

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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"THE LORD MADE ME DO IT"

Most readers of *The K.F. Stone Weekly* remember the late comedian Flip Wilson. Back in the '70s, Wilson (1933-1998) was at his peak, hosting his own Emmy-winning television show, doing stand-up comedy in Las Vegas, making movies and recording great comedy albums. Few will ever forget



Wilson's two most famous alter egos: "Reverend Leroy," the materialistic pastor of the "Church of What's Happening Now," and by far, his most popular creation, "Geraldine Jones," who always referred to her boyfriend as "Killer," and whose line "*The devil made me do it!*" became a national catchphrase.

A lot has changed in the years since Wilson had us all laughing in the aisles. For one thing, a lot of folks seem to have lost their sense of humor - especially where anything even remotely religious is concerned. 40+ years ago, lots and lots of people found Flip Wilson's *The devil made me do it!* line an absolute howl. Today, on the other hand, a certain vocal segment of society finds the line both unfunny and unacceptable; they see it as an intolerable affront to the "old time religion" they so sanctimoniously practice and so publicly wear upon their sleeves. These are the folks who cry long and loud about there the so-called liberal "war on Christianity." (For more on what I call [*The Endangered Super Majority*](#), you may wish to check out my April 20, 2015 essay.)

Kim Davis is one of those who publicly wears the old time religion on her sleeve. She firmly believes that Christianity is being attacked and marginalized by secularist liberals, and makes no bones about the fact that she takes her marching orders from God -- and God alone. Mrs. Davis, for anyone who's been hanging out in a cave without Wi-Fi, is the Rowan County Kentucky Clerk of Courts who is currently in jail for contempt as a result of her steadfast refusal to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. And her justification for ignoring the law of the land? Why that issuing and signing these licenses would go against her religious scruples. Davis is a born-again Apostolic Christian who fervently believes she is, in her own words, "under God's authority." In essence, her justification for shining on the Supreme Court can be summed up in six words: *The lord made me do it.*



(n.b.: The [Apostolic Christian Church](#) [A.C.C.], in which Mrs. Davis was reborn about four years ago, is a small Christian denomination founded in the 1830s by Samuel Froehlich, a pastor who was dismissed from the Swiss Reformed Church for refusing to compromise his biblical convictions. A.C.C. embraces so-called biblical literalism and is staunchly anti-hierarchical, with all ministers -- ordained "elders" or unordained lay leaders -- serving their congregations without pay. [According to](#) one of their lay leaders, while the church roots itself in scripture, the denomination does not have lengthy, codified statements on marriage, divorce, or homosexuality. Instead, he said, members usually look to one document -- and one document alone -- for answers: the King James Bible.)

At the contempt hearing held this past Thursday, Mrs. Davis' attorney, Matt Staver of the [Liberty Counsel](#), told U.S. District Judge David Bunning that affixing her name to these marriage certificates went against her strongly-held religious conviction. He quoted her as telling him: "God's moral law conflicts with my job duties." In sending Davis to jail for contempt, Judge Bunning (the son of former Kentucky Senator and baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Bunning) said, "Her good faith belief is simply not a viable defense. I myself have genuinely held religious beliefs . . . but I took an oath. Mrs. Davis took an oath Oaths have meaning."

Indeed . . . oaths *do* have meaning. But more on that below.

In [defense of his client](#),



attorney Staver invoked Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (who went to jail for defying a court injunction against a business boycott in Birmingham, Alabama) and -- maddeningly -- likened Mrs. Davis to a Jew living in Nazi Germany. In an interview with "Washington Watch" host Craig James, Staver said: "*Back in the 1930s, it began with the Jews, where they were evicted from public employment, then boycotted in their private employment, then stigmatized and that led to the gas chambers. This is the new persecution of Christians here in this country.*" We won't go into either the alarming insensitivity or gross stupidity of this parallelism; it doesn't deserve the ink. All that need be said are three words from Dickens' Mrs. Gamp, one of English

literature's great, great gargoyles: *Stuff and nonsense!* - which is a delightfully Victorian way of saying "Bullshit!"

(**n.b.:** It should be noted that a character in *Martin Chuzzlewitt* refers to Mrs. Gamp as ". . . the sort of woman... one would almost feel disposed to bury for nothing; and do it neatly too!" Hmmm).

It seems to me that in attempting to make Mrs. Davis into some kind of Christian martyr ala Dr. King -- one who places obedience to God before anything -- Staver and his colleagues are engaged in a cynical campaign to raise hundreds of thousands -- if not millions -- of dollars for "the cause" -- whatever or whoever that cause may be. Don't be surprised if Staver introduces Kim Davis to a literary agent who then pairs her up with a ghostwriter and manages to get her a lucrative book deal with, say, Regnery Publishing -- the same firm which handles Anne Coulter, Michelle Malkin and Newt Gingrich. And of course, *L'affaire Davis* has already become an issue for various Republican presidential hopefuls . . .

When one assumes office, one takes an oath to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution. Clearly, Mrs. Davis and all those who argue that following "God's law" supersedes civil law, are in clear violation of that oath. They aren't called "civil servants" for nothing. Among those who have strongly sided with Kim Davis' actions -- and her reasoning -- are Republican presidential hopefuls Bobby Jindal, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum and Ted Cruz. Former Arkansas Governor Huckabee will be visiting her in jail next Tuesday to express his extreme displeasure at what he calls "the criminalization of Christianity in our country." Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum called Davis "heroic," while Kentucky Senator Rand Paul described Davis' being in contempt of court "the American way," and through his spokeswoman, Texas Senator Ted Cruz

stated “. . . the federal government and court should in no way be able to compel people of faith to violate their religious beliefs.” These guys simply don't want to lose a single vote from the religious right . . .

It seems to me when a presidential candidate states for the record that obeying God trumps a decision of the Supreme Court, it essentially disqualifies the candidate from ever holding office. For it means that were they to be elected president in 2016, it would be virtually impossible for them to honestly take the oath of office in which they would swear to "Preserve, protect and defend the Constitution . . ."

Davis and her ilk, in the words of Dr. King, "live in monologue rather than dialogue." Make no mistake about it: Kim Davis is in jail not because of her strong belief in the word of God, but because of her even stronger belief in the primacy of monologue. Her unerring belief that no one can ever force her to interact with those she disagrees with is both bigoted and highly un-American. To claim as she has, that *The lord made me do it* is but another stopping-off point on that slippery slope which leads to a theocratic America. What's to keep another monologist from claiming that *The Lord made me* rob a bank, or *The Lord made me* stop paying taxes, or *The Lord made me* expunge all references to Evolution or global warming from textbooks used in public schools? Where does it all end?

Rachel Held Evans is one of my favorite Christian authors. Raised in Dayton Tennessee (home of the famous "Scopes Monkey Trial") where her father was an administrator at Bryan College, Ms. Evans is the author of *Evolving in Monkey Town*. And it is to her, we give the final comment on L'affaire Davis:

"No one's being jailed for practicing her religion. Someone's being jailed for using the government to force others to practice her religion."

And if you don't like the way I ended this week's piece or what I had to say, just remember one thing:

The Lord made me do it!

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