

The Bible and Religious Freedom

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Abstract

Religious beliefs influence the acts and behaviors of religious people, most of the time overwriting any social or deontological norm. A brief overview into the dogma of diverse religions that refers directly to religious freedom sheds more light on these behaviors that could not be otherwise explained. Looking into Christianity, things should not be different. According to the understanding of most Christian denominations, the Bible is the only norm for Christian living. Thus biblical doctrines should reveal how to act in regard to religious freedom. Although the Bible is not considered a norm by society at large, only by Christians, it could provide moral principles for those professing the Christian faith that are linked with a normative approach to religious freedom in actual modernity. What does the Bible say about religious freedom? Of what relevance is this to non-Christians? Are Christians aware of these prescriptions? These are extremely important questions for a contemporary multi-religious society, in tension with numerous interreligious or religiously originated conflicts. The aim of this article is to find a solid biblical base for an approach to religious freedom in order for Christians to position themselves on this issue.

The subject of religious freedom is covered extensively throughout the Bible, either presented as part of the historical process, or as part of the biblical principles for life. Under all circumstances, God's faithful people are to obey and submit their attitudes and behavior to the will of God. The Bible includes numerous examples of interactions between God's faithful people with other religious groups or individuals professing their own faith. Though a specific context may change, the biblical principles for living do not. Globalization brings forth the need for a solid biblical perspective in regard to the religious freedom that shapes the reflexes and attitudes of Christians.

Religious Freedom: Christianity and the Evolution of Biblical Understanding

From the beginning, the Christian Church was extremely persecuted. Nero excelled in persecuting the Christians. First, he accused them of setting Rome on fire, but soon after that the only accusation set against Christians was their faith (Bunaciu, 1996:20). Until the *Edict of Milan* (313 A.D.), Christianity was considered a *religio prava* (Brânzei, 1998:24), a deprived and decadent religion, or even an “illicit” religion (Popovici, 2007:180). Christians tried to form their own understanding of state authority, being a theme closely linked with the idea of religious freedom. From Christ’s commandment in Matthew 22:21, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s,” the first generation of Christians understood a total separation between Church and State.¹ Another concept linked with religious freedom is the concept of the good citizen. One of the Bible passages on this topic is what Paul writes in Romans 13:1-2:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

The hermeneutic applied to similar texts from the Bible actually led the socio-political thinking and decisions of society as a whole until the Middle Ages, including the adoption of different Church-State models.² Justin the Martyr (c. 100-165 A.D.), in his *First Apology*, asks the Emperor for tolerance toward the Christians (Richardson, 1953:10). Tertullian (150-230 A.D.) writes a letter to Scapulam³ saying that it is a fundamental right of every person to worship according to his convictions, knowing that the religion of one person does not prejudice or help the other person. Consequently, people should not be forced or pressured

1 The conceptual *Church-State* construct includes the term “Church”, which, though well understood, is discriminatory against non-Christians, thus a *Religion-State* construct would be preferable.

2 Paul Negruț, in *Church and State*, describes the diversity of church-state models. It starts with the martyr’s church and the apologist’s church, going to the church of the emperor, into “pope-Caesar-ism” or “Caesar-pope-ism”. Societies later came to have “national churches”, “ethnic churches” and “multi-ethnic churches”. But the symphony model (introduced by Justinian - 483-565 A.D.) paved the way to an inter-change in the functions of state. Thus, the *imperium* got an important role in leading the Church, and the *sacerdotium* got a special role in the State. The Church got to be historicized and the State got to be “eschatology-zed” (Negruț, 2000:165-166).

3 *Tertullian*, site: http://www.tertullian.org/works/ad_scapulam.htm, accessed 24 August 2009.

into a religion, but should be free (Tertulian, 1844:699). After Galerius's *Tolerance Edict* (311 A.D.), the Christians could peacefully live and establish their places of worship, under the condition of not upsetting the public order (Bettenson & Maunder, 1999:16). Constantian's *Edict of Milan* (313 A.D.) radically changed the situation for Christianity as it became the religion of the empire. The chiliasm concept of the Church-State model was rapidly abandoned by the Christians in order to adopt an amillennialist position. The church went from a position of being persecuted into a position that enabled them to persecute others.

Apologists of religious freedom tried to articulate the concept of the good citizen. The Romans held that a good citizen should unconditionally submit to the emperor. Christian apologists, such as Justin the Martyr, Airside, Athenagoras, etc., supported instead the idea⁴ that a good Christian should only submit to those laws of the state that are morally justified and respect one's freedom to first be submissive to God.⁵ The Christian was placed in the intersection between the eternal and the temporal, being a citizen of the state, but also aware of his/her divine citizenship.⁶ An attempt to cross the demarcation line was seen as a stroke of palace in which one authority could usurp the other (Brânzei, 1998:39). Augustine (354-430 A.D.), in *De Civitate Dei*, affirms that the *Civitas Dei* is the Church. Although Christians live in the *civitas terrena*, they should strive to make it a *Civitas Dei* that is characterized by love and a willingness to sacrifice for the neighbor, although, the inhabitants (the Christians) are in a permanent battle with Satan's servants until the second coming of Christ. Augustine believed that this battle should be transferred from the spiritual and theological arena to the political arena where "Millitia Christi" could even use force to fight against Satan's servants. The ultimate purpose of this should be, in Augustine's opinion, to conquer the world and place it under the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. The concept of the Christian as a good warrior meant to have the Bible in one hand and a sword in the other, and it created room for justifying the Inquisition and the Crusades. Religious pluralism was then seen as an opportunity, a battlefield for authentic Christians.

The Athanasian Creed, adopted at the Nicean Council (325 A.D.), included assimilational and exclusivist phrases:

- 4 The debate was dominated by the "two sword" concept (from the biblical texts: Matthew 26:51, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:49-50, and John 18:10-11; these are texts describing the arrest of Jesus when Peter takes out his sword). This doctrine was understood as the two façades of society, the sword of the state and the sword of ecclesiastic authority.
- 5 The text used to support this was Acts 4:19: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."
- 6 In accordance with Ephesians 2:19, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;

44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved (Sullivan, 1907).

These affirmations that articulated the Christian view on Church and society caused Christians not only to believe that there was no salvation outside of the Church, more or less institutional, but to have deficiencies in dealing with those who were outside the Church. This rigid attitude toward non-Christians, along with misinterpretations of some Old Testament texts, lead to the Inquisition and the Crusades, as well as other behaviors and reflexes that were, at the very least, unbiblical in relationship to those outside of the Church institution.

Although most of the Protestant Reformers (like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, etc.), where all indebted to the existing Church-State model, the radical reformers (like the Anabaptists) disagreed with the concept of *Corpus Christianum*. This construct defined the organic unity between Church and society in which the Church submitted its authority before the State's authority (George, 1998:334-336). This attitude was radical and revolutionary at that time, attracting heavy persecution and repression. Martin Luther (1483-1546), in *Von Weltlicher Oberkeit* (1523) (*On the Secular Authorities*) (Clemen, 1967:360), describes his understanding of religious freedom:

Everyone should make conscientious decisions regarding his own parish; what he wants to believe, and needs to decide if it is fair to believe. Other people could not go to heaven or hell because of me; I open and close doors for them. The little they can believe or not believe, because of me, could not force anyone to belief or unbelief. The way in which they believe is a matter of everyone's individual conscience, and this diminishes the secular authority of the government. They have to be pleased in taking care of their own business, allowing people to believe what they can and want to believe, without using coercion against anyone on this matter (Höpfl, 1991:25).

John Calvin (1509-1564), on the other hand, installed a religious regime in Geneva that brutally punished anyone who professed other creeds or had different beliefs than those included in the *Ecclesiastic Ordinances*. Although at first he accused Francis I, the King of France, that even the "right to whisper is cancelled" (Calvin, 2003:109) in the kingship, he proved himself to be very intransigent in relationship with other believers. Other reformers, like Anabaptist Hans van Overdam, in his discourse in front of the secular rulers (1550 A.D.), presented his perspective on the "state sword" as being only for punishing people that disobey the secular rules, having nothing to do with religious matters (Wenger, 1961:71). *The Schleithelm Confession of Faith* (1527 A.D.) (Wenger, 1945) includes the same

view of secular government. The Anabaptist Claus Felbinger, as he was questioned by the Landshut authorities before his decapitation, courageously said, "God does not want servanthood imposed by force. On the contrary, He loves a heart that is free and open, that serves Him with a soul that joyfully does what is right" (Friedmann, 1955:149). Hubmaier, in the brochure *About Heretics and Those that Burn Them* (1524 A.D.), writes, ". . . a Turk or a heretic is not convinced by our deeds, neither by sword or fire, but only by patience and prayer" (Estep, 2006:214). He held the conviction that the Christian "who belongs to God could not harm anyone, only if first he abandoned the Gospel" and that it is clear that "the law that requires the burning of heretics is an invention of the Devil" (Estep, 2006:214). Hubmaier, in *Short Apology* (1526 A.D.), written after his imprisonment in Zurich, ordered by his former friend, Zwingli, writes, "They tried to teach me the faith through arrest, imprisonment, suffering and execution. But faith is a work of God, not one of the heretic's towers from which you can not see the sun or the moon, and you live only on water and bread" (Vedder, 1905:85-88; Stayer, 1972:141-146). Roger William (1603-1683) wrote prolifically on religious freedom, defending the separation of Church and State, in which his main thesis was, "They have the right to fall into error" (Little, Kelsaz and Sachedina, 1988:23). John Locke, in *De toleratia* (1689), first introduces the principle of the separation of Church and State, also declaring religion to be a private matter "between the individual's soul and the Creator" (Gough, 1968:23). This later became a measuring unit used to determine the levels of civilization (Oberman, 2002:15). Locke considers his perspective on religious freedom to be a combination of Gospel principles in coexistence with human rationality.⁷ Under the fire of terrible suffering, the Christian perspective of religious freedom was almost completely reshaped in an attempt to reflect more of the biblical truth.

Religious Freedom: Moral Principles from the Bible

Methodological, religious freedom is not just a legal or state issue, but is mainly a matter of a combination of moral principles for a society that favors faith manifestations. Even a debate over law is an intrinsically moral debate, as every single law is based on a moral principle. If the moral principle is taken out of the law, there is no law. Thus, a debate on religious freedom is basically an ethical de-

7 Locke writes, "The tolerance of those having different religious opinions is in agreement with the Gospel and rationality, in such a way that someone has to be a monster to not see this in a such clear light" (Raymond Klibansky, ed., *John Locke. Epistola de Toleratia. A Letter on Toleration, loc.cit.*, p. 64). See also: John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Reutledge, London and New York 1991.

bate. L. Feuerbach asserts that a perspective on human beings is not complete without a correct perspective on their relationship to others (1957:10). Context begs for social arrangements from different political perspectives, which include an ethical debate within themselves over the society's construction. This means that governments that are in favor of religious freedom should look for the moral principles that apply to society which will not discriminate on a religious basis. The network of morals, chosen and combined by the government to form the laws for religious freedom, should be tuned in such a way that the most disadvantaged religious minority will not, under any circumstances, have to suffer on the basis of their religion. Moreover, the behavior and reflexes of the society should be in favor of religious freedom, which again falls under an ethical debate.

The Bible includes a set of moral principles that are far more than a moral minimalism which restricts discrimination or harm based on religious beliefs. The moral principles found in the Bible go beyond even favoring or guaranteeing religious freedom as such. This is why the Bible is a great source of inspiration for the moral principle that enables a society to create a state of religious freedom, an ultimate desire in favor of religious freedom for society.

Biblical anthropology has its roots in the creation story, revealing the truth of God's image in human beings (Genesis 1:27; 5:1). The incarnation displays Christ wrapped in humanity. Thus, these two divine acts, the creation and the incarnation, define human dignity as being of divine origin. For religious freedom, human dignity has an important role, as it is the only moral principle which overlaps in all existing moral codes. This is why, in order to start a construction of an environment favorable to religious freedom, it is necessary to build on the moral principle of human dignity. In spite of the fact that non-Christians may not accept biblical moral principles, in human dignity there is, at least, a starting point and a common element for the dialogue on religious freedom.

Theodore Y. Blumoff, in *An Essay on Liberalism and Public Theology* (1999), mentions some moral principles found in the book of Genesis. The morality of the actions in Eden, including the sentence and the divine condemnation, shows God's purpose for human beings as it is presented in the biblical narratives. Blumoff (1999-2000:258) asserts that Genesis introduces a fundamental human condition: equality, a norm to which we aspire. In this context, freedom is absolutely necessary, and if it is reasonably used and not abused, it will allow humans to have equality. Blumoff specifically considers the element of suffering, found explicitly in the story of expulsion from Eden, to be a good explanation of the value of equality in the intended order between men and women. The two free entities were condemned with specific sentences, suffering being thus equality distributed, without specific immunities to suffering. The two had to share the project of creation, being equal partners, both in capacities and participation, able to cre-

ate an environment of common living in relative peace and harmony (Blumoff, 1999-2000:270-278). Their behavior in that context showed undesirable human characteristics. The cooperation in ensuring the minimal good, in Rawls's terms, had been shown in the worst context following the fall, imposed by the need for cooperation for survival. The fourth chapter of Genesis shows an awareness of freedom, an awareness of the freedom to do evil, the killing of Abel by his brother Cain and the will of Cain to shun God's intervention. Blumoff considers that the cry of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?", should cause the reader to cry, "Yes, you are!" (1999-2000:280-281). Ontologically, the question of Cain is correct, but the moral element is missing; Cain refused to acknowledge his responsibility and have a morally correct attitude toward his brother.

Religious freedom guaranteed by God finds expression in Adam and Eve's choice in the Garden of Eden, in the story of Cain and Abel, in Noah's invitation to salvation offered to his society, in Abraham's *lech lekha*, etc. Each of these events are examples of religious freedom, violations of God's will, or adverse interests professed by the people in regard to God's purposes (Blumoff, 1999-2000:260-27). God not only ensured them freedom from His will, but guaranteed them religious freedom because He honored their choices.

The moral principal of charity is also central to the Old Testament. The Israelites were to take care of the poor in their society (Exodus 23:11), a principle which was often included in prophetic discourse: Isaiah (10:1-2; 58:1-21), Amos (4:10), Jeremiah (7:3-6), etc. All of their messages include the requirements of God in regard to the other, shaping a social behavior pleasing to Him. The Israelites were obligated to strive for justice for the poor, to offer them material support by leaving the fields not fully harvested, to apply equal treatment, to act without oppression, and thereby to please God. The Hebrew expression for charity, *tzedakah*, also means righteousness, showing that God is looking for it.

But the Bible goes beyond the principles of justice, freedom, equality, charity, etc. Jesus Christ introduces His love to the world, His *agape* (ἀγαπάω) love, a sacrificial love (see Mathew 4:23; 20:28). *Agape* is the supreme standard for love, oriented to offer unconditionally. This is not only God's love for humans, but also God's requirement for individuals to love Him (2 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 2:5; 3:17), and His commandment to love one's neighbor (John 15:12; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 4:14). Christ's love is central to Christian theology and biblical understanding. This love is much more far-reaching than the ideas of tolerance and respect in society, which, most of the time, do not go further than political prudence. Political prudence is mainly an attitude that faces the challenge of keeping stability, unity and social peace, but skepticism and relativism could well also exist under its auspices. Locke (1991:16-17) considers tolerance to be an "agreement with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and rational authenticity

for every person.” Tolerance is a prudent determination which helps enable the cohabitation of different faiths or lifestyles, and eliminates the threat of persecution, but without requiring trust, mutual respect or cooperation. It has become something of a survival kit for contemporary society, an atrophy and protection from religious conflicts for the public arena (Lindholm, 2004:45). E. C. Dewick, in *The Christian Attitude to Other Religion*, claims that tolerance is just a negative and neurotic virtue that does not lead to any decision, nor inspire to enthusiasm (1953:160). Christian love goes much beyond this. *Agape* is a love that is willing to sacrifice, even for an enemy, inspiring people to find ways to understand each other, to build dialogue between religions, to create an environment of social peace and to favor religious freedom.

The importance of every single individual in God’s sight is a dominant theme in the Bible. The fact that humanity was created in the image of God, and that Christ sacrificed himself for all of humanity, reveals the universal love of God and His all-inclusive plan of salvation.⁸ This equal access to salvation reveals God’s equal treatment of all people. Because of the reality of Christ’s sacrifice that brought salvation to humanity, relationships are being challenged to change, both the human’s relationship with the Savior and with all other individuals, because Christ died for them on the cross. Jesus Christ reveals that the essence of the Old Testament law is included in the commandment, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). The two commandments, equal in importance, define the relational system of Christianity. Even if one’s neighbor was to have adverse interests or demonstrate enemy-like behavior, the love commandment is the same: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). These commandments to love also include the well known no-harm principle:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” *Love does no harm* to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

The answer to any possible victimization is also an answer of love. The Christian is obligated by the divine law revealed in Scripture to act in love with love, and to

8 John 3:16 includes both aspects: the universal love of God (“For God so loved the world”), and the importance of every single human being in the plan of salvation (“that whoever believes”).

promote love in all his or her relationships. There is no other attitude or behavior accepted beyond this standard of Christ's love. Non-discrimination, the promotion of social peace, equal treatment, etc., have mandatory biblical references, which are all absorbed by the golden agape command of Christ.

Knowing that morality is integral to one's individual structure, or essence, the Bible says, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Being unified with Christ, the Christian can produce good deeds, but in the absence of Christ will produce only sinful deeds (Galatians 5:17-23). The moral likeness human beings have with the image of God makes the restored humans in Christ, the Christians,⁹ responsible for moral absolute duties. In a prescriptive way, those duties are included in the moral code of the Bible. The Christian moral is thus deontological (focused on duty), and not teleological (focused on the goal). This means that it requires the Christian to practice it. Failing to practice it means sin¹⁰ and affects the Christian's relationship with God and others, and creates spiritual disorder in the individual's life. This is why Christians are to be like Christ, having social reflexes like Him in daily life.

Religious Freedom: The Bible and Other Religious Precepts

A Comparative Study

It is imperative to compare religious doctrines in order to know other positions on the subject, and to further establish the dialogue between religions. There might not be an articulated holistic view on religious freedom in most Christian denominations, but they do all promote it in one way or another through moral principles that could indicate their position on the subject. A brief glimpse at some of the major religious precepts will help our comparison with the biblical understanding.

The Koran has many references regarding religious freedom. The principle of equity and coercion are mentioned:

There is no coercion (*rushd*) in religion: (moral maturity and intellectual) have a clear distinction from *ghay* (domination, weakness): anyone who rejects *taghut* (tyranny) and believes in God, grabs the hand that keeps him secure and doesn't let the hand loose. And God hears and know all things. (Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 256)

The principle of non-coercion in spreading the faith is included in this text. The

9 See: Genesis 1:27; 9:6; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9; etc.

10 See 1 John 3:4.

Koran requires a specific faith that rejects a coercive type of religion (Said, 2000-2001:104-105). Treatment may be differentiated in regard to others based on their beliefs and actions (Koran 3:113-114; 2:26; 5:69). The expansion of Islam through *da'wa* in regions like Asia, Africa or the Pacific islands, was mainly between non-Muslims. Islam survives and prospers in the midst of diversity, but it is a diversity characterized by the "people of the Book." Religious pluralism has been thus accepted only by diverse fractions of Muslims. This means that a correspondent to the Bible believer's world could not be tracked in this expansion.

The development of the Koran interpretation legitimates differences (*ikhtilaf*): few Koran interpretations co-exist in the same time and space. On the other hand, Islam is less tolerant toward non-believers and infidels. Throughout history, those that had been identified as *kafirun* (plural from *kafir* – unbeliever), were persecuted and punished by the leaders and fellow believers (Abu-Nimer, 2000-2001:261).

Islam holds the idea that the human being is a divine sign (*aya*) as an axiom. Human dignity is based on this principle. A separation from the divine leads to the disappearance of the spiritual dimension and the deification of the human, and the human being implicitly loses dignity. Muslims often quote the text, "We honored the sons of Adam..." (Sura Al-`Isra` : 70), in support of the common humanity that gives everyone dignity. The idea behind this is that, based on this, everyone's rights, those necessary for existence, should be guaranteed (Sabaayi, 2008:33-34). The Koran specifically mentions the attitude toward the monotheist non-Muslim, mainly the followers of Jesus Christ (Koran 5:85). But under no circumstances is it allowed to tolerate polytheists or atheists (Koran 9).

Confucianism has the *ren* principle as a central fundamental virtue. This is the concept of the "two thoughts", or "empathy for the other." The Chinese character used for this indicates a bivalence of the two entities: "you and me". The Hindu Scriptures contain the following wisdom words:

We walk together
Talk together
We all people of the world
Then
And only then
Will we have peace.

Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (or Mormonism), declared his understanding of religious freedom in the Nauvoo Charter, Illinois, included in the Ordinance in Relationship with Religious Societies:

To be declared by the Council of Nauvoo Town that: Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-Day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mahomedans and other religious sects or denominations, should be tolerated and have equal privileges in town; but any other person being guilty of radicalization, abuse or depreciate the religious conscious of someone, will be considered as a disturber of public peace, will be taxed by any amount, no more than five hundred dollars, or imprisoned for no more than six months, or both (Durham, 2001:12).

All thirteen of the articles of faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints start with the affirmation, “We believe”, except the eleventh article that includes a right:

We support the privilege of worshipping the Almighty God in conformity with the dictate of our conscience, and allow everyone the same privileges, to worship how and where they want (Durham, 2001:4).

Humanism as a way of life anchored in rationalism supports natural laws and human rights. Those are considered social norms that should be defended and promoted for the social peace and welfare of society. The ethical system is extracted from the value of humanity and human experience, thus supporting the responsible freedom of every individual. The freedom *from* religion in the public arena is crucial for the humanists in order to allow every human being to strive for their own ideal, including religious ideals (Gogineni & Gule, 2004:699-702).

The values the religious group promotes, and the moral principles are, in fact, what dictate behavior and attitude toward others, either toward those internally, from the same religious group, or externally toward other people of diverse beliefs. Compared with a desirable norm in society for religious freedom, some of the religions present in our society have major deficiencies in adapting to a multi-religious context. Compared to the biblical love (*agape*) commandment as a standard in the Christian perspective on relationships, most other religious people need to reexamine themselves.

In Conclusion

The Bible sets the standard high, introducing the sacrificial love of Christ (*agape*), a starting point that should entirely reshape the Christian’s perspective on religious freedom. This goes far beyond concepts such as respect, tolerance, empathy, non-discriminatory attitudes, no-harm, etc., that are often used in the discourse on religious freedom. There is, in fact, by far, no equal or comparable term to the love of Christ when talking about the relationship between neighbors. The Bible reveals that God guarantees religious freedom for all people. God does not

force anyone's *forum internum*, but gives all a free choice in the matter of religion. In His plan of salvation, everyone has the option of being fully restored into His image, lost by Adam's sin, available through Christ's sacrifice. This restoration in Christ enables Christians to practice the love of Jesus in daily life. By doing that, Christians can practically improve their relationships with other Christians or non-Christians, which will not only guarantee religious freedom, but will also produce harmony and social peace in society.

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Biblija i vjerska sloboda

Sažetak

Vjerska uvjerenja utječu na djela i ponašanja religioznih ljudi, nadjačavajući u većini slučajeva društvene i deontološke norme. Kratki osvrt na dogmatiku različitih religija koja se izravno odnosi na vjersku slobodu, pojašnjava ponašanja koja se ne mogu drukčije objasniti. Osvrnemo li se na kršćanstvo, stvari ne bi trebale biti drugačije. Prema razumijevanju većine kršćanskih denominacija, Biblija je jedini standard kršćanskoga življenja. Stoga biblijsko učenje treba otkrivati kako treba postupati u pogledu vjerskih sloboda. Iako društvo ne smatra Bibliju standardom, već samo kršćani, onima koji ispovijedaju kršćansku vjeru ona može ponuditi moralne principe koji su povezani sa standardnim pristupom prema vjerskoj slobodi u sadašnjem vremenu. Što Biblija govori o vjerskoj slobodi? Od kakve je važnosti za nekršćane? Jesu li kršćani svjesni tih propisa? Ovo su iznimno važna pitanja za današnje multikonfesionalno društvo, opterećeno brojnim međuvjerskim ili vjerski potaknutim sukobima. Cilj je pronaći zdrav biblijski temelj za pristup vjerskoj slobodi koji bi kršćani mogli zauzeti po ovom pitanju.