

## *G E FIFIELD QUOTES*

### *Religious Liberty*

**CHRIST** came to set men free. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me. . . to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isaiah 61:1. Perfect liberty is found only in Christ. God's law is called the law of liberty. The Inspired Word calls that law a hedge. It marks out the unchangeable principles of right between man and God, and between man and man, which must be recognized, else liberty is impossible to intelligent beings. All slavery, physical, moral, and intellectual, comes from breaking that law. Liberty is found only in obedience to it. Still there is a sort of slavery in the futile attempt to keep it in our own strength. But Christ, through the new covenant, writes that law in the heart, so that we not only have power to keep it, but His will becomes ours, and with Christ we delight to do His will, because His law is in our hearts. Here is perfect liberty. The perfectly saved will be perfectly free. Throughout eternity they will do just what they please, because they please to do just what makes liberty and joy possible.

Now, as to the relation of the state to the conscience of man, Christ found men enslaved to kings and priests. He taught that all men are brothers, sons of one Father, and therefore equal

before the law – equal in civil rights. Rulers were, therefore, only their servants, chosen under God to protect them in the enjoyment of their rights. He freed us from the chains of priestcraft by teaching the absolute independence of the individual soul in matters religious, and by promising the spirit of truth to guide each one into all truth.

It is true that all liberty comes through keeping God's law, but God Himself, who wrote that law in the hearts of men in the beginning, who spoke it amid the thunders of Sinai, that all might hear and obey, who waits through the new covenant to rewrite it in every trusting soul – God Himself, who did all this, still made man as free to disobey these precepts as to obey them. Why did God allow all this fearful iniquity that man might be made free? To this there can be but one answer. It was because He knew the worthlessness of all forced obedience, and that, therefore, the freedom to sin was absolutely necessary to the possibility of righteousness.

After having made men free to sin, that the internal principle of love might work itself out in outward acts of righteousness unhindered by force – after having made men thus, has God given to any human authority the right to take away that freedom, and so to thwart His plans? He has commanded all men to worship Him and obey His precepts, and this command applies to each individual personally; but has He ever commanded any man or set of men to compel others to worship Him, or to act even

outwardly as if they worshiped Him? To ask these questions is to answer them emphatically in the negative.



The civil power is the power of arbitrary force to compel men who will not be righteous, to at least be civil, that men may live together in peace and quietness. The true power of the church is the power of divine love manifest in the flesh, to win men to lead righteous lives. The two powers are entirely separate, and Jesus so taught when He said, "Render to Caesar [the civil powers] the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17.

When Peter, as a member of the Christian church, sought to defend the truth by the sword, Jesus, pointing to His Father as the Church's only Source of power, said, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword [i.e., in religious matters] shall perish with the sword." Matthew 26:52. The tares are to be allowed to grow with the wheat until the harvest. Then God will send forth His angels to gather out the tares to burn them. No human effort of arbitrary force can be used in rooting them out, lest in the act the wheat shall be rooted also. See Matthew 13:24-30.

Again Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." John 18:36. Every civil law has the power of the sword back of it. If it is right to make law, then it is right to enforce it. In denying the church the power of the sword, Jesus therefore forbade the church to ask the state for laws enforcing beliefs and observances. Paul understood this when he said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." 2 Corinthians 10:4.

The early church, strong only in the power of God, triumphed grandly, even over the opposing forces of a false religion, upheld by the state. Only when she allied herself with the state, seeking its aid, did she deny her God, lose her power, and darken the world into a night of a thousand years. The present effort of the church to get the state to enforce religious observances of the Seventh Day Adventist faith is but a revival of the pagan and papal doctrine of force in religious things and as such it is antichristian.

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Every pagan religion has its sacrifice, and this sacrifice is derived from the true Sacrifice by which the world is to be redeemed, through a degeneracy from the true type of that sacrifice which God gave to man at the gate of the forfeited Eden. But Satan has brought it around so that the pagan sacrifice means just the opposite of the true. The meaning of the true sacrifice is this: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Every sacrifice truly offered was a revelation, an expression of that great sacrifice by which God was to give the pledge to all his intelligent creatures of all worlds that he so loved them that, if need be, he would give his life to redeem them. But the pagan sacrifice speaks of a god of wrath and anger, whose wrath must in some way be appeased, perchance by the blood of a lamb, or it may be only by the blood of a fair maid, or innocent child, or some other human victim. When he smells the freshly flowing blood, they believe his vengeance will be satisfied, and he will be propitiated.

What shall we say of the false idea of the atonement, held even by many in the popular Protestant churches of today, and expressed in a late confession of faith in these words, "Christ died to reconcile the Father unto us"? This is not the place to enter into a discussion of that theme; suffice it to say that it is the pagan idea of sacrifice applied to Christianity. God, they think, was angry; he must pour forth his wrath upon some one. If upon man, it would eternally damn him, as he deserved; but this would interfere with God's plan and purpose in creating the worlds, so this must not be. And yet God must not be cheated of his vengeance; for this reason he pours it forth upon Christ, that man may go free. So when Christ died, he was slain really by the wrath and anger of the Father. This is paganism. The true idea of the atonement makes God and Christ equal in their love, and one in their purpose of saving humanity. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." The life of Christ was not the price paid to the Father for our pardon; but that life was the price which the Father paid to so manifest his loving power as to bring us to that repentant attitude of mind where he could pardon us freely. Thus Satan has transformed the truth of God's love into a lie, and even infused this lie into the very doctrine of the atonement. pp.33-34.

The word "atonement" means at-one-ment. Sin had brought misery, and misery had brought a misunderstanding of God's character. Thus men had come to hate God instead of loving him; and hating him, the one Father, men also hated man, their brother. Thus, instead of the one family and the one Father, men were separated from God and from each other, and held apart by hatred and selfishness. There must be an atonement. An atonement can be made only by God so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men's hearts will be touched to tenderness; and they, being delivered from Satan's delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misrepresented the divine One, and so done despite to this Spirit of his grace. Thus they may be led, as returning brethren, to come back to the Father's house of blissful unity.

The atonement is not to appease God's wrath, so that man dare come to him, but it is to reveal his love, so that they will come to him. It was not Christ reconciling God unto the world, but God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It is nowhere said that God needed to be reconciled to us; he says, "I have not forsaken you, but you have forsaken

me.” And Paul says, “I beseech you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God.” It was this question that needed to be answered: How can it be that God is our Father, and that he is love, when we suffer so much, and oftentimes so unjustly, and yet no voice breaks the silence, no Father’s touch soothes our sorrow? The question was to be answered by God, through Christ, breaking the silence, and through him healing the sick, and raising the dead, prophetic of the time when, Satan’s power being broken, all tears shall be wiped away.” pp.100-1