

By aligning themselves over the past sixty years with the most conservative wing of the Republican Party, Mormons became leading contributors to the cultural and moral decay of America. Instead of a land of freedom, justice, and peace, religious conservatives have made America a place of imprisonment, poverty, and oppression.

Breaking the Promise of the Promised Land: How Religious Conservatives Failed America

by Johnny Townsend

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JOHNNY TOWNSEND

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Ban All Routine Traffic Stops

We must ban all traffic stops that don't involve immediate threats to public safety.

We've all seen the police engage in high-speed car chases in movies and on the news. Such chases are naturally exciting. But so many innocent drivers and pedestrians are killed as a result that some cities have banned car chases entirely.

People do not need to be injured or killed over minor infractions, not the drivers, not the police, and certainly not bystanders.

Likewise, so many routine traffic stops for a broken taillight or driving five miles over the speed limit or having an expired brake tag end up with a police officer shooting an unarmed person, often someone black or brown. And these are drivers who *didn't* flee, who *didn't* pose a threat. But trained police officers are still human beings whose behavior can be influenced by fear and adrenalin. They are people who have grown up in a culture ensuring that even the most open-minded and humane among us have at least some lingering bias. When a life and death decision must be made in a split second, Sunday School lessons on "love thy neighbor" are replaced by the biological imperative to survive.

Are the officers justified in being afraid? Are they overreacting out of bias? We can avoid that emotionally

charged debate altogether. More importantly, we can avoid the deadly consequences of both justified and unjustified fear. If police officers are legitimately putting themselves in a life and death situation when stopping a driver for a broken taillight, that traffic stop simply isn't worth the risk. Let the errant driver go, for God's sake. Revenue from issuing tickets doesn't need to drop. Police can record the license plate (like cameras do at stoplights all the time) and mail a ticket to the offender. There's no need for a physical confrontation of any kind, even a mild, orderly one. Not having to spend millions on investigations and settlements, and not having to suffer constant PR nightmares, must surely be worth something as well.

Unless they're stopping a kidnapper or killer or someone suspected of similarly grave crimes, officers should just snap that photo of the license plate and let the driver move on. If we can't justify endangering lives in a car chase over minor violations, then we shouldn't keep endangering them during traffic stops for non-threatening offenses. Such traffic stops are not worth the death of the police officer, the driver, or any passengers in the car. Drug possession or car theft don't warrant the death penalty, after all, even after an arrest and conviction. They certainly don't warrant execution without a trial. If officers are legitimately in danger when pulling people over for any non-violent transgression, then they are risking their lives unnecessarily.

As a child attending my first big tent circus, I remember hearing the announcer say that the trapeze artists were now going to walk across the tightrope without a net. Even at that young age, I thought, "Do they really need to risk killing themselves for this?"

There are times police officers and other first responders need to put their lives on the line. There are times when everyday civilians need to do it, too.

But there's no need for anyone to risk their life just to reprimand someone over a broken taillight. Some officers have even pulled cars over simply because they were driving three miles *under* the speed limit along a corridor frequently used by drug traffickers. If the driver was being so careful not to attract attention, the officers reasoned, he was probably up to no good.

When officers can justify pulling over a car in perfect condition being driven without breaking even the most minor regulation, we have a problem with the status quo.

For the sake of innocent people being killed by the police on a regular basis, we need to stop routine traffic stops that don't involve reckless or intoxicated driving. And even if you're one of those people who don't believe Black Lives Matter, you should *still* want to ban these traffic stops just to protect the people whose lives you *do* think matter.

“We've always done it this way” is no longer a valid rationale for sustaining a policy that inflicts so much unnecessary harm.

Let's ban all routine traffic stops.

Keeping the Pantry Full: Justice, Freedom, and Equality Don't Have Fairy Tale Endings

“I can't wait till the Mueller report comes out.” “I can't wait until the mid-term elections.” “I can't wait till we elect a new president in 2020.” Almost everyone I know is working hard to get us out of the terrible political predicament we're currently in, but only a handful seem to recognize that none of these things is a permanent fix. Justice, freedom, and equality don't have fairy tale endings. There's no moment after which we can live happily ever after. Maintaining freedom and justice and equality will be a constant battle, not only in our lifetimes but forever.

Have we ever heard someone say, “I finally got all the weeds out of my yard. I never have to worry about that again”?

Have we heard anyone say, “Whew. I'm finally down to my ideal weight and BMI. Now I can stop exercising and watching what I eat”?

Or “I finally have the right to marry, and I've married the man of my dreams. It's all coasting from here”?

Whatever our personal end goals are for “progress,” whether that be electing anyone other than Trump, or trying to get Democrats to move to the left, or to implement full-fledged

socialism, Election Day is not the end of the struggle. The “Revolution” is not the end.

The work we do is hard. We want it to be over. We want to “win” and finally have a chance to breathe, but the painful truth is we can never relax.

Critics of reform point out that reforms can always be undone. That’s true. But revolution and complete overhaul can be undone, too. The people’s revolution in Russia didn’t bring about lasting change. Within a decade, socialism had been corrupted into communism. Before long, Russia and then the Soviet Union were oppressive tyrannies.

Everything can be undone. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t push Dems to the left, that we shouldn’t try to shift to Democratic Socialism, that we shouldn’t bring about Trotsky socialism. It just means that whatever path we choose, we must realize our end goals are no more secure than anyone else’s. Your system may be better than my system, but it’s every bit as susceptible to failure as any other.

That’s because human beings will be working each and every type of system we ever develop, and no humans of any persuasion are perfect. It seems a trite and obvious point, but every day I see people who think that if they get *their* way, if *their* idea of the perfect candidate or perfect policy or perfect economic or political system is victorious, we’ll finally be okay.

We can be better, but we’ll never be okay.

Again, that doesn’t mean we should fall into cynicism or despair. We just need to have realistic expectations.

Protecting and preserving something great is a never-ending battle. Religious fanatics in the past decade have destroyed Persian artifacts dating back nearly 2000 years. Catholic invaders 500 years ago destroyed every Mayan book they could find. Thousands of temples, churches, synagogues, and mosques around the world, some of them hundreds of years old, have been destroyed over the years by enemies of the worshippers who met there.

We can preserve national parks against predators (you know, coal and oil companies, loggers, off-road recreational vehicles) every day for decades and decades, but all that work can be undone overnight once one of those predators finally gets in.

Holocaust survivors are murdered 70 years after their liberation from the camps.

There will *never* be a time when we can let our guard down.

Why in the world would we expect something different in the political and economic world? Because *those* things are simpler, smaller, and easier to control?

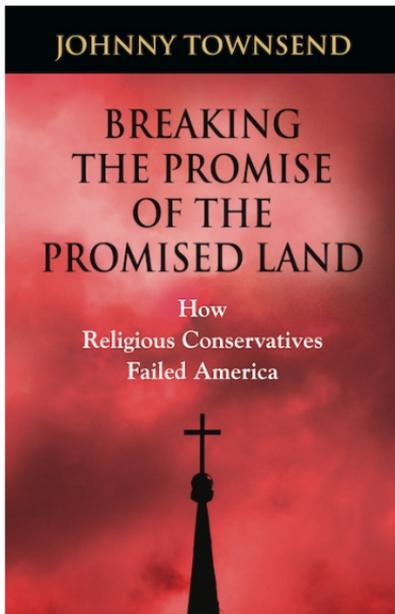
We must fight to make the world a better place, but we must do so with the understanding that such an endeavor requires a permanent commitment. Every advance we achieve must be supervised and monitored. We must always maintain oversight. We must continually keep pressure on all involved to preserve each and every victory.

We just returned from the dentist with clean teeth and a clean bill of health, with no cavities or gum disease? That's great, but we'd better keep brushing and flossing.

Folks in AA take things “one day at a time.” They understand a universal truth, that one must always maintain constant vigilance, that even thirty or forty years of sobriety can be lost with a single night of drinking.

We just got back from the grocery and filled our fridge? Would any of us ever consider that a *final* victory?

Anyway, you get the point. I need to conclude now. It’s time for semi-annual maintenance sex with my husband. He seems reluctant to head into the bedroom with me, but I really don’t understand why. I bathed last month, didn’t I? I’m good.



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