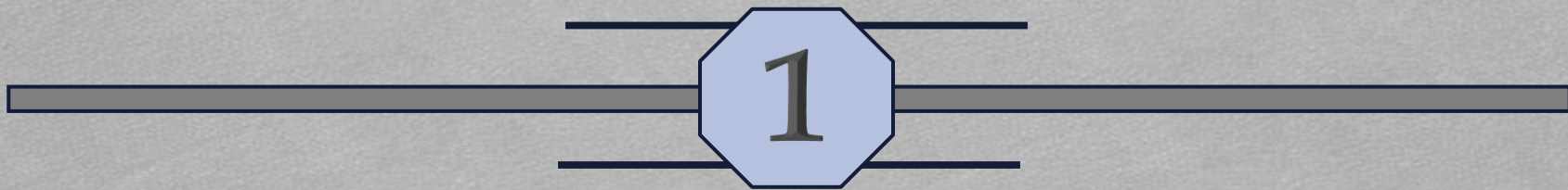


Religious Liberty and the Eternal Gospel



The Origin of Religious Liberty

Revelation 13:11, 15

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. . . .

¹⁵He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Revelation 14:6, 7

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people –⁷saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

Desire of Ages, 22

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne.

The Origin of Religious Liberty

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

US Constitution, First Amendment

The Origin of Religious Liberty

“In all the affairs of this present life, my fidelity shall be unshaken, for here to lose or to gain is of no consequence to salvation. But when eternal interests are concerned, **God wills not that man should submit unto man.** For such submission in spiritual matters is a real worship, and ought to be rendered solely to the Creator.”

Luther, Letter to Emperor, Charles V (GC, 167)

The Origin of Religious Liberty

So they [rulers of Israel] called them [Peter and John] and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. ²⁰For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:18-20

The Origin of Religious Liberty

¹⁷Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” . . .

²¹And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”

1 Kings 18:17, 21

The Origin of Religious Liberty

“If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

The Origin of Religious Liberty

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; . . .” Deuteronomy 30:19, 20

The Origin of Religious Liberty

It did not begin with the US Constitution.

It did not begin with the Protestant Reformation.

Nor the Apostles – God above Church authority.

Nor Elijah during Israel's apostasy under Ahab.

Nor Joshua when he called the people to choose.

It didn't even begin with Moses' appeal for Israel to choose God's blessings over sin's curses.

Genesis 2:8, 9

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15-17

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

The Origin of Religious Liberty

God **did not say,**

“If you eat of it, I will kill you.”

This was a loving warning of sin's consequences, because sin separates the sinner from the Giver and Sustainer of life.

“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

Revelation 14:8

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because **she has made** all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Revelation 14:9, 10

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.

The Origin of Religious Liberty

Religious liberty, as far this earth is concerned, was established by God Himself in the Garden of Eden before the fall.

And God established religious liberty in a perfect world because it is an eternal principle of His government, and an essential quality of His character of love.

Patriarchs and Prophets, 49

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton.

(Religious liberty is also called liberty of conscience, free will, free moral agency, etc.)

Patriarchs and Prophets, 49

Without freedom of choice, his 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 man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.

Signs of the Times, 12/30/1889

God grants men a probation* in this world, that their principles may become firmly established in the right, thus precluding the possibility of sin in the future life, and so assuring the happiness and security of all.

*Probation is another name for religious liberty: a time to freely choose whom you will serve.

Signs of the Times, 6/17/1897

Christ died in behalf of the human family, giving men a probation, that they might have opportunity to see the evil of sin, and **to choose as their leader**, either the apostate who was expelled from heaven, or the Prince of Life, who gave himself as an atoning sacrifice, that all might return to their loyalty.

Desire of Ages, 22

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne.

Desire of Ages, 22

From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency.

Signs of the Times, 4/25/1892

God knows the end from the beginning;
“known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” Therefore redemption was not an afterthought – a plan formulated after the fall of Adam – but **an eternal purpose** to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the worlds which God has created.

A Foundational Principle

- There can be no gospel, not even a need for the gospel, without having first established the principle of religious liberty.

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- There can be no gospel, not even a need for the gospel, without having first established the principle of religious liberty.
- Without the religious liberty that God established before time began, there would have been no need for the plan of redemption because there could have been no sinners!

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- To preserve liberty of conscience – an eternal, foundational principle of His government – God “gave His only begotten Son.”
- Your religious liberty is so precious to God that He determined it was worth dying for!
- Thus, the everlasting gospel [Rev. 14:6] is key in Earth’s final conflict between Satan’s rule by force and God’s gift of eternal liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

We can be certain, then, that wherever religious liberty is restricted — wherever is found a spirit of control over others, a striving for authority, or a spirit of contention —

the Spirit of the Lord is absent!