

A photograph of the Statue of Liberty, tinted in a teal/cyan color. The statue is shown from the chest up, holding the torch in its right hand. In the background, several large, dark wooden crosses are visible against a cloudy sky. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The Cost of Freedom

1888 MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER
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FROM THE EDITOR

Rev. 10:7, “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.”

Things are speeding up.

The bishop of Rome recently invited the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians to come to “my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer” (for peace). Pope Francis (via video message) seductively suggested that evangelicals come to the Vatican that they might “give each other a spiritual hug.”

We know where this is going.

“She is employing every device to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution... These things should awaken the anxiety of all who prize the pure principles of the gospel.... The people need to be aroused to resist the advances of this most dangerous foe to civil and religious liberty. - GC88 565, 566

Mrs. White declared, “I do not mean to live a coward or die a coward..I must follow in my Master’s footsteps.” (*Southern Work* p. 10.) A.T. Jones was led of the Spirit of God to boldly confront papal encroachments on civil and religious liberty.

Freedom of conscience was dearly purchased on Calvary by Jesus Christ. In the area of our conscience God has retained exclusive access, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.” (Rom. 14:1).

May we courageously preserve the freedom of all men to keep (or not) the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

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1888
MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE

EDITOR

William Pergerson

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Autumn Roberts

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday
9:00am-5:00pm EST

The purpose of this newsletter is to share the good news of Jesus Christ as the foundation of effective personal and public evangelism to the world, to encourage the use of and share more effective methods and resources.

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VOICES FROM THE HARVEST

Listen to a sampling of the grateful voices of some who were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the preaching of the everlasting gospel.

“My Aunt & Uncle invited me to go to a Revelation Seminar. It has been SO terrific! The pastor explained things that I’ve been hearing about in churches for the last 18 years, but have never completely UNDERSTOOD the way I do now!!! And the congregation there at ___ - they are amazing! The church is small and doesn’t have a pool, so I asked if the baptism could be held in our pool at home and they kindly agreed.

I was not baptized as a baby, but even still, I believe that baptism is a decision that should be made as an adult when you know what

it really stands for. We all know many people who were baptized as infants who are outwardly living their lives for themselves and not for Jesus. That’s because their parents made that choice for them and it means nothing to *them!* I see now that God calls us to surrender ourselves to Him, and when we are willing to do that, **then** we *bury* our old sinful selves into the watery grave at the baptism.... and when we rise up from the water we are ‘born again’ of the Lord, dying to ourselves each day and allowing Christ to live in & through us! I am so very excited to finally be adopted




into the Lord's family and allow Him to live each day through me! This doesn't mean that we never fall and make mistakes ever again, but that when we do, we are not defeated... we repent, and get up and start over again, knowing that we have a Savior that has already died for ALL sins because He loved us enough to give His life for us so that we can be washed clean, and spend eternity in Heaven with Him because of our faith & trust in Him!

If you feel the Lord knocking at the door of your heart and

want to let Him in, don't let ANYTHING stop you from doing that... get down on your knees and invite Him in! It will make the difference in where you spend eternity! I will be happy to do Bible studies with anyone who would like them, and have a terrific BIBLE-BELIEVING, BIBLE-PREACHING church if you want to attend with us! I pray that God will bless your day!!!!

With love from the Lord,"
Michelle ∞" - (Excepts from an email sent to family and friends)



Thank you for supporting 1888 Glad Tidings Evangelism. Your continued intercessory prayers are needed to open up new cities and hearts to this message most precious.

The Cross, Justification by Faith, and Liberty of Conscience

Jerry Finneman

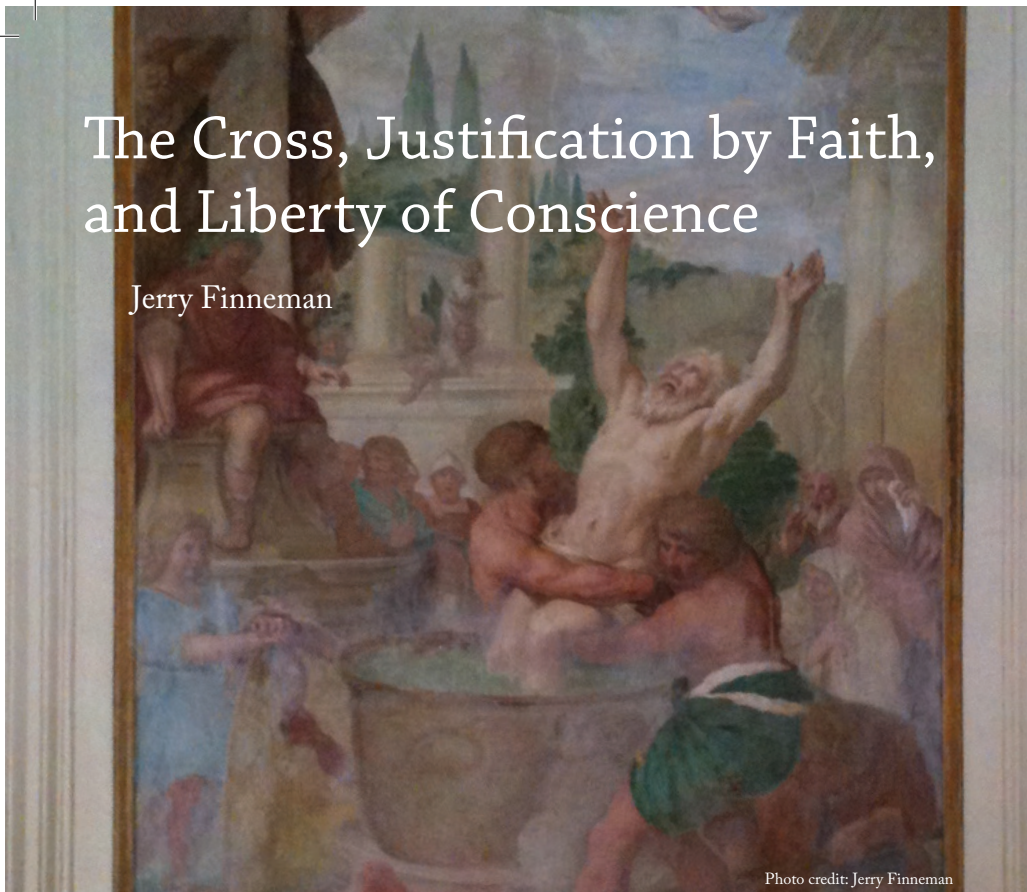


Photo credit: Jerry Finneman

This article will consider some of the experiences of Jesus, the Apostles and others regarding the affirmation and the denial of faith and liberty of conscience. Christ died for this liberty. Christ crucified is central and foundational to liberty of conscience. What was done to Jesus was the greatest travesty of justice witnessed by the universe.

Although in a very minor key, variations on this theme have been played over and over again thousands of times throughout human history. When the repeat performance is played in the grand finale, there will be no encore. Both the denial of liberty of conscience and its triumph will occur when God's people are prepared, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, known as

the Loud Cry during the time of the return of the Latter Rain. The power of freedom of conscience will be triumphant in the followers of Christ because it is an eternal principle of the kingdom of heaven. For this eternal principle Christ died. The cross of Christ altered the course of human history. Paul wrote of the power of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-24). There are various terms in the Greek language for power. The one used by Paul here is *dunamis*. From this word we get our English words dynamic, dynamo and dynamite. The cross of Christ is the explosive power of God. Another verse using the same word is Romans 1:16 – “the gospel of Christ is the power of God.” This is because “the righteousness of God is revealed” therein and is to be received by faith “as it is written, “The just shall live by faith’” verse 17. It was this concept accepted by Luther that led to the mighty changes

that took place in his world. As with the cross, the teaching of justification by faith during the Protestant Reformation altered the course of modern history. Luther saw the connection between justification by faith and liberty of conscience. He spoke of this in the following words: “Let there be no compulsion. I have been laboring for liberty of conscience. Liberty is the very essence of faith.”¹ From his very first trial this was the case with Luther. As he stood before the legates of Rome and the Emperor of the “Holy” Roman Empire at the Diet of Worms, they pressed him to recant. Luther calmly declared, “I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience.” And then, looking round on the assembly, he said—and the words are among the sublimest in history—

1. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, b. 9, ch. 8.

“HERE I STAND. I CAN
DO NO OTHER. MAY
GOD HELP ME. AMEN.”²

The power of the cross is the power of the gospel which reveals the righteousness of God, justification, and liberty of conscience. It is the power of the gospel that gives power to both faith and liberty. After receiving the power of God by faith in Christ alone, men, women, and children have laid down their lives for their precious liberty of conscience. Justification and liberty of conscience are inseparably united. When a person denies the teaching of justification by faith, he denies liberty of conscience. And vice versa. The one who denies either justification by faith or liberty of conscience will eventually justify himself and condemn others. Time and again, beginning with Cain who killed his brother, this has happened in the course of human history.

2. James Wiley, *History of Protestantism*, Vol 1, Bk 6, Chapter 6.

Cain denied his brother the teaching of justification by faith and its consequence – liberty of conscience. The denial of freedom of conscience is the history of mankind. Jesus was denied His liberty of conscience and was crucified. His execution was accomplished by the union of Church and State. Whenever Church and State are joined together with the Church in charge, liberty of conscience is denied and persecution results. Our liberty of conscience comes to us as a free gift from God, but at the cost of Christ’s death. That which was denied to Christ became the foundation of freedom of conscience for mankind. The denial of religious freedom to Christ was followed by its denial to all His apostles. With the exception of one, all the apostles gave their lives because of their faith in Christ and for liberty of conscience. Freedom of conscience can be denied by church and state, but it cannot be taken from a

person. Merle d'Aubigné, historian of the Reformation, wrote that

“Christian conscience is independent, in matters of faith, to all human power: it relies only on the Word of God, and does not submit to other control. No power is able to impose on them its yoke, neither tradition, nor pope, nor nobles, nor the state.”³

Today, as a consequence of losing sight of and even rejecting the message of justification by faith, the gains of the Reformation have been slipping away from Protestantism. These losses are: liberty of conscience, religious and civil liberties, capitalism and economics, the free market, constitutional government, and the separation of church and state. As a consequence of not moving, by faith, with Christ and His message of justification

by faith into the Most Holy Place ministry in heaven, Protestantism has retreated and is heading back to Dark Age theology and feudalism. May we not join them in this retreat! The only way liberty of conscience can be removed is through its surrender to another entity, whether that entity is a person, a church, or a state. Religious freedom may be taken from us, but not our liberty of conscience. Freedom of religion was taken from the apostles as they were placed in dungeons, burned at the stake, and thrust through with the sword, but they refused to surrender their liberty of conscience. It could not be taken from them. Nor can it be taken from you and me. It cannot be forced from those who trust in Christ alone for their salvation. A person may die because of liberty of conscience, but he dies free. Of the apostles, John was the exception who did not die as a martyr. While he was overseer

3. Quoted by J.B. Roney, (2003). Merle d'Aubigné, Jean Henri. In (T. Larsen, D. W. Bebbington, M. A. Noll, & S. Carter, Eds.) *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

of the churches in Asia Minor, he was arrested and ordered to be taken to Rome for trial by the Emperor Domitian. Domitian hated this preacher of Christ and His righteousness. John was sentenced to death by the Emperor. To accomplish this, John was plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil. However, by a most striking miracle, John did not die while in that oil. He came out of the cauldron safe and sound. The very men who thrust him into the oil had to pull him out. Another cauldron, a cauldron of intense hatred, boiled within the heart of Domitian. And in his hatred toward the last living apostle, he ordered John to be taken to the Federal Penitentiary on Patmos. Even there Domitian could not destroy John. While in that prison John wrote the last book in our Bible. And that book deals with the faith of Jesus, of justification, and of liberty of conscience in our day. We will be faced with the same issues that the early church

faced and which the Protestant Reformers had to confront. (In Rome there is a church dedicated in honor of John. It was built near to what is called the Latin Gate just inside the old Roman wall in the modern city of Rome. The little chapel is called "Saint John in Oil." This chapel traditionally marks the spot where John was boiled in oil. While there, I took pictures both of the chapel and of the paintings depicting the Apostle being placed into the cauldron of oil). Paul also was executed because of his faith and liberty in Christ. Before his death in Rome, he was placed under house arrest. The Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—were most likely written during his house arrest in Rome. Later he was sent to a terrible dungeon known as the Mamertine Prison. Finally, Nero, moved on by the devil, executed Paul. Before his death, in another letter

– to the Hebrews – Paul wrote about justification by faith, liberty of conscience, and suffering. In the last part of Hebrews 10 we find the following thoughtful and encouraging words:

“Recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and

will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:32–39).

The recipients of this letter had suffered severely for their personal faith in Christ Jesus and for conscience sake. Paul encouraged them to persevere and to not draw back. He quoted Habakkuk 2:4 regarding justification by faith: “Now the just shall live by faith.” “Do not cast away your confidence.” Christ’s promise is that He is coming back “and will not tarry.” Believe. Do not surrender your liberty of conscience. Persevere. Never give up the fight of faith. The next chapter (11) in this letter was written for us as well as the Hebrew believers. This is the well-known “faith” chapter. It is also the chapter about liberty of conscience. Verse one states:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The context from chapter 10:32-39 and chapter 11 is that of the just living by faith and its essence – liberty of conscience. This is what is hoped for. Faith is the evidence of liberty of conscience. In Hebrews 11:4 we have the revelation of the first conflict in the human family over righteousness by faith and freedom of conscience. Cain’s sin of fratricide was because of his animosity to righteousness by faith and liberty of conscience as believed and practiced by his brother Abel. Cain’s attitude and practice was opposed to righteousness by faith and liberty. He himself was devoid of faith and consequently of freedom and then denied liberty of conscience to his brother. However, Abel died in faith, free; Cain in unbelief and bondage. After outlining some of the experiences of people who lived

by faith, Paul turned to those who died in faith – those who refused to give up their faith and its direct consequent, liberty of conscience. After asking “what more shall I say,” he said,

“For the time would fail me to tell of [those] who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They

wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” Hebrews 11:32–40.

Here is the cloud of witnesses to justification by faith and to liberty of conscience. These witnesses tell in their own experiences the fact of righteousness by faith and its essence – liberty of conscience. These all died in faith and in liberty. Because of this, Paul encourages us to persevere in running “the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). He doesn’t merely keep us running. Paul next tells us how to endure in this race. It is only by “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our

faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

In full agreement with this thought we have the following inspired counsel: “If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.”⁴

In conclusion, by beholding, knowing and receiving the One whose religious freedom was taken (not His liberty of conscience), who died and rose again giving to us His faith and securing forever our liberty of conscience, let us not give up faith the faith of Jesus nor our liberty of conscience. We are not to be “of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). The justified always live by faith and in liberty!

4. Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892.

The God of Choice

Sharon Pergerson

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Jesus made everyone on earth do what's right? Think about it; if He did, everyone would be nice to each other. Everyone would worship God, maybe even on the same day, in the same church. In fact, Jesus could just control the keyboard of everyone's mind. Then no one would think up evil or selfish ideas, He could just program us all to do exactly what He said. What a safe place the world would be for all of us.

Thankfully, that will never ever happen, not on earth and not in Heaven. Sometimes ideas about Jesus may sound

good on the surface, but when you look at them a little closer they are straight from Satan! That's why it is so important for God's people to know Him and understand His character. Satan has fatal traps being set right now that the Bible says are so strong that, "if it were possible, they will deceive the very elect" Matthew 24:24.

What could be so dangerous about Jesus forcing everyone to do right? The answer is the most powerful secret in the universe; please don't ever forget it, write it down in your heart and mind right now. It is,

“God is love.” That sounds like a principle we learned in cradle roll, certainly not an answer for more mature children; or is it? God is love, that’s His character, and that’s what He uses to rule His universe. True love comes with choice and risk. For love to be love there must be choice. And once there’s choice, there is risk. Because He is love, He created us with the power to choose for ourselves whether we want to love Him back or not. That was pretty risky, if you ask me, to create those who would possibly hate you. That is the only way love can exist. God cannot and will not ever force us to love and worship Him. It would go against His character and against the foundation of His whole universe. It would make Him a liar, for He said that we are made in His image. He loves us by choice, not by force. If Jesus will never force anyone to love and worship Him, where did this idea of doing so

come from? Satan. Satan is the one who tries to rule by force through deception. He is desperate for the world to worship him and will use whatever bully tactics he can think up to “cause both small and great to worship him.” The only tool he cannot use is true love, because there is absolutely no love in him. As you watch the news about things happening in the world, and hear about those trying to force the world to worship God their way, remember that God is love. Anything or anyone that uses tactics or beliefs that go against the character of the God of the Bible are from Satan. They are designed to deceive us and lead us to eternal destruction. Let’s keep our eyes on Jesus, study for ourselves what He is like, and invite Him to live in us. You can ask your parents to help you. Then share this God of choice with as many others as you can, for “God is love.”



A. T. Jones & Religious Liberty

Submitted by Raymond Joseph

This study is based on the third of the sermons given by Jones at the 1893 General Conference.

A.T. Jones was impressed to read a portion of a letter from Ellen White that had been received just three days earlier.

Jones read; “Brethren and Sisters, would that I might say something to awaken you to the importance of this time, the significance of the events that are now taking place. I point you to the aggressive movements now being made for the restriction of religious liberty.”

(*GCDB*, January 28, 1893 Par.26: also quoted in *6T* 18.2)

What exactly was happening in 1893 that made the prophet say such things?

1893 was a very interesting year; there was a desire to affirm the United States as a Christian nation and there was

a Sunday law passed closing the World’s Fair exposition in Chicago on Sunday.

A.T. Jones went to Congress and skillfully presented arguments against the Sunday law. I encourage the reader to read all 24 of Jones’ 1893 sermons to get the full context.

In sermon number 24 at the end of Jones’ arguments, he brings his conclusions which I would like to look at.

Jones asks: “Did Congress know what was in the Sunday act, closing the World’s Fair on Sunday? Did they know what was in that?”

“The point is, they do not know what is in it, and they themselves now know that there is in what then they did not know was in it.

“A senator from the state of Washington told brother Decker, that if he had known before

what he knew afterwards, he would not have voted as he did.

“Exactly; and members of the house have said the same thing.

But there is the mischief of it. Satan does not care, and the papacy does not care whether they know what is in it or not, or whether they intended it or not; it is done, and the fruits of it will appear, and the wrong that is in it will come, in spite of what the court intended,

in spite of what Congress intended, and in spite of what the court knew, and in spite of what Congress knew.”

Quoting Jones again: “I

will read that statement a little further concerning those who say it will all die down: ‘Testimony no. 33, pages 243, 244:—

“Too often the leader has stood hesitating, seeming to say, ‘let us not be into great haste. There may be a mistake. We must be careful not to raise a false alarm.’ The very hesitancy and uncertainty on his part is crying, ‘peace and safety’. Do not get excited. Be not alarmed. There is a great deal more made

of this Religious Amendment question then is demanded. This agitation will die down. Thus he virtually denies the message sent from God; and the warning

which was designed to stir the churches, fails to do its work. The trumpet of the watchmen gives no certain sound, and the people do not prepare for the battle. Let the watchman beware, lest through his hesitancy and delay, souls shall be left to perish, and their blood shall be required at his hand.”

Jones continues: “Then another thing. Some of the ministering brethren, and a good many of the people, have

said, ‘I do not think this religious liberty work, this church and state work, is quite the thing; it is too much like politics. I do not think it is exactly the thing, to work in the church and on the Sabbath and so on.’

“ And so those brethren that have supposed that the religious liberty work was too much like politics for them, what they need is to find out what religious liberty is, and to get religious liberty for themselves and in their hearts, and then they will know it is not politics; they will know that it is religion. ”

Well, that depends altogether on what the condition of your heart is; it depends altogether on what it is to you. If it is simply a political thing to you, then all

that is to you is politics. If it is religious liberty work in deed with you, and in you, then it is the gospel. If it is with you only a theory, only a outward formalism, then all it is with you is politics: policy is all you know. But if

it is with you and in you, though real soul liberty, the real liberty that Christ gives the converted soul, then it is religious liberty indeed, the gospel of Christ, and no politics about it. That is the difference between politics

and the gospel of Christ....

“And so those brethren that have supposed that the religious liberty work was too much like politics for them, what they need

is to find out what religious liberty is, and to get religious liberty for themselves and in their hearts, and then they will know it is not politics;

they will know that it is religion. Those folks have not found out what real religion is. No, sir; the man who finds the religious liberty that there is in Jesus Christ, and which the gospel brings to him, and which separates every religious thing from the state, separates church and state,—the man who does

that, he knows that it is not politics; because he knows the straightway, and he will take the straightway, and he will go that way in the face of every

“ And the secret of all, the beginning and the ending of all, the all in all of it, is simply Jesus Christ in a man, the hope of glory. That explains everything; that gives understanding of everything; it suplies everything. ”

consideration that the earth can furnish our mention; and there is no politics in that; that is principal.

“Well, then this is where we stand. These are some of the things we are to consider. And the secret of all, the beginning and

the ending of all, the all in all of it, is simply Jesus Christ in a man, the hope of glory. That explains everything; that gives understanding of everything; it supplies everything. Christ, Christ and him crucified; that is all that any man wants; that is all that any man needs; it is all we can have; for ‘In

Him dwelleth all the fullest of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him.”

So you can see that brother Jones identified religious liberty, freedom of conscience, the practice of your faith in your heart and your mind, depending upon the righteousness of Christ, as the heart of the gospel, even the third angel’s message itself.

May your hearts be blessed as you consider these thoughts, spoken when Jones was under the influence of the latter rain.

See the letter Ellen White wrote to Jones in 1908: “I have been instructed to use those discourses of yours printed in the *General Conference Bulletins* of 1893.... I was shown that many would be helped by these articles, ... these arguments, which were of the Holy Spirit’s framing.” (Letter 230, 1908, July 25; 9MR 278.2)

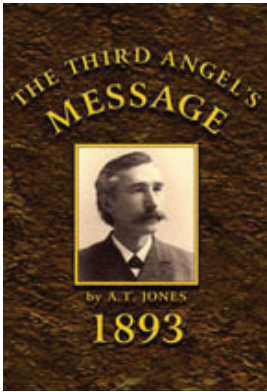
We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

- Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

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.

- The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States

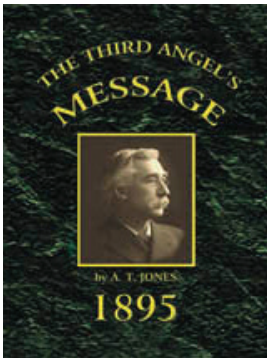
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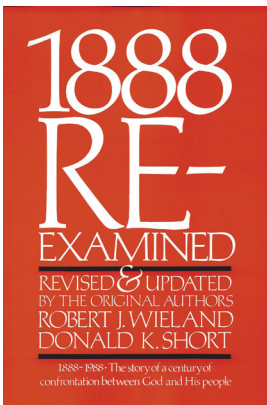
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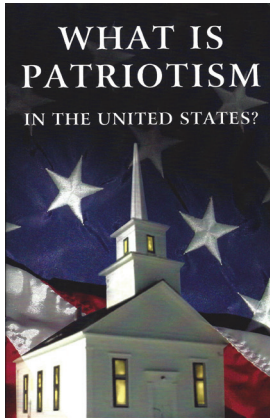
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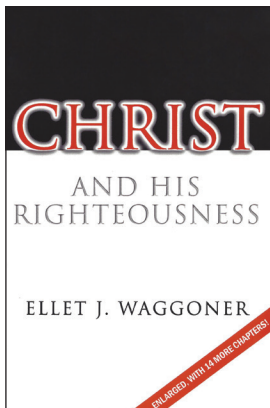
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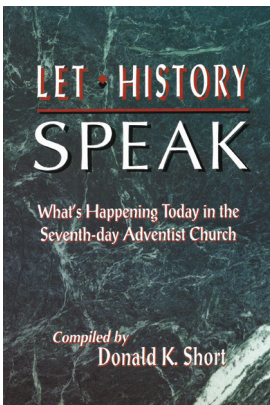


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Compiled by Donald K. Short

A compilation of six papers presented to the General Conference Primacy of the Gospel Committee between May 1999 and January 2000. Titles include “Fifty Years of Modern Adventist History” and “A Brief Summary of the Nature of Christ Controversy.” Little information was published during the time the Committee met, but now it can be told! 150 pages.


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The Impending Conflict - Its Causes

Excerpts from *The Great Controversy*, Chapter 36

by Ellen G. White





The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering--a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.

The agencies which will unite against truth and righteousness in this contest are now actively at work. God's holy word, which has been handed down to us at such a cost of suffering and blood, is but little valued. The Bible is within the reach of all, but there are few who really accept it as the guide of life. Infidelity prevails to an alarming extent, not in the world merely, but in the church....

In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver. It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as

to fashion an idol of wood or stone. By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character.... Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists--the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions--is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia.

Now that Satan can no longer keep the world under his control by withholding the Scriptures, he resorts to other means to accomplish the same object. To destroy faith in the Bible serves his purpose as well as to destroy the Bible itself. By introducing the belief that God's law is not binding, he as effectually leads men to transgress as if they were wholly ignorant of its precepts.

The teachings of religious leaders have opened the door to infidelity, to spiritualism, and to contempt for God's holy law; and upon these leaders rests a fearful responsibility for the iniquity that exists in the Christian world.

Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching

their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this

“ Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: 'The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' ”

country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.

As Spiritualism more closely imitates the nominal Christianity of the day, it has greater power to deceive and ensnare. Satan himself is converted, after the modern

order of things. He will appear in the character of an angel of light. Through the agency of Spiritualism, miracles will

be wrought, the sick will be healed, and many undeniable wonders will be performed. And as the spirits will profess faith in the Bible, and manifest respect for the institutions of the church, their work will be accepted as a manifestation of divine power.{GC88 588.2}

The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church-members love what the world loves, and are ready to join with them; and Satan determines to unite them in one body, and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of Spiritualism. Papists, who boast of miracles as a certain sign of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and Protestants, having cast away the shield of truth, will also be deluded. Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in

this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world, and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium.

The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.



The Origin of Protestantism

“Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

Thus ended Patrick Henry’s famous speech compelling Virginia to join the battle for independence from the British monarchy.

Nearly 250 years before, another group of men met to discuss what would become the new genesis of Protestantism. Again liberty from church-state monarchy was at stake. A deal

offered the “favor” of liberty to those who then possessed it, but insisted that the teachings of the Reformation must go no further. Those still under church-state law, as well as the people of other ages (you and me in particular), would be allowed no such liberty. Nearly one half of the reformed princes present at the meeting refused the deal.

“Happily they looked at the principle on which this arrangement was based, and they acted in faith. What was that principle? It was the right of Rome to coerce conscience and forbid free inquiry. . . . Rather would they “sacrifice everything,

even their states, their crowns, and their lives” (D’Aubigne, bk. 13, ch. 5; quoted in Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 200).

This was the “Patrick Henry” of the Reformation, if you will, but it was not a new and different voice. The same cry was heard from Peter and the apostles some 2,000 years ago when, filled with the Spirit of God, they too resisted the coercive dictates of civil and religious powers of their day, insisting, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

The apostles of Jesus were echoing the spirit of religious protest sounded some five hundred years before by Daniel’s three friends. Faced with the threat of death, they flatly refused to worship before the religious and civil statue of Babylon’s king:

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar,

we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16-18).

The heritage of Protestantism is a long one, spanning thousands of years, though the principles of civil and religious liberty were not named Protestant until the courageous stand made by those German princes at the Diet of Spire:

“One of the noblest testimonies ever uttered for the Reformation was the Protest offered by the Christian princes of Germany at the Diet of Spire in 1529. The courage, faith, and firmness of those men of God gained for succeeding ages liberty of thought and of conscience. Their protest gave to

the reformed church the name of Protestant; its principles are ‘the very essence of Protestantism’” (D’Aubigne, bk. 13, ch. 6; quoted in Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 197).

“Protestant” as a definition of religious belief emerged from the protest of the princes. Religious liberty was its foundational principle. The true spirit of Protestantism accords liberty, both civil and religious, to all faiths and it is the reason many once saw the United States as “Protestant America.”

Protestant America

During the establishment of America over 200 years ago, the Catholic faith was a minority religion. In some of the early states, Catholics were even persecuted. This was a time when the character of the Jesuits, a special order of Catholics, was better known.

“I do not like the reappearance of the Jesuits,” John Adams wrote to Thomas

Jefferson after Pius VII revived the order in 1814. “If ever there was a body of men who merited eternal damnation on earth and in hell, it is this society of Loyola’s. Nevertheless, we are compelled by our system of religious toleration to offer them an asylum” (*Seattle Times*, February 17, 1991).

The history of the struggle for liberty, both religious and civil, is built into the very fiber of America. It defines the very core of this great country.

“I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials,” -John F. Kennedy.

This is the America for

which President Kennedy lived and died—an America with a government established upon the separation of church and state.

The founding fathers of America agreed. Some of them were influenced by the writings of John Locke, who wrote on the principles of religious liberty as they relate to the Bible:

“‘The Church,’ he contended, ‘was a voluntary society, and no man was bound by nature to any particular sect, but every man joined himself voluntarily to that profession and worship which he thought acceptable to God.’ The Church had no right to avail itself of force or compulsion, because no such power was granted to it by its founder, and also because no man can be saved by any other religion except the one in which he believes freely. Therefore, Locke demanded absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty; for all dissenters, not as

a favor or an act of indulgence but as a right” (William Warren Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America*, Charles Scribner and Sons, N.Y. 1942; See also, John Locke, *A Letter of Toleration*).

John Wesley, the main founder of the Methodist Church, gave this insight to religious freedom:

“Condemn no man for not thinking as you think: Let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself: Let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God. Abhor every approach, in any kind or degree, to the spirit of persecution. If you cannot reason or persuade a man into the truth, never attempt to force him into it. If love will not compel him to come in, leave him to God, the Judge of all.”

What these men had personally experienced, seen, and heard of the religious persecution in Europe and the

early colonies of America caused them to write the religious clauses of the Constitution of the United States. George Washington, first president of the United States, believed that, “Any man, conducting himself as a good citizen and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.”

James Madison, known as the father of the Federal Constitution, wrote, “Religion is not in the purview of human government. Religion is essentially distinct from civil government, and exempt from its cognizance; a connection between them is injurious to both.”

And Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, said,

“Almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal

punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His almighty power to do.”

Benjamin Franklin wrote, “When a Religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig’d to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one” (*The Founders’ Constitution*, Volume 4, Article 6, Clause 3, Document 5, The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

These are principles of divine truth, brought together and expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States:

“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.”

Today the ring of freedom still stirs the inmost soul of the American people. We were created to be free. While political corruption and corporate greed slowly dismantle our nation, this one principle holds together the land of the free, home of the brave. It strikes a moral chord that reminds us of the image in which we were created. Our hearts still rise with a sense of our innate free nobility when we hear the song,

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountainside

Let freedom ring!

Prophetic Protestantism

This liberty is a significant part of the prophetic picture of Bible prophecy. The principles of liberty are represented in Revelation chapter 13 and verse 11:

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”

Civil and religious freedom are here symbolically pictured as two lamb-like horns. These symbols are not difficult to identify. The “lamb” in this verse is a reference to Jesus Christ. More specifically, to Him being slain on Calvary’s cross to redeem men who were sold into sin-slavery and could not redeem themselves (Revelation 5:1-9). Rather than wipe out sinners by sheer force, God chose to be lifted up on a cross to draw all to Himself by the power of His love. The death of the cross was God’s way of saying, *All*

people are free to choose whom they will serve—Me, or themselves.

America's history embodies the lamb-like principles of liberty so clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Christ. It is a nation that has continued the journey of liberty's forefathers to stand for both religious and civil freedom. And the final prophetic forecast, "he spake as a dragon," is right on target, so much so that its founding fathers would turn with embarrassment from the picture of America's present state of affairs.

What does it mean to speak as a dragon? In Revelation chapter 12, Satan is unmasked as the "dragon." To speak like him would be to embody his principles of war, accusation, anger, coercion, force, deception, and lies (Revelation 12:7-11, 17; 13:12-17). Basically, the way America is increasingly conducting itself. The kingdom or nation rising out of the earth speaks as a dragon, revealing

the very character of Satan rather than the principles of the lamb, coercing the moral conscience of the entire world.

Personal Protestantism

And yet, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can still be free. Those principles can still reign in our hearts individually. The subjection to the dragon prophesied in Revelation begins in individuals and not with corporations or governments. It begins with us, you and me today, now. As you read these words, they will call you to freedom, to the liberty that you have in Christ Jesus, the liberty Jesus lived and died to protect and honor, even if such liberty leads you to choose against Him. Even the state church of certain segments of the Reformation era, such as John Calvin's Geneva, did not like the idea of a liberty that allowed us to choose against the Liberator, Jesus Christ, but that is the true spirit of liberty that is

foundational to the love of God.

Protestantism at its very best represents the liberty we are to have over the very worst kind of bondage and oppression—the slavery of the mind to the flesh. The apostle Paul stated this idea well when he said:

“I PROTEST by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31).

Paul walked in a liberty that began with a personal daily death to his own flesh or carnal nature. Even as a Roman prisoner, Paul was still free. This is the liberty Jesus promised us when He said:

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jesus, John 8:36).

Martin Luther also spoke to this same biblical truth when he said:

“I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, Self.”

Literal slavery is imposed upon millions of human beings by those who are themselves spiritual slaves to their avarice and lust. The callous greed of the natural human heart is the catalyst of the “beast.” The beast within forms the “beast” without. Think about it. The bondage we all experience to one degree or another forms the basis for the atrocities that support the literal slave trade. Sexual immorality and materialism are simply forms of bondage. Bondage to the flesh inhibits our ability to love selflessly in a genuine, other-centered way—the way that Jesus loves.

“Whosoever will list himself under the banner of Christ, must, in the first place and above all things, make war upon his own lusts and vices. It is in vain for any man to usurp the name of Christian, without holiness of life, purity of manners, benignity and meekness of spirit” (John Locke,

A Letter Concerning Toleration).

We can do something to be free. We have a part to play. We have choices. Jesus died to preserve our choice. America's founding fathers lived and died to give the world this freedom. Lives are being affected by the choices we are making in the privacy of our own home. Slavery is sustained by us. We are free to choose to say "no thank you" to slavery. God wants to set each of us free first—you and me. And once we are free, we are called to set others free by the same power of love that has freed us.

Refuse the "protest" against your own flesh and you refuse the liberty of Christ. This personal choice places you in bondage to the desires of this world. The prince of this world, styled "the dragon" in Revelation 13, will work through two primary powers to coerce all who have rejected the liberty Christ gives from the bondage of the flesh. The world will

form one final movement to wipe out religious freedom. The habits long established, the surrender of liberty in exchange for self-indulgence, will produce fruit in the inability to do what is right when the test comes. Bondage to the world will serve as a means of forcing all to worship the "beast" rather than face economic sanctions and the threat of death. The "beast" is the composite of self, the uniting of all the selfishness that has refused absolute surrender to the self-liberating power of God.

Spiritual Protestantism

On the other hand, there are men, women, and children today who are still protesting against individual self and its beastly composite. Many of them may know nothing of Protestantism or its fine history, but they hear the voice of conscience, the voice of God. They follow the Spirit of another world than this. They accept the Spirit of liberty over the passions of the flesh

and they choose “to live simply that others may simply live.”

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

This Spirit of liberty has been leading the human heart to freedom for thousands of years. It is leading us to freedom today. Can you hear it now? Shut off the TV, the internet, the radio, the phone. Get to a quiet place and listen. If you are willing to be set free you will begin to hear a “strong” voice as from “heaven” growing to “great power” and crying “mightily” (Revelation 18:1-4). It is calling us—every person who has ears to hear—out of the political, religious, economic system-code named “Babylon” (Revelation 18). The call echos the “glory” of God—the fullest revelation of selfless love ever witnessed on Planet Earth—Calvary. This love restores to you and me the choice to be free from the

bondage of Babylon—from the leaders and merchants of the world who will one day weep in agony as the machinery of human bondage comes crashing to the ground (Revelation 18).

And the same cry that echoes down the corridor of time, “Give me liberty or give me death,” will be heard again. The words of Bible prophecy indicate that the Lamb will have a people to whom liberty is more precious than life itself:

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

The “him” of this verse is the dragon, Satan, the devil, the author of selfishness. He will be overcome by people who have opened their hearts fully to the other-centered, liberating love of the Lamb.

People like you and me.

James Rafferty is Co-Director of Light Bearers

Peter and Forgiveness: Part 2

Fred Bischoff

In our first two stories we saw Peter's confession of Jesus' identity as the Son of God, giving the essential background to the enormity of Jesus' gift of Himself to bring forgiveness to humanity—the *giving* of God to become man for the suffering of temptation and death. This profound dialogue was followed immediately by Peter's rejection of Jesus' statement as to the ultimate expression of that gift. Our next story weaves together the identity and the *giving* again.

Story #3: Matt. 17 (1): Peter's Drowsiness—Missing the Encouragement of Forgiveness

And after six days Jesus

taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. (verses 1-3)

Question: What did Peter and the other two miss, and why? Luke's account explained:

Moses and Elias ... appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and they that were with him were heavy

with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. (Luke 9:30-32)

Reflections: It was the topic of conversation between Jesus and His visitors from heaven—“his decease [death] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem”—that Peter and the other two missed. Their failure to watch and pray, and giving into sleep, kept them from hearing the vital encouragement these two glorified humans gave Jesus to go through with the ultimate act of *giving*. They did awaken, but they had missed the key point of the encounter. When the brilliant cloud of the Father’s presence came, with His voice repeating the words given at the Jordan River, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” the Father added the commanding plea, “Hear ye Him.” On the core issues of Messiah’s mission, the disciples were failing to hear Him. Their response to these

words was to become “sore afraid” (Matt. 17:5, 6). The adverb “sore” describe an exceedingly large amount of fear. Their self-focus led them to be thus fearful.

Commentary: “Moses and Elijah had been co-laborers with Christ. They had shared His longing for the salvation of men. Moses had pleaded for Israel: ‘Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written’ Exodus 32:32. Elijah had known loneliness of spirit, as for three years and a half of famine he had borne the burden of the nation’s hatred and its woe. Alone he had stood for God upon Mount Carmel. Alone he had fled to the desert in anguish and despair. These men, chosen above every angel around the throne, had come to commune with Jesus concerning the scenes of His suffering, and to comfort Him with the assurance of the sympathy of heaven. The hope of the world, the salvation

of every human being, was the burden of their interview.

“Through being overcome with sleep, the disciples heard little of what passed between Christ and the heavenly messengers. Failing to watch and pray, they had not received that which God desired to give them,—a knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. They lost the blessing that might have been theirs through sharing His self-sacrifice. Slow of heart to believe were these disciples, little appreciative of the treasure with which Heaven sought to enrich them.” {DA 422.2-425.1}

Reflections: Their failure and sleepiness would be repeated not too many days in the future, keeping the same three still out of touch with Jesus’ struggle to go through with the “decease”—the final gift of Himself—this time not on a mountain but in a garden—Gethsemane.

Right after the mountain

experience Matthew records Jesus again telling them of His soon-coming betrayal, death, and resurrection. Their response was similar. “They were exceedingly sorry.” (Matt. 17: 22, 23). The adverb “exceeding” is the same as the “sore.” Again the clash of visions must be highlighted. Jesus was moving further down the path of *giving* motivated by the “joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). Failing to see the glory of *giving*, the disciples saw nothing but great sorrow in such a future. And this not only unfitted them for the great test toward which the events were moving, it also confused them on other lesser forms of *giving*, as Peter’s next story shows.

**Story #4: Matt. 17 (2):
Peter’s Boast—Retreating on
the Enormity of Forgiveness**

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. (verse 24-27)

Reflections: The tribute was for the support of the temple. The question put to Peter was designed to place Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If Jesus were not to pay it, it would be used as evidence that He was disloyal to the temple. However, if He were to pay it, He would deny His divinity

and prophetic role, as prophets were exempt, and for sure also was “the Son of the living God” whose house the temple was.

Peter’s hasty response to the question was not a simple “yes” but an emphatic affirmation better translated “assuredly” or “indeed.” Did he see the inconsistency with his earlier declaration that Jesus was “the Son of the living God”? Perhaps Peter was beginning to see the importance of *giving*, and of Jesus’ embodiment of this principle, and the devil crafted the circumstance of *giving* the tribute to catch Peter into affirming a superficial act of giving that would actually testify against the enormous act of giving that Jesus’ true identity indicated—that the incarnation of the Son of God witnessed to the amazing path of *giving* He had already embarked on, and was steadily treading to the ultimate act of *giving*.

Jesus purposely avoided conflict and controversy. He had

no desire to “offend them.” His mission of *giving* was to remove offenses. The word “offend” echoed what Peter had done in attempting to block Jesus’ path to the cross. (The verb “offend” corresponds to the noun “offence”—both sources of our words “scandalize” and “scandal.”) Jesus’ simple but miraculous solution destroyed the dilemma, by *giving* what Peter’s boast had foolishly promised, but in a way that affirmed that He was not just another human being. For the gift is measured not simply by its being given or by its size, but by the One *giving* it, and the manner in which it is given. The forces of taking can hijack the heavenly principle of *giving*, so it takes divine wisdom to give in a way consistent with the principle. Jesus would promise such divine aid—we would be guided “into all the truth” (John 16:13). Though we don’t know what the truth of *giving* looks like, “the Spirit of the truth” for sure does. Was

Peter learning to listen to that still small voice, as Jesus Himself did (John 3:34; see Isa. 50:4, 5)?

Transition: A short while later, the issue of forgiveness came up again. It was revived by the question of “Who is the greatest?” (Matt. 18:1). Jesus addressed the disciples’ converted status (18:3)—and tied it to humility. He began to talk about offenses (18:7), using the same word as in Matt. 16:23, whose verb form we just noted in this story. In heaven’s view, the principle of *taking* is a scandal. It is a deadly serious matter. Jesus spoke of its consequences—about not entering the kingdom, about being drowned, about a woe being placed, about people living by that contrary principle being cast into everlasting hell fire (18:3-9). He pointedly warned, “Take heed” (18:10). He declared again His mission—“to save that which was lost” (18:11). In a brief parable (18:12, 13) He touched again on how far

He has gone—how much He has *given*—to save those who would otherwise perish. He left, He went, He sought the one sheep that was lost, to give it back its place in the fold.

Jesus then addressed how to respond to the taking of sin, laying down clear guidelines to follow (18:15-20). The divine order that *giving* produces does not excuse sin. One humbles self to address those who sin. Did not Jesus do this? And people are saved from sin, if they will. Again, this process produces a divine authority, based on the *giving* that heaven endorses, and Jesus affirms by His own presence. The disciples' need (their love of taking), and Jesus' solemn and far-reaching response (the godly order of *giving*) stirs something deep within Peter—something called conviction. So rather than the usual bold assertions, he is led to ask a question—and what a question! That is our next story.

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