is a beautiful spring day, as it was in Aylmer, Ontario, this past Sunday), this is impractical during rainstorms, bitterly cold days (quite common in Canada during the winter), or exceptionally hot days. And when governments are run by those who despise the church and its message, they are going to do what they can to prevent that message from getting out, including making a congregation meet outdoors. While devoted followers might still meet in a driving rain storm, they are unlikely to attract non-church members — people they are trying to reach with the Gospel.

Ridiculous fines, such as the six-figure fine imposed by Justice Thomas, are, as Hildebrandt explained to the reporter, an effort to intimidate. In the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights, excessive fines are forbidden, but this has long been a provision that has been largely ignored in our country. In Canada, a country that historically has not been as devoted to liberty as the United States, such fines are more common.

In the biblical Book of Acts, the apostles were told by the governmental authorities not to preach in the name of Jesus, to which they responded, “Whether it be right in the sight of God, to obey you rather than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20)

Americans should be alert to what is happening, not only in Canada, but in our own country. While many have meekly submitted to the whims of what Pastor Hildebrandt called “medical dictators,” during a pandemic, we must understand that such submission has set a precedent to close houses of worship.

What will be the next excuse?



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