

# What Southern Baptists Believe

An overview of *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*

Session 21: Article XVII – Religious Liberty

*God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.*

I. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of God

II. \_\_\_\_\_ of conscience

III. \_\_\_\_\_ of church and state

IV. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of government

V. The Christian's \_\_\_\_\_ to government

VI. Limitations of \_\_\_\_\_

VII. Limitations of the \_\_\_\_\_

*Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19*

## Questions for consideration?

1. How does your view of the relationship between the Christian and the government resonate with the views in the BFM?
2. How does your view of the relationship between church and state resonate with the views in the BFM?
3. When, if ever, is civil disobedience allowed by Scripture? On what do you base your answer?

Southern Baptists are a convention of autonomous, like-minded churches voluntarily partnering for ministry and mission.

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