

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

ARTICLE 17

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it.

Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.

In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.

The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends.

The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24;
16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20;
Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians
5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy
2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17;
3:11-17; 4:12-19.

LORD OF THE CONSCIENCE

1. There is no verse in the Bible that states: “Thou shalt have religions liberty.”
2. The US Constitution is NOT inspired by God, contra Glen Beck.

Why Religious Liberty as Baptist Principle?

1. God made humans in His own image (Genesis 1:1). Therefore, humans are responsible to God regarding their worship or lack thereof.
2. The civil government does not have the authority under God, and furthermore is incompetent, to guide in matters of faith and religion.

3. Humans are therefore free and responsible to God in matters of faith; not to the government.

4. Ecclesiastical authority is freely submitted to in matters of faith and conscience. Civil authorities should protect that authority; not interfere with that authority.

5. Baptists cooperate with and respect civil authority, while recognizing that the final authority rests in King Jesus.
6. The state authority is for a temporary kingdom on earth. The Christian lives as a citizen of an eternal kingdom.

Baptists Are Serious About Religious Liberty

1. Roger Williams
2. Obadiah Holmes
3. John Clarke

(See pp. 162-164 in your workbook.)

“It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him.”

James Madison

WHAT ABOUT ISLAM?

1. What do I want?
2. How does the principle of religious liberty work in this situation?
3. Does the government have the authority under God to choose for us which faiths are legitimate?
4. Is the government competent to choose religious “winners” and “losers”?

Case Study:

Mosque zoning ordinance in New Jersey.

1. Is Islam right?
2. Do we want a Mosque?
3. How does the principle of religious liberty work in this situation?
4. Does Mark 12:31 apply?

Reasons Christians oppose it:

1. Fear (which is legitimate sometimes.)
2. Confusing the church's mission with the government's responsibility.
3. Lack of confidence in the Gospel.
4. Weak view of the sovereignty of God in salvation. (If salvation is just by "wild chance," then use force to protect our children.)

Baptist View:

1. Islam is a false religion and anti-gospel.
2. Pray that a mosque would not be established in our town.
3. Uphold religious liberty, preventing government tyranny, by urging the government's fair and equal treatment of all religions.
4. Islam provides an opportunity for the Gospel to shine!

Baptist View:

4. Islam provides an opportunity for the Gospel to shine!
5. Do not try to use political means to gain a spiritual result. “The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work” (BF&M).
6. “The religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man.” James Madison

“I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

(1 Timothy 2:1-2)