

BLESSED REVILED, MOCKED, INSULTED . . .

Mt 5:10; Gn 39:1-23; I Kings 21:5-16; Mt 26:59-61; James 3:1-12

I. WOUNDING WORDS/VERBS

- A. Revile—verbal abuse—“criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner”
- B. Mock—Jesus on Cross—“tease or laugh at in a scornful or contemptuous manner”
- C. Calumniate—deliberately, designedly utter false words, ‘make false and defamatory statements about’
- D. Insult—verbal attack, “speak to or treat with disrespect or scornful abuse”
- E. Slander—publicly make false charges, d’the action or crime of making a false spoken statement damaging to a person's reputation,” a “false and malicious spoken statement”
- F. Maliciously gossip—“casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true” (unlike innocent or innocuous or even critical talking).
- G. Backbite—“talk maliciously about someone who is not present”

II. WOUNDED WARRIORS (AKA “persecuted prophets” and accomplices) BLESSED

- A. Joseph, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife (Gn 39:1-23)—exemplary servant, egregiously betrayed, yet ultimately vindicated
- B. Naboth, falsely accused by Jezebel (I Kings 21:5-16)—innocent “little guy,” shrewdly accused, yet remembered for character
- C. Jesus, falsely accused by priests (Mt 26:59-61)—Suffering Servant falsely accused, yet redeemed sinners
- D. Stephen, upholding Risen Lord, vindicated for his witness
- E. Joan of Arc, falsely accused, burned to death, ultimately recognized for sanctity
- F. Thomas More, falsely accused by alleged friend, maligned by Thomas Cromwell, reverend for courage and dignity
- G. Recent Supreme Court nominees
 - 1. Robert Bork, slandered by Ted Kennedy, stands tall in history
 - 2. Clarence Thomas, falsely accused by Anita Hill, still serving well
 - 3. Brett Kavanaugh, falsely accused by Christine Blasey Ford, largely vindicated
- H. Will Perkins, Bill Armstrong, Bill McCartney in Colorado, defending Amendment 2, deserve respect for resolve, integrity

III. O.T. COROLLARY: “YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS” (Ex 20:16)

IV. N.T. COROLLARY: TAME THE TONGUE (Js 3:1-2)

The struggle to make gay okay first surfaced, for many of us, in the state of Colorado when concerned citizens passed a constitutional amendment designed to prevent gays and lesbians from receiving preferential treatment from the government. Steven Bransford, wrote *Gay Politics vs. Colorado and America: The Inside Story of Amendment 2* and the strategies described and the consequences envisioned have altered the social landscape of America as well as Colorado. The battle began when the “cities of Aspen, Boulder, and Denver had granted gays protected class status in citywide ordinances” (p. 9). As Bransford learned—and we all should indelibly remember —“to homosexuals, laws against wrongful firing, violence, and harassment have never been enough. These laws merely make them equal, giving them no special advantage to force society to affirm their lifestyle. Forced affirmation requires the power to punish people for their thoughts, motives, attitudes, prejudices, hatreds, private biases—even their moral convictions” (p. 102). Thus gay activists determined to impose their agenda on the state with ‘a sweeping gay rights law disguised under the nice sounding title, ‘The Ethnic Harassment Bill’” (p. 9).

Awakened to the intent of homosexual activists, a small group of concerned citizens (encouraged by former Senator Bill Armstrong, Colorado University’s football coach Bill McCartney, and Colorado Springs automotive dealer Will Perkins) organized themselves as “Colorado for Family Values” (CFV) and determined to use an initiative to add an amendment to the state constitution that would prevent preferential treatment for gays. Carefully worded, the amendment stated that no branch of government “shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices or relationships shall . . . entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status, or claim of discrimination” (p. 43). CFV secured signatures to place the proposal (Amendment #2) on the ballot for the November, 1992 election. For endorsing the amendment, Coach McCartney’s job was jeopardized as his university openly censured him. Congressman Pat Schroeder labeled the coach a “self-appointed ayatollah.” The state’s newspapers snidely smeared McCartney and Bill Armstrong. To *Denver Post* columnist Ken Hamblin: “When shallow people like Armstrong and McCartney are permitted to float like scum on top of a sea of knowledge, they take us back to the 14th century” (p. 56). After the signed petitions were collected, Will Perkins tried to hire various armored car agencies to haul them to Denver—but their fears of homosexual retaliation kept them from doing so. In Boulder, gay rights activists started a Sunday morning fire in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church, which had a few months earlier removed a lesbian choirmaster. Following the amendment’s passage, vandals desecrated the statue of the Virgin Mary in Denver’s Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Such intimidation and violence routinely characterized opponents of the amendment. And their behavior logically followed their ethical nihilism—if there are no standards for sexual conduct there are, similarly, no standards regulating any activity.

But the biggest opponent CFV faced, as the election neared, was the press. “All naive notions of journalistic integrity” quickly dissolved, for, as Will Perkins noted, “Language doesn’t shape the campaign—it is the campaign” (p. 89). Rather than truthfully describing the amendment, the press routinely referred to it as an “anti-gay” effort to punish, to “legalize discrimination” against a long-suffering minority. Homosexuals were constantly compared to racial minorities who simply wanted their basic civil rights protected. Headlines skewed the factual content of the news stories. Scores of politicians were quoted as opposing it whereas only a dozen could be found with something favorable to say about it. TV stations in Denver refused to air advertisements supporting of the proposal—revenue apparently meant less than accommodating homosexuals. Only talk radio hosts such as Dennis Prager and Mike Rosen provided the public with pro-Amendment 2 information. Though the gay-rights activists frequently denounced the “religious right,” there were in fact remarkably few pastors (evangelical or otherwise) who openly supported Amendment 2. Said Will Perkins, “I knew how Custer felt the day he modeled the first arrow shirt” (p. 136). Nor did Colorado’s Catholic hierarchy assist them.

Anti-amendment religious spokesmen, however, abounded. The American Academy of Religion and The Society of Biblical Literature (the most prestigious of scholarly associations for professors of religion) supported gay rights. Evangelicals Concerned (renowned for its superstars Ron Sider and Tony Campolo) pushed for its defeat. The National council of Churches intoned: “It is blasphemy to invoke the infinite and holy God to assert the moral superiority of one people over another” (p. 139). Only the Vatican, belatedly but powerfully, came to the amendment’s defense. Yet on election day, Colorado’s voters resoundingly endorsed Amendment 2. But the courts, with their commitment to the ever “evolving standards” of society rather than the text of the Constitution, disapproved it. Days after the election gay activists filed a lawsuit, *Romer v. Evans*, and found a friendly judge, Jeffrey Bayless, to grant an injunction ordering the state to not enforce amendment. The state’s Attorney General did little to effectively uphold the amendment and six months later, the Colorado Supreme Court, arrogating to itself power supposedly reserved to the federal courts, upheld Bayless’ judgment, allegedly defending “the right for gays to participate equally in the political process” (p. 197). Then in 1996 the U.S. Supreme Court annulled Amendment 2 and provided a crucial legal precedent for the multiplied court decisions granting virtually every demand, including “same sex marriage,” of the homosexual community.