

# Religious Liberty



*The Beginning of Liberty*

Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. “By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, ... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers” (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance. (*GC* 493.1)

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants **freedom of will**, that they may render Him voluntary service. (*GC* 493.2)

But there was one that chose to pervert this **freedom**. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. “Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Ezekiel 28:12–15.

*(GC 493.3)*

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:12–14)

Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. . . . Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone. (*PP* 35.2)

To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God. But He who would have **the will of all His creatures free**, left none unguarded to the bewildering sophistry by which rebellion would seek to justify itself. Before the great contest should open, all were to have a clear presentation of His will, whose wisdom and goodness were the spring of all their joy. (*PP* 36.1)

The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented [by Lucifer to the holy angels] as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure **freedom** for all. But now even the **liberty** which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts. (*PP* 37.1)



He promised them a new and better government  
than they then had, in which all would be  
**freedom.** (*SR 16.1*)

Does the Bible teach  
religious liberty, or  
freedom, to all?

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God . . . (Exodus 20:3–5)

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8–9)

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *And* to hearken than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22)

Does the Bible teach that  
there is to be religious  
freedom man-to-man,  
between us as a human race?

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (Romans 13:1)

There is a prospect before us of a continued struggle, at the risk of imprisonment, loss of property, and even of life itself, to defend the law of God, which is made void by the laws of men. In this situation worldly policy will urge an outward compliance with the laws of the land, for the sake of peace and harmony. And there are some who will even urge such a course from the scripture: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. . . . The powers that be are ordained of God.” Romans 13:1. (2TT 319.3)



But what has been the course of God's servants in ages past? When the disciples preached Christ and Him crucified, after His resurrection, the authorities commanded them not to speak any more nor to teach in the name of Jesus. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19, 20. They continued to preach the good news of salvation through Christ, and the power of God witnessed to the message. The sick were healed, and thousands were added to the church. "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." Acts 5:17, 18. (2TT 319.4)

But the God of heaven, the mighty Ruler of the universe, took this matter into His own hands; for men were warring against His work. He showed them plainly that there is a ruler above man, whose authority must be respected. The Lord sent His angel by night to open the prison doors, and he brought forth these men whom God had commissioned to do His work. The rulers said, Speak not “at all nor teach in the name of Jesus;” but the heavenly messenger sent by God said, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” Acts 4:18; 5:20. (*2TT* 320.1)

And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.  
(2 Samuel 11:14–15)

And Joab, whose allegiance had been given to the king rather than to God, transgressed God's law because the king commanded it. (*PP* 719.2)

David's power had been given him by God, but to be exercised only in harmony with the divine law. When he commanded that which was contrary to God's law, it became sin to obey. "The powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1), but **we are not to obey them contrary to God's law.** (*PP* 719.3)

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, sets forth the principle by which we should be governed. He says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1. (*PP* 719.3)

*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to  
loose the bands of wickedness, to undo  
the heavy burdens, and to let the  
oppressed go free, and that ye break  
every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)*

. . . render therefore unto Caesar  
the things which are Caesar's; and  
unto God the things that are God's.  
(Matthew 22:21)

Do religions teach  
religious liberty?



Protestants?

Senator Henry W. Blair introduced a bill for a **national Sunday law** into the Senate of the United States Congress on May 21, 1888, and A. T. Jones spoke before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, of which Senator Blair was chair, and advocated for the separation of church and state and against the passage of the Blair bill.

Today there is a push for a day of rest coming from a coalition of ecclesiastical and secular leaders. They claim the need for a day of rest not only to provide worship opportunities for all but also to provide a day of mental rest and a day for family time. Also, there is a call for a day of rest to help save the environment. If there is less need for travel and less need to heat or cool office and convention spaces, for example, the environment will benefit.

Roman Catholics?

“Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy.” (Section 67, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, John Paul II, issued May 31, 1998)

Muslims? Hindus?

When a person leaves Islam they are considered to have committed treason and face Muslim apostasy law and punishment. The one who has left is not considered to have just changed his or her belief or to now have a different opinion, but they have betrayed and harmed the Muslim community and the general public as well, and the sentence is death.

- ❖ Freedom to travel
- ❖ Freedom of speech
- ❖ Freedom to peaceably assemble
- ❖ Freedom of religion



When the conflict was renewed upon the earth, Satan again won a seeming advantage. By transgression, man became his captive, and man's kingdom also was betrayed into the hands of the archrebel. Now the way seemed open for Satan to establish an independent kingdom, and to defy the authority of God and His Son. But the plan of salvation made it possible for man again to be brought into harmony with God, and to render obedience to His law, and for both man and the earth to be finally redeemed from the power of the wicked one. (*PP* 331.2)

To stir up rebellion in the fallen race, he now represented God as unjust in having permitted man to transgress His law. “Why,” said the artful tempter, “when God knew what would be the result, did He permit man to be placed on trial, to sin, and bring in misery and death?” (*PP* 331.3)

There are thousands today echoing the same rebellious complaint against God. They do not see that to **deprive man of the freedom of choice** would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton. It is not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist. God made such ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan. (*PP* 331.4)

God instructed our first parents in regard to the tree of knowledge, and they were fully informed relative to the fall of Satan, and the danger of listening to his suggestions. **He did not deprive them of the power of eating the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe His word, obey His commandments, and live, or believe the tempter, disobey, and perish.** They both ate, and the great wisdom they obtained was the knowledge of sin and a sense of guilt. The covering of light about them soon disappeared, and under a sense of guilt and loss of their divine covering, a shivering seized them, and they tried to cover their exposed forms. (*SR 37.1*)

Today angels are sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, to help them to escape from the thralldom of Satan's power, and stand as faithful volunteers in the army of him who in their behalf came to this world and endured suffering and affliction. **Each human being is given the freedom of choice.** It is his to decide whether he will stand under the black banner of rebellion, or under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel. With deep solicitude heaven watches the conflict between good and evil. None but the obedient can enter the gates of the city of God. Upon those who choose to continue in transgression, the death sentence must at last be pronounced. The earth will be purified from their misdoings, their defiance of God. (*RH* March 15, 1906, par. 14)

Freedom of choice is given to every soul, but after a man has enlisted, he is required to be as true as steel, come life or come death.—Manuscript 7a, 1900.

God placed human beings under law, as an indispensable condition of their very existence. They were subjects of the divine government, and there can be no government without law. God might have created them without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case human beings would have been, not free moral agents, but mere automatons. Without freedom of choice, their obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with the inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of humanity as intelligent beings, and **would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.** (*HB 176.3*)

Men act out their own free will, either in accordance with a character placed under the molding of God or a character placed under the harsh rule of Satan. (*RH* November 13, 1900, par. 11)



The principle for which the disciples stood so fearlessly when, in answer to the command not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, they declared, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye,” is the same that the adherents of the gospel struggled to maintain in the days of the Reformation. When in 1529 the German princes assembled at the Diet of Spires, there was presented the emperor’s decree restricting religious liberty, and prohibiting all further dissemination of the reformed doctrines. (*AA* 68.1)

It seemed that the hope of the world was about to be crushed out. Would the princes accept the decree? Should the light of the gospel be shut out from the multitudes still in darkness? Mighty issues for the world were at stake. Those who had accepted the reformed faith met together, and their unanimous decision was, “Let us reject this decree.

In matters of conscience the majority has no power.”—Merle d’Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, b. 13, ch. 5. (AA 68.1)

This principle we in our day are firmly to maintain. The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God's witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A "Thus saith the Lord" is not to be set aside for a "Thus saith the church" or a "Thus saith the state." The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates. (AA 68.2)

Satan is still working through every means  
which he can control to destroy religious liberty.  
(*GC88* 204.2)

In the seventeenth century thousands of pastors were expelled from their positions. The people were forbidden, on pain of heavy fines, imprisonment, and banishment, to attend any religious meetings except such as were sanctioned by the church. Those faithful souls who could not refrain from gathering to worship God, were compelled to meet in dark alleys, in obscure garrets, and, at some seasons, in the woods at midnight. In the sheltering depths of the forest, a temple of God's own building, those scattered and persecuted children of the Lord assembled to pour out their souls in prayer and praise. (*GC88 252.1*)

But despite all their precautions, many suffered for their faith. The jails were crowded. Families were broken up. Many were banished to foreign lands. Yet God was with his people, and persecution could not prevail to silence their testimony. Many were driven across the ocean to America, and here laid the foundations of civil and religious liberty which have been the bulwark and glory of this country.

*(GC88 252.1)*

Again, as in apostolic days, persecution turned out to the furtherance of the gospel. In a loathsome dungeon crowded with profligates and felons, John Bunyan breathed the very atmosphere of Heaven, and there he wrote his wonderful allegory of the pilgrim's journey from the land of destruction to the celestial city. For two hundred years that voice from Bedford jail has spoken with thrilling power to the hearts of men. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" have guided many feet into the path of life. (*GC88* 252.2)

[https://archive.org/details/pilgrimsprogress00buny\\_16/page/n47/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/pilgrimsprogress00buny_16/page/n47/mode/2up)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/654>

Baxter, Flavel, Alleine, and other men of talent, education, and deep Christian experience, stood up in valiant defense of the faith which was once delivered to the saints. The work accomplished by these men, prescribed and outlawed by the rulers of this world, can never perish. Flavel's "Fountain of Life" and "Method of Grace" have taught thousands how to commit the keeping of their souls to Christ. Baxter's "Reformed Pastor" has proved a blessing to many who desire a revival of the work of God, and his "Saint's Everlasting Rest" has done its work in leading souls to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." (*GC88* 253.1)

Flavel— <https://dn790007.ca.archive.org/0/items/fountainoflifeop00flav/fountainoflifeop00flav.pdf>

Flavel— <https://dn790002.ca.archive.org/0/items/methodofgraceinh00flavrich/methodofgraceinh00flavrich.pdf>

Baxter— <https://ia601301.us.archive.org/1/items/reformedpastor00baxtgoog/reformedpastor00baxtgoog.pdf>

Baxter— <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/58135>



*The American Sentinel* (1886–1901) was a weekly devoted to the propagation of the principles of religious liberty. It was followed in 1901–1904 by the monthly *Sentinel of Christian Liberty*.

# THE AMERICAN SENTINEL.

“Corrupted freemen are the worst of slaves.”

VOLUME 1.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY, 1886.

NUMBER 1.

## The American Sentinel.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, BY THE  
PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING COMPANY,  
OAKLAND, CAL.

Entered at the Post-office in Oakland.

### “A Christian Nation.”

THE idea which is advocated by some, that this may be made a Christian nation by simply making a change in the Constitution, was thus pertinently commented upon by the *Janesville, Wis., Gazette*:—

“But independent of the question as to what extent we are a Christian nation, it may well be doubted whether, if the gentlemen who are agitating this question should succeed, they would not do society a very great injury. Such measures are but the initiatory steps which ultimately lead to *restrictions of religious freedom*, and to committing the Government to measures which are as foreign to its powers and purposes as would be its action if it should

### The American Sentinel.

It is well known that there is a large and influential association in the United States, bearing the name of the “National Reform Association.” It is popularly known as the “Religious Amendment Party,” because it is endeavoring to secure a religious amendment to the Constitution of the United States. As stated by the world, its object is “to put God in the Constitution.” According to its own avowal its aim is to procure—

“Such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States (or its preamble) as will suitably acknowledge Almighty God as the author of the nation’s existence, and the ultimate source of its authority, Jesus Christ as its Ruler, and the Bible as the supreme rule of its conduct, and thus indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all Christian laws, institutions, and usages, on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.”

The president of this association is Hon. Felix R. Brunot, who has held that position almost from its origin. Its present list of vice-

or our reasons, will be ready to class us, and all who indorse our positions, with the base of the earth, assuming that we are striking at the foundations of morality and religion. But they are much mistaken in their estimate. We promise to do or say nothing against the plainest principles of morality and religion. So far from that, we shall try to set before our readers the true relation of morality and religion, and show that this relation is not correctly presented by this “amendment party.”

But the objector will say: “There can be no harm in recognizing Jesus Christ as the Ruler of the nation, and his laws as the rule of our lives.” We know that this plea is plausible—we may say it is *taking* with nearly all religious people. Yet it is specious; plausible in the eyes of those only who have not examined the subject in its bearings, or have not traced the end to which it necessarily leads. Let us notice some of the things which must attend the success of their efforts, and some principles bearing on the subject:—

The Department of Religious Liberty was organized in 1901, by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. A few years later, in 1906, the department began publishing *Liberty, A Magazine of Religious Freedom*. It became the only magazine on religious freedom in the Americas.  
(<https://www.adventistliberty.org/history>)

The leader of this department in 1901 was A. T. Jones, and the current leader is Dr. Ganoune Diop.

Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam's disgraceful failure and fall. **The two Adams will meet in Paradise** and embrace each other, while the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, and all who have refused the opportunities and privileges given to them at such an infinite cost, and have not returned to their loyalty, will be shut out of Paradise. (12LtMs, Ms 33, 1897, par. 30)