



REDEEMER

Presbyterian Church | PCA

»» PRESENTS ««

COUNTER CULTURE

FOLLOWING CHRIST
IN AN ANTI-CHRISTIAN AGE

Christ in the Public Square: The Gospel and Religious Liberty

Breadth of Knowledge

General knowledge of Scripture

- History
- People
- Themes

Depth of Knowledge

How to apply Scripture

- Principles – nature of God / nature of man
- How commands interact
- Applications for the Christian

Cultural Influences

- Political Ideals
- Social Ideals
- Economic Ideals
- Morality/Ethos

BELIEVER

Heart and mind
captured by God,
resulting in obedience
to scripture

Personal Influences (the self)

- Socioeconomic position
- Religious upbringing
- Vocation

Love of God's Word (heart)

Zealousness for study and
application

Knowledge of God's Word (intellect)

- Discipline of study
- Discipline of meditation/reflection
- Discussion with believers

Focus of Religious Liberty

Focus is on the civic life of a nation to ensure its people have the freedom to act and live according to their religious principles.



Some Characteristics of Religious Liberty

- Government exists by God's sovereignty
- Power is in government, which may or may not be sympathetic to the faith
- Rests upon 'rights' guaranteed by governmental authorities
- Focus rests outside the church
- Accommodates multiplicity of opposing positions and views
- Accepts and even celebrates division and disunity as long as individual liberty is protected
- Usually requires identifying and aligning with secular positions, groups, parties, etc.



Scriptural Basis for Religious Liberty

Contemporary commentary and analysis seems to agree that a biblical argument for religious liberty is implied in scriptures rather than explicit



Ensures people the choice to accept or reject the faith

‘The Bible’s outright rejection of religious coercion and its insistence on persuading people to follow Christ by their own free will is enough reason to claim biblical support for religious liberty.’

- Matt 13:24-30 – parable of wheat and tares
- Matt 19 - Parable of the rich young ruler
- Acts 17:17 – Paul’s appeal to reason at the Aereopagus



Guarantees believers the freedom to act and live according to scriptural mandate



Ensures government does not reach beyond its scriptural authority

‘government is ordained by God to promote good and restrain evil.... Understanding the limited role of the state has implications for religious liberty.’

- Romans 13
- Matt 22:21 – render unto Caesar

“Taken together, Romans 13 and Matthew 22 demonstrate that a limited government with clearly defined boundaries is the form of government envisioned by the Bible. Ordained by God, government is God’s servant in the civil sphere where it administers justice. Within this God-given task, government may operate with freedom. However, Jesus makes clear that certain areas of life belong exclusively to God and that government steps beyond its prescribed limits when it demands loyalty in these regards.’



Potential Reading

- Luther – *On Christian Liberty*
- Calvin – *Institutes of Christian Religion*
- *Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 23*
- Kuyper – *Calvinism and Politics*
- Wayne Grudem – *Politics According to the Bible*
- John MacArthur – *Why Government Can't Save You: An Alternative to Political Activism*



Focus of Christian Liberty

To allow differences of conviction in non-essentials, often in application of biblical commands, in order that individual believers can act and live according to their conscience while pursuing unity within the body of Christ.



Some characteristics of Christian Liberty

- Mandated by scripture
- Focus is on the church and within the church
- Intent is to promote unity
- Liberty is a consequence of being freed from the bonds of sin
- Liberty is a consequence of identifying with Christ alone
- Authority is acknowledged to be in God alone



Scriptural Basis for Christian Liberty

In contrast to arguments for religious liberty, the Scriptures contain explicit commands regarding the practice of Christian liberty



Liberty coincides with obedience

Gal 5:1, 13

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.... For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.



Liberty exists because the Holy Spirit lives in us

1 Corinthians 8:9

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.



Individual believer acts on conviction of conscience, moved by the Holy Spirit, in obedience to scriptural authority

1 Corinthians 10:29

I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

Romans 14:5

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Romans 14:23

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.



Its end is unity, not division

- Although an accommodation by God in our fallen condition, it is willingly ceded by the individual when it causes division in the body
2 Corinthians 3:17

But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

An accommodation for growth and patience and mutual encouragement

Romans 14:1

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.



Some takeaways...

...in considering the differences between religious and Christian liberty and their application in the body of Christ

- It is appropriate to appeal to God to remove persecutors of His people
- We must know scripture in order to evaluate our zeal with God's word
- We must confess our sin in our appeals to God
- We must understand who has the seat of power
- Our identity is in Christ alone

