



CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

“THE TRUE DOCTRINE IS NOT OUR RIGHT TO THINK FOR OURSELVES, BUT THE RIGHT OF THE OTHER MAN TO THINK FOR HIMSELF.”

The impression very widely prevails that the battle for Christian liberty has been fought and won. So far as regards precaution of the more active kind, this is the case in the larger part of the civilized world. The right of the minority to free speech and free action in the line of conscientious conviction is, in theory, at least, conceded.

But it is a mistake to assume that because harsh laws have been softened, human nature has been radically changed. The grosser forms of persecution have disappeared, but subtler forms remain. The intolerant spirit has survived the death of many institutions by which intolerance was once manifested. Christian liberty is still, in a considerable degree, conceded only in theory. Men still endeavor to punish those who have the temerity to differ with them.

There is no cause for astonishment at this manifestation of inconsistency. It is one of the curious things in human history to see how generally the persecuted have become in turn persecutors the moment the power was lodged in their hands. And why? Because the true principle of Christian liberty had not been grasped and is to this day apprehended by only a few. The right of any body of men to differ in opinion from others has always been claimed by them; there is no novelty in that. From the beginning, every Christian sect that has arisen has vehemently contended for its right to differ from others. It has protested against persecution – that is to say, the persecution of itself by others. But in few cases has any sect conceded the right of others to differ from it, or forborne to persecute when it had the power. And in our own day each man is prompt to claim and assert the right to think for himself, but how loth most are to concede the equal right of all other men to think for themselves. Everyone resents any attempt to coerce him into the avowal of anything that he

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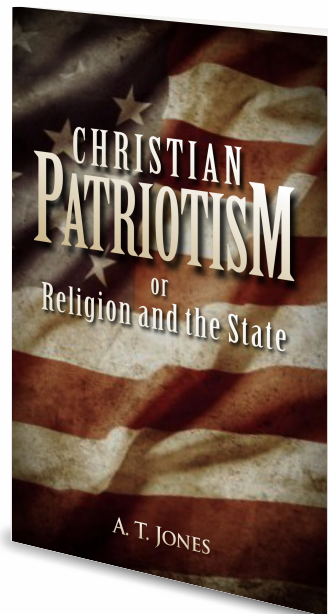
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Editors: Jason Ash
Dustin Butler

does not honestly believe, but how few of us fail at one time or another to attempt thus to coerce others.

The true doctrine of Christian liberty is not our right to think for ourselves, but the right of the other man to think for himself. There is no danger now that our right will not be insisted upon and enforced, particularly if our thinking happens to fall in with that of the majority. It is the other man's liberty that is in danger, particularly if he happens to be in the minority. It is his liberty that demands defense at all hazards; for, if liberty is denied him, how long will it be conceded to us?

To demand liberty for the other man, even when he differs from us, is not to admit that truth and error are essentially one, or to deny that it is of great consequence what the other man believes and teaches. It may be our duty to oppose with all our might what he teaches, to denounce it as deadly error. But this may be done without identifying the man with what he teaches, and without the display of the spirit of intolerance and persecution. We need not try to make the man odious because his opinion is odious to us. To be loyal to the truth, and yet faithfully to recognize the equal rights of all men to free thought and free speech, is not always an easy task. The two may, however, be combined. And nothing can be more certain than that the preservation of Christian liberty for any is conditioned on the concession of that liberty for all.¹

CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENTS

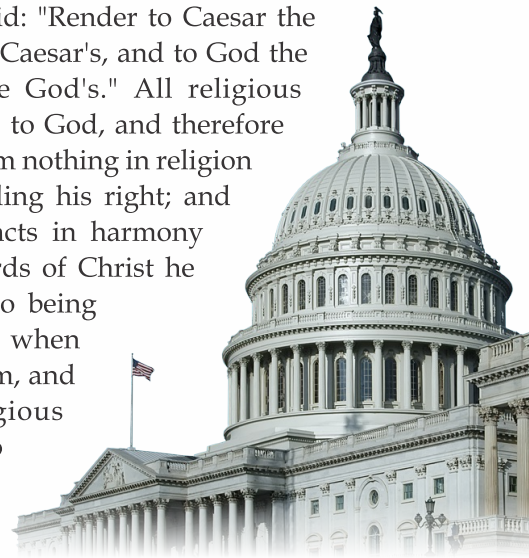
Christianity is an individual matter. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God," says the Scripture; and also, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." And again: "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Man, the individual, was created to love, believe, and obey his Maker. Civil governments were created not to love anybody nor to experience emotions of any kind. The gospel message to man is, "He that believeth and is baptized, the same shall be saved," but no civil government can believe, be baptized, and be "saved." Civil governments are temporal; the salvation of the gospel is for eternity.

The sphere of the individual human being is thus altogether different from that of the political entity created by individuals acting collectively, known as the government. Civil governments exist to preserve rights: to give order and peace to society in the place of anarchy. That is their sphere, and so far as Christianity can apply to it, civil governments can be Christian. But manifestly, the government to be Christian must at least do what it is created to do; it must preserve the rights of the individuals who live under it. And if it does this, it will preserve the right of religious freedom—the right to be guided in religion by the dictates of one's own conscience; it will frown upon

any measure that would compel the conscience.

The very way, therefore, for a government to manifest its Christianity is to compel no one in religious matters, to have no laws that would force the consciences of any, but to leave every one free to follow the dictates of his own mind. In other words, the civil government must be neutral; it must have nothing to do with religion one way or the other. This may at first glance appear like an anti-Christian attitude; but it is not so. It is the attitude which expresses as nearly as any civil government can express it, a Christian character. The government cannot be religious without also being anti-religious and interfering with the liberty of religious dissenters; to espouse one religion is necessarily to oppose some other religion. Jesus Christ said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." All religious service belongs to God, and therefore Caesar can claim nothing in religion without exceeding his right; and while Caesar acts in harmony with these words of Christ he comes nearer to being Christian than when he violates them, and demands religious obedience unto himself.²



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HOW FAR FROM HOME?

Annie Smith

How far from home? I asked, as on
I bent my steps-the watchman spake:
The long, dark night is almost gone,
The morning soon will break.
Then weep no more, but speed thy flight,
With Hope's bright Star, thy guiding ray,
Till thou shalt reach the realms of light,
In everlasting day.

I asked the Warrior on the field:
This was his soul-inspiring song:
With courage, bold, the sword I'll wield,
The battle is not long.
Then weep no more, but well endure
The conflict, till thy work is done;
For this we know, the prize is sure,
When victory is won.

I asked again: earth, sea and sun
Seemed, with one voice, to make reply:
Time's wasting sands are nearly run,
Eternity is nigh.
Then weep no more-with warning tones,
Portentous signs are thickening round,
The whole creation, waiting, groans,
To hear the trumpet sound.

How far from home? ah, then, I cried
To God, who marks each plaintive sigh:
A still, small voice, within, replied,
Not far from home am I!
Then weep no more, though round thy way,
Afflictions rise, and doubt and fear,
While myriad voices sweetly say,
The Pilgrim's home is near.

Not far from home! O blessed thought!
The traveller's lonely heart to cheer;
Which oft a healing balm has brought,
And dried the mourner's tear.
Then weep no more, since we shall meet
Where weary footsteps never roam-
Our trials past, our joys complete,
Safe in our Father's home.

Seventh-Day Church of Revelation In-Person Fellowship

North Carolina

Teachers Cottage
307 Church St. NW
Valdese, NC 28690

Sabbath, June 10 and June 24, 2023

Sabbath School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Lunch - 12:00pm - 2:00pm

California

Orosi Seventh-day Church of Revelation
12883 Avenue 419
Orosi, CA 93647

Weekly Meetings*

Sabbath School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Potluck Lunch - 12:30pm

*Exception, June 24 Camp Meeting in Badger, CA



Christian Reformers: Pushing Versus Drawing

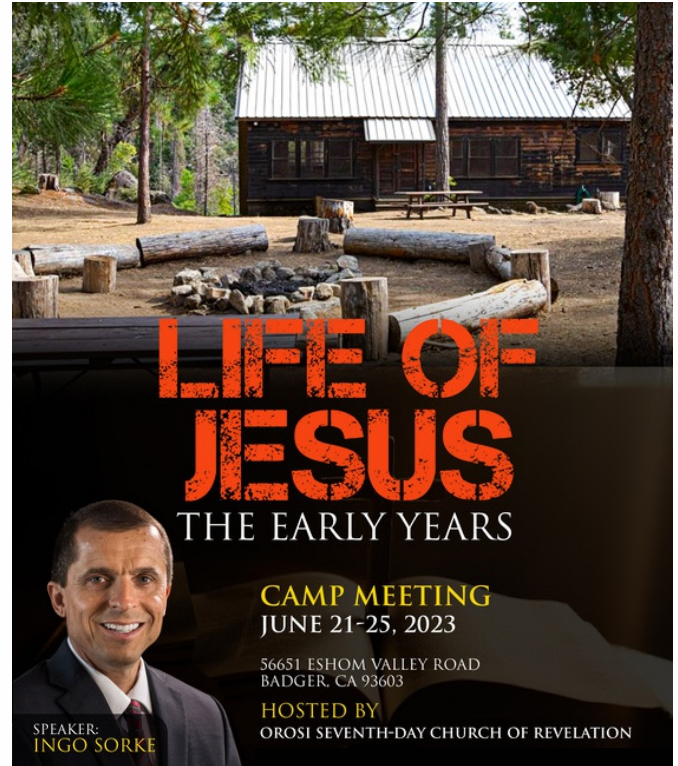
There are self-styled reformers in these days of intense aggressiveness who think that the loving, drawing method of our Lord and his early disciples is obsolete. Christianity must keep up with the spirit of the age. We, too, must push things. Their idea is to get up the best machinery that they can, put plenty of power behind it, and then go ahead. They would crush opposition instead of trying to win and save the opposers. Such efforts may seem to succeed for a time. But true Gospel progress means hearts won to Christ, and you cannot win hearts by pushing. When we read of pushing in the Bible it is only in the case of vicious beasts with horns, or of men who are like them. See Ex. 21:29; 1 Kings 22:11; and Dan. 8:3. There is no case where it speaks of pushing in any great and good enterprise. It never represents God or his prophets and apostles as pushing. On the contrary the Bride in Canticles cries: "Draw me; we will run after thee." And our Saviour said: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." John 12:32. The prophets were inspired to cry: "Come;" Jesus himself said: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," and on the last page of the Bible we read: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." When the Good Shepherd putteth forth his own sheep he does not drive them but "goeth before them," and they follow. The whole spirit of the gospel is attraction. Coercion is the distinctive characteristic of false religions, of corrupt Christianity. The true disciples of Christ never persecute; they are not wont to push with their horns like the ox in Ex. 21:29. Like their divine Master, they

are meek and patient. They do not strive but are gentle unto all men. See 2 Tim. 2:24.³

¹ N. Y. Examiner, *The American Sentinel*, October 1887

² L. A. Smith, *The Sentinel of Liberty*, December 13, 1900

³ Self-Styled Reformers, Selected, *American Sentinel*, December 19, 1895



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Offering is used for the expenses of the church such as rent, supplies, and services.

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