

British School Requires Idolatry in Its Schools, 2 Rebel; America Still Enjoys “Free Exercise; the Mayor of Ephesus Calms the “Reckless” with the Lie, Acts 19:35-37

13. Yet notice how even the easily detectable lie of idolatry and rejection of it has become a difficult task for students in England. The sorry tale of religious diversity in the schoolroom is the subject of this article by William J. Watkins:

Last month, two brave British schoolboys were given detention because they refused to kneel down and pray to Allah during a religious-education lesson. The boys attend classes at Alsager \ol'-si-jeɹ\ High School near Stoke-on-Trent, situated approximately midway between Manchester and Birmingham. The local county council has a diversity curriculum that requires children be educated in the beliefs of different faiths. According to the council, this diversity education “is essential to understanding.”

As part of “understanding” Islam, the boys’ religion education class was forced to don Muslim headgear and watch a film about Muslim worship. After the film ended, the teacher produced prayer mats from her closet and said, “We are now going out to pray to Allah.” Children were then told to kneel on Muslim prayer mats and to recite a Muslim prayer.

When the two boys (11 and 12) refused to worship Allah, their teacher accused them of being disrespectful and ordered them to detention. Not satisfied that her authority over the children’s education and spiritual life was reestablished, the teacher punished the remainder of the class by depriving them of the afternoon snack.

Parents were rightly outraged. The grandfather of one child in the class described the forced worship as “absolutely disgusting, there’s no other way of putting it.” Karen Williams, whose child was also in the class, said, “I am absolutely furious my daughter was made to take part in it and I don’t think it acceptable.”

The boy’s refusal to violate the First Commandment and the parents’ anger at the school are good signs. The children and their parents demonstrate that there are still a few Britons left who will resist the onslaught of multiculturalism.

What is worrisome, however, is the vocabulary many parents are using to describe the teacher’s actions. Rather than invoking their ancient rights as British subjects, the parents complain that the school violated the boys’ “human rights.” Nary a word was said about the historic rights that made England, and later, Great Britain, the envy of oppressed peoples of the globe.

Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and centuries of customary law defined and secured British liberty. The fundamental rights of Englishmen, in the words of William Henry Drayton, are “rights which no time, no contract, no climate can diminish.” This great inheritance should be a source of British identity and the fortress from which Britons fight the Islamization of their country.

Today, Britons look to the Human Rights Act 1998, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. The act makes it unlawful for any public body to behave in a way that is incompatible with the Convention. Case law from Strasbourg [France] and the European Court of Human Rights is binding on British judges. “Human rights” rather than the “rights of Englishmen” has become the law that modern Britons invoke when government officials overstep their authority.

The episode with the schoolboys shows that even in 2008 multiculturalists can push for a bridge too far. In Stoke-on-Trent, this bridge was mandatory worship of a false god. Fortunately, two plucky lads refused to violate the First Commandment. Unfortunately, their parents are not using the incident to teach them about the rights of Englishmen. The parents’ pathetic appeal to “human rights” as defined by judges in Strasbourg teaches British children nothing about their inheritance, nor does it equip them to resist other forms of multiculturalist tyranny.¹

14. The idolatrous lie was widely unrecognized by the inhabitants of first-century Ephesus. That same blindness is in its ascendancy in twenty-first century England.
15. At Ephesus’s Grand Theater, Alexander never got a chance to speak. We don’t know if he was “given detention,” but we can discern the mob’s response to Alexander’s request to address the crowd: “You worship the God of Israel, but Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”
16. Today, the lie is being repeated with as much enthusiasm as it was that day in Ephesus except the shouting in the theater is now disseminated by every form of media.
17. Regardless, we in the United States may still appeal to the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment. Refusal of a U.S. citizen to bow to any religion’s idol is not “disrespectful” to that belief system but rather an appeal to the “rights of Americans” – specifically, the constitutional right to “free exercise” of one’s religion.
18. Order is finally restored at the Great Theater when the mayor of the city arrived on the scene and reminded the mob of the “rights of Ephesians” granted by the laws of Rome:

Under the Roman Empire, Ephesus is a free city. The mayor is called the γραμματεὺς, *grammateus*, the word translated in the King James Version, “town clerk.” Actually he is the controller of the city, performing the functions of a mayor. Each free city had a different title for its mayor, e.g., Thessalonica had a πολιτάρχης, *politarchēs*. Athens’s mayor was an ἄρχων, *archōn*. Rome became great not because of its great armies but because Rome had the greatest sense of law in the ancient world, fulfilling the principle of divine institution number four.²

¹ William J. Watkins, “Britain’s Fiery Furnace,” *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, September 2008, 7-8.

² Robert B. Thieme, Jr., *Acts*, MP3 disk of sermon presented at Berachah Church, Houston (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1965), lesson 86.

19. The mayor of Ephesus is not identified by name but his presence is obviously respected by the mob and they quiet down to give him a hearing:

Acts 19:35 - And when the mayor had silenced the people, he said, “Men of Ephesus, what person is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the keeper of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell down from heaven [a meteorite].

v. 36 - “So because these facts are indisputable, you must keep quiet and not do anything reckless.

v. 37 - “For you have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess.”

1. It is obvious this man is a politician. The first thing he does is confirm the lie in order to comfort the crowd. “Everybody knows Ephesus is the site of the temple of Artemis and we are the ones who are the keepers of her image.” He then certifies the lie with the comment, “These facts are indisputable.”
2. This reassurance enabled the mayor to lead the crowd back to reality – Roman reality. It was imperative that this riot be quelled since the men were about to violate Roman law.
3. The mayor is the most important resident official in Ephesus and thus held responsible for maintaining the peace. The mob is familiar with the fact that if a riot were to occur and a Roman citizen murdered without due recourse of law it would bring the wrath of Rome down upon the city.
4. In addition, those who perpetrated “anything reckless,” as warned by the mayor, would fall under Roman justice.
5. The mayor was not aware of any crime committed by Paul or his associates and as examples he contends they have not robbed the temple of Artemis nor have they blasphemed the goddess.
6. The temple of Artemis was a bank where people all over the Roman world deposited money. The temple also lent money and received legacies and private donations. It owned revenue-producing property, including herds of deer. It was an asylum for debtors and for the helpless.³
7. The mayor then identifies himself with Artemis in order to calm the crowd by calling the idol “our goddess.” The reference puts him in agreement with them that if Artemis were blasphemed he would be as upset as they.

³ James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 269.

8. This helped him emphasize the point that the men had not robbed the temple; they had not blasphemed, therefore to do anything to them was reckless in the sense that they would all fall under Roman scrutiny.
9. The following statements by the mayor introduce establishment common sense into the discussion and bring the mob back to reality.

Acts 19:38 - "So **if** [**ei, ei**: first class condition: assumption of truth for the sake of argument] Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him, have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another there."