

# The Real Reason the Secular Left Loathes Religious Liberty

## The Rights of Conscience

Have you ever wondered why the Left has so little regard for religious liberty and the rights of conscience? How can a group so committed to “equality for all” and “an America free from discrimination” have no problem using fines and other means of coercion to force others to violate their most deeply held convictions?

Secularists have a nasty habit of taking words we commonly use in the context of a Christian worldview and then gutting them of all their original meaning. Words like freedom, liberty, justice and beauty are powerful and inspiring because they point us to something Transcendent. They direct our attention to the existence of a good, holy, wise, just, all-powerful and eternal God Who sets the objective standard for these transcendent values. When you remove God from everyday life like the secularists do, the words become meaningless. They lose their weight and substance.

Perhaps this is why the Left rabidly fights for the unbridled freedom of sexual expression, while caring little for protecting the “rights of conscience.” You see, our English word conscience comes from the Latin word *conscientia*. The prefix *con* means “with” or “together.” The verb *scire* means “to know.” So the word literally means “to know with or to know together.”

We must ask the question: With whom we are “to know together”?

Herein lies the problem for secularists. The conscience was designed to agree with God concerning matters of right and

wrong. God Himself, His character and standards, is our benchmark. Thus, the conscience is a God-given moral compass which helps us determine right from wrong. It has been called "a law we cannot not know."

The conscience is that part of every person which, willingly or unwillingly, responds to the universal moral law of God. The Apostle Paul writes: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, while their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" (Rom. 2:14-15).

Our conscience bears witness to our actions. When we examine our actions what does our conscience say? It is trying to give you an accurate witness of how you measured up to God's standards.

This is why the Apostle Paul said, "I always strive to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16).

Perhaps this explains why there is so little zeal from the Left to defend the rights of conscience. When you have little use for God, then why would you care about the rights of conscience? In fact, without God, how does one even define "conscience rights?" What is a "conscience?"

### **America's Uniqueness**

America is an exceptional nation. Our Founding Fathers gave us a political society unlike any other in the history of the world. The Founders considered religious liberty to be our "first freedom." It was the foundation stone upon which all other freedoms rest.

Why?

Because one's religious faith was the foundation for morality.

Morality was the foundation of virtue. Virtue was the foundation of liberty.

This explains why religious liberty has been protected by our civil law. James Madison, one of the chief architects of our American understanding of religious liberty, puts the point well:

*"The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right."*

-Memorial and Remonstrance

Madison argued that it is an *"arrogant pretension"* to believe that *"the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious Truth."*

But here's where the rub comes in.

Madison, like the rest of our Founders, acknowledged the existence of God and the duty of every man to worship Him. He wrote:

*"What is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society."*

Did you hear that last phrase? The duty toward God takes precedence to the claims of government. Madison went on to say:

*"Government exists primarily to protect our natural, God-given rights: 'Government is instituted to protect property of every sort. . . [and] conscience is the most sacred of all property.'"*

Government exists for the purpose of protecting property and the most precious of all property is the human conscience! How far we have fallen from the biblically immersed worldview of our Founding Fathers.

The Bible predicted the day would come when people would be *“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”* (2 Tim. 3:4) We are living in such a time. If we fail to demonstrate the superior pleasure of knowing and loving Christ (Ps. 16:11) our most cherished liberties will vanish before our eyes.

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