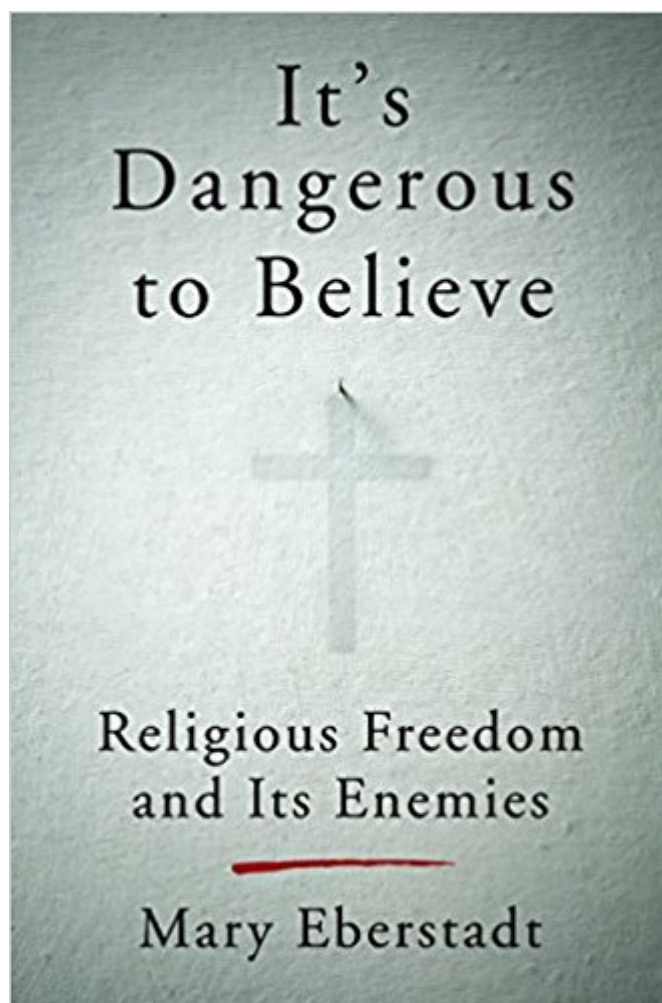


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# It's Dangerous To Believe: Religious Freedom And Its Enemies



## Synopsis

Mary Eberstadt, *It's Dangerous to Believe* (Francis Fukuyama) shines a much-needed spotlight on a disturbing trend in American society: discrimination against traditional religious belief and believers, who are being aggressively pushed out of public life by the concerted efforts of militant secularists. In *It's Dangerous to Believe*, Mary Eberstadt documents how people of faith—especially Christians who adhere to traditional religious beliefs—face widespread discrimination in today's increasingly secular society. Eberstadt details how recent laws, court decisions, and intimidation on campuses and elsewhere threaten believers who fear losing their jobs, their communities, and their basic freedoms solely because of their convictions. They fear that their religious universities and colleges will capitulate to aggressive secularist demands. They fear that they and their families will be ostracized or will have to lose their religion because of mounting social and financial penalties for believing. They fear they won't be able to maintain charitable operations that help the sick and feed the hungry. Is this what we want for our country? Religious freedom is a fundamental right, enshrined in the First Amendment. With *It's Dangerous to Believe* Eberstadt calls attention to this growing bigotry and seeks to open the minds of secular liberals whose otherwise good intentions are transforming them into modern inquisitors. Not until these progressives live up to their own standards of tolerance and diversity, she reminds us, can we build the inclusive society America was meant to be.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“There has been a well-organized campaign against Christianity, making use of new interpretations of the concepts of free speech, civil rights, and social justice. Eberstadt argues correctly that this assault goes to the very core of our founding constitutional principles of freedom of worship and free association” (Donald Critchlow, National Review) “I don’t think the debate over religious freedom can rightly take place now without engaging her arguments. It’s Dangerous to Believe is a quick and easy read, but packs a wallop.” (Stanley Kurtz, National Review Online) “It’s clear that the keepers of the new progressive orthodoxy have garnered enough establishment backing to push as far as they choose. A read through Eberstadt’s research is a good first step toward getting oriented in this new cultural landscape” (The New Criterion) “Eberstadt, in a neat series of chapters, contrasts the self-descriptions of progressives and secularists with their actions. They believe themselves champions of civil rights, while circumscribing the freedoms of fellow citizens...They make blacklists and call themselves open-minded.” (Michael Brendan Dougherty, The Week) “Eberstadt is a superb analyst. Her hypothesis-carefully demonstrated and ringing true-is that secular progressivism is not just a political ideology; it is a competing faith, a religion.” (Luma Simms, Public Discourse) “Eberstadt’s argument is hard-hitting and convincing.” (First Things) “Eberstadt’s description of the bewildered faithful, caught up in rapid social changes, is deeply affecting|One hopes liberals and progressives will accept her call...particularly in institutions of higher learning whose leaders speak ceaselessly of their commitment to diversity.” (The American Conservative) “I can’t think of a better way to start than for Christians to read this book and equip themselves to stand up for the future of faith in this country, with fortitude and hope. (Catholic World Report) “[Eberstadt] offers scores of cases, all from recent years, in which Christians have been denied freedoms and protections that would be afforded as a matter of course to any other group. The arguments given for this suppression are transparently ludicrous or paranoid. Christians have real reason to be afraid.” (Rachel Lu, The Federalist) “Eberstadt asks the progressive victors in the culture wars whether their vision of public life demands that traditional religious belief and believers be expunged. This book marks a turning point-whether it’s one toward a gracious return to liberal tolerance or into a different and darker period, we shall see.” (Tod Lindberg, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and author of The Political Teachings of Jesus and The Heroic Heart) “A searing indictment of the hypocrisy and duplicity of many secularists who have abandoned the old rules of mutual

respect. Instead they exhibit rank bigotry in the name of “tolerance” and conduct themselves, especially on sexual matters, more as an evangelical sect than as a movement of reason and dialogue. (Michael Novak, author of *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* and the recipient of the 1994 Templeton Prize) “Every man and woman of the left should read *It’s Dangerous to Believe*. If they are honest with themselves, the book will change their assumptions about religion in America, and about the meaning and value of religious freedom. (Thomas Farr, Director, The Religious Freedom Project) “In the midst of increasing and often disrespectful challenges to groups that uphold and defend the Church’s teaching, I recommend Mary Eberstadt’s book as an important resource for all who hold religious freedom to be a priority for the Church and society. (Cardinal Sean O’Malley, OFM, Cap., Archbishop of Boston) “Mary Eberstadt is one of America’s most vibrant and compelling thinkers. This book takes on the question of religious liberty, and does so without mincing words. The book will equip you to know what’s happening to America’s first freedom and will inspire you to act. (Russell Moore, president, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Southern Baptist Convention) “Mary Eberstadt is one of the most perceptive and thoughtful observers of contemporary social maladies. She appeals to the good sense that has brought us through religious wars in the past. We must understand, she pleads, that the enemies of religious freedom are the enemies of liberalism itself. (John Garvey, President of The Catholic University of America) The “cultured despisers of religion” are now the cultured despisers of religious freedom, too. In her terrific new book *It’s Dangerous to Believe*, Mary Eberstadt exposes these tin pot Torquemadas. She has given friends of religious liberty and the rights of conscience a powerful new manifesto. (Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University)

Religious freedom is under assault today as never before. A country founded on freedom of speech and religious belief is being changed from within by activists hostile to both. Is this what we want America to be? Religious freedom is a fundamental right, enshrined in the First Amendment. In *It’s Dangerous to Believe*, author and critic Mary Eberstadt documents how those who adhere to traditional religious beliefs—especially Christians—face widespread discrimination in today’s increasingly secular society. For holding “wrong” opinions on flashpoint issues like birth control, abortion, and same-sex marriage, people of faith are being publicly attacked and demonized by aggressive anti-religious activists in an effort to drive them out of public life and cripple their institutions. Examples from across the country and elsewhere

of self-appointed adversaries undermining believers in the workplace, intervening in faith-based charity efforts, and interfering in religious education reveal nothing less than a targeted assault on faith itself. Eberstadt writes to call attention to this underreported campaign and argues that it is a classic moral panic reminiscent of the Salem witch trials and the McCarthyism Red Scare of the 1950s. Eberstadt reveals how recent laws, court decisions, and intimidation on campuses and elsewhere increasingly threaten believers' freedoms of speech and action. They fear losing their livelihoods, their communities, and their basic constitutional liberties solely because of their convictions. They fear that their religious universities and colleges will capitulate to aggressive secularist demands. They fear that they and their families will be ostracized and that they won't be able to maintain charitable operations that help the sick and feed the hungry. In this spirited and powerfully argued manifesto, Eberstadt calls attention to today's growing bigotry and seeks to open the minds of secularists and progressives to the injustices being committed against believers by ideologues turned modern inquisitors. Citing titans of authority ranging from Thomas Jefferson to Martin Luther King Jr. and other eminent defenders of the open society, she builds the case that America will become truly inclusive if and only if the antagonists of religious faith live up to their own standards of tolerance and diversity.

Mary Eberstadt gathers much information here on serious affronts to Christians--especially those whose work is now "counter-cultural"--as they seek to live their faith in the world. She thoroughly documents through ample citations the examples she uses. The first five chapters of her book "It's Dangerous to Believe," focus on the length to which some people have gone (OK, liberals and progressives mainly) to make life difficult for Christians who promote traditional sexual morality, and the dignity of human life. She writes of challenges to the work of Catholic Charities when they attempt to function according to Catholic moral and social teaching, to Christian schools because they are Christian, to home schooling because of the fear that parents will "indoctrinate" their children in hateful Christian teaching. The commonality in all this is that when they are faithful to Christian teaching on sexual ethics, the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, and the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, Christians are considered by some to be bigots and a danger to young people and society. Granted, these examples are not of Christians, at least in the United States, suffering personal violence and death as they increasingly do in Europe, the Middle East and other parts of the world, but they are affronts to religious liberty nonetheless. And for those who have suffered these attacks, they are very real. An additional important contribution of the book is found in Chapter 6, "What is to Be Done; or, How to End a Witch Hunt."

Here Eberstadt calls for a return to basic civility, of people respecting others and their beliefs and allowing these beliefs to be tested in the marketplace of ideas. When we make people we disagree with our enemies, we prevent open discussion and a common movement toward truth. The book is short--126 pages--and the ample examples Eberstadt uses makes for interesting reading. I found the book eye-opening and engaging and thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

It's an interesting book.

Eberstadt is an excellent writer with an engaging style. She describes the problem of the treatment of Christians in America in a calm manner with many anecdotes documenting anti-Christian bias. She reviews movements in the past that focused on oppressing various groups, and explores how they played out. Her suggestions for fighting the oppressing of Christians is reasoned, thoughtful and focused on ideas that might work. The Book is well worth reading.

The author states what is obvious to all sincere, Bible believing Christians in this country. The amazing reality is that her book needed to be written at all. "We hold these truths to be self evident." Is the way our founding fathers put it. Almost none of them would be allowed to speak publicly now. They would be (and indeed have been) branded as intolerant, bigoted, sexist, etc. And this from the tolerant liberals of our era. This book should be required reading in high schools around this country. This is a wonderful defense of the first amendment. Perhaps some day the first amendment will be revered in our country again.

As a matter of style, pretty much the first half of the book pounds the reader into a corner with all the stuff that's coming the way of positions that are important to conservative Christians. The reviewer, Edd, is correct that the term Religious Right is not used. This sort of allows the author to not mention all the pressure tactics that were used by my fellows and friends to achieve some of our ends. While on the Edd review topic, somehow he thinks that school vouchers steal money from where it should go. Please note that parents sending their kids to Catholic or private schools, or homeschooling are being taxed twice for the education of their kids. It is important enough to them to do it. What the NEA is campaigning for is no competition, and that INCLUDES the way sensitive items are addressed. It is not wrong to teach your kids a scripturally based foundation for sex. Now in Anchorage there's a stink about letting Planned Parenthood come in to schools as specialists on sex ed. That is NOT hate or bigotry. Bear in mind that there is a wide range of views by Christians,

so it's equally improper to paint us all with the same brush. Phillip Yancey in his book *Soul Survivor* describe growing up in a church barely to the left of the KKK. Kids cannot pray in schools. Coaches can't pray with teams. Christian clubs are kicked out of high schools and colleges. A teacher was terminated for bullying when she offered to pray for a student. We've all read about the wedding service providers (bakers, florists, photographers) who've been harassed out of business for electing not to provide for same sex weddings. Religious institutions are now in court to protect their positions about birth control. Catholic adoption agencies have had to close shop when they won't place babies with same-sex couples (and why isn't that OK, when other agencies can follow their own thoughts and provide such adoptions?). These things are real and keep happening. The author's position which she supports well is that it's not a campaign based on freedom, but one based on competing religions, where the one on the other side is the religion of the sexual revolution. I can't say I Totally agree about the sexual revolution, but that is certainly a component, and it IS a fight between contradictory religious-like views. THEY want no Christian thought anywhere near them, and that probably goes for Islamic thought too, as well as conservative Jewish. She proposes that we just agree to live in the same place and respect each other's views. If a fellow Christian is trying to stifle by disrespectful means the rights of those with whom we disagree, we should call them on it. And of course that MUST go for the opposing side as well. The appendix for the book is awesome. Here work is totally backed up and all sources are cited. I learned that in Jefferson's correspondence regarding the "wall of separation", he asked one of his letter's recipients to pray for him. I hope they did, and cast their prayers forward in time for our benefit.

Mrs. Ever stat gives clear evidence of the changing views American culture possesses toward Christianity. She cites evidence for the shift away from "freedom of religion" toward "freedom of worship" with religion dismissed, or even banned from the public square. Some may diss this book as a mere conspiracy theory, but the book reveals a shift in American, and all Western culture, toward an approved secular philosophy. A very informative read whether you agree or not!

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