

# From Our Pastor

## March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone,

Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa in 1564, the first of six children of Vincenzo Galilei, a musician and scholar. Considered the father of modern science, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) made major contributions to the fields of physics, astronomy, cosmology, mathematics and philosophy. He invented an improved telescope that let him observe and describe the moons of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, the phases of Venus, sunspots and the rugged lunar surface.

Using his new telescope, he proved that the discoveries of Nicholas Copernicus (from Poland) were correct. The earth-centric teaching of the Roman Catholic church was incorrect. The earth and planets revolve around the Sun, not around the earth. In 1616 the Catholic Church placed Copernicus' book "De Revolutionibus," the first modern scientific argument for a heliocentric (sun-centered) universe, on its index of banned books. Pope Paul V summoned Galileo to Rome and told him he could no longer support Copernicus publicly. Galileo continued to write about his discoveries, knowing that he was taking a risk by questioning the religious dogma of his time.

As a result Galileo was put on trial before the Roman Inquisition in 1633. Galileo was convicted of "vehement suspicion of heresy" and under threat of torture forced to express sorrow and curse his errors. Nearly 70 at the time of his trial, Galileo lived his last nine years under comfortable house arrest, writing a summary of his early motion experiments that became his final great scientific work. Later years and scientists were to prove him correct, but not in time to free him from prison.

While we might scoff at the events of the late Middle Ages, is it possible that "accepted dogma" is replacing free speech in our society? The ability to discuss topics openly is based on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and is called Freedom of Speech. We need to be allowed to say what we want, as long as our words don't cause tangible harm to people's bodies or property. Author Izzy Kalman nearly ten years ago posted on his website (bulliestobuddies.com) "Where the concept of Freedom of Speech is absent, people believe they are entitled to kill others who say things they find offensive. Without Freedom of Speech, we would literally be living in the Dark Ages... Not only is no one teaching Freedom of Speech anymore, that precious freedom is being slowly but surely killed."

There are a growing number of public issues that illustrate how the dialog necessary to free speech is being shut down. Opinions other than the "accepted" ones are simply not allowed to be published or are shut down with name calling and slanderous labels. Two that come to mind are the safety of vaccinations and the need to combat "climate change." Whatever one might think about the issues, the pressures to shut down opposing viewpoints and information is obvious. Popular internet site Pinterest this week removed all information not fully in support of government mandated vaccinations. Congressmen are pressuring Facebook and Google to do the same. Those opposed are being once again relentlessly stereotyped, demonized and bullied.

The same can be said about "climate change." The discussion is being dominated by those who support the concept and the need for government to deal with it. While some opposing viewpoints are still available, the progression to silence them is moving along. Reading in public what the Bible--what many believe is the Word of God-- says can land a person in jail in nations such as Sweden and Canada. Sweden has moved to make all anti-homosexual speech a criminal offense, including sermons or Bible readings that condemn homosexual behavior. Pastors can be fined and cited for unacceptable sermons. Canada's legal system is moving quickly in the same direction--and with the same arguments. Can the US be far behind? Even though a painting of Moses bringing the Ten Commandments down from Mt. Sinai adorns the inside of the US Supreme Court chambers, reading those commandments out loud has by some been labeled "hate speech" and within a few years might result in arrest. We all are aware that in recent years there has been an increase in court actions to remove the Ten Commandments from public displays across the country.

Where will all this lead? The Bible provides the answer: (the coming world government and religion) "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. " (Revelation 13:16-17). Disagreeing with the accepted dogma will once again be a crime. Galileo would understand.

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