

# THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER'S HANDBOOK





# **CONTENTS**

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<b>3</b>	<b>.....INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>.....OPEN YOUR WINDOW ON YOUR COMMUNITY!</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>.....THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>.....WHAT DOES THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER DO?</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>.....WHY WORK AT THE UNITED NATIONS?</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>.....INTER-CHURCH/FAITH RELATIONS</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>.....REPRESENTATION AT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>.....THE CHRISTIAN AND GOVERNMENT</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>.....THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS</b>
<b>36</b>	<b>.....RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS</b>
<b>42</b>	<b>.....RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER CHURCHES</b>
<b>46</b>	<b>.....THE CHRISTIAN AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS</b>
<b>49</b>	<b>.....APPENDIX 1</b>
<b>55</b>	<b>.....APPENDIX II</b>
<b>57</b>	<b>.....APPENDIX III</b>
<b>62</b>	<b>.....APPENDIX IV</b>
<b>68</b>	<b>.....CHARTERS, DECLARATIONS, AND CONVENTIONS</b>
<b>73</b>	<b>.....BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the **Religious Liberty Leader's Handbook**. Its purpose is to summarize our position on Religious Liberty and Public Affairs, and to make the Department relevant at the local church level by acquainting the Religious Liberty Leader with the duties and areas he or she should be involved in.

This handbook has been developed from a variety of sources and has been extensively re-written to reflect the current situation and practice. It succeeds a previous version compiled in 1993.

The hope is that it will be a ready reference for all kinds of questions as to the work of the Department, and that it will encourage others to become more closely involved in this vital task. In this way we wish to speak well of our wonderful God who values most of all our freedom and dignity as His created children, and to share His freely-given love for those in this sad and dying world:

*"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth... The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love."*

*(Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 415.)*

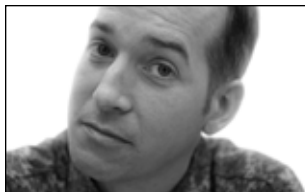
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## Acknowledgements

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*Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department, General Conference*  
2004.



# OPEN YOUR WINDOW ON YOUR COMMUNITY!

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## **JOHN GRAZ, DIRECTOR**

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY (PARL),  
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SDA

**O**n September 2-5, 2002, I had the privilege of leading a seminar for 350 pastors and Church administrators in Romania. It was the first time that pastors and administrators had gathered at a meeting whose theme was “How to influence your community.” This great initiative was part of a global project of the Union PARL Director, Viorel Dima. Viorel has been working for several years to give our Church more visibility and influence in the local community. The Church’s visibility at the national level has always been good. The President of the Republic and the Prime Minister used to meet with our Union officers. Both the Union President and the PARL Director have received a medal from the President. But we had a problem at the local level, with our Church being almost totally ignored. The mayor rarely invited our church officials to public events for discussions about sensitive issues or asked for their advice.

In 2001, Viorel organized symposiums and seminars in 35 cities. Mayors, city council members, the chief of police, and representatives of the army, main public institutions and religious organization, attended. The first visible result was that now our local churches are invited to attend all the official events, including some commissions of public interests.

In this context, the national evangelistic campaign, led for the first time by a Romanian evangelist, became a public event. Government representatives and local and regional authorities attended the opening meetings. According to the response of non Adventists, it was the most successful campaign.

### **10 lessons we can learn from such a project:**

1. We have a role to play and a place to take in the local community.
2. We have to make the first step to establish contact with local authorities.
3. We have to show our concern on issues of public interest.
4. We have to create a local commission for external affairs.
5. We have to choose a qualified PARL Director who knows the local context.
6. We should not change the PARL Director every year.
7. We should list the thought-leaders in the city and contact them.

8. We should define Church events which may be open to city officials and religious leaders.
9. We should have an appropriate set of documents and information about our Church for authorities and media.
10. We should prioritize regular visits to local religious leaders.

These guidelines will help you build a network of relations in your city. Never forget that the quality and the efficiency of your work will be proportional to the network of friends you have.

To complete my contribution to this manual, I would like to invite you to test your PARL Factor. It is a good way to make the point.



# THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

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**CLARENCE E. HODGES, FORMER DIRECTOR**

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

**O**f all the human rights recognized by the various nations of the world and proclaimed by the world through the United Nations, there is none more important than religious liberty. The United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Islands of the Pacific which identify with North America emphatically endorse religious freedom as basic in the hierarchy of freedoms. The United Nations, speaking for the nations of the world, has issued a declaration of human rights which is designed to protect the right to believe, practice, and change religion on an individual or corporate basis.

Religious freedom allows the individual to be influenced or controlled by religious conviction, by one's conscience, without outside interference as long as said conviction does not limit the rights and lifestyles of others and does not adversely impact on the well-being of society. Religious freedom from the North American Division perspective promotes the "Golden Rule" of freedom which, advances the concept of allowing others to enjoy the freedoms you desire.

Those nations which enjoy religious freedom enjoy other freedoms and other benefits which produce a better quality of life for all citizens. Religious freedom is the freedom which produces those other freedoms which lead to an improved quality of life for all. Religious freedom, therefore, improves the quality of life for all and should be supported by all. The North American Division praises God for the blessing of religious freedom. It is a God-given blessing.



# WHAT DOES THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER DO?

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**JONATHAN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR**  
U.N. LIAISON, GC PARL

**T**his question is frequently asked of the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. Historically, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) department has been very involved with representation to governments, congresses, and decision-making assemblies of all kinds in an effort to ensure that religious liberty is protected and that no infringements of religious rights occur. As such, the department is one of the oldest in the Adventist Church and still carries out this vital role.

Yet much more needs to be done at the local, rather than just the national, level. The promotion of religious liberty in the local church community is an essential role. The fundamental principle of freedom of religion is a basic human right and cannot be granted or removed by governments or individuals. Our position is to promote, protect, and defend religious freedom for all people everywhere.

Also, without such freedom of religion, the church could not function as it does. Any kind of restriction or prejudice can hinder the spread of the gospel and needs to be challenged. Religious liberty has never come easily, and history reveals that much blood was shed in achieving true religious liberty. So its promotion goes without question since it involves the church's very existence. More than this, our participation in religious liberty for all demonstrates our true Christian character and can be an excellent way of removing prejudices against Adventists. The church has sometimes been the victim of religious intolerance, and therefore identify with the rights of everyone to freely choose their own religious beliefs and to practice their convictions as they see fit. Consequently, the gospel liberty Jesus spoke of needs to be practiced by the church as a witness to all humanity.

## WHY RELIGIOUS LIBERTY?

So then, why religious liberty? What are the specific reasons why we should support religious freedom? Answers include:

### **1. Because the Bible promotes religious liberty**

The God of the Bible is a God of freedom. He invites choice, offers salvation, and does not use force. He desires a free response—and “whoever has the Son is free indeed.”

## **2. To maintain human dignity**

There is a de-humanizing effect when man's religious liberty is removed. Religious liberty is based on the dignity of the human person and is an inalienable right.

## **3. For self-protection**

We are a minority group, and in particular have experienced religious restrictions regarding the Sabbath. When religious liberty is denied, we have much to lose.

## **4. For prophetic understanding**

Knowing what the future holds, and knowing that the Great Controversy is centred on true and false worship—the heart of religious liberty—this vital aspect must be highlighted to the people.

## **5. To remove prejudice**

We want to reveal ourselves as we are and demonstrate the kind of God we worship to the world. Religious liberty is essential in proclaiming the right God!

## **6. To combat religious intolerance**

The denial of religious freedom is a frequent cause of conflict and violence. It provokes deep-seated grievances and promotes instability in society. By combating religious intolerance, we demonstrate that our God is not intolerant; that His invitation for salvation is universal.

## **7. To promote God's values and ideals**

By supporting religious liberty, we demonstrate God's values and ideals in practice. It is a highly effective witness for the truth of the gospel, and as we do so, we are "a spectacle to angels and to men."

Such ideas mean that we have to broaden religious liberty beyond a narrow view of protecting our own beliefs and practices. We cannot accept the view that religious liberty is only for those who have the truth. Liberty implies the freedom to be wrong. Our primary reason for promoting religious liberty is that it is inherently true and right!

# **SO WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER DO?**

## **The Leader will**

- keep up-to-date on what is happening (which means access to the news—a leader without radio or TV or newspapers cannot be effective!);
- meet and know thought-leaders in the community;
- promote religious liberty publications, (and the religious liberty special day);
- be aware of what other churches are thinking and doing;
- organize conferences and seminars about religious freedom;



- advise other organizations (Conferences, Unions, etc.) of concerns and local developments;
- participate in world congresses; and
- in every way possible make religious liberty issues known in the church and local community.

### **Principles for the Leader's work include:**

- Defending the freedom to have, or not to have, a personal religious belief; to maintain, to adopt, or to change one's religion or personal belief.
- Guarding the freedom to practice one's religious beliefs in private, in public, or in association with others, whether in worship, in practice, in teaching, or in evangelistic dissemination.
- Building public opinion and gaining public support for religious liberty, the fundamental right which undergirds all human rights.
- Encouraging the concept of separation of church and state, and defending the church's ability to act without state interference.
- Upholding the principle of the free exercise of religion and opposing any private or government encroachment that tends to inhibit this principle.
- Taking action to eliminate religious discrimination in both public and private employment.
- Supporting direct action campaigns, such as letter-writing to address religious liberty concerns.
- Educating public and government representatives through all appropriate means, including publications and media presentations, promoting awareness of the threats to principles of religious liberty.
- Supporting and aiding in the legal defense of religious rights and privileges.
- Engaging in research and education promoting religious freedom.

Most of all, we wish to be known as bridge-builders, using quiet diplomacy to ensure that freedom of conscience is upheld.

Sounds like a daunting task! But we are simply called to witness, and the extent of involvement is up to the individual. In the end, we know that religious liberty will be removed. Until then, we have the exciting opportunity to speak for God, revealing Him to be intimately concerned with the rights of every one of His intelligent beings. In this way, we may be able to influence many who perhaps would not otherwise have the chance to hear the truth about the God we worship and admire.

## **THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

1. Jesus' assurance that "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NIV) is the clearest demonstration of the kind of God we love and trust. The One who came to this earth to win back our confidence in the God of freedom and choice never practiced force or coercion. Remembering that only by love is love awakened and that "Perfect

love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment” (1 John 3:18, NIV), then we honor and serve this God of freedom who wishes only freely given love and admiration. “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36, NIV).

2. God is both Creator and Redeemer. His power and authority is supreme, yet He wishes an openness of response. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, and He has the highest place in the life of the Christian (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:5, 6; Matthew 22:37; 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; Revelation 19:16).
3. Proper government is ordained by God to maintain law, order, justice and peace. In this way, base human nature is controlled through the overriding government of God so that the gospel may be spread (Romans 13:1-4, etc.).

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***Religious liberty is defined as the right of the individual to determine his/her own relationship to any religious tenet, principle, or requirement and the right to hold and practice that belief freely.***

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4. As Christians, we realize our responsibilities both to earthly and heavenly governments (Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13; Luke 10:20; John 17:14-16; 18:36; Romans 13:7). Recognizing our privileges and obligations, we are loyal to each proper sphere of government. Insofar as such earthly government requirements do not conflict with the heavenly, Christians will obey human authorities and powers (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Ecclesiastes 8:2). Where the requirements of earthly authorities conflict with the law of God, we are to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29; Matthew 6:33; Daniel 3:17, 18; 6). “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21, NIV).
5. Christians are to pray for those who govern them, for they too are in need of God’s salvation (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Scripture nowhere legitimizes an “armed struggle.”
6. The rights of conscience and religious liberty are inherent in every person, created and given by God (Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 8:4-9). Religious liberty is defined as the right of the individual to determine his/her own relationship to any religious tenet, principle, or requirement and the right to hold and practice that belief freely. Neither the church nor the state shall by decree or otherwise, seek to subjugate the conscience of

the individual or force him/her to believe or practice anything contrary to his/her own will or conscience (John 14:2-5, 12, 13; Colossians 2:16).

7. The principles of religious liberty and the rights of fellow humans must be respected and preserved, and an effort made through peaceful endeavours to obtain the recognition and protection of such rights and freedoms and to rescue from oppression, slavery, and captivity, those who do not enjoy such rights and freedoms (Matthew 7:12; 22:39; Leviticus 25:17; Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 10:38; Ecclesiastes 4:1; 5:8).

## **THE GLOBAL SCOPE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

### **1. A World-wide Work**

Religious liberty knows no borders. Since it is based on a fundamental God-given right, it is not for nations or governments to grant or to remove. Sadly, however, many nations attempt to limit the freedom of religion and its free exercise. As a result, multiplied millions around the world live in conditions that violate freedom of belief and of conscience to greater or lesser degree.

The church has a great mission in this area. If there is no religious freedom at all, as is the case in a few countries, then even the possibility of spreading the gospel is denied, at least officially. In addition, the church has a duty to support and defend those whose religious freedoms are violated, wherever such violations may occur.

Such reasons explain the global scope of the church in religious liberty, and the need for greater involvement. Like Joseph and Daniel, Adventist leaders seek to influence national and international statesmen for good so that freedom of conscience worship may be upheld.

### **2. International Treaties, Declarations, and Obligations**

Many international documents support and defend the principles of religious freedom as a basic human right. These can be very helpful in emphasizing the vital importance of freedom of religion and to highlight violations of such freedoms. Most of the 191 countries of the United Nations, for example, are signatories to such declarations, and such guarantees of religious freedom can be used to effect in cases where violations of such freedoms occur. It is important to know what a specific country has agreed to regarding the freedoms for which they have declared and promised their support, and to what extent these are guaranteed in national law.

Supreme among such declarations is the 1948 United Nations' "Universal Declaration on Human Rights," which in Article 18 guarantees freedom of religion to a wide extent, including the right to change one's religion. Subsequent documents include the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (including the optional protocol). A wide range of UN Conventions also include some provisions for religious liberty, while the most important recent document is the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief (see Appendix III).

**Regional human-rights documents that apply to religious liberty include:**

1. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950).
2. American Convention on Human Rights (1969).
3. Helsinki Final Act (1975).
4. African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981).
5. Concluding Document on the Vienna Meeting of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1986).
6. Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension (1990).

As a consequence of these instruments, some of which are legally binding on states, religious liberty violations can be protested. Such actions may be taken through the United Nations. Commission on Human Rights, including the special *rapporteur* on Religious Freedom or Belief, the European Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, and the African Commission on Human Rights.

For this reason, the church maintains representation at the United Nations, and regularly informs the Commission on Human Rights of matters of religious liberty concern, highlighting cases around the world that require attention.



# WHY WORK AT THE UNITED NATIONS?

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**JONATHAN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR**

U.N. LIAISON, GC PARL

The United Nations is the International Forum to which all Nation States are invited. It provides an arena for information, debate, conflict resolution, international treaties, resource development, social action programs, education improvement, health issues, humanitarian aid coordination, disarmament negotiations—in short, all areas of human life and society.

Like any human institution, the UN is far from perfect. However, it is the primary meeting point between countries, and serves as a useful function in diplomacy, negotiation, and recommendation. Its development of international conventions and treaties provides a basic framework for many fundamental rights and principles, especially in such areas as religious freedom and human rights, resolution of violence and war, nuclear disarmament, chemical and biological weapons, women's rights, ecology, sustainable development, humanitarian aid and development, etc.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a history of representation at national and international organizations. Church representatives spoke before the U.S. Congress in the 1890s and at the League of Nations in the 1930s. Adventists believe that they should be part of civil society and share their beliefs and programs with a wider community. In addition, Adventists fully support programs that seek to alleviate poverty, suffering, disease, violence, and other problems, while also seeking to inform the UN and other organizations of the beliefs and programs of the Church.

The best answer to the question “Why Work at the UN?” is that it provides us with a unique opportunity to speak with high-level diplomats and leaders, to share our message and mission, and to have a voice in decisions that affect the whole world. It would be a tragedy to fail to make use of this opportunity to work together with a wide range of individuals and organizations to make a real difference to so many people. If we truly believe that our program and message are essential, then we cannot ignore the possibilities provided by access and participation at the UN and other global organizations. We are not called to work for one group or people alone, but to work for all people. The UN provides a wonderful way to fulfill this commission.

What will the future bring? We know that the solutions to this world's problems are a huge challenge, and that without divine aid, they will be impossible to solve. But that is no reason not to do our part and to maintain our work, occupying till He comes. So many can be helped through our liaison program at the UN, and we count it a privilege to represent the Church and the God that we love at such an important assembly.



# INTER-CHURCH/FAITH RELATIONS

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**BERT B. BEACH, DIRECTOR**

INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS, GC PARL

Seventh-day Adventists firmly believe that this Church was organized in 1863 in response to God's call. Adventism is a prophetic movement with her specific task the proclamation of the "eternal Gospel" in preparation for the Second Coming. As a result, there is an emphasis on calling God's children out of Babylonian error and disunity into a global Advent family of truth, unity, love, and evangelistic witness.

While since the days of the Millerite movement there have been at times embittered relations with other denominations, it must not be overlooked that there are many wonderful children of God in other denominations. In fact, Adventists recognize all agencies that lift up Christ as part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world. This has been recognized by the *General Conference Working Policy* for over three quarters of a century (since 1926).

Yes, God wants His people to be "separate from the world," and be living examples of holiness, but this is not in order to neglect or even ignore other churches, but so that "the world may be enlightened" (2T 689) and many precious souls be saved.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that final events will largely take place in the two arenas of church-state and inter-church relations. That is one reason why we have a PARL department to provide information, expertise and advocacy in these areas. You cannot be well-informed if you live in isolation.

During the past half century or so, the ecumenical movement has been a significant force to be reckoned with. As a result, interchurch relations tend to be less hostile and more benign, irenic, and even often cooperative.

While Adventists express some critical views regarding the ecumenical movement and its main organizational manifestations (such as the World or National Councils of Churches), we must readily acknowledge that there have been some positive aims and results. Unity—for which Christ Himself prayed—is a desirable goal. Adventists cannot be seen as opposed to unity in truth, holiness, love, and witness. Religious liberty, kinder interchurch relations, more dialog and less diatribe, removal of unfounded prejudices and untrue characterizations are all laudable goals and achievements.

Complete isolation and insolation are recognized marks of a sect. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not a sect—it is indeed a church with worldwide dimensions, operating over 6,000 schools and hundreds of medical institutions. Others need to be aware of these

significant dimensions of Adventism, including ADRA and the important work promoting religious liberty for everyone in cooperation with religious leaders and representatives from various religions.

Having said this, one may ask why is the SDA Church not a member of the organized ecumenical movement (such as the WCC)? Without going into a lengthy discussion, here are some succinct reasons:

1. The eschatological picture of God's church is not one of a mega church gathering all humankind together, but of a "remnant." The ecumenical movement largely downplays or ignores heresy (except "disunity" and racism) and apostasy.
2. Softness and relativization of belief. We are told (with some truth) that all denominational formulations of truth are partial, relative, and inadequate. What is advocated is reconciled diversity, but how do you reconcile, for example, Sabbath and Sunday or believers and infant baptism?
3. For many ecumenists the Bible is not normative and authoritative in itself. Inspiration lies not so much in the Biblical text, but in experience. Apocalyptic prophecy is given practically no time of the end role.
4. There is a categorical opposition to proselytism. While there are various definitions of proselytism (some of them negative and with which we would agree), condemnation in ecumenical ranks of proselytism comes very close to opposition to any evangelism among. Those who are even only formal members of a church. Salvation is often seen more as saving society from oppressive regimes, from hunger, etc., rather than saving individuals from sin and for eternity.

In view of the importance of inter-church/fair relations, the General Conference, a quarter of a century ago (1980), set up a Council on Inter-Church Relations, in order to give some overall guidance to relations with other religious bodies.

In recent decades there have been theological and other conversations with theologians and leaders of other denominations: Lutherans, Presbyterians, Evangelicals, Salvation Army and others. These discussions have been helpful in removing false stereotypes, discovering where there is agreement and where there are small or substantial differences. Those discussions have also sharpened our theological tools and increased understanding of our own faith and beliefs.

In regards to various councils of churches, experience has taught that the best relationship for Adventists is generally that of observer or consultant status. This helps the church keep informed and understand trends and developments. It helps to know Christian thinkers and leaders. It also provides the Adventist Church the opportunity to exert a presence and make the church's viewpoint known. Membership is not really advisable. These ecumenical bodies are not neutral! They often have specific goals and play theological and sociopolitical advocacy roles with which we may strongly disagree.

It is generally good for Adventist ministers to join ministerial associations, fraternal, some local church organizations, Bible study groups, specific groups to meet community needs. We must not be seen as simply opting out of responsibility for the local community.

There is no reason for Adventist ministers or lay leaders to have an inferiority complex. It is a wonderful privilege to be an Adventist and know that the theological or organizational foundations of the Church are sure and secure.

In view of our eschatological and prophetic views regarding the papacy, it is important to be especially careful regarding our relationship to Roman Catholics. Ellen G. White has wise counsel to give in this regard. There are a number of statements. Here are a couple: “We should not go out of our way to make hard thrusts at the Catholics” (CW 63). “I feel hurt when I see that so many decided thrusts are made against Catholics. Preach the truth, but restrain the words which show a harsh spirit” (CW 64). “We should not, upon entering a place, build up unnecessary barriers between us and other denominations, especially the Catholics, so that they shall think we are their avowed enemies.” “We should avoid making a raid upon them” (EV 574). There is an interesting statement, written long before Vatican II and the resulting changes in Catholic practice: “...We may have less to say in some lines, in regards to the Roman power and Papacy” (CW 65).

PARL directors should be bridge builders. It is much easier and quicker to blow up ecclesiastical bridges and act as irresponsible “Christian commandos.” It requires much wisdom and time to reach and influence other ministers, and men and women that are leaders in society. “Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding... As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock” (6T 78). She calls them shepherds of the flock. Those involved in religious liberty work and inter-church relations should remember this.

In interchurch relations, we need to follow the Petrine three-fold principle: While always being ready to give a reason for the Advent message of hope, we should always do it with 1) humility, 2) respect, 3) with the good conscience that honesty provides (see 1 Peter 3:15, 16).

## **HOW SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS VIEW ROMAN CATHOLICISM**

Seventh-day Adventists regard all men and women as equal in the sight of God. We reject bigotry against any person, regardless of race, nationality, or religious creed. Further, we gladly acknowledge that sincere Christians may be found in other denominations, including Roman Catholicism, and we work in concert with all agencies and bodies that seek to relieve human suffering and to uplift Christ before the world.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to take a positive approach to other faiths. Our primary task is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of Christ’s soon return, not to point out flaws in other denominations.

The beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists are rooted in the biblical apostolic teachings and thus share many essential tenets of Christianity in common with the followers of



other Christian churches. However, we have a specific identity as a movement. Our compelling message for Christians and non-Christians alike is to communicate hope by focusing on the quality of life that is complete in Christ.

As Adventists relate to Roman Catholicism in particular, both the past and the future enter into our thinking. We cannot erase or ignore the historical record of serious intolerance and even persecution on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic system of church governance, based on extra-biblical teachings such as papal primacy, resulted in severe abuses of religious freedom as the church was allied with the state.

Seventh-day Adventists are convinced of the validity of our prophetic views, according to which humanity now lives close to the end of time. Adventists believe, on the basis of biblical predictions, that just prior to the second coming of Christ this earth will experience a period of unprecedented turmoil, with the seventh-day Sabbath as a focal point. In that context, we expect that world religions—including the major Christian bodies as key players—will align themselves with the forces in opposition to God and to the Sabbath. Once again the union of church and state will result in widespread religious oppression.

To blame past violations of Christian principles on one specific denomination is not an accurate representation of either history or the concerns of Bible prophecy. We recognize that at times Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists, have manifested prejudice and even bigotry. If, in expounding on what the Bible teaches, Seventh-day Adventists fail to express love to those addressed, we do not exhibit authentic Christianity.

Adventists seek to be fair in dealing with others. Thus, while we remain aware of the historical record and continue to hold our views regarding end-time events, we recognize some positive changes in recent Catholicism, and stress the conviction that many Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.

*This statement was recorded on April 15, 1997, by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg.*



# REPRESENTATION AT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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**JAMES STANDISH, DIRECTOR**

U.S. CONGRESS, GC PARL

The Adventist Church has long viewed representation to the United States government as a crucial component of our religious liberty work. There are five primary reasons for this:

1. Adventists have a large number of members and key institutions, including our world headquarters, located in the U.S., and therefore the policies of the U.S. have a very direct impact on our world church.
2. The U.S. provides one of the oldest examples of religious freedom, and this example is widely considered the most influential model of religious freedom in the world today. Hence, the way religious freedom is handled in the U.S. influences the rest of the world.
3. The U.S. is the world's sole superpower. The way in which the U.S. uses its power can have a profound impact on freedom of conscience around the world.
4. Adventists have long understood Bible prophecy to point to the U.S. playing the central role in end-time events.
5. Finally, Adventists were specifically instructed by Ellen White to “press the front in Washington...” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, February 16, 1905).

Adventist representation to the U.S. Government can be divided into domestic issues and international issues, with each influencing the other. Our domestic work focuses primarily on the two religion clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which read: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

The ban on the establishment of religion is designed to ensure that church and state do not become excessively entangled in the business of the other. While the application of this principle can at times become complex, there are many very clear issues that present themselves in American political life. These include efforts to enforce religious laws, such as Sunday laws, and efforts to use public institutions as proxies for religious denominations.

The second prong of religious freedom is even more important, for it focuses on the individual right to free religious practice. Adventists have had a profound impact on the way this right is viewed through involvement in two seminal Supreme Court cases. While Adventists recognize that there must be some limits to religious freedom—a zealot cannot murder a heretic, even if he believes he is compelled by his faith to do so—we believe these limits must apply only to clear cases in which religious practices would harm the rights of others to their physical integrity, property, or similar clear-cut abuses.

**Our work on international religious liberty issues focuses on four U.S. institutions;**

1. The U.S. Congress;
2. The U.S. executive branch—including the White House and the State Department;
3. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; and
4. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (which is an agency of the U.S. Government).

Each of these institutions has a profound impact on freedom of faith around the world. For example, the U.S. Congress sometimes chooses to place economic pressure on regimes that violate religious freedom. The State Department also has means of bringing diplomatic pressure to bear on brutal regimes. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom provides a forum and vehicle for keeping religious freedom at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy, and the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe maintains as one of its core missions the advancement of religious freedom in the nations of Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The U.S. influence on religious freedom around the globe can be both negative and positive. For example, sometimes the U.S. arms and assists brutal regimes that persecute on the basis of religion (e.g., the U.S. recently discussed training the police force of Turkmenistan, one of the world's worst violators of religious freedom). The Adventist Church works against the adoption of negative policies and if negative policies are adopted, we work to have them overturned.

Our work in Washington often involves us in issue-based coalitions. These coalitions form around a particular legislative proposal or issue. For example, we currently co-chair a coalition that is working to ensure that employers respect the rights of people of faith, including Sabbath-keepers. This coalition includes 44 organizations, including a broad array of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh entities. The coalitions we work with are not ecumenical in nature; rather, they are issue-focused. By working with other groups who have a similar view on a particular proposal, we greatly strengthen the likelihood that positive change will occur. Indeed, we are following the model provided to us by early Adventists who worked with commercial interests to defeat a proposed national Sunday law in the 1880s.

In conclusion, our work with the United States Government is key, as we have many members and institutions in the U.S. The U.S. example reverberates around the world, and the power the U.S. wields can do much to advance or inhibit religious freedom. Ellen White extolled Adventists to “press the front in Washington.” Today we continue to follow this instruction by upholding the most precious right of all, liberty of conscience, in America’s capital city.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

If we wait until we need friends in government, it will be too late to make them. The time to build bridges with government officials is not when a crisis hits, but rather when things are progressing smoothly.

There are many ways to build bridges with government officials. One of the best ways is to invite them to visit our institutions or inspect our programs. A good example of this is the “Look Who’s Coming to Read” program run by Leisa Standish. Each year she invites a variety of government officials to come and read to her kindergarten class. A U.S. Congressman came to read, the state representative comes every year, a number of federal and state judges came to read over the years, as did the local councilman, and fire chief, and the police chief. All of these people held prominent positions in government, and all were very impressed by the positive Christian learning environment provided by Seventh-day Adventists. Similarly, our hospitals, churches, Pathfinder clubs, and community service operations provide many opportunities to invite government officials to become acquainted with who we are and the positive work we engage in.

Getting to know our representatives can be as simple as visiting their offices, showing up at public events, and becoming involved in public activities. Sometimes providing support for health, education, or public service initiatives supported by an elected representative provides the chance to get to know that representative and his/her team and build confidence. This confidence can be very helpful when religious liberty issues come up.

In some cases, holding a periodic dinner to honor government officials who have provided important leadership on health, education, religious liberty, etc., will work to solidify a relationship. When done well, it also helps to increase the profile of the church among those in civil leadership.

Sometimes, lesser-known legislators, junior officials, and the staff members of elected representatives are considered too insignificant to cultivate relationships with. This is a mistake. Often staff members have enormous influence over those with whom they work. Officials often serve in a junior capacity prior to assuming senior leadership positions, and even obscure legislators can make a profound impact given the right circumstances and a will to do so. The earlier in the career we build relationships with elected representatives, the longer those relationships will be beneficial to us. In conclusion, it is important to remember that the way the community reacts to us has much to do with how we treat our community. It is incumbent on Adventists to get involved in our communities in a practical and positive way and to live exemplary lives. Being real Christians is the best way in which to build bridges.

## GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS

In societies that function on democratic principles, the rights that come along with that form of government are accompanied by responsibilities. These responsibilities include using our voice to promote religious liberty. Ellen White stated, “We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 714).

One of the most effective ways to stand tall for liberty of conscience in a democracy is to organize members to assist in promoting religious liberty proposals. The organization of members is typically referred to as “grassroots mobilization.” There are four primary ways to effectively use grassroots support (the appropriateness of these methods will vary depending on social and political culture):

1. Contacting elected representatives;
2. Visiting elected representatives;
3. Organizing lobby days; and
4. Staging public events.

Adventists have a long history of grassroots mobilization when religious liberty is threatened. Adventists members ran an extremely successful grassroots campaign to defeat Sunday law proposals in the U.S. in the 1880s, presenting petitions with thousands of names opposing Sunday laws to their elected representatives. Today, several hundred letters from constituents on a given proposal can make a powerful impression on an official, as all elected officials are dependent on the goodwill of their constituents to remain in power.

Constituent visits to the offices of elected officials to advocate specific religious liberty proposals can also be a powerful way for church members to advance religious freedom. It is important that office visits are carefully structured. Church members must prepare in advance, have material supporting their views with them, give an organized presentation, and follow up with the office after the visit. Only those familiar with the issue at hand should attend, and generally it is preferable if only one issue be raised per visit.

In order to operate a grassroots campaign, the Church must have a way to communicate effectively and nimbly with its members, provide them with material, and explain ideal ways to communicate with their representatives. An example of this kind of support is the [ola.adventist.org website], in which sample letters to U.S. representatives are provided, and where members are encouraged to sign up for religious liberty e-mail alerts. E-mail can be a powerful tool to communicate with your grassroots members when you need letters, calls, or visits on a particular issue in a relatively short period of time. Another important way to involve church members in our religious liberty work is to run training sessions for them to instruct them in the appropriate decorum for interacting with elected officials.

U.S. organizations frequently organize “lobby days” during which hundreds of their members come from across the U.S. to Washington to visit their representatives and/or staff members of elected officials. Lobby days can be an effective way to communicate that we are a nation-wide organization mobilized for liberty of conscience. The effectiveness of this approach, however, will vary depending on the cultural norms of the society.

Finally, in some cases it may be beneficial to hold public events/rallies to bring an issue to the attention of legislators and society at large. This tool was effective in the abolition of slavery and later in the civil rights struggle. We must consider very carefully whether such a rally is beneficial to our cause in a particular situation, and if so, we must plan it meticulously to ensure that it is a positive, trouble-free event.

By building the capacity to operate effective grassroots campaigns, we greatly amplify the voice of the church on crucial issues, and set the stage for becoming the foremost advocates of liberty of conscience.



# THE CHRISTIAN AND GOVERNMENT

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Since the very beginnings of the church, Seventh-day Adventists have been enthusiastic proponents of civil and religious liberty. This reflects our concern for an openness of mind to the truth we would wish to present, as well as to the obvious challenges for a Sabbath-keeping church in what is very much a Sunday-keeping society.

While our first and highest duty is to our God whom we trust and honor, the Bible also instructs Christians to be subject to “the powers that be” (Romans 13:1), that is, the civil government. This dual relationship of loyalty to both God and country was spoken of by Jesus. When His enemies tried to trap Him by asking a difficult question about the Roman government and whether Jews ought to pay taxes, Jesus gave a very wise response. This answer is of great help today in determining what we should do.

Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21, NIV). He showed us that we have a duty to God and to His church, and also a duty to the ruler and the government. Both are important. However, when the civil powers seek to make and enforce laws that control religious beliefs, we should, like Peter and John, affirm that we must obey God rather than man.

## THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

We should remember that Jesus lived at the time of Roman occupation and oppression. Many Jewish zealots in the time of Christ became involved in political movements to overthrow the government, but Jesus refused to sanction such activities. He did not become involved in political movements. He respected Roman centurions and officers (Luke 7:1-10), told His followers to obey military orders (Matthew 5:41), and instructed them to love and pray for their enemies even while suffering at their hands (Matthew 5:44).

Jesus did not seek to champion His own rights. Even though He is God, Jesus did not stand on ceremony or try to achieve some legal recognition of His supremacy. Rather, He took the role of the suffering servant. “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8, NIV).

In the same way Christians should not expect fairness, justice, and respect from all the legislative and executive authorities. Jesus Himself warned, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why

the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...” (John 15:18-20, NIV).

Jesus’ own example of non-resistance and patient suffering when arrested and tried teaches Christians how to react under similar situations. Jesus warned that as we near the end of time, Christians can expect persecution, imprisonment, and even death. However, the New Testament consistently teaches an obligation of loyalty and respect to earthly governments, and our duty to rightly witness for God to them, as did Paul to Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, etc.

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CIVIL OBEDIENCE**

Paul said, “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” (Romans 13:1, 2, NIV).

Remember that the one writing these words had himself suffered many injustices and finally death at the hands of the Roman authorities. However, Paul clearly states that our responsibility as Christians is to obey and follow the requirements of civil government. Recognizing that such authorities are given their powers by God, Christians will give their assent to government decrees and follow them so long as they do not conflict with God’s will. “Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, the respect; if honor, then honor” (Romans 13:7, NIV).

So the New Testament urges Christians to cooperate with government and to acknowledge its authority. This means they will pay taxes and customs, be loyal to the leaders of the country, and act as good citizens.

There is no place here for revolutionaries or political activists. Ellen White wrote, “The people of God will recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment and will teach obedience to it as a sacred duty within its legitimate sphere” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, p. 402).

## **GOD CREATED GOVERNMENT**

In stating that “the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1), Paul did not mean that a specific type government is ordained of God and that other forms are not. Nor did he mean that existing personnel in any government are so appointed by God, or that a government is acting in line with divine principles. That may or may not be so. Rather, it is the idea of human government itself—the appointment of civil government with authority and power to act in the affairs of man, which is given or delegated by God. God gave government for the preservation of law and order, for the protection of the community. As Paul also makes clear, “Rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you” (Romans 13:3, NIV).

Governments are necessary. Without the preservation of law and order, there would be chaos. Doing what is right is in the best interests of all people of earth, whether they agree with that principle or not. No earthly government is perfect, nor indeed could it be in a world



that is itself in rebellion against God, its Maker. However, order is the first law of heaven, and thus it is delegated to civil governments to enforce law and maintain order. To them, the Christian is obliged to be a faithful subject, a proper taxpayer, and an orderly citizen.

Any attempt on the part of a Christian or a church community to act outside of duly-constituted laws may bring the gospel of Christ into disrepute. While the Christian cannot abide by laws that restrict freedom of conscience and religion, the Christian cannot be “above the law.” Even those laws that seem to be petty and trivial should not be publicly flouted, for this too can lead to misunderstandings as to the nature of the church and also to a questioning of the higher laws of the God we worship. No course of action should lead to deception or evasion of the authorities. Our God is able to overrule when He deems it necessary without our (often misplaced) stratagems. Peter’s instruction was, “Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Peter 1:27).

## **THE CHRISTIAN, REVOLUTION, AND EVIL GOVERNMENT**

This means that even when oppressive governments may gain power, or at times when political corruption is present and wicked powers have assumed control, it is not for Christians to become involved in political movements to overthrow the government. It is God alone who controls and allows the rise and fall of nations. To each individual or government, God gives the authority or opportunity to rule. He even allows wicked men to have power at times. But it is not our prerogative to work for their removal. We are not to be the instruments of vengeance, for we do not see as God does. This is why He says, “It is mine to avenge: I will repay.” For the Christian, the human (and often violent) response must be replaced by the response of Christ: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19, 21, NIV).

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*God alone is supreme and responsible for matters of the spiritual realm. In this intimate matter of each individual’s relationship to God, the power of the state has no place.*

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By following the God he knew so well, Daniel was able to represent the right spirit even in the heart of Babylon. As a result, King Nebuchadnezzar testified that “the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men” (Daniel 4:17, NIV).

Ellen White wrote: "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man....But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. The complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth" (*Education*, pp. 173, 178).

That is not to say that Christians should not speak out against abuses of power, corruption, and other wrongdoing in government. However this must not be seen as political, but simply maintaining gospel principles and the law of God.

## **GOD'S LIMITATION OF HUMAN POWER**

Although God has granted civil government certain authority, He has not allowed it unlimited power. That would be to make earthly government equal to the government of God. God would never concede such authority since it would place God's work on earth under the control of human government without reference to its attitude and relationship to Himself.

The Great Controversy is very much over God's use of power. Through His words and actions, God has revealed Himself to be the trustworthy and true Father who wishes the best for all His created children. For God to allow arbitrary, tyrannical, and cruel governments to continue to exercise power would clearly be completely contrary to His divine will and His desire to win this sinful world of rebels back to love and trust in Him.

Consequently, human government is limited to jurisdiction and power in the sphere of civil relations, to dealing with questions that govern the relation of people to each other. It is only "the things that are Caesar's" that we are told by Jesus to render to Caesar.

There is a sphere however, the personal relation of men and women to their Maker, Redeemer, and Friend, into which civil government has no right whatsoever to intrude. The individual rights of conscience, the moral obligations of mankind to God, do not belong to the realm of human authorities. God alone is supreme and responsible for matters of the spiritual realm. In this intimate matter of each individual's relationship to God, the power of the state has no place.

## **NO NATION IS SPECIALLY FAVORED**

It is dangerous for governments or earthly rulers to think that their country is specially blessed by God. Though God chose ancient Israel as His covenant people as a way of representing Himself to the world, their rejection of Jesus when He came to earth annulled that special relationship. God's favor rests on those who accept the message that Jesus came to bring: salvation only through Christ. Salvation was and always has been an individual matter, and since the coming of Christ, no nation, race, or people can claim a special relationship with God except as individuals.

Peter makes it clear that the Christian church is the “chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). No nation can therefore claim God’s special favor or believe that national blessings will naturally follow righteousness. We need to beware of such religio-political movements that would try to introduce religious legislation as part of a divine mandate for a country. “Righteousness exalteth a nation,” but not by legislation or compulsion. Inasmuch as God never forces obedience to Him, the state has no place in demanding or enforcing a particular response to God. Love cannot be commanded.

## **CHURCH AND STATE ARE SEPARATE**

Christ clearly recognized and taught this dividing line that separates the authority of civil government from the sphere of spiritual relations. “Caesar’s power” may operate in certain areas, but of even greater importance are “the things that are God’s.” The Christian must always distinguish between these two responsibilities. Sometimes the enemy of truth tries to blur the separation and would have human authorities intrude into the spiritual realm.

Down through history, governments have attempted to legislate and control in matters of religion and conscience. Sadly, church and state have not always remained separate. However Christ clearly draws a line of separation, and the history of the Christian church reveals the difficulties and persecution that have arisen when church and state have combined. Whenever the laws of man conflict with the law of God, Christians have but one direction: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

## **THE NEED FOR CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION**

“Full religious liberty, in my view, involves some form of separation of church and state and the rejection of established religion, for the state is not competent in spiritual matters and the churches’ basic role is not really in the political arena. One may argue about the modality and extent of separation, but separation is good for both church and state. Unfortunately, in both the spiritual and political realms, some churches have historically tried to play a dominant role in society and public life. It is the duty of government to allow churches (and, of course, synagogues, mosques, and temples) and religions ample opportunity to fulfill their spiritual mission, but not to seek political power and control. Religions should not have hidden political agendas. This would be detrimental to both their integrity and credibility.

“There is little doubt that religious liberty is best exercised within the setting of the secular state. This does not mean the state should be hostile or indifferent to religious bodies, but rather, that it must exhibit what has been called a “benevolent neutrality.” It is self-evident that church and state can never be completely separate. There are areas where responsibilities overlap and where activities of church and state need to meet in a positive way. While each needs to weed its own garden, there are areas of social activity where ongoing, sincere, fruitful cooperation between churches and government agencies

can occur. Basic public morality, peace promotion, education, health, drug abuse, and the care of the handicapped are some key areas that immediately come to mind” (B.B. Beach, *Bright Candle of Courage*, p.14).

## OUR PERSPECTIVE ON SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Religious liberty, the most basic human right, is best protected where separation is maintained between church and state. Legislation and other governmental acts that *unite* church and state are contrary to the best interests of both institutions and are potentially prejudicial to human rights.

There are two aspects of religious liberty: (1) Freedom to believe and hold religious opinions; and (2) Freedom to act in accordance with one’s beliefs. Freedom of opinion, *per se*, is absolute because it has little, if any, social significance and, therefore, true religious liberty requires that the state not interfere with the religious beliefs of its citizens, thus recognizing that there is a closed arena, where the state is incompetent. But freedom to act on those beliefs falls into the social context of conduct and thus, of necessity, there are areas where religious activities and state jurisdiction overlap.

Separation of church and state must, at times, be an invulnerable wall, but on occasion it must be a permeable honeycomb, allowing legitimate cooperation and even government regulation. Church activities often can hardly be separated from rights or enterprises that fall under the regulatory power of government, such as church schools and state education laws, church construction and building codes, church financial operations and laws affecting financial transactions, and church-operated health-care institutions and health regulations.

Separation of church and state entails a commitment by the state to stay disengaged from religious affiliation. Prior to the American and French Revolutions, it was generally *assumed* that there could be no national political stability or unity without the citizenry sharing, or at least *pro forma* professing, a common and officially established religion. While rejecting this false assumption, separation of church and state should not mean hostility of the state toward religion, nor state support of secularism aimed at rejection of religion. Rather, it means benevolent neutrality. Government is not to treat certain religions as second- or third-class religions and their adherents as stepchildren. All citizens, even the nonreligious, are to be recognized as equal members of the political family. The state is to be an impartial father to all its children.

Separation of church and state does not mean the privatization (in the secrecy of the home) of religion, nor the marginalization of religion. There are countless ways of public manifestation of religion that puts religious faith at the center of a people’s life, without official government recognition or sponsorship.

Separation of church and state means not so much *distance* between government and church, as *differentiation* regarding each’s function. The churches should not exercise powers of governance, nor should the state be involved in supporting varying forms of “pious civil religion.” True religion does not need the help of government. Such help

weakens religion, especially in the long run. Indeed, differentiation and separation mean that churches are not to be part of the structure that exercises political power, and the state is not to exert religious authority or sway.

Separation of church and state means that tax money raised from all citizens should not be used to subsidize the inculcation of religious faith. The union of church and state involves the endorsement by the state of one or more religions, and *ipso facto* the disapproval of other religious options, or at least their treatment as “outsiders,” lacking full legitimacy.

Separation of church and state does not mean support of religious indifference. Some opponents of separation of church and state fear a mildew of religious unconcern. Of course, authentic religious liberty upholds the right of every person to reject any or all religion. However, from a Christian perspective, the cardinal purpose of separation of church and state is not to promote religious apathy or to do away with religion, but to represent the most secure platform on which one may stand in individual and collective searches for religious faith, identity, and belonging.

The state exists essentially to promote the social and economic welfare of its citizen, not their salvation as such, but it should provide the framework in which they can freely endeavor to reach salvation. As John Locke said, “The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force: but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind.” The state should not “preach.” This function belongs to those who have “come out” and formed a separate spiritual “kingdom.” Therefore, the state must be detached and impartial in questions of religious teaching and preaching. The New Testament shows distinctly the different purposes of Caesar’s temporal kingdom and Christ’s spiritual kingdom.

The concept of separate functions and spheres of influence is a distinctly New Testament contribution, which has been recognized increasingly in political society since the Enlightenment, and especially in the post-World War II period of growing pluralism.

Separation of church and state envisions a pluralistic society, with a free church in a free state. When this delicate balance is upheld, men can loyally render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and render freely and lovingly unto God the things that belong to God. (Bert B. Beach, Director of Inter-faith Relations, GC PARL)



# THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

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## SERVING THE COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY

**T**he Bible gives us several examples of people who served their country and their king in high positions of responsibility, and whom God was able to use because of their faithfulness. The New Testament principle that Christians follow is that of faithful service at all times, whether as a public servant, employee, or community leader. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters here below with reverence and trembling, with singleness of heart as to Christ himself; instead of merely working when their eye is on you, like those who court human favor, do God’s will from the heart like servants of Christ, by rendering service with goodwill as to the Lord and Master, not to men” (Ephesians 6:5-7, Moffatt).

The parable of the talents also endorses the virtue of faithfulness in service, in the words of final commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21, NIV).

It is clear that the Christian’s motivation for service and work of any kind must be far more than that of monetary reward or social prestige. By faithfulness in work, Christians reveal the kind of God they believe in. And in a clear demonstration of the pointlessness of legislating religion, worship, or even good work and behavior, Jesus made the following invitation to a personal relationship, which is the true motivator for the Christian: “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends...” (John 15:15, NIV).

As a result of knowing God as a trustworthy and saving Friend, the Christian will remember that “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,” and “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23, NIV).

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT/COMMUNITY SERVICE

At times, Seventh-day Adventists may be asked to help in local affairs by serving on councils or committees. This can provide an opportunity to serve our local area, our country, or our government by giving wise counsel to help make good laws for the community.

If we are asked to serve in such a way, we should always make it clear that we cannot attend meetings or functions on the Sabbath, as this is God’s sacred day; but on other days

we would be ready to help as much as we can, insofar as this service does not conflict with our religious principles and church responsibilities.

## **OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC SERVICE**

Jesus contrasted the attitude of earthly rulers with the attitude of selfless service that should characterize His followers when He said, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:25, 26, NIV).

Great opportunities exist for Christians who are employed by the government in positions of leadership or public service to use their gifts and talents for the good of the community and the nation. Sometimes their faithfulness and good character are rewarded with greater responsibilities, and this places them in positions of influence and importance. People in such positions must continue to work for the good of all and “do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31), rather than for selfish purposes or their own promotion and interests.

The biblical examples of God’s people who held prominent positions of power and authority show that they were not personally ambitious. Instead, they were providentially placed in positions of influence by God. They were committed to their work and willing to serve God and the people selflessly. Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah—all fulfilled an important role in God’s plan by their faithful service. Many Seventh-day Adventists around the world today hold similar positions of responsibility.

## **THE WITNESS OF INDIVIDUALS**

When church members are elected to positions of public office and responsibility, the influence of their lives and example is even greater and demands careful attention. By their actions and their lifestyle, they can have a powerful influence for good or evil, and they have opportunities of being an important witness to the truth, just as Daniel and his three friends were in Babylon.

Church members who become members of the government (local, provincial, or national) or who stand as candidates in an election should not be criticized or censured by the church for doing so, unless their attitude or behavior clearly contradicts the teachings and standards of the church, or brings discredit and division. As long as such members uphold the principles and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they should not be prevented from holding membership or office in the church.

## **CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION**

We need to recognize the importance of our example in political and public life and endeavor to do nothing that will discredit the cause of God or compromise the standards of the church. Frequently the church is judged by the witness and lifestyle of its members

who serve in prominent places. Many times they are a positive witness, but sometimes they are an embarrassment and a poor advertisement for the church. Peter urged Christians to maintain good conduct among the Gentiles in order to glorify God (1 Peter 2:12).

## **INFLUENCING THE GOVERNMENT**

The question of just how much a Christian should use his or her position of responsibility to influence legislation or the government of the country is a very difficult one. Generally, a Christian will always work to uphold the standards of morality and principles of government that will preserve peace, justice, law, and order, and the rights of all individuals. Never should individuals use their power or influence to gain favors or advantages just for themselves, their church, or some minority. A Christian politician or public servant should be impartial and work for the good of all the community. However, they should be able to use their influence and example to promote Christian principles of morality.

There may be times of crisis when God's work or the church or individuals are threatened, and through careful representation and diplomacy, dedicated Christians in positions of responsibility can help to avert trouble.

The Bible gives several examples of how God used individuals to influence the monarchs of the day and thus avoid disasters, tragedy, or attacks on God's people. Joseph helped to save Egypt from famine and to provide protection for the children of Israel in Goshen. Through his position of influence, he was able to gain the fertile land of Goshen for the settlement of God's people. No doubt the old prophet Daniel explained the divine predictions of Israel to Cyrus, who then issued the first decree for the return of Jews to Jerusalem and the provision of materials for the restoration.

Later, Ezra and Nehemiah were able to obtain assistance from Artaxerxes for completing the rebuilding program. In the time of Esther, the lives of all God's people were saved by her intervention against Haman's decree of destruction. In similar ways, God's people have often been helped and His work advanced by the influence of dedicated individuals in positions of power. To those Christians who are serving their country or community in positions of responsibility and at times of crisis, we say as did Mordecai to Esther, "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14, NKJV).

## **POLITICS**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains an actively neutral position toward politics. We respect the various political processes that exist in different forms of government, but do not become involved in advising our members in political matters or in supporting any particular political party. Some church members have become involved in politics. This is their own personal decision. However, because of the rivalry and trouble that often exists between political parties, it is better for Christians who wish to stand for positions of responsibility in elections to do so as independents. This means that they are free to act according to their own individual convictions when representing their constituency and are not bound by the positions or directives of political parties.



Adventist ministers, teachers, and others in church employment are, however, prohibited from any involvement in politics.

It is essential that all church employees abstain from any political activity so that the church maintains total impartiality. It is required of all ministers and teachers to give undivided attention to the task of their responsibility to the church and to refrain from any political activity or campaigning for political parties.

Writing to the young minister Timothy, the Apostle Paul gave similar advice regarding the danger of secular distractions when he said, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, in order that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4, NKJV).

## **ELECTIONS AND VOTING**

In democratic societies, elections are the only way in which representatives of the people are chosen to lead and to govern the country. Usually, elections are conducted properly in order to discover the true wish of the people. However, sometimes dishonesty and corruption enter into politics and the process of elections. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not tell its members how to vote, but simply counsels them to do what they believe to be the right thing.

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***Our decision on how we vote or who we support  
is an individual decision. It should be made  
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Our decision on how we vote or who we support is an individual decision. It should be made prayerfully and based on what we believe will be the best for the country for the preservation of freedom and for the continued proclamation of the gospel. We should not be involved in political campaigning, but should keep our opinions private.

In some countries the government says that we can choose whether or not to vote, and in others, voting is compulsory. Usually, it is our responsibility and right as citizens to

express our choice of candidates by casting a vote. However, there may be times when a Christian feels that there are no worthy candidates, or that political issues are so confused that it is better to refrain from voting. At other times, there could be good reasons why we *should* vote; for example, we could vote for a candidate who is interested in temperance or religious liberty and the preservation of human rights. Party politics and voting for a manifesto as a whole must be avoided since there will always be some proposals with which the Christian cannot agree.

## **NO CAMPAIGNING OR POLITICAL AGITATION**

It is very clear that political questions and campaigning for individuals should not be allowed to enter into the church. The church is not to be involved in political controversy but should maintain a neutral position. Never should the pulpit or church meetings be used as a platform for political campaigning.

When a financial controversy about the national currency became a political issue in Ellen White's day, she said: "Would we know how we may best please the Savior? It is not engaging in political speeches, either in or out of the pulpit....I was surprised as I saw men who claim to believe the truth for this time all excited in regard to matters....some ministers were distinguishing themselves by weaving these subjects into their discourses. They were excitably involving themselves, taking sides in regard to these questions that the Lord did not lay upon them the burden to engage in....we are not to take part in this political money strife" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 331, 332, 335).

She also spoke strongly against any form of presentation, official or otherwise, that would imply some kind of political endorsement. "Whatever the opinions you may entertain in regard to casting your vote in political questions, you are not to proclaim it by pen or voice.... My brethren, will you remember that none of you have any burden laid upon you by the Lord to publish your political preferences in our papers, or to speak of them in the congregation, when the people assemble to hear the Word of the Lord....we are not as a people to become mixed up with political questions....keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, pp. 336, 337).

## **VOTING AND SABBATH OBSERVANCE**

Elections are not normally held on Saturday, but if they are, we must remember that voting is not a Sabbath duty. Our obligation to God comes before our obligation to earthly powers. However, arrangements can usually be made to cast votes after sunset or by some other means such as a postal vote or absentee vote, on a day or time before the Sabbath.

Arrangements for participating in elections can usually be made that will accommodate the religious convictions of Seventh-day Adventists. We should appreciate such arrangements and do all that is possible to cooperate with the authorities as responsible and faithful citizens.

## **REFERENDUMS**

Sometimes governments conduct a special vote to discover the will of the people on certain issues, and this is called a referendum. Christians may exercise their right to take part in a referendum, and especially when it gives opportunity to support religious freedom, or temperance, or other moral issues.

## **THE DANGERS OF RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION**

One of the greatest dangers facing Seventh-day Adventists who find themselves in positions of power is the temptation to use their influence to bring about legislation that would impose their religious ideals. If Seventh-day Adventists become a major force in some communities, there is the danger of using this opportunity for their own advantage. However, as previously emphasized, the spiritual realm has not been placed under the authority of civil powers. No earthly power or government has the right to legislate in matters of religion, and never should the church use its influence or its power to bring about legislation or force others to conform to its beliefs or practices. Whenever spiritual leaders have sought to strengthen their position or gain their wishes through civil enforcement, the result has been tragic. No form of religious enforcement by civil powers is acceptable to God; in fact, the final crisis of this world, and the final attack upon God and His people will be brought about by such a union between church and state (Revelation 12:17; 13; 17:12-14).



# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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## THE GOD OF FREEDOM AND THE GOSPEL

Jesus began His ministry with the announcement that He was anointed “to preach the gospel to the poor....to preach deliverance to the captives and...to set at liberty those who are oppressed....” (Luke 4:18, NKJV).

Many people in today’s world are bound by oppression, tyrannized by dictatorial regimes, enslaved by evil habits, and denied the right to freedom of conscience and religion. The Christian message and mission of the church is to bring freedom to such people. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free....Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36, NKJV).

This is the essence of the gospel. True freedom is found in Jesus Christ—freedom from sin, freedom from bondage to the law, and freedom from death (Romans 6:16-20; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:2; Galatians 2:4; 5:1, 13). God is the God of liberty who values nothing higher than the freedom of His created beings.

The right to freedom of conscience is inherent in every person created and bestowed by God (Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 8:4-9). Humanity was created with a free will and the power to choose, either to obey or disobey, believe or disbelieve (Joshua 24:5; Isaiah 1:18-20; John 12:47). God does not force obedience from anyone. Neither the church nor the state should attempt to subjugate the conscience of individuals, or force them to believe or practice anything contrary to their own will or conscience (Romans 14:2-5). What God seeks is the trusting response of love: “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, NIV). This response cannot be achieved by force or coercion, and is entirely contrary to God’s will and purpose.

Ellen White has much to say about the use of force in relation to God: “God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan’s constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself” (*Great Controversy*, p. 591).

“Force is the last resort of every false religion” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 976). “While force may secure outward submission, the result...is a more determined rebellion of heart” (*Education*, p. 288).

“The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 22).

“God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force men to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1112).

If this is true of God, then we must follow His example. Human rights and freedoms must be extended to others, and must be respected and preserved. Christians should make an effort through peaceful means to promote these rights and to rescue others from oppression, slavery and captivity. This is included in the obligation to “Love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:39, NIV) and to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12, NIV).

## HISTORY OF ADVENTIST RELIGIOUS LIBERTY INVOLVEMENT

Adventist interest and activity in the area of religious liberty is evident from the inception of the church, and well prior to its organization in 1863. No doubt the desire to gain Sabbath privileges was one major motivating factor; however, it is in connection with Adventist understanding of prophecy that concepts of religious liberty are first mentioned. The “two horns like a lamb” of Revelation 13:11 were identified by several Adventist writers of the 1850s as referring to civil and religious liberty, and developed into a clear conviction on the necessary separation of church and state.

The need to establish the Adventist position of non-combatancy at the time of the Civil War led the General Conference to send J. N. Andrews to Washington in 1864 to speak to members of the Government, and subsequent to this, the attempts by the National Reform Association to introduce Sunday laws meant further visits to Washington and a great deal of religious liberty promotion. Of particular importance in this role of informing the public was the *Sabbath Sentinel* (commenced 1884) and the *American Sentinel* (commenced 1886).

The introduction of the 1888 Blair Sunday Bill (which sought to enforce Sunday as a legal holiday) led to the founding of a GC “Press Committee” on religious liberty, the success of which led to the founding of the National Religious Liberty Association.

“Adventist views on religious liberty were set forth in 1889 as the “Declaration of Principles” of the National Religious Liberty Association, organized that year in Battle Creek, Michigan. The four resolutions directly related to religious liberty were:

- We believe in supporting the civil government and submitting to its authority.
- We deny the right of any civil government to legislate on religious questions.
- We believe it is the right, and should be the privilege, of every man to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience.
- We also believe it to be our duty to use every lawful and honorable means to prevent religious legislation by the civil government; that we and our fellow citizens may enjoy the inestimable blessings of both civil and religious” (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol.10, p. 1198).

Freedom of religion and other human rights are best protected when included in the legal safeguards of the state. However, we must continue to watch, guard, monitor, and

observe the application of these laws, and to promote religious liberty through judicial and legislative processes.

The work of one of the oldest of church departments has continued to grow in scope and volume, and its later history is recorded in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol.10, pp. 1158-1164.

## **INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS OF RIGHTS**

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is included as one of the important, inherent human rights, and has been so recognized in a number of declarations adopted by the United Nations and ratified by many world governments

1. The UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 18—see Appendix IV.
2. The International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (1976), Article 18.
3. The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance, and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981)—see Appendix.
4. The European Convention on Human Rights:
  - Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.
  - Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests or the protection of public order, health, or morals, or for the protection of rights and freedoms of others.

## **CALENDAR CHANGE AND THE SABBATH**

The seven-day week and succession of days that exists in our calendar has continued unchanged from ancient times. Even the calendar changes in 1582 did not affect the normal succession of days—only the numerical order. However, there have been suggestions and attempts in modern times to change the structure of the calendar in order to have months of equal length. This radical change meant that certain “blank” days would be inserted from time to time, and the seven-day cycle would be broken. Seventh-day Adventists and other religious groups opposed this calendar change, and it has now been dropped.

However, a more recent development involves the printing of calendars that show Monday as the first day of the week, and Sunday as the seventh. This has been produced particularly for commercial organizations that recognize Monday as the start of normal business activity each week, and where common practice observes Sunday as a “no work” day, a day for Sunday worship, rest, and recreation. While this calendar fits current business practice, it is biblically incorrect and very dangerous in that it perpetuates the false notion that Sunday is the true Sabbath and the seventh day of the week. The traditional calendar has at least preserved the correct identification of Sunday as the first day, and Saturday as

the seventh. If, however, the new commercial calendars become widely used and accepted, the identification of Saturday as the seventh day of the week may become lost, and in time, it might be difficult to explain why we observe Saturday as the seventh-day Sabbath.

## **SUNDAY LAWS**

Sunday laws that prohibit Sunday trading, employment, or recreation already exist in varying degrees in many countries and states. Although such laws discriminate against non-Sunday keepers and constitute a type of religious legislation that should never exist where there is true separation of church and state, they do not cause too much inconvenience in most places. So long as Sunday laws do not constitute an enforcement to worship on that day and thereby conflict with our conscience, we should comply with them rather than arouse prejudice and suspicion.

It is not wise for Adventists to violate Sunday laws that only prohibit public work and sport, etc. We can take these opportunities for missionary work and other church activities. Ellen White was shown that “when the people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort. To defy the Sunday laws will but strengthen in their persecution the religious zealots who are seeking to enforce them. Give them no occasion to call you lawbreakers. In no case are God’s people to pay it [Sunday] homage. But I wish them to understand that they are not doing God’s will by braving opposition when He wishes them to avoid it. Thus they create prejudice so bitter that it is impossible for the truth to be proclaimed. Make no demonstration on Sunday in defiance of law” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 232, 235).

However, Bible prophecy predicts that enforcement of Sunday worship will eventually constitute the “mark of the beast” (Revelation 13:15-17), and in loyalty to God we must refuse to obey such human legislation (Acts 5:29).

It is the work and responsibility of the Religious Liberty Department, however, to uphold complete religious freedom and to work with governments for the removal of Sunday laws. Where Sunday legislation or restrictions are brought in, or whenever Constitutions are being reviewed, the church should make appropriate submissions and representation to prevent governments from making laws that would discriminate against non-Sunday-keepers.

## **MILITARY SERVICE**

Seventh-day Adventists have generally followed the injunction of the law of God, “You shall not kill,” and the words of Jesus, “Love your enemies” by refraining from combatant duties in time of war. Jesus also made it clear that His followers, as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, should not fight (John 18:36).

Although there are biblical examples under a theocracy in Old Testament times of God’s people going to battle, the New Testament principle is, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” The example of Jesus was to “turn the other cheek,” and “when they hurled their

insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats” (1 Peter 2:23, NIV). He told Peter to “put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew 26:52, NIV).

For these reasons, Seventh-day Adventists are encouraged not to volunteer for service in the armed forces, and when military service is required by law, to apply for non-combatant status.

As loyal members of our country, we are willing to serve our country in any way that can save life and without breaking God’s commandments. Therefore, Seventh-day Adventists usually perform medical services or engage in civil duties. In times of war, there are wounded and dying to care for, and we can help the government by assisting in hospitals or by joining a medical unit and being willing to save lives.

This opportunity is not always available in the military during peacetime but each individual must decide for himself what position he will take. One must also realize that Sabbath observance and proper diet are not easily obtained in the military services. However, Seventh-day Adventists should remember to keep the Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8-11) by refusing to do ordinary work on that day, and by observing Adventist health principles, remembering that our bodies are the temples of God (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Military training is compulsory in some nations, and usually in such circumstances Seventh-day Adventists are permitted to engage in civil or non-combatant duties. Where military service is not compulsory, Seventh-day Adventists are encouraged not to join the armed forces. Those who choose to enter the armed forces voluntarily as recruits will have to accept the regulations of the forces and not expect special favours or exceptions for their individual benefit.

## **TRADE UNIONS**

With the development of many large industries in Western societies and the employment of large numbers of people in various trades and professions, associations or confederations of employees have developed to protect the rights and working conditions of employees and to press for better wages.

These trade unions have sometimes been beneficial in securing better conditions for workers; however, they also use measures of force and disruption to gain their demands. By joining together in unions, these people are often able to pressure their employers or the government to accept their demands. When the trade union cannot get what it wants, it may call a strike and ask all its members to stop work.

In such confrontations between workers and masters, the Christian cannot take any part or any side. We must not be motivated by selfishness or greed. We must keep out of conflict and remember that we are servants of God. The Bible says, “Do violence to no man” (Luke 3:14) and “the servant of the Lord must not strive” (2 Timothy 2:24). John the Baptist told the Roman soldiers of his day, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you...and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:13, 14, NKJV). Paul exhorted Christian believers, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14, NKJV), and Ellen White warns that “we are not to unite with secret societies or with trade



unions (*Testimonies*, page 84). “Those who claim to be the children of God are in no case to bind up with the labour unions that are formed or that shall be formed. This the Lord forbids” (*Selected Messages*, Book 2, pg. 142).

For these reasons, Seventh-day Adventists are encouraged not to join trade unions. In most countries, even when trade union membership is compulsory, it is possible to gain exemption on the grounds of deep conscientious conviction or religious belief. This usually requires special application for exemption from membership in a trade union and appearance before an industrial tribunal. Seventh-day Adventists will therefore be willing to negotiate directly with employers or employees over working conditions or wages without the confrontational tactics of pressure groups or trade unions.

## LEGAL DISPUTES

Paul says in Romans 12:18, 19, NIV: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.” Every effort should therefore be made by Christians to settle such disputes peacefully and unselfishly.

Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 6:7, 8 about this very problem and suggests that ultimately it would be better to be cheated and wronged rather than to enter into conflict with a brother. The selfless spirit of Christ should therefore characterize God’s people in such matter. (Philippians 2:3-5), and we should remember His promise that “the meek...will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5, NIV).

There are times when a true follower of Jesus will be prepared to suffer wrong rather than create an issue and cause conflict. Injustice and ill-treatment will be the price that some may have to pay in order to witness to the love of God and practice the golden rule (Matthew 7:12).



# RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER CHURCHES

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## THE MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

When Jesus established His church on earth, it was for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of salvation and finishing the work that Christ began. The commission given to the disciples was “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15, NKJV), to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

The early Christian church was made up of believers in Jesus from many different countries and cultures. It was not identified as any particular denomination but represented the “body of Christ,” members of the household of God “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20, NKJV).

Today, the church is divided into many denominations because of varying doctrines and traditions. However, most Christian churches accept the Bible and believe in salvation through Jesus Christ. There are common areas of agreement and a desire to fulfil the mission of the church.

## OUR SPECIAL ROLE AND MESSAGE

Seventh-day Adventists believe that they have a special role to fulfil in these last days as “the remnant” of God’s church that has existed down through history (Revelation 2, 3; Revelation 12:17). We do not see any need for competition with other churches, but we must heed God’s command to “prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Revelation 10:11).

The distinct message that must be given in these last days is pictured in Revelation 14 as the message of the three angels just prior to the coming of Jesus (Revelation 14:14) and it is described as “the everlasting gospel...to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6, NKJV).

Most of all, we have the truth of God to share with this end-time world, and cannot leave this essential message to others. “It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating

in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth... The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love" (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415).

Seventh-day Adventists therefore are compelled to go everywhere to proclaim this message and cannot accept any territorial divisions or restrictions to operate only in designated areas.

## THE VALUE OF OTHER CHURCHES

Seventh-day Adventists recognize the value of other Christian denominations, and like Paul, rejoice whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed (Philippians 1:15-18). We recognize that truth is progressive (Proverbs 4:18) and that God accepts people as they are and leads them into a fuller knowledge of truth and a closer relationship with Himself (Acts 17:23, 30; 10:34, 35; John 16:13). Seventh-day Adventists should not despise or try to prevent the activities of other Christians (Mark 9:38-40), but recognize that all who confess the name of Jesus are children of God (John 4:2, 15; 5:1; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

## TRUE CHRISTIANS IN OTHER CHURCHES

In light of the above verses, we recognize that many of God's faithful children are found in other churches and religions. Jesus Himself said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:16, NKJV).

"There are true Christians in every church..." (*Evangelism*, p. 234). "There are in our world many Christian workers who have not yet heard the grand and wonderful truths that have come to us. These are doing a good work in accordance with the light they have" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 416).

The final call to God's people as described in Revelation 18 is to "come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4). This indicates that many of God's people are still in the apostate churches of the world, and it is not our task to condemn, but to call them in love. "Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are true followers of Christ in these churches. Before the final visitations of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times.... Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming" (*Great Controversy*, p. 464).

## WORKING WITH COURTESY AND TACT

When coming into contact with other religious groups, Seventh-day Adventists should be very careful not to cause conflict or arouse opposition. We should present our message with tact and discretion. Jesus said to be "wise as serpents, and harmless

as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Ellen White says, “In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach. Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines” (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 119, 120).

“When you are laboring in a place where souls are just beginning to get the scales from their eyes, and to see men as trees walking, be very careful not to present the truth in such a way as to arouse prejudice, and to close the door of the heart to the truth. Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so” (*Evangelism*, pp. 141, 142).

“In bearing the message, make no personal thrusts at other churches.... Angels of God see in the different denominations many who can be reached only by the greatest caution” (*Evangelism*, p. 576. See also General Conference Working Policy O 75 in Appendix).

Therefore, we must learn to cooperate with other Christian churches as much as possible and do all we can to remove prejudice and misunderstanding. Do not antagonize by publicly attacking other churches. Preach the truth in simplicity and love, and educate people to show religious toleration.

## **WORKING WITH OTHER MINISTERS**

It is important to show friendship and Christian courtesy to ministers of other churches. Even some of the bitterest opponents of the truth will yet be converted and used of God as was Saul of Tarsus. Ellen White says, “Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding.... Our ministers are to make it their special work to labor for ministers. They are not to get in controversy with them, but, with their Bible in their hand, urge them to study the Word... It requires much wisdom to reach ministers and men of influence” (*Evangelism*, p. 562).

## **USING QUESTIONABLE METHODS**

Some people may be tempted to use methods of coercion or enticement in order to win a following to their particular belief. As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not approve of such methods. Temporal advantages, financial inducements, or methods of force should never be used in the preparation of candidates for church membership. Commitment to Christ and the church must be the independent decision of every individual according to the convictions of their own conscience (Refer especially to the GC Working Policy O 75—see Appendix).

To avoid the charge of “sheep-stealing,” we also consider it to be a wise course of action to inform those concerned regarding a new member’s decision and their convictions.

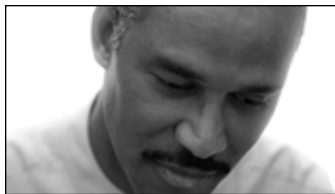
## **FALSE DOCTRINE**

Nevertheless, Seventh-day Adventists recognize that not all professed Christians are led by the Spirit of God, or endorse the truths of Scripture. “Jesus said, ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven.’” Although they have prophesied and cast out demons in His name, He claims to have never known these “workers of iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus predicted that before His coming, “false Christs and false prophets” would arise (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24). The New Testament speaks of a time of apostasy, when people would not believe the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. See also Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:1, 2). Revelation depicts the apostate churches as Babylon—the harlot woman (Revelation 17, 18) and the false prophet (Revelation 16:13; 19:20). God’s last warning message is against the false doctrines of this system (Revelation 14:8; 18:2-5).

## **ECUMENICAL MOVEMENTS**

Seventh-day Adventists long for the true unity of faith and belief that Jesus prayed would exist among His followers (John 17:21, 22), and we commend all sincere attempts of Christians to cooperate in mission and final unity in the Spirit. However, the ecumenical movement is characterized by elements of doctrinal compromise with which we cannot agree, and the emerging organization of united apostate churches mirrors the description of the “false prophet” in Bible prophecy.

There is a strong tendency for these churches to be involved politically with the state, and therefore Seventh-day Adventists do not seek membership in such organizations, but hold observer status only. In most parts of the world, a representative of our church usually attends meetings of these ecumenical organizations as an observer or as an associate to foster cooperation and understanding, but we do not hold full membership.



# THE CHRISTIAN AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

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## SECRET SOCIETIES, CHARITABLE CLUBS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

Societies or clubs such as the Masonic Lodge exist in some areas, and these organizations often require special “initiation” as entrance into membership. Frequently, the activities and meetings of these groups are held in secret and are for males only. Their organization consists of a hierarchy of secret orders. No Seventh-day Adventist should join such secret societies. The Bible says, “What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?... Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:14-17, NKJV).

Ellen White wrote at great length concerning the evils of secret societies and published a little pamphlet in 1893 entitled “Should Christians Be Members of Secret Societies?” It is found now in *Selected Messages* (Book 2, pp. 120-140). She wrote, “Those who stand under the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel cannot be united with the Free Masons or with any secret organization. The seal of the living God will not be placed upon anyone who maintains such a connection...” (p. 140).

## CHARITABLE CLUBS

However, some clubs are organized for charitable purposes and for service in the community and they attract membership mainly from professional people. These clubs, such as the Rotary and Lions’ Clubs, usually have high moral standards and are involved in many charitable projects.

Although not all Seventh-day Adventists will find membership in such clubs attractive, these organizations provide excellent opportunities for community-minded members to come into contact with non-Adventists and to be a good witnesses. Many Adventist businessmen and pastors have been involved in these clubs and have contributed to the needs of the community.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership in business ventures can be a way of avoiding problems associated with direct employment (e.g., Sabbath work, questionable practices, etc.). Some business

partnerships have been both a blessing to individuals and to the church. If a Seventh-day Adventist, however, wishes to join in a partnership with a man or men who are not Seventh-day Adventists, he may find trouble in Sabbath trading, types of goods sold, and many other things, and it would be best for him not be yoked in this way with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). In addition, business concerns have frequently been a source of difficulty even between church members, and those contemplating a partnership with another person must be fully aware of the risks and dangers they undertake. At no time can the church be responsible for the business activities of members.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

As a local church Religious Liberty Secretary, you are entrusted with the responsibility of promoting religious liberty, understanding, and cooperation toward religious tolerance in both the local church and in the community. Here are a few suggestions on how to get involved and make religious liberty issues a part of your church's agenda:

1. Survey your local congregation to learn which church members can assist you in organizing activities to promote religious liberty. Look for lawyers, journalists, civic activists, social workers, and members of professional and social associations. They will form—when invited—a group that can assist you in your religious liberty program.
2. Propose the formation of a Religious Liberty Committee in your local church. Seek advice and approval from the pastor and the church board.
3. Set specific objectives, have a time frame, and choose appropriate personnel to promote religious liberty. Among the objectives you may wish to include:
  - Promote religious liberty within the church and in the community by publishing a newsletter, organizing rallies, and facilitating discussion groups.
  - Organize a Religious Liberty Day.
  - Promote subscriptions to journals on religious liberty and other appropriate topics. Prepare a list of individuals or organizations in your community who will benefit from receiving such material as a gift from your church. International practice reveals how successful such a venture can become. Among those who may be considered are the public library, editors of newspapers, religious or church leaders, lawyers, the mayor's office, and of course your local representative/member of Parliament.
  - When designing a program, remember to budget your anticipated activities and have it approved by the board. Your budget could be off set by a special offering, part of which could underwrite subscriptions.
4. Consider establishing a library with literature dealing with religious liberty issues.
5. Prepare a list of organizations in the community which would be included on your mailing list for invitations, public appeals, and mailings of other materials.

6. Get in touch with the local civic and social organizations, human rights groups (Amnesty International, Friends of the UN, Keston College, etc.), religious organizations, and churches.
7. Designate a person who could be entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring human rights, specifically, religious freedom, in the local community and also nationally and internationally. From time to time, you may wish to consider organizing a special action in favor of religious tolerance or against religious intolerance.
8. Inform the local press and media about your activities. Editors could be invited both to participate in your events and also publish information about your activities.
9. You may wish to consider establishing an annual award for a person with outstanding achievement in promoting religious freedom. Such an award (a diploma or a plaque) could become a feature at your Religious Liberty Day.
10. Part of your success will depend on how well you communicate with your local Conference and/or Union. Conference leaders are your source of information and assistance.

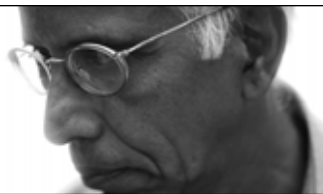
## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY RESOURCES

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sponsors two international associations promoting the principles of religious liberty. These two organizations are (1) the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), with its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA; and (2) the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (IADRL), with its headquarters in Berne, Switzerland. Both organizations promote protection of religious freedom through facilitating world congresses and through contacts with international organizations and human rights entities, as well as through contacts with national governments.

Religious freedom is also promoted by both associations through journal publications. Seventh-day Adventists had already been involved in publishing the *American Sentinel* in 1886, a journal which developed in 1906 into *Liberty* magazine. *Liberty* is published bimonthly and caters to the North American readership. *Conscience and Liberty* is another journal, published in Europe since 1948 in several languages: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Serbo-Croatian. In 1989, an English edition of the journal was introduced, published biannually, and is an official organ of IADRL.

*Fides et Libertas* is a professional journal published by the IRLA and is aimed at thought-leaders, diplomats, legislators, and academics. It is a compendium of articles on a wide range of religious liberty issues and activities, and presents well-researched materials written by experts on religious issues, representing various worldviews. Readers and subscribers of *Fides et Libertas* include statesmen, lawyers, scientists, religious leaders, journalists, educators, human rights advocates, public opinion makers—all those who wish to be informed about the religious scene and who desire to contribute toward greater religious tolerance, liberty, justice, and peace.





# APPENDIX 1

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## DECLARATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ON CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

### PREAMBLE

God is love. His rule of this universe is based on the willing obedience of His creation evoked by His magnificent benevolence.<sup>1</sup> Only a faith that rests in the heart of man,<sup>2</sup> and only actions prompted by love,<sup>3</sup> are acceptable to God. Love, however, is not subject to civil regulation. It cannot be evoked by fiat nor sustained by statute. Therefore, efforts to legislate faith are by their very nature in opposition to the principles of true religion, and thus in opposition to the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

God placed our primordial parents on this earth with the power to choose between good and evil.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent generations born into this world have been granted a similar choice. This freedom to choose, so granted by God, should not be infringed on by man.

The appropriate relation between religion and the state was best exemplified in the life of our Savior and example, Jesus Christ. As one of the Godhead, Jesus held unparalleled authority on earth. He had divine insight,<sup>6</sup> divine power,<sup>7</sup> and a Holy charter.<sup>8</sup> If anyone in the history of the world had the right to force others to worship as he dictated, it was Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus never used force to advance the gospel.<sup>9</sup> It is for the followers of Christ to emulate this example.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has, from its inception, attempted to follow the example of Christ by championing freedom of conscience as an integral part of its gospel mission. As the role of the church in society expands, it is appropriate to state the principles that guide our worldwide church in our contacts with the governments of the lands in which we operate.

### FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

At the heart of the Adventist message is our abiding belief that freedom of conscience must be guaranteed to all. Freedom of conscience includes the freedom to believe and fully practice the religious faith of choice, the freedom not to believe or practice religious faith, freedom to change faiths, and the freedom to establish and operate religious institutions in accordance with religious beliefs. We are dedicated to working for the advancement of legal and political protection of religious freedom and in support of the broad interpretation of national and international charters that guarantee the protection of this freedom.<sup>10</sup>

As Christians, Seventh-day Adventists recognize the legitimate role of organized government in society.<sup>11</sup> We support the state's right to legislate on secular matters and support compliance with such laws.<sup>12</sup> When we are faced with a situation in which the law of the land conflicts with biblical mandates, however, we concur with the Scriptural injunction that we ought to obey God rather than man.<sup>13</sup>

The Adventist dedication to freedom of conscience recognizes that there are limits on this freedom. Freedom of religion can only exist in the context of the protection of the legitimate and equal rights of others in society. When society has a compelling interest, such as the protection of its citizens from imminent harm, it can therefore legitimately curtail religious practices. Such curtailments should be undertaken in a manner that limits the religious practice as little as possible and still protects those endangered by it. Limitation of freedom of conscience in order to protect society from offense or similar intangible harms, from hypothetical dangers or to impose social or religious conformity by measures such as Sunday laws or other state-mandated religious observances, are not legitimate limitations on freedom.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to stand for the principle of liberty of conscience for all. In keeping with our love for others,<sup>14</sup> we must be ready to work on behalf of groups whose freedom of conscience is inappropriately impinged on by the state. Such work may result in personal and corporate loss. This is the price we must be willing to pay in order to follow our Saviour who consistently spoke for the disfavoured and dispossessed.<sup>15</sup>

## **PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is mindful of the long history of the involvement of the people of God in civil affairs. Joseph wielded civil power in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Daniel rose to the heights of civil power in Babylon and the nation benefitted as a result.<sup>17</sup> In our own church history, Adventists have joined with other religious and secular organizations to exert influence over civil authorities to cease slavery and to advance the cause of religious freedom. Religious influence has not always resulted in the betterment of society, however. Religious persecution, religious wars, and the numerous examples of social and political suppression perpetrated at the behest of religious people, confirms the dangers that exist when the means of the state are used to advance religious objectives.

The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has resulted in a corresponding growth in our ability to exert political influence in some areas of the world. This political influence is not in itself problematic. Indeed, Adventists may properly aspire to serve in positions of civil leadership.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, we must remain ever mindful of the dangers that are associated with religious influence on civil affairs and assiduously avoid such dangers.

When Adventists become leaders or exert influence in their wider society, this should be done in a manner consistent with the golden rule.<sup>19</sup> We should therefore work to establish robust religious liberty for all and should not use our influence with political and civil leaders to either advance our faith or inhibit the faith of others. Adventists should take civic responsibilities seriously. We should participate in the voting process available to us when it is possible to do so in good conscience<sup>20</sup> and should share the responsibility

of building our communities. Adventists should not, however, become preoccupied with politics, or utilize the pulpit or our publications to advance political theories.<sup>21</sup>

Adventists who are civic leaders must endeavor to adhere to the highest standards of Christian behavior. As modern-day Daniels, God will lead them and their fidelity to Him will inspire their community.

## **REPRESENTATION TO GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES**

Throughout the history of the people of God, the Lord has seen fit to delegate individuals to present His message to the rulers of the time. Abraham,<sup>22</sup> Joseph,<sup>23</sup> and Moses<sup>24</sup> all dealt directly with the Pharaoh of their times. Esther's presence in the court of King Ahasuerus resulted in saving God's people from destruction.<sup>25</sup> Daniel was first a representative to the Babylonian Empire,<sup>26</sup> and later to Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede.<sup>27</sup> Paul carried the gospel to the ruling class of the Roman Empire.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, many of the great reformers stood before the rulers of their day to advocate their position. We would therefore be remiss if we were not to endeavor to represent Christ to the leaders of this world in our current time.

Indeed, Adventists are called to be a voice for liberty of conscience to this world.<sup>29</sup> Integral to this mission is the development of relationships with temporal rulers.<sup>30</sup> In order to do this, the Seventh-day Adventist Church appoints representatives to governments and international bodies that have influence over the protection of religious liberty. This work must be viewed as essential to our gospel mission and should be accorded the resources necessary to ensure our representation is of the highest order.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENTS**

Governments are established to serve the needs of the governed. As such, they must ensure the protection of the population's fundamental human rights, including freedom of conscience. The state must also endeavor to build communities with public order, public health, a clean environment, and an atmosphere that does not unduly inhibit its citizens' ability to raise families and freely explore the facets of their humanity. It is the state's responsibility to endeavor to eliminate discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, social class, religion, political persuasion, and gender and to guarantee its residents equal access to an impartial judiciary. States have a responsibility not only to protect all those living within its borders but also to work for the protection of human rights in the international community and to provide a haven to those fleeing persecution.

## **RECEIPT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Seventh-day Adventists have long debated whether the Church or its institutions should accept government funding. On one hand, the Church has taught that the Lord moves upon the hearts of those in civil power and that the Church should not build barriers

that would cut off assistance for the advancement of His cause.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the Church has warned against the union of church and state.<sup>32</sup>

Thus when laws of a nation permit government assistance to churches or their institutions, our principles permit receipt of funding that is not accompanied by conditions that inhibit our ability to freely practice and promulgate our faith, to hire only Seventh-day Adventists, to retain governance by only Seventh-day Adventists, and to observe without compromise principles expressed in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. In addition, to avoid a union of church and state, government funds should not be accepted to pay for religious activities such as worship services, evangelism, the publishing of religious texts, or for the salaries of those working in church administration or in the gospel ministry, except for the provision of spiritual services to those whose lives are so fully regulated by the state as to make the provision of such services impracticable without state involvement.<sup>33</sup>

In instances when the acceptance of government funding does not violate the foregoing principles, careful consideration should be given to whether government funds should be accepted. Ongoing government funding, as opposed to single financial contributions, presents a particular danger. It is virtually impossible for institutions not to become at least partially dependent on ongoing governmental funding streams. Such government funding typically is accompanied by governmental regulation. While such regulation may not violate Christian principles when the money is first received, such regulations are subject to change. In the event that regulations governing the receipt of government funds change to require the abandonment of the principles for our institutions described in the Bible and by Ellen G. White, ongoing governmental funding must be refused, even if as a result the institution must be closed, sold, or significantly restructured.

When Adventists receive government funding, we must handle such funds with the highest integrity. This includes strict compliance with the regulations attached to the funding and the use of rigorous accounting standards. If procedures are not in place to ensure such compliance, funding must be refused.

In some exceptional circumstances, Adventists can only achieve a presence in a country if we operate programs that are controlled by the government and that forbid an open witness. Considerable prayer and thought must be given to the ramifications of participating in such programs. We should consider whether participation assists the government in maintaining its restrictive policies, whether participation associates the church's name with the coercive government, and whether participation will provide opportunity both in the short and long term for spreading the gospel including the three angels' messages<sup>34</sup> in the country concerned. We must assiduously avoid associating the name of Christ with regimes that suppress and brutalize their populaces.

## CONCLUSION

God has put each individual on earth with the capacity to determine right from wrong under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with His Word. This declaration, therefore, is not designed to supersede divine counsel, nor is it designed to be an

authoritative interpretation of that counsel. Rather, the declaration serves to encapsulate the understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at this time.

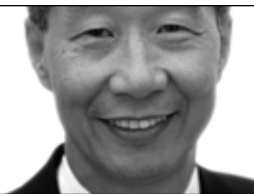
The way in which Seventh-day Adventists conduct our church-state relations has a significant impact on our worldwide efforts. We must therefore approach this area with significant thought and prayer. Working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Adventists will continue to champion the gospel principle of freedom of conscience.

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 "God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.
- 2 Ezekiel 36:26.
- 3 1 Corinthians 13.
- 4 The example of ancient Israel under theocratic rule is sometimes used to justify modern efforts to legislate religious mandates. Such justifications misapply Biblical precedent. For a relatively short period of this earth's history, God used particular methods to preserve His message for the world. These methods were based on a mutually agreed upon covenant between God and a family that grew into a relatively small nation. During this period, God directly ruled in a manner He has not chosen to utilize since. The experience of direct rule by God based on a mutually agreed upon covenant, while of invaluable importance to our understanding of the Lord, is not directly applicable to how modern nations should be ruled. Rather, the more applicable example of the relationship between the church and the state is that provided by Jesus Christ.
- 5 Genesis 3.
- 6 See, e.g., John 4:17-19.
- 7 See, e.g., John 11.
- 8 1 John 2:1.
- 9 Quite the contrary, Jesus explicitly stated that His "kingdom is not of this world" and therefore His servants were not commissioned to exert power through force. John 18:36.
- 10 See, e.g., United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 18; The American Convention on Human Rights, Art. 12; The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Art. 8; The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Art. 9; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Art. 15; Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Art. 5; Constitution of the Republic of South Korea, Art. 20; Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, Art. 116; Constitution of India, Art. 25-28; Constitution of the United States of America, First Amendment.
- 11 1 Peter 2:13-17.
- 12 Romans 13.
- 13 Acts 5:29; "The people of God will recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment and will teach obedience to it as a sacred duty within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, the word of God must be recognized as above all human legislation. 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for 'Thus saith the church or the state.' The crown of Christ is to be uplifted above the diadems of earthly potentates." (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 402).

- 14 Matthew 22:39.
- 15 See, e.g., Luke 4:18; Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 10:30-37.
- 16 Genesis 41:40-57.
- 17 Daniel 6:3.
- 18 "Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard." (Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 82).
- 19 "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" Matthew 7:12.
- 20 While Seventh-day Adventists are to vote, they are to cast their vote with prayerful consideration. See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p.337 (admonishing Adventists to vote); Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 475 (stating that Adventists cannot safely vote for political parties); and Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p.127 (Adventists become partakers in the sins of politicians if they support candidates that do not support religious liberty).
- 21 Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 475.
- 22 Genesis 12:15-20.
- 23 Genesis 41.
- 24 Exodus 4-12.
- 25 Esther 8.
- 26 Daniel 3-5.
- 27 Daniel 1:21; and 5:31-6:28.
- 28 Acts 23-26.
- 29 "We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 714).
- 30 "Kings, governors, and councils are to have a knowledge of the truth through your testimony. This is the only way in which the testimony of light and truth can reach men of high authority" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1890).
- 31 "Just as long as we are in this world, and the Spirit of God is striving with the world, we are to receive as well as to impart favors. We are to give to the world the light of truth as presented in the sacred Scriptures, and we are to receive from the world that which God moves upon them to do on behalf of His cause. God has not closed the door of mercy yet. The Lord still moves upon the hearts of kings and rulers on behalf of His people, and it becomes us who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question not to cut off any favors, or withdraw ourselves from the help that God has moved men to give for the advancement of His cause" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 197-203).
- 32 "The union of the church with the state, be the degree ever so slight, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality but bring the church nearer to the world" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 297).
- 33 This category includes chaplains retained by the state to provide spiritual services to those serving in the military, those who are incarcerated, those who are in state hospitals, and those whose lives are similarly restricted to state institutions or whose lives are similarly pervasively regulated by the state.
- 34 Revelation 14:6-12.



## APPENDIX II

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### **CHURCH POLICY O 75**

#### **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

To avoid creating misunderstandings or friction in our relationships with other Christian churches and religious organizations, the following guidelines have been set forth:

1. We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls for Christ.
2. When mission work brings us in contact with other missionary societies and religious bodies, the spirit of Christian courtesy, frankness, and fairness shall prevail at all times.
3. We recognize that true religion is based on conscience and conviction. It is therefore to be our constant purpose that no selfish interest or temporal advantage shall draw any person to our communion, and that no tie shall hold any member save the belief and conviction that in this way the true connection with Christ is found. If a change of conviction leads a member of our church to feel no longer in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist faith and practice, we recognize not only the right but also the responsibility of that member to change, without opprobrium, religious affiliation in accord with belief. We expect other religious bodies to respond in the same spirit of religious liberty.
4. Before admitting to church membership members of other religious organizations, care should be exercised to ascertain that the candidates are moved to change their religious affiliation by religious conviction and out of regard to their personal relationship with God.
5. A person under censure of another religious organization for clearly established fault in Christian morals or character shall not be considered eligible for membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church until there is evidence of repentance and reformation.
6. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is unable to confine its mission to restricted geographical areas because of its understanding of the gospel commission's mandate.

In the providence of God and the historical development of His work for men, denominational bodies and religious movements have arisen from time to time to give special emphasis to different phases of gospel truth. In the origin and rise of the Seventh-day Adventist people, the burden was laid upon us to emphasize the gospel of Christ's second coming as an imminent event, calling for the proclamation of biblical truths in the setting of the special message of preparation as described in Bible prophecy, particularly in Revelation 14:6-14. This message commissions the preaching of the "everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," bringing it to the attention of all people everywhere. Any restriction which limits witness to specified geographical areas therefore becomes an abridgment of the gospel commission. The Seventh-day Adventist Church also acknowledges the rights of other religious persuasions to operate without geographical restrictions.





## APPENDIX III

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### UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

#### INTRODUCTION

One of the basic purposes of the United Nations, as set forth in its Charter, is the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Freedom of belief is one of the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966.

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.”

Article 2 declares that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.”

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”

This right was transformed into a legal obligation for ratifying States in article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that:

“1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

“2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

“3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

“4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the

liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”

Preparation of a draft declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion and belief originated in 1962, when the idea of a United Nations instrument on this issue was first approved by the General Assembly. Two distinct documents were then envisaged: a Declaration and an International Convention.

In 1972, the General Assembly decided to accord priority to the completion of the Declaration before resuming consideration of the draft International Convention. At the Assembly’s request, the question of a draft Declaration was considered by the Commission on Human Rights at each of its annual sessions from 1974 to 1981. In March 1981, the Commission adopted the text of a draft Declaration, which was submitted, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its regular session later that year.

On November 25, 1981, the General Assembly proclaimed the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief, stating that it considered it essential “to promote understanding, tolerance, and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief,” and that it was resolved “to adopt all necessary measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.”

The full text of the Declaration follows.

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## **DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF**

*Adopted by the General Assembly on November 25, 1981 (Resolution 36/55)*

The General Assembly,

**Considering** that one of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations is that of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that all Member States have pledged themselves to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion,

**Considering** that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights proclaim the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief,

**Considering** that the disregard and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or whatever belief, have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suffering to mankind, especially where they serve as a means of foreign interference in the internal affairs of other States and amount to kindling hatred between peoples and nations,

**Considering** that religion or belief, for anyone who professes either, is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life and that freedom of religion or belief should be fully respected and guaranteed,

**Considering** that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance, and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter, other relevant instruments of the United Nations, and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration are inadmissible,

**Convinced** that freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice, and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination,

**Noting with satisfaction** the adoption of several, and the coming into force of some, conventions, under the aegis of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies, for the elimination of various forms of discrimination,

**Concerned** by manifestations of intolerance and by the existence of discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in some areas of the world,

**Resolved** to adopt all necessary measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief,

**Proclaims** this Declaration of the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief:

### **Article 1**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

### **Article 2**

1. No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or other beliefs.

2. For the purposes of the present declaration, the expression “intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief” means any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

### **Article 3**

Discrimination between human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enunciated in detail in the International Covenants on Human Rights, and as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations.

### **Article 4**

1. All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise, and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social, and cultural life.

2. All States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter.

### **Article 5**

1. The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up.

2. Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.

3. The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.

4. In the case of a child who is not under the care either of his parents or of legal guardians, due account shall be taken of their expressed wishes or of any other proof of their wishes in the matter of religion or belief, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.

5. Practices of a religion or beliefs in which a child is brought up must not be injurious to his physical or mental health or to his full development, taking into account Article 1,

paragraph 3, of the present Declaration.

### **Article 6**

In accordance with Article 1 of the present Declaration, and subject to the provisions of Article 1, paragraph 3, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, *inter alia*, the following freedoms:

1. To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;
2. To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
3. To make, acquire, and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;
4. To write, issue, and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;
5. To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;
6. To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;
7. To train, appoint, elect, or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;
8. To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief;
9. To establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.

### **Article 7**

The rights and freedoms set forth in the present Declaration shall be accorded in national legislations in such a manner that everyone shall be able to avail himself of such rights and freedoms in practice.

### **Article 8**

Nothing in the present Declaration shall be construed as restricting or derogating from any right defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

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## APPENDIX IV

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### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

#### Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

**Article 1**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Article 2**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

**Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

**Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

**Article 8**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

**Article 9**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

**Article 10**

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

### **Article 11**

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

### **Article 12**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

### **Article 13**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

### **Article 14**

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

### **Article 15**

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

### **Article 16**

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.



### **Article 17**

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

### **Article 18**

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

### **Article 19**

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

### **Article 20**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

### **Article 21**

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

### **Article 22**

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

### **Article 23**

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

#### **Article 24**

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

#### **Article 25**

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

#### **Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

#### **Article 27**

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

#### **Article 28**

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

**Article 29**

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.



# CHARTERS, DECLARATIONS, AND CONVENTIONS

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In addition to the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Intolerance, the following are some of the safeguards for religious freedom in important international documents.

## **AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights was adopted African State' members of the Organization of African Unity meeting in Banjul, Gambia, on June 27, 1981. It entered into force on October 21, 1986.

### **Article 8**

Freedom of conscience, the profession and free practice of religion shall be guaranteed. No one may, subject to law and order, be submitted to measures restricting the exercise of these freedoms.

## **AMERICAN DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MAN**

The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man was adopted by the Ninth International Conference of American States of the Organization of American States in Bogota, Columbia, on May 2, 1948.

### **Chapter One: Rights**

#### **Article 3. Right to religious freedom and worship**

Every person has the right freely to profess a religious faith, and to manifest and practice it both in public and in private.

#### **Article 22. Right of association**

Every person has the right to associate with others to promote, exercise, and protect his legitimate interests of a political, economic, religious, social, cultural, professional, labor union, or other nature.

## **AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

The American Convention on Human Rights was adopted by Member States of the Organization of American States in San José, Costa Rica, on November 22, 1969. It entered into force on July 18, 1978.

### **Article 12. Freedom of conscience and religion**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and of religion. This right includes freedom to maintain or to change one's religion or beliefs, and freedom to profess or disseminate one's religion or beliefs, either individually or together with others, in public or in private.
2. No one shall be subject to restrictions that might impair his freedom to maintain or to change his religion or beliefs.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion and beliefs may be subject only to the limitations prescribed by law that are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the rights or freedoms of others.
4. Parents or guardians, as the case may be, have the right to provide for the religious and moral education of their children or wards that is in accord with their own convictions.

## **[EUROPEAN] CONVENTION FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS**

The European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was adopted by the Council of Europe on November 4, 1950, and entered into force on September 3, 1953.

### **Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.
2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health, or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

# CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE VIENNA MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (CSCE)

The Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the CSCE was adopted January 19, 1989.

## Questions relating to Security in Europe: Principles

(13) In this context [i.e., the respect of human rights] they [i.e., the participating States] will

(13.7) ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, without distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status;

(16) In order to ensure the freedom of the individual to profess and practice religion or belief, the participating States will, *inter alia*,

(16.1) take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or communities on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise, and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural life, and to ensure the effective equality between believers and non-believers;

(16.2) foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers;

(16.3) grant upon their request to communities of believers, practicing or prepared to practice their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, recognition of the status provided for them in their respective countries;

(16.4) respect the right of these religious communities to:

- establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly;
- organize themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure;
- select, appoint, and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangement between them and their State;
- solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions;

(16.5) engage in consultations with religious faiths, institutions, and organizations in order to achieve a better understanding of the requirements of religious freedom;

(16.6) respect the right of everyone to give and receive religious education in the language of his choice, whether individually or in association with others;

(16.7) in this context respect, *inter alia*, the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions;

(16.8) allow the training of religious personnel in appropriate institutions;

(16.9) respect the right of individual believers and communities of believers to acquire, possess, and use sacred books, religious publications in the language of their choice, and other articles and materials related to the practice of religion or belief;

(16.10) allow religious faiths, institutions, and organizations to produce, import, and disseminate religious publications and materials;

(16.11) favorably consider the interest of religious communities to participate in public dialogue, including through the mass media.

(17) The participating States recognize that the exercise of the above-mentioned rights relating to the freedom of religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are provided by law and consistent with their obligations under international law and with their international commitments. They will ensure in their laws and regulations and in their application the full and effective exercise of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief.

## **CHARTER OF PARIS FOR A NEW EUROPE**

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe was adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe at a Summit Meeting of Heads of State or Government of participating States in Paris on November 21, 1990.

### **Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law**

We affirm that, without discrimination, every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of movement;

We affirm that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of national minorities

will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve, and develop identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.

## **INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966. It entered into force on March 23, 1976.

### **Article 18**

- 1.** Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.
- 2.** No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
- 3.** Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
- 4.** The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.





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