



**WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS,
THERE IS LIBERTY.**
— 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17

Shurtleff's Ripple Effect:

How the Supreme Court's 9-0 Decision Affects Flag-Flying Policies Nationwide

When the United States Supreme Court handed down its 9-0 opinion in *Shurtleff v. City of Boston* on May 2, 2022, it marked a great victory for the protection of religious speech in a public forum. The High Court ruled unanimously that the City of Boston missed the mark by invoking the "Establishment Clause" to censor Camp Constitution's request to fly the Christian flag on the City of Boston's flagpole "open to all applicants."

For 12 years, Boston had approved 284 applications with not a single denial, nixing only Camp Constitution's request to participate in the public program designed to celebrate the city's rich cultural and historical diversity. Astonishingly, Boston censored the flag because the application referred to it as a "Christian flag." If the word "Christian" were removed from the application and the same flag given a nonreligious modifier (like "Camp Constitution flag"), Boston would have approved the application.

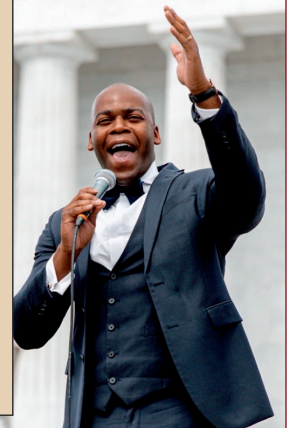
The High Court stated Boston's censorship of the Christian flag was viewpoint discrimination, and there was no Establishment Clause defense. More specifically, the Court rejected Boston's reliance on the 1971 case of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. Relying on the *Shurtleff* case, the Supreme Court then overruled the so-called "Lemon

Test" in the Coach Kennedy case.

Thirteen months later, *Shurtleff's* ripple effect can be felt coast to coast. Not only did the Supreme Court's decision give religious viewpoints an equal footing in the public square, but it also served as a warning sign to government entities catering to special interest groups. The unanimous opinion called out government's tendency to grant blatant (and unconstitutional) favoritism to certain viewpoints at the expense of other disfavored ones.

Fast-forward to June 2023 for a relevant case in point. Spurred on by the White House [proclamation](#) calling the American people to "wave their flags of pride high" and inundated with free advertising by some of the country's largest corporations (think Target, Kohl's, Budweiser), all Americans were urged to join in celebrating so-called "Pride Month" — a nonstop 30 days of supporting all things LGBTQ and pledging allegiance to its increasingly radical ideology. Nothing has symbolized the show of solidarity to LGBTQ ideals more than flying the six-stripe LGBTQ rainbow flag. During June, Americans can see this flag flying in storefronts, in restaurants, and, inappropriately, *on government and U.S. military flagpoles and properties.*

Celebrating the One-Year Anniversary of the Overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.
Senior Counsel for Governmental Affairs Jonathan Alexandre sings "We Shall Overcome" and the National Anthem at the National Celebrate Life Day Rally and Gala on June 24, 2023, in Washington, D.C.



CAN AI REWRITE THE BIBLE?

Yuval Noah Harari, senior World Economic Forum (WEF) advisor and top globalist philosopher, who believes humans created the concept of God, calls for artificial intelligence to "correctly" rewrite the Bible.

"It's the first technology ever that can create new ideas," [he said](#) during an "A.I. & The Future of Humanity" forum. "You know, the printing press, radio, television, they broadcast, they spread the ideas created by the human brain, by the human mind."

Harari further explained, "Throughout history, religions dreamt about having a book written by a superhuman intelligence, by a non-human entity. In a few years, there might be religions that are actually correct. Just think about a religion whose holy book is written by an AI. That could be a reality in a few years."

From his statement, does Harari believe that human inputs into AI databases would, in fact, *make* the religion correct, pushing the false notion that the acquired and limited knowledge of the created is greater than that of the Creator? It's a future dystopian world dominated

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by computer-generated "entities that are super intelligent but completely non-conscious. "Emotionless, soulless. It puts a manmade machine on a throne reserved for God alone and gives it the ability to manipulate the very words of God with the power to imprint the hearts and minds of the masses with its counterfeit message.

The potential harms of AI have raised concern for years. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2014, billionaire Elon Musk issued a warning, saying we "need to be very careful" in using AI. "With artificial intelligence, we are summoning the demon," Musk said.

Not only is the rise of AI an existential threat on humanity, but there are intense, spiritual warnings about altering the Word of God and the messages within it ([Deut. 4:2](#), [Rev. 22:18-19](#)).

Rewriting Scripture seems like a logical next step after an entirely [AI-generated church service](#) drew hundreds of attendees in Nuremberg, Germany, this month. From a sermon written by ChatGPT to an AI bot that delivered it to over 300 churchgoers, are we now witnessing test runs of concocted computer-driven events that do more to spark curiosity and praise the ingenuity of humankind than to worship the matchless Creator of the universe?

It sure seems like it. [Harari](#) and others like him believe technology will turn men into gods. At the India Today Conclave in 2018, Harari even declared, "The combination of AI and bioengineering will create completely new bodily and physical and mental traits. So, we are in the process of becoming gods and the big question that faces us is what to do with our new god-like powers."

Amid rapidly evolving technological advancements, Christians must fight to preserve the physical Word of God — the true Bible that can never be replicated or rewritten. The foundation of the Christian faith is the Spirit-breathed Word of God. [2 Timothy 3:16](#) states, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." This is the one time the Bible uses the Greek word [theopneustos](#), which means "God-breathed, inspired by God, due to the inspiration of God."

Christians must know the Word of God, even committing to memorizing Scripture, to withstand evil and protect themselves from the coming deception of persuasive computer-generated "rewrites."

We must hold fast to the preeminence of Jesus Christ who is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:16) and *The Eternal Word from the beginning* (John 1:1). Even as the rise of AI poses a threat to manipulate and twist the very words of God, we hold fast. We hold fast to Jesus. We hold fast to the God-breathed, inerrant Holy Scriptures. And we hold fast to the promise that "the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1:25). The Word of our God will stand forever when everything else fades away (Isaiah 40:8, 1 John 2:17). **LC**

>>continued from "Shurtleff's Ripple Effect"

The practice of favoring the LGBTQ rainbow flag to the exclusion of equal treatment for flags of differing viewpoints stands in direct conflict with the Supreme Court's decision in *Shurtleff*.

"The clear message from the Supreme Court is that government must not discriminate based on viewpoint," said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty



Counsel. "The government cannot favor one viewpoint and censor another, and cannot censor religious viewpoints under the guise of government speech. Any governments that are ignoring this ruling are setting themselves up for potential lawsuits."

From the historic village of Cold Spring, New York, to [Orange County](#), California, government officials are waking up to the fact that government flag-flying policies need to "stay in their lane" and stick to flying county, state, and national flags.

Encapsulating the collective sentiment of many local governments nationwide, [Cold Spring](#) Mayor Kathleen [Foley](#) said, "We didn't think through the Pandora's box that was being opened. You get into that sticky area where you are acting as arbitrator of free speech."

While Mayor Foley had the wherewithal to recently take down flying a foreign country's flag (Ukraine) on government property, she said the Pride flag will remain on display through the end of June, despite acknowledging that it's a "sticky area." In the meantime, village attorney John Furst is now drafting a regulation that, once adopted, will

allow only the U.S., New York State, and POW/MIA flags to be displayed. The regulation comes after members of the Cold Spring Village Board unanimously voted on June 1, 2023, to stop accepting requests to fly flags on village-owned property.

Cold Spring joins many municipalities and school districts across the country that have passed similar restrictions, including Hamtramck, Michigan; Delaware, Ohio; and Southington, Connecticut.

Some cities acted soon after the *Shurtleff* decision was announced. For example, in 2022, Delaware Ohio, [cited](#) the Boston Flag case decision in its announcement to hit the pause button on the city's flag program. City Manager Thomas Homan wrote a letter to flag applicants on May 10, 2022 (just over a week after the *Shurtleff* decision was released), stating, "As a result of the Supreme Court ruling, the City of Delaware is pausing its flag and banner program to review and evaluate it in light of the *Shurtleff* decision."

In Wethersfield, Connecticut, a similar scenario played out in December 2022 when the city council voted 5-4 to limit what flags could be flown on government property. Like Mayor Foley in Cold Spring, Mayor Michael Rell, who had previously supported raising the "rainbow pride flag," voted this time not to allow it because he believed the ruling in *Shurtleff* could open the town to lawsuits if they tried to be the "ultimate decision-making body" for who can or cannot fly flags.

"When we allow any one group to fly their flag it sends a message to the public," Rell [said](#). "It puts us in a position where, as a council, we would have to sit there and pick one group over the other. ... It's not a position the council should be in. The council's role is to make policy. We should not be making divisive political decisions that could set the town up for a lawsuit."

As *Shurtleff's* ripple effect continues to affect flag-flying policies across the country, the legacy of the precedent-setting unanimous ruling is about much more than which flags get to fly on what flagpoles; it's about equal treatment under the law that provides safeguards against viewpoint discrimination for all Americans for generations to come.

Liberty Counsel's Mat Staver sums it up well: "This case is about more than just the Christian flag. This will set national precedent and affect everyone. We must not give government the power to censor disfavored viewpoints — while granting special treatment to favored ones — in a public forum." **LC**