Written by **Dave Bohon** on July 28, 2014

Editor Fired for Criticizing "Queen James Bible" Fights Back

A newspaper editor in Iowa who was fired for his private blog criticism of a homosexual-themed "Bible" has filed a religious discrimination complaint against his former employer.

Earlier this year while serving as the editor-in-chief of Newton, Iowa's *Daily News*, Bob Eschliman wrote a post on his personal blog about the "Queen James Bible," an "LGBT" adulteration of the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible — with the scriptural condemnation of homosexual behavior conveniently edited out.

Eschliman, who embraces a traditional Christian faith, wrote that it would be "pretty easy to brush off a nonsensical contrived version of the Bible," if it weren't for the fact that the ultimate goal of those behind the sacrilege is to force "all Christendom to abandon their faith," a goal they pursue "by 'proselytizing' to church leaders to change their view on homosexuality."

The award-winning editor and journalist noted in his blog that Jesus Himself had warned "there would be deceivers. He said those deceivers would cause Christians who remain true to His teachings to become reviled. He said false prophets would follow to deceive even more, and that lawlessness will abound."

Opined Eschliman on his private blog site: "If you ask me, it sounds like the Gaystapo is well on its way. We must fight back against the enemy."

It is probable that Eschliman's ill-advised post on his sparsely read blog would have faded rapidly into oblivion had it not been for the post of another, more widely read blogger, busybody media commentator Bill Romenesko, who wondered if the newspaper Eschliman edited "can cover gay issues fairly and objectively when he's declared gays the enemy."

While Eschliman quickly deleted his blog post, it had already gained the troubled attention of Shaw Media, owner of the *Newton Daily News*, which first suspended Eschliman before following up with gay-friendly flair by publicly terminating his employment.

In a prepared statement, Shaw Media president John Rung worried over the possible harm Eschliman's privately expressed views might have done to the newspaper's reputation. "Last week, Mr. Eschliman expressed an opinion on his personal blog that in no way reflects the opinion of the *Newton Daily News* or Shaw Media," assured Rung. "While Mr. Eschliman is entitled to his opinion, his public airing of it compromised the reputation of this newspaper and his ability to lead it." Added Rung: "Mr. Eschliman has a right to voice his opinion. And we have a right to select an editor who we believe best represents our company and best serves the interests of our readers."

Since his firing, Eschliman has turned to the conservative legal advocacy group Liberty Institute to file a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against his former employer, arguing that the newspaper group wrongly fired him because of his religious beliefs. "To be fired for, basically, on my own time, expressing my personal and deeply held religious views is shocking," Eschliman said during a press conference July 23 as he and the Liberty Institute announced the

complaint.

Matt Whitaker, an attorney with the Liberty Institute, told reporters that "no one should be fired for simply expressing his religious beliefs. In America, it is against the law to fire an employee for expressing a religious belief in public. This kind of religious intolerance by an employer has no place in today's welcoming workforce."

While sympathetic to Eschliman for the apparently knee-jerk reaction by his former employer, Fox news commentator Todd Starnes nonetheless questioned Eschliman about what some journalists charged was unprofessional behavior on his part. "Why was a newsman writing a personal blog?" wondered Starnes. "In many newsrooms across the country, such activity is outright banned."

According to Starnes, Eschliman told him that "Shaw Media does not have a policy prohibiting personal blogs or social networking sites. When he was hired, Bob told them he had a personal blog and he said he was encouraged to continue his off-the-clock writings."

As for supposedly calling homosexuals the "enemy," Eschliman insisted to Starnes that he was referring to "Satan," not the LGBT community. "That's a valid explanation," wrote Starnes. "In the Christian tradition, Satan is often referred to as the 'Enemy.' However, since Bob used a lower case 'e' — it implied the LGBT community was the enemy."

Starnes wrote that Eschliman seems to be a "stand-up guy," and "I suspect had the newspaper bosses given him a chance to dialogue about the posting, they could have worked out an amicable and reasonable solution."

The newspaper group's rapid-fire "solution," however, was to fire Eschliman, whom publisher John Rung determined did not adequately represent "our company" or best serve "the interests of our readers."

Wrote Starnes: "So for what it's worth, Shaw Media decided that [Eschliman], a faithful husband and father, a devout and outspoken Christian man, [and] an award-winning journalist, did not represent the values of their company. Maybe Shaw Media ought to reconsider its values."

For some conservative observers, Eschliman's termination brought to mind last year's firing of commentator Craig James by Fox Sports, after a news report revealed that during his 2012 run for a U.S. Senate seat in Texas, James had voiced his support for traditional marriage.

During a campaign debate that turned to the issue of same-sex "marriage," James expressed his support for the biblical definition of marriage, adding that he believed America's "moral fiber is sliding down a slope that is going to be hard to stop if we don't stand up." James emphasized that he "believes in [marriage between] a man and a woman, [and] the greatest government is occurring in a home at night between a husband and wife, Adam and Eve, and what the Bible says."

As for homosexual partnerships, he said that "if someone chooses to do that, that's them. And God's going to judge each one of us … for our actions. And in that case right there, they're going to have to answer to the Lord for their actions." He added that "we should not give benefits to those in civil unions. We have to stay strong on this. This is important.… We have a fiscal issue in this country, [but] we also have a moral issue in this country, and as Christians we've got to stand up."

As soon as James' comments came to light, he disappeared from the Fox show, with the network tersely announcing that he would "not be making any further appearances on Fox Sports Southwest's football coverage this season." When queried about the quick departure, a spokesman for Fox Sports explained:

"We just asked ourselves how James' statements would play in our human resources department. He couldn't say those things here."

Craig later filed a religious discrimination complaint against Fox Sports with the Texas Workforce Commission, employing the Liberty Institute, the same group taking up Eschliman's case.

In response to news about the complaint, Fox Sports appeared to change its reason for firing James, with a Fox spokesperson insisting that the network respected "all points of view, and despite reports to the contrary, the decision to no longer use Craig James in our college football coverage was simply because he was not a good fit for Fox Sports."

James said he was "shocked that my personal religious beliefs were not only the reason for Fox Sports' firing me, but I was completely floored when I read stories quoting Fox Sports representatives essentially saying that people of faith are banned from working at Fox Sports."

James, whose case is still before the Texas Workforce Commission, told One News Now that he hoped his situation would prompt other Christians to take a bold stand for their convictions. "I do think we're at a fork in this road in this country and we have got to be heard," he said. "I believe brothers and sisters have got to be bold and passionate because the other side is being bold and passionate — they're being heard and we're not. And I just believe that is important." He added that "this is a time where evil prevails when good people do nothing, and you can't shine light on darkness unless the light shows up."

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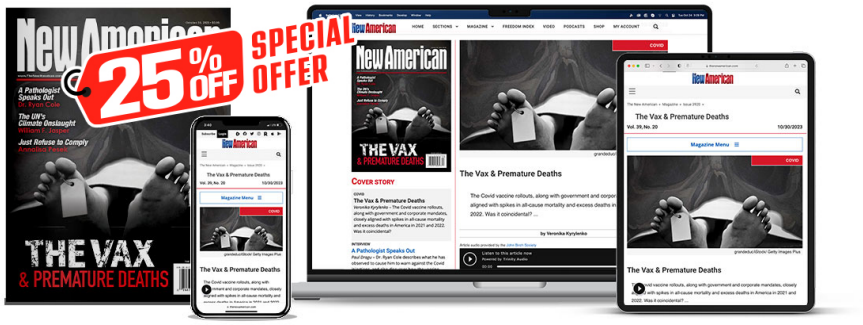

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