FIDES ET LIBERTAS

1999

The Journal of the International Religious Liberty Association

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International Religious Liberty Association
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Declaration of Principles

We believe that religious liberty is a God-given right.

We believe that legislation and other governmental acts which unite church and state are contrary to the best interests of both institutions and are potentially prejudicial to human rights, and hold that it is best exercised where separation is maintained between church and state.

We believe that government is divinely ordained to support and protect citizens in their enjoyment of natural rights, and to rule in civil affairs; and that in so doing, government warrants respectful obedience and willing support.

We believe in the natural and inalienable right of freedom of conscience—to have or not to have a religion; to adopt the religion or belief of one's choice; to change religious belief according to conscience; to manifest one's religion individually or in community with others, in worship, observance, practice, promulgation and teaching–subject only to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

We believe that religious liberty includes also the freedom to establish and operate appropriate charitable or educational institutions, to solicit or receive voluntary financial contributions, to observe days of rest and celebrate holidays in accordance with the precepts of one's religion, and to maintain communication with fellow believers at national and international levels.

We believe that religious liberty and the elimination of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief are essential to promote understanding, peace and friendship among people.

We believe that citizens should use lawful and honorable means to prevent the reduction of religious liberty, so that all may enjoy its inestimable blessing.

We believe that the spirit of true religious liberty is epitomized in the Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.*

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FIDES ET LIBERTAS

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Contents

Proselytism and Religious Freedom

John Graz

Secretary General
International Religious Liberty Association

The International Religious Liberty Association, dedicated to religious freedom since 1893, is very much concerned with the issue of proselytism and religious freedom because:

Proselytism is considered an unfriendly word.
Proselytism is a problem for some religions.
Proselytism is an issue for ecumenism.
Proselytism is a challenge to post-modernists.

By way of introducing the 1999 issue of *Fides et Libertas,* I want to comment on each of these concerns—and then we'll hear from the experts.

Proselytism: An unfriendly word. I doubt that you have ever met a religious leader or a missionary who boldly asserted: "I am proselytizing—and you too ought to be more involved in proselytism." We avoid the word because in the main it is used in a negative manner. It is simply unfriendly.[1] David A. Kerr writes: "The word has different nuances in individual languages and among languages. . . . It refers both to the transfer of allegiance from one religion to another and to the transfer of allegiance between churches."[2] The term *proselytism* is very often used in denouncing the activities of minority religious groups seeking new members. These proselytizing groups are seen as a threat to the majority whose traditional position and nominal membership may be affected by open competition in the marketplace of religious thought and action. Is not this an obvious, natural reaction? We see it in many areas of society. In the world of business and economics, when a new company emerges, the ones that are well-established will try to protect what they call market share

Even if religion is not a business in the traditional sense, when the issue of proselytism arises no one is neutral. The established religions will be inclined to see proselytism as a threat. The minority religions seeking for new members see proselytism as a right. Writes David Kerr: "Attitudes to proselytism are conditioned by political, social, and cultural considerations, and responses vary

from one church to another, from one culture to another."[3]

Proselytism: A problem for some religions. The primates of the Orthodox churches consider proselytism a factor in the division within Christianity: "We . . . consider that uniatism and proselytism are serious objects to the program of our dialogue with the Roman Catholics and Protestants."[4] Link this statement to an earlier declaration: "With great affliction and anguish of heart we realize that certain circles inside the Roman Catholic Church proceed to activities absolutely contrary to the spirit of the dialogue of love and truth."[5] What does this mean? The declaration continues: "The traditional Orthodox countries have been considered 'terra missionis' . . . and proselytism is practiced with all the methods which have been condemned and rejected for decades by all Christians."[6] Why the condemnation? Why the rejection? The declaration implies that certain countries claim to have received the gospel centuries past. The primates assert that "every form of proselytism–to be distinguished clearly from evangelization and mission–is absolutely condemned by the Orthodox."[7] According to the declaration, proselytism threatens the traditional church and negatively affects Christian unity and interchurch dialogue.

But from those who are convinced that religious liberty is a universal individual right, the notion that any church, any religion, has by tradition a claim to a geographical area as "its own" gets no support whatsoever.[8]

Proselytism: An issue for ecumenism. On September 25, 1996, a study document titled "The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness" was issued by the joint working group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The following is from the introduction: "Serious concerns about tensions and conflict [are] created by proselytism in nearly all parts of the world."[9] Proselytism is seen as an effort "to take advantage of people's misfortunes [e.g., poverty, mass migration, absence of pastoral care] to encourage people by unfair means to become members of other churches."[10] While the document does not mention "terra missionis," it denounces all behavior and every method it views as being in opposition to Christian unity. Among the activities deemed objectionable are: making unjust or uncharitable references to the beliefs of other churches; stressing the weaknesses and the perceived problems of other churches; employing physical violence and/or moral compulsion; and using political, social, and economic power as a means of winning new members.[11] Chapter III of the document addresses

"some principles of religious freedom." If I understand the document's message, it is this: *We are in favor of religious freedom, but true religious freedom is the opposite of proselytism.* Why? "Proselytism can violate or manipulate the rights of the individual and can exacerbate tense and delicate relations between communities and thus destabilize societies."[12] The document briefly mentions target groups: "In many parts of the world, the churches are experiencing proselytizing activities of sects and new religious movements."[13]

I must ask: Do all "sects" and "new religious movements" proselytize as is described in the document? And is this a fair use of such generic terms as "sect" and "proselytism"?

Proselytism: A challenge to post-modernists. Proselytism challenges the post-modernist concept. Sociologist Sharon Linzey writes: "In the past few centuries, no one questioned the appropriateness of sending missionaries to other cultures. All of the major world religions have been spread this way. . . . But in today's political climate, the core value of evangelism is being questioned. Post-modern values teach that each culture is unique and precious, and every expression of diversity is valuable. According to this view, all cultures are basically equal and no culture is entitled to impose its values on another."[14] Indeed, post-modernism considers missionary activity a form of cultural aggression. Evangelism and proselytism are one and the same, with the same effect. Thus a Christian hospital or school established in an animist region is seen as a kind of cultural aggression.

Another question: Are those who defend religious freedom also protective of cultures? If the answer is "yes," can a church affirm "the call to conversion [as] one of the fundamental tasks of the church"[15] without being condemned for "cultural aggression"?

Proselytism and religious freedom. As a non-governmental organization committed to freedom of religion and freedom of expression, the IRLA may defend unlimited proselytism or accept it within certain limits. But we cannot ignore its potential cause for trouble. Nor can we ignore the positive effects proselytism has had on established religions and churches: it has served to encourage a renewal of church life and outreach. After all, religious freedom means free choice, and free choice requires pluralism and free expression. So, is proselytism an expression–or a negation–of religious freedom? To answer this and related questions is the *raison d'etre* for the convening of the IRLA's Conference of Experts in May of 1999 in historic San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Papers offered at the conference are presented in this issue of *Fides et*

Libertas. More will be published in 2000 following the second phase of the conference to be conducted in January–again in Spain.[16] Our aim: To propose, adopt, and issue a consensus declaration on principles of proper proselytism. Watch for it in the 2000 issue of *F&L*. Given the situational complexities, we may not answer the question to everyone's complete satisfaction, but we do hope that this discussion will contribute to a better understanding of this very sensitive issue, one that will certainly remain important for freedom and peace in the 21st century.

Notes

[1]Kerr, David A.: "Christian Understandings of Proselytism," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1999 (p. 8).

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]"Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Church," in *Patmos*, September 26, 1995.

[5]"Message of the Primates of the Most Holy Orthodox Churches," Istanbul, March 15, 1992 (p. 3).

[6]*Ibid.*, (p. 4).

[7]*Ibid.*

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church: "The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness," September 25, 1995 (p. 2).

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]*Ibid.*, (p. 7).

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]*Ibid*,. (p. 2).

[14]Linzey, Sharon: *Linzey on Russia: Multiculturalism and Missions*. (Garden Grove: Assist Communications [undated]).

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]With deep gratitude the IRLA acknowledges the superior support of the Department of Religious Affairs (Albert de la Hera, director) of the Spanish Ministry of Justice in providing the beautiful venue of the Conference of Experts. I had long wanted our global Board of Experts to meet to consider some important issue in international religious freedom. Prof. de la Hera and his colleagues helped immensely to make it happen. *Muchas gracias!*

This article is an expansion of Dr. Graz' opening remarks at the IRLA Conference of Experts, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain, May 1999.

Danger Ahead

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I sense a tendency among some Seventh-day Adventists to take advantage of the church's historic position on last-day events to foist upon members inflated and unwarranted claims of contemporary threats to religious liberty. When such claims are based on surmise or flimsy evidence, they turn intelligent people off. But I think astute Adventists sit up and take notice when presented with credible, dispassionate evidence of serious dangers to religious freedom. I sensed one such danger while attending the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (December 1998; Harare, Zimbabwe)—and I think it's one that impacts not just Seventh-day Adventists but all religious bodies that take seriously the great commission.

But first let me go back to the WCC's Seventh Assembly (February 1991; Canberra, Australia). I still remember the half-veiled frown on the face of the highest-ranking member of the Roman Catholic observer delegation when the issue of proselytism surfaced during a press conference. Uppermost on his mind was the evangelistic activity of Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and other such groups in Central and South America. He was not amused. And I remember also the strong reaction a day or so later from a Greek Orthodox delegate to what was, in truth, a naively impolitic announcement from a witless American delegate that his church was ready to take its evangelistic campaign to Greece that summer. The Orthodox delegate was scandalized.

But however strongly felt at Canberra, the anti-proselytism sentiment never made it to center stage. In Harare, however, it did. Devoting an entire section to it in his report to the assembly, moderator Aram I asserted categorically that "ecumenism and proselytism cannot coexist." In a line that must have sounded like music in the ears of the Orthodox, he lashed out at developments in Eastern Europe and in the nations of the former U.S.S.R. Following the collapse of Communism, he said, we have seen "scores of foreign mission groups and sects directing competitive missionary activities at people already belonging to one of the churches in those countries." At no time during the ensuing days did I pick up even a single iota of dissent to the moderator's pointed remarks.

So what Seventh-day Adventists (and other religious bodies) regard as *evangelism* (in their eyes a perfectly legitimate and praiseworthy activity), the World Council of Churches labels *proselytism,* or sheep stealing—an activity it sees as illegitimate and unethical. "Recent years," said the moderator, "have seen an increase of aggressive evangelism [read proselytism] and competition in mission in an almost free-market spirit" in many areas of the world. This ought not to be, he said. And he urged member churches to implement the recommendations contained in the WCC document *Towards a Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and Renounce Proselytism.*

It doesn't take much to see that this is a philosophy that flies smack in the face of the mission agenda of most, if not all, evangelical bodies. Seventh-day Adventists, for example, are challenged to deliver a prophetic message for this hour to every person on earth. This should not mean, of course, that Adventists and others operate without regard for the status quo in any particular area, or without any concern for the sensibilities of other faiths. But it does mean, in the language of Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (a document the Harare assembly formally reaffirmed), that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion . . . [including] 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."

I have found that no matter how liberal we might be, there is always some issue on which we are rabidly conservative. For many member churches of the WCC, proselytism is that issue. And it would not surprise me if one day proselytism becomes the catalyst for conflict—even bloody conflict—among the various religious communities. Said a WCC official at a press conference I attended in Harare: "Religious liberty is a right for which there can be no derogation. But at the same time, it is not an unrestricted right."

When it comes to proselytism, the danger I see ahead is related precisely to that kind of doublethink.

Modified by the author and reprinted by permission from *Adventist Review,* March 5, 1999.

Globalization, Postmodernism, and Proselytism

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The Problem

Proselytism is becoming increasingly unpopular both in theological and in legal circles.[1] Theologically, the inherent incompatibility between ecumenism and proselytism among Christian denominations has been underlined (Sabra, 29–31), and the propriety of proselytism directed to members of non-Christian religions has been questioned (Robeck, 6). Legally, doubts have been raised about the inclusion of proselytism under the umbrella of religious freedom (ECC document: The Challenge of Proselytism, 1995, n. 15–17; Lapidoth, 460).

Traditionally, proselytism was viewed as an expression of the right to manifest one's religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance (Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 18, ICCPR). Now it is also viewed as a violation of the rights to privacy and religious identity (Articles 17 and 19, ICCPR), or of the right "to be left alone" (Minnerath, 8). Moreover, a negative attitude towards proselytism is implicit in the growing trend aimed to exclude any explicit reference to the right to change religion in international provisions on religious liberty, as this trend was (and is) mainly motivated by the desire to avoid any indirect or tacit approval of proselytism (Hirsch, 411–415; Evans, 191, 192, 196; Garay, 9–11).

Of course, resorting to various kinds of illegitimate activities has always been condemned; but now the focus of the debate is shifting from the illegitimate forms of proselytism to proselytism itself; thus the question is whether proselytism, even when correctly practiced, should be prohibited or at least limited (Hirsch, 415 ff., construing the religious domain as a "semi-private" domain and prohibiting proselytism activities from penetrating into it; Lerner, 559, arguing that protection of communal or collective identities is a legitimate limit to proselytism; Message, 59, excluding intra-Christian proselytism; Robeck, 2, about the

FIDES ET LIBERTAS
1999

requests to fix geographic or cultural boundaries to proselytism).

While this process is not new, in the last few years it has gained new impetus. This paper aims to provide a few indications which can help in analyzing and understanding this recent change.

The Basic Data: Membership, Change of Religion, and Proselytism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam[2]

First of all we need to look at the religions themselves because the way they think of membership is not the same; consequently, proselytism is also conceived differently.

The topic has already been explored by some scholars (for example, Morris, 238–245, distinguishing between communities of assent–the Christian model–on one hand, and communities of descent–the Jewish model–on the other hand). In my opinion, as far as proselytism is concerned the most important difference runs between religions where faith is primarily perceived as a personal relationship with God and religions where the accent is placed on the community as the provider of the indispensable spiritual and social context within which individual faith is nurtured (Kerr, 19). From this point of view the spectrum goes from the Protestant churches at one end to the Muslim community at the other, passing through the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches, and the Orthodox Jewish community.

I am aware of the limits of the distinction I have drawn and of the classification derived from it. This distinction needs to be put in a context that takes into account the historical and cultural habitat within which any religion develops. At any rate, it deserves to be tested–and examining the way by which a person becomes a member of a religious community is the first way to do it. All religions admit conversion, but some of them rely on transmission of the faith by birth (Islam and Judaism: see Pearl, 121 ff.; *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* "Jew," 24, 25); while others (Christianity) require baptism, i.e., a "voluntary" act of assent to the faith. But "voluntary" has a weaker meaning in the case of baptism of infants (which is the normal practice of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches) than in the case of baptism of adults (as required by, among others, Seventh-day Adventists and Baptists). Moreover, while church membership is directly connected to baptism in the Catholic and Orthodox churches, Evangelicals and other Protestant communities place much more stress on the personal commitment to follow the command of Jesus Christ (Nichols, 597; *Oxford Dictionary,* "Infant Baptism," 832). (By the way, these differences about membership have significant repercussions on the notion of being a "nominal" Christian, and there-

fore affect proselytism. This is considered legitimate by some, but not all, religious groups if practiced by Christians towards "nominal" Christians of a different denomination. See Robeck, 7.)

An examination of the way a person is allowed to leave a religious community can provide us with an instrument for a double check. Apostasy is punished by death according to Islamic law (Mayer, 149 ff., Sachedina, 53 ff., Rahman, 134); strictly speaking, apostasy is technically impossible according to Jewish law. A Jew born to a Jewish mother or a person properly converted to Judaism cannot change his or her religion (*Encyclopaedia Judaica,* "Apostasy," 212). The same applies to a Roman Catholic Christian: apostasy does not eliminate the obligations that he or she assumed with baptism (Naz, 649) even if the new Code of Canon Law is less firm on this point (Valdrini et al, 207). On the contrary, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Free churches, and in other Protestant groups, the withdrawal of a member frees him or her from any obligation towards the church he or she left (*Encyclopedia of Christianity,* "Church Membership," 549, 550).

Summing up this first set of affirmations, religions stressing the individual component of the relationship between a person and God are inclined to look at the entering and the leaving of a religious community as a matter of individual choice, while religions stressing the communitarian component of the same relationship tend to conceive membership in a religious community as something which is beyond individual decision.

Generally speaking, religions of the first type have had fewer problems than religions of the second in coming to terms with modernity.[3] In particular, they have been able to accept the notion of religious liberty which has taken shape in the West in the last two hundred years–a notion based on the supremacy of the individual conscience, a notion that includes the right to change religious affiliation, a notion that does not entail a negative consideration of proselytism correctly practiced. (On individual choice as a characteristic of modernity, see Berger, 1–31.)

These observations help to explain why specific anti-proselytism laws are not common in countries which are predominantly Protestant and Catholic (although limitations are sometimes placed on the activity of "sects," but that is something different from a general limitation of proselytism). On the contrary side we do find anti-proselytism laws in Greece[4] and Ukraine (Biddulph), in Israel,[5] and in many Muslim countries,[6] i.e., where the communitarian components of religion are stronger even if declined in different ways: in Islam, through the notion of *ummah,* which is political, social, and religious community at the same time

(Al-Ahsan); in Judaism, through the notion of "chosen people;" and in Orthodox Christianity, through the notion of local church (Habib, 22).

These last remarks highlight a second distinction between the two types of religions that have been identified: the relationship between religious and secular society is conceived by "communitarian" religions in much tighter terms than by "individual" religions.

Some comparative references to Jewish law, Muslim law, and Catholic canon law (which, along with Orthodox canon law, is one of the most extended and pervasive in the Christian world) tend to substantiate this affirmation. By opening a textbook of Jewish or Islamic law, it is easy to see that the area covered by these two legal systems is much larger than the area covered by canon law. It extends to topics (contracts, property, civil liability, etc.) which are scarcely considered by canon law. Only Jewish and Islamic law constitute a detailed corpus of theocratic law governing all aspects of life, religious and secular (Romney Wegner, 29; Englard [1987], 191; Dorff, 1333; Falk, 84; Schacht, 1; Hassan, 94). Canon law confines itself much more to the first of these aspects–religious life–and to the profiles which interest the organization of the church (David, 473). The same conclusion is reached if we look at divine law, i.e., the inner core of the three legal systems.

A consequence of this inclusive approach of Jewish and Islamic law to secular matters is the difficulties they experience in separating state and religion.[7] Moshe Silberg, making a point which applies to Judaism as well as to Islam (see Hassan, 93; Anderson [1957], 487, 488), writes that "the well known conciliatory advice 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' is a novelty created in the school of Christianity. Judaism does not recognize 'things of Caesar' at all" (Silberg, 321). Therefore, concludes Englard, the religious law of Judaism *(halakah)* "makes no functional distinction between worldly matters, given over almost exclusively to the political authority, and matters touching the well-being of the soul, coming within the jurisdiction of religious organs. . . . Human affairs are an integral concern of the *halakah* in precisely the same manner as matters between man and Divinity" (Englard, [1975], 24). As Englard himself recognizes (together with many others; for examples, see Maoz, 242; Falk [1980], 84; Falk [1981], 9–24), we are far away from canon law and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, based on the distinction between religion and politics, and church and state, but not so far away from the Orthodox Church, even if in this case the proximity of church and state is grounded on a dif-

ferent theological and historical approach–as we shall see in the next paragraph.

The attitudes concerning religious membership, change of religion, and church-state relations I have tried to describe are part of centuries-old traditions. They have always affected inter-religious and church-state relations, but their importance has recently been highlighted by a number of different factors. Leaving apart those factors which, though important, are more general (the "deprivatization"of religion [Casanova], the revival of its importance in the geopolitical scene [Johnston and Sampson], the links between religion and nationalism [Jurgensmeyer] on one hand and religion and cultural blocs [Huntington] on the other, etc.), I shall focus on the elements which have a more direct impact on proselytism. In my opinion, the most important among them are (A) the diffusion of "new religious movements," sometimes characterized by unusual and aggressive forms of proselytism;[8] (B) the spreading of Islamic "fundamentalism," with the consequent tightening of anti-missionary and anti-apostasy provisions; and (C) the re-emerging of the Orthodox churches after the fall of communism and the strengthening of a notion of national religion (and a corresponding dichotomy between national churches and foreign organizations) which previously was confined to Greece.[9] A fourth element of conflict is now taking shape and will confront us very soon: the clash between freedom of religion (and proselytism) on one hand, and the protection of indigenous communities on the other.[10]

Developmental Factors: (1) Globalization and Orthodox Christianity

To put it in the simplest possible way, one of the reasons of the strengthening negative attitude towards proselytism is the shifting equilibrium among the "individual" and "communitarian" religious groups mentioned above, resulting from the transformations in the Islamic and Orthodox world cited at the end of the preceding paragraph.

Starting with the second case, recent studies on globalization[11] provide a good framework to analyze developments concerning the Orthodox Church.

By increasing contacts among particular cultures and identities, globalization has the effect of relativizing them all, making much more visible the fact that diverse ways of living are largely human constructions (Featherstone, 8; Beyer, 2). At the same time, particular cultures and identities do not relate on an equal footing. Thus, through globalization, dominant cultures and identities spread their values to the rest of the globe (Ahmed and Donnan, 3). From

this point of view, globalization means the spreading of the "modern" values and institutions of the West to the "pre-modern" rest of the world (Beyer, 8; Ahmed, 98 ff.).[12] This process can undermine particular cultures and identities. But it can contribute to revitalizing those able to resist the process of globalization by appealing to a set of specific values (Aslan, 98).

The fall of communism left a void of values and ideals all over Central and Eastern Europe. This void was rapidly filled with the ideals, values, and "way of life" prevailing in the West, the United States in particular. The disruption that inevitably followed has triggered a reaction aimed to rediscover alternative values based on "local" tradition.

In providing these values, religions can play a relevant role, especially those that are very closely tied to the particular cultures and identities where they developed and which contributed to shape. Such is the case of the Orthodox religion. The Orthodox churches in Russia and in the Balkans had a prominent position in safeguarding the cultural identity of these populations during the Mongol and Ottoman dominations (Arzt, 427; Perenditis, 231–246). Their autocephalous organization brings them to take on the shape and characteristics of the culture in which they are practiced (Nichols, 622). Orthodox theology developed a particularly strong notion of the local church, according to which the identification of the faith with a people and a culture is a logical outcome of the incarnation (Habib, 22). Orthodox canon law is familiar with the principle "one church in one territory." The idea of a national church rests on this principle and likewise (coming directly to the subject of this paper) the demand that proselytism of other Christian churches be funneled through the Orthodox Church to help the church recover "its" lost faithful in the spirit of a joint witness to Christ (Volf, 26, quoting Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow; Nichols, 629, 634, 646), and that proselytism not be directed against the church.

Therefore it is not surprising that a link has been quite easily established between some political groups opposing foreign cultural and economic influence and an important part of the Orthodox Church in Russia and the Balkans, both being persuaded that defending "local" religion means at the same time defending "local" culture and identity (Berman, 301, stressing the ethnic character of the Orthodox Church; Biddulph, 337, regarding the situation in Ukraine). The message of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad at the WCC-CWME Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (November 1996) is a clear example of this connection: "Proselytism is not some narrow religious

activity generated by a wrong understanding of missionary task. Proselytism is the fact of invasion by another culture, even if Christian, but developing according to its own laws and having its own history and tradition" (Nichols, 645; on the adoption of similar arguments by the Catholic hierarchy in South America, see Robeck, 4, 5).

According to this conception, proselytism is a threat not only to a religious faith, but also to "the spiritual health of the nation, the future of the fatherland, and the preservation of its unique form" (Arzt, 422, quoting a 1997 declaration of the patriarch of Moscow; see also Nichols, 648, 650), so that the issue becomes both moral and cultural. This entitles the church to appeal to the state, in full compliance with the Orthodox "symphonic" conception of church-state relations. According to this model, the church provides the state with moral values and the state grants material support to the church. More often than not, the governments of Central and Eastern Europe, well aware that the Orthodox Church (or, in some countries, the Catholic Church[13]) is one of the few institutions in a position to fill the ideological void left by the fall of communism, have been willing to provide such support. In these cases, opposition against "foreign" proselytism has easily become one of the strongest links joining religion and culture in the struggle against globalization.

These remarks do not apply only to the Orthodox Church. Interestingly, Arzt's study of proselytism and the Muslim community in Russia reaches the conclusion that "Islam and Russian Orthodoxy . . . have more in common with each other than either does with the individualistic Western form of Christianity" (Arzt, 474). This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the text of the earlier drafts of Russia's 1997 law on freedom of conscience and religious associations which mentioned Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism, but not Christianity (i.e., non-Orthodox Christianity) which was apparently confined among the anonymous group of "other religions traditionally existing in the Russian Federation" (Arzt, 423). In general, the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism (Aslan, 234) and, in particular, the Islamic revolution in Iran (Beyer, 160 ff.) have been viewed (also) as a response to the impact of globalization. But in my opinion the developments concerning Islam can be better analyzed through the prism of post-modernity.

Developmental Factors: (2) Post-modernity and Islam

Post-modernism does not have the same meaning in the West as it does in the Islamic world where the rejection of modernity is largely perceived as the rejection of a set of values imported into

Islam and imposed by Western colonialism. Thus post-modernism means a reversion to traditional Muslim values as against foreign or Western ones. This is, in its inner core, what is called Islamic "revivalism," "resurgence," or "fundamentalism" (Ahmed, 29–33).

Among the traditional components of Islamic identity, the union of religion, society, and politics is absolutely central (Arzt, 389; Welch, 123): the post-modernist trend has had the effect to revert to a closer linkage of these elements, putting a brake on the attempts of Muslim "modernists" to develop a distinction among them on the base of the (scarce) sources found in the Quran and the Sunnah. The larger place recently given to *shari'a* (Islamic religious law) in the constitutions[14] and legal systems of some states (Mayer [1990–91]) is an example of this development. In this context, the reviving (Arjomand, 341 ff.) of the death penalty for apostasy (which had been forgotten for some time; Talbi, 183, affirms he had no knowledge of death penalties enforced before 1985) is considered an example of a post-modern return to pre-modern principles abandoned during the modern period of Islam (Mayer [1999], 157).

According to Islamic law the death penalty for apostasy is a *hadd* punishment, i.e., a punishment "for crimes mentioned by the Holy Quran or the Sunnah of the prophet" (Doi, 221). Therefore any state adopting a legal system based on the preeminence of *shari'a* is bound to be challenged, sooner or later, by the problem of the death penalty for apostates (even if Islamic law allows some degree of tolerance and discretionary power by offering to the apostate the possibility of repenting and thus escaping the punishment; this point is discussed extensively by Rahman).

The most common rationale put forward for the death penalty for apostasy is the damage inflicted by the apostate on the whole of society. In a 1993 answer to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, the Sudanese government stated: "Islam is regarded by Muslims not as a mere religion, but as a complete system of life. Its rules are prescribed not only to govern the individual's conduct, but also to shape the basic laws and public order of the Muslim state. Accordingly, apostasy from Islam is classified as a crime. . . . The punishment is inflicted in cases in which the apostasy is a cause of harm to the society, while in those cases in which an individual simply changes his religion the punishment is not to be applied. But it must be remembered that unthreatening apostasy is an exceptional case" (Evans, 256). Two years earlier the same rationale had been given by the government of Mauritania (Stahnke, 232). This affirmation (which has some

resemblance to the justification of the punishment for heresy in medieval Christianity) confirms that in a system where religion and citizenship are intermingled, the apostate who abandons the religion of the ancestors is regarded as abandoning a whole set of cultural, social, and historical elements which constitute the heritage of the community in which he or she lives. Apostasy becomes akin to treason (*Encylopedia of Religion,* 354). In such a context there can be no space for proselytism, as plainly declared by Maulana Maududi: "The execution of apostates has already decided the issue. Since we do not allow any Muslim to embrace any other religion, the question of allowing other religions to open their missions and propagate their faiths within our boundaries does not arise. We cannot tolerate it" (Ahmad). Even if this opinion is not shared by everybody in the Islamic world, the link between condemnation of apostasy and prohibition of proselytism is quite evident.

Some points made in reference to Islam have a certain affinity with what has been said concerning Orthodox Christianity, but it is a deceiving resemblance. The proximity of religious and secular society–of church and state in the Orthodox world–is based on ethnical and/or historical factors; the experience of being a nation is central and supports the notion of national church and national religion. Nevertheless, the distinction between the realm of God and the realm of Caesar remains a central part of the Orthodox doctrine, even if it is interpreted more narrowly than in other Christian churches. In Islam, however, ethnical elements, albeit not absent, do not play a decisive role, and the idea of nation has a different meaning, being the "nation of believers" or the *ummah,* i.e., something which is actually supranational from the point of view of the Western concept of nation. The specific characters of Islam are the basic union of religion and society on one hand, and, on the other, the lack of a process of secularization as wide and deep as that experienced by most Christian churches (Gellner, 5, 6). Therefore the perception of proselytism is also different. Primarily, the danger does not come from outside (foreign missionaries), but from inside (the member of the Islamic *ummah* who wants to divide religion and socio-cultural identity). This difference could explain why, in Orthodox countries, the accent is placed on the need to limit foreign proselytism and, in Islamic countries, on the punishment of the converted Muslim (even if limitations on proselytism by non-Muslims have deep roots in Islamic law, as already noted).

Developmental Factors: (3) Post-modernity[15] and the West

Previously it has been said that the revival of both Orthodoxy and Islam have contributed to giving proselytism an increasingly negative connotation. Now we should deal with a third factor, one that has its roots implanted deep in the Western world.

Post-modernity in the West entails a discontinuity with modern values and ideals (as in Islam), but without clearly identifying an alternative path. Christianity is far from playing in the West the role Islam plays in the East as an alternative to modernity.[16] Therefore modern ideals become weaker, but new values are not (yet?) emerging as a viable and sufficiently shared alternative.

The issue of post-modernity (or trans-modernity, as others prefer to call it; see Cleveland and Luyckx, 256) is by far too complicated to be dealt with here. I shall limit myself to note that the "revanche de Dieu" (as the return of religion into the "public" arena has been called; see both Keppel and Casanova) contradicts the separation between religion and society which is a fundamental tenet of modernity. But the path towards a new balance, which overcomes the "modern" separation between religion and society without deleting their distinction, is by no means clear.

This uncertainty affects the notion of religious liberty. The limits of the post-World War II legal tradition, which underline the individual side of the right to religious liberty, are becoming more and more evident (as, for example, in dealing with the demands of the Islamic communities in Europe); but it is unclear how far we can push the collective side of that right to accommodate more largely the needs of religious groups and organizations without recreating unacceptable pre-modern restrictions on human conscience. Equally unclear is where to draw the line between what is part of the core of religious liberty (and therefore not negotiable without affecting the identity of a community) and what is part of its historical tradition (and therefore could be negotiated in order to accommodate a different *Weltanshauung*).

A couple of examples will illustrate this state of confusion.

A group of Arhuacas, an indigenous community within Colombia, converted to the Pentecostal United Church of Colombia. Arhuaca authorities complained that Pentecostal doctrine and practice were contrary to their culture. Eventually the matter went to Colombia's Constitutional Court–whose decision (No. 510/1998) served to protect the ethnic and cultural integrity of the Arhuaca community at the expense of the converts' right to be proselytized in particular and their religious freedom in general (Morales Hoyos, 10, 12). While the first value is certainly worthy of respect, one wonders whether religious liberty was thus deemed

less important and whether a better balance between the two could not have been struck. If not, we should conclude that minorities which base their existence on a religious choice are less protected than minorities which base their existence on ethnic or national identity (Stahnke, 274, 300–305).

The issue of proselytism by what are called "sects" and "new religious movements" offers another example of the present confused state of affairs. Provided it is not practiced in an illegitimate way, proselytism by "sects" and "new religious movements" should be as acceptable as proselytism by older, more established religious groups. But some governments have been trying to limit such proselytism by asserting that these "sects" and "new religious movements" are not religions at all. And some churches have put forward the objection that these groups (at least some of them) do not participate in the ecumenical dialogue (Robeck, 4, 6, 7, quoting various Roman Catholic and World Council of Churches documents; see also Minnerath, 1, 9, 10, on the notion of "exclusive concept of truth").

Even assuming that these arguments are at least in part correct, they tend to muddle the problem by introducing elements (the definition of religion, the notion of proselytism, etc.) which have little or no weight on the legal discipline of proselytism.

Conclusions

My conclusions are not optimistic. I am afraid that the causes I have discussed are taking us toward a period when conflicts among different religious groups will increase. The intensity of these conflicts could be reduced if the religious communities would restrain their activities–if they would simply apply self-imposed guidelines, or codes of good conduct. Thus a group might decide to avoid activities it deems legitimate, but which are likely to offend the sensitivity of another religious group. Nevertheless, this voluntary self-restraint should not interfere with the definition and legal discipline of proselytism. This should rest on the precise distinction between legitimate and illegitimate methods–a distinction which should not take into account the geographical or cultural areas where proselytism is practiced, nor the subjects (churches, new religious movements, etc.) which practice it.

Notes

[1] In this paper I use the term "proselytism" without the negative connotation it has recently acquired. When the term is negatively connoted, I refer to "improper proselytism." On the changing meaning of proselytism (confirming the theological and legal trends mentioned in the text), see Lerner, p. 490; and Nichols, p. 566.

[3]I regret I do not have the necessary knowledge to deal with this topic in reference to other religions, but it is well known that the rights to change religion and to proselytize are also burning issues in regard to Buddhism and Hinduism. For example, see the limits to the change of religion included in the constitution of Nepal, a predominantly Buddhist country (Art. 19.1).

[4]I use the term "modernity" to refer to the principles and values in the West following the Enlightenment.

[5]Art. 13.2 of the Constitution and Law 1672/1939. On their interpretation, see Marinos.

[6]The Penal Law Amendment (Enticement to Change of Religion) Law, 5738-1977, does not prohibit any kind of proselytism (as does Art. 13.2 of the Greek Constitution), but only the enticement to change religion through money or material benefits. See Lerner, pp. 20, 21.

[7]According to Islamic law, the *dhimmi* is not allowed to proselytize (Arzt [1996], p. 414), but it must be remembered that for a long time the same rule applied to non-Christians in Christian countries. About the restrictions placed on proselytism in Muslim countries, see Stahnke, pp. 267, 276, 283, 284, 307–310.

[8]This last affirmation applies also to some Christian countries like England and the Scandinavian nations. But the weak separation between religion and state is not dependent here on a weak separation between religion and society (see Bauberot, pp. 29, 30), as it is in Israel and many Muslim countries. On the contrary, England and the Scandinavian nations have been exposed to an advanced process of secularization.

[9]Although in this paper I shall not deal with the methods of proselytism adopted by some "new religious movements," these methods have had a relevant impact on the general discussion of proselytism and, in particular, on the attempt to draw a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of proselytism.

[10]At least within the borders of "free Europe." As already noted, in the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain there were–and there are–national churches, but without the social and cultural pervasiveness of the Orthodox church in Greece (Bauberot, pp. 29, 30).

[11]See *infra*.

[12]By globalization I mean the rapid development in communication technology and the concomitant rapid increase in the transmission of knowledge and information which bring the remotest part of the world within easy reach, virtually putting an end to the isolated community (Aslan, p. 98; Ahmed and Donnan, p. 1). At a different but no less important level, population movements (migrant workers, refugees, etc.) have had the same effect in fostering contacts among people of different cultures (Ahmed and Donnan, pp. 4–7; Durham, p. 11).

[13]I would stress that the dominant culture is also affected by globalization (Beyer, p. 9). But this very complex topic cannot be adequately summarized here.

[14]The concordats recently signed by the Holy See and some states of Central Europe (Croatia, Hungary, Poland, with others under negotiation) can be viewed as a sign of the willingness of these governments to support the Catholic church (Ferrari, pp. 176–178).

[15]For an example, see Art. 4 of the Iranian Constitution of 1979: "All civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, [and] political laws and regulations, as well as any other laws or regulations, [shall] be based on Islamic principles. This principle will in general prevail over all the principles of the Constitution and other laws as well."

[16]I shall not dare to define postmodernity. What I am interested in is that "postmodern theory often implies a rupture with the philosophic basis of the modern Enlightenment era, which, in the legal context, institutionalizes various ideals as truth" (Stone, p. 833).

[16]From this point of view, Gellner's thesis about the resistance to secularization as the characteristic distinguishing Islam from other religions (Christianity in particular) is worthy of attention.

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Proselytism and/or Interreligious Dialogue

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The question of proselytism is at the heart of UNESCO's conception and programmatic implementation of interreligious dialogue. Our expanded interdisciplinary program, "Towards a Culture of Peace," is committed to promote tolerance and mutual knowledge. "Spiritual Convergences and Interreligious Dialogue," a subsidiary program, was developed from a UNESCO report on the important contribution of religions and spiritual traditions to essential questions today: peace, globalization, development, human rights, environment, and individual, ethnic, and religious barriers.

As a matter of fact, in 1992 UNESCO commenced "Les Routes de la Foi" ("The Roads to Faith"), a project to highlight the major role of religious and spiritual traditions in solving current problems and to create a framework for the exploration of new avenues for dialogue among cultures, civilizations, and faith communities as a means to strengthening peace.

The 1995 Rabat, Morocco, meeting of the three great religions of the Book—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—brought to light an essential prerequisite to interreligious dialogue: full acceptance of others to establish a solid background of religious tolerance. As a result, the dialogue among the three monotheistic religions was enlarged to include other spiritual traditions. Therefore, at the 1997 Malta meeting, convened to evaluate interreligious initiatives, a declaration was adopted that underlines the urgency of promoting a reciprocal knowledge of scriptural texts, spiritual traditions, and specific cultures. In accordance with the Rabat and Malta propositions and at the request of specific countries and religious institutions, UNESCO is in the process of creating a network of UNESCO chairs for the "mutual understanding of religions, spiritual traditions, and their specific cultures."

UNESCO's director general has established an International Advisory Committee on Interreligious Dialogue. Its first task is to consider the importance of mutual understanding in interreligious dialogue. Acceptance and understanding: these fundamental condi-

tions of interreligious dialogue seem to us to be essential to a deeper understanding of the issue of proselytism.

In this context, I quote a vital paragraph from the Malta Declaration:

"Such a dialogue, far from disregarding the differences among our respective spiritual heritages, allows us to discover these differences, to know one another better, and to enrich one another. It does not drive each individual to dissolve into the other, but to affirm his convictions. Dialogue does not aim at the fusion of spiritual identities, or the elaboration of syncretism, or a forum for proselytism. Its aim is openness, respect, and the recognition of the possibility of living together in a pluralistic context."

The premise of interreligious dialogue is that each religion and spiritual tradition makes known its uniqueness in two basic dimensions: essence and expression. Accordingly, such interreligious dialogue implies the liberty to express unique specificities in the context of a legal framework wherein each individual is free to develop his or her convictions while respecting fellow human beings.

Interreligious dialogue bears as much on religious essence as on religious expression. But history and certainly current events teach us that the recognition of universal values shared by religions and spiritual traditions is often accompanied by misunderstanding, divergence, and hostility to manifestations of religious essence. Antagonism is often aimed at the manifestations of faith rather than the essence of the faith: rituals, liturgies, vestments, food, collective ceremonies. External expressions of faith have often been regarded as the pretext for ostracism and for actual attacks with dreadful consequences.

It is important to keep in mind that history has a long memory—especially religious history. It is then possible to understand that the concept of proselytism has always tended to be understood in two ways: the degree of dialogue or the degree of intolerance. In their very nature, all religions proselytize. It is what moves religions to spread, to exist in time and geographic space. For after all, they believe they possess truth and are the messengers of truth unique and universal. And they believe that a convert, or a "newcomer" (the first meaning of *proselyte*) has a mission: to communicate this message to everyone everywhere. Therefore, in the course of history, religions have often extended themselves far from their places of birth, influenced on the way by other religious traditions, especially in external manifestations, but also in their essence (for we find compromise to dogmatism in all the spiritual traditions). Thus the pertinence of the concept of "roads" in UNESCO's program of interreligious dialogue, bringing to light interactions, exchanges, and mutual influences generated through the movements of people and ideas—including missionaries and their mes-

sages. The "roads" concept highlights the dynamism that forged durable cultural identities—and, therefore, spiritual and religious identities. Therefore, proselytism is, in this context, a prerequisite for the development, maturation, and enrichment of any spiritual tradition.

In the UNESCO approach, which spotlights the processes, mechanisms, and results of secular interaction among cultures and religions, proselytism in the sense of free expression and the sharing of the essence of one's faith is a condition of interreligious dialogue. But dialogue is no longer possible when one wants to impose personal convictions, when one wishes the effacement of another. Proselytism can manifest itself as a form of intolerance. Proselytism can then be accused of being used as a mask, implacably ideological and positioned to track, subvert, question, and deny the essence of the message and the expression of the message. Result? Strategies of camouflage emerge. Expressions and rituals are borrowed from the dominant traditions. For example, during the Middle Ages, in the period of peaceful cohabitation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Andalusia, the phenomenon of "acculturation" emerged. To facilitate coexistence, minority communities adopted the habits of the majority faith. In such conditions there is no authentic dialogue.

In thinking about proselytism, one must be cognizant of the complex relationship between religions and spiritual traditions and other elements of human knowledge. Science comes to mind. In the course of history, religion—a body of fixed beliefs and dogmas and, by definition, dependent on the irrational—was considered to be in opposition to science, usually understood to exist and have meaning in a purely rational environment. An example: the open debate between creation and evolution. And now the affirmation of compatibility between Faith and Science is, paradoxically, interpreted as a strategy for proselytism in which science is suspected of being used to spread a religion.

For UNESCO, the development of a definition of the concept of *proselytism,* its scope and its meaning with regard to religious liberty, coming from different spiritual communities, would be a significant step in the promotion of interreligious dialogue. The rapport of proselytism and fundamentalism needs to be explored. And finally one must ask if a certain degree of proselytism is not the necessary condition to avoid spiritual confinement and religious fundamentalism in their aspects of the rejection of proselytism.

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The Right to Proselytize and Freedom of Conscience in France Today

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A useful hypothesis comes from the sociology of religion: *Proselytism constitutes a most significant instrument to assess the depth of a national attitude* because, as Durkheim said (1912): "A society is not only made up of the masses, of the territory it encompasses, and of the movements it accomplishes, [but also] of the idea that it has of itself." Conflicts, when they appear, happen "not between the ideal and reality, but among different ideals."

From the 16th century to the 20th, the conflicts that gave birth to modern, liberal, and democratic France pinpoint religion as an issue mingled with religious issues. This fact is fundamental and necessary to understand the strong attitude of the French today regarding proselytism, even if they may be unaware of the attitude.

(1) The Edict of Nantes and its revocation

One must go back to the religious wars of the 16th century (1562–1598) that seared the collective memory of the French. The partial success of the Protestant Reformation (nearly 10% of the population, but one fourth of the nobility) required new solutions to keep the peace. Two were possible.

First, a religious concord was attempted at the Colloquium of Poissy in 1561, wherein unity was based on a theological agreement between the two parties. The concord was obtained with the political guaranty of the prince whose duty was to enforce it. This could have opened the doors to a form of "Gallicanism" (analogous in part to Anglicanism) since the conciliators were proposing the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (the basic Lutheran statement) as a basis for a compromise on the Eucharist (there were major differences touching on fundamental beliefs and important rites). But both sides rejected the compromise.

Royal power then selected a second option: a bolder political stance favoring civil tolerance which assigned relative liberty of worship to the Protestants (January 1562). This was intolerable to many Catholics and the Wars of Religions erupted two months later. But the king did not give up. The Peace of Saint-Germain,

achieved in 1570, was even more favorable to the Protestants. The infamous massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24, 1572) appeared to put an end to the policy of civil tolerance.

Well, that was not really the case. After 40 years of often cruel war, Henry IV imposed a policy of civil tolerance with the Edict of Nantes (May 1598). It granted Protestants full freedom of conscience (including some elements of religious freedom), while preserving, naturally, the Catholic character of the kingdom (see in particular B. Cottret, 1997). The Edict of Nantes effected a cultural break at a time when the unity of faith formed the very foundation of society itself, when any division of belief was seen as blasphemy. This directly concerns our topic. Contrary to what others have written, the Edict of Nantes did not prohibit proselytism, but, ironically, demanded something even harder to accomplish: an attitude of understanding and respect for divergent convictions. Article 16 of the Edict is worth examining:

Let us enjoin . . . all preachers and others who speak in public to exercise restraint and modesty in their speech and exhortations as they edify and instruct the public, without using words that may move it to trouble or sedition, as also we forbid all classes of people to publish libelous and defamatory writings, under the penalty of severe punishment, especially recommending to all our judges and officers to uphold said decisions and to punish the culpable without regard or exception to person.

In its preamble, the Edict of Nantes is declared perpetual and irrevocable. Thus when Louis XIV actually did cancel it in 1685, indignant Protestant writers based their objections on these terms in order to demonstrate that the revocation was totally illegitimate.

Historians of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, religious as well as secular, have tended to take the words of the preamble literally, thus emphasizing moral history. Studies done to commemorate the third centennial of the revocation (1985) showed that the expression "perpetual and irrevocable" should be reinterpreted: the Edict of Nantes could not be abolished except by another similar in nature. During the commemoration of the fourth centennial of the issuing of the edict (1998), some historians, including Wanegffelen, took a meaningful step in a different direction. They applied a literal reading to another formula in the preamble which states that it is regrettable that God could be worshiped "still in a similar form of religion." This application put forward the idea that, on one hand, the edict was founded on a desire for religious unity, and on the other, that it carried within itself its own code of revocation: "Revocation was a way to be faithful to the spirit of the Edict of Nantes by putting an end to a temporary tolerance which it established, while awaiting for something better

to come" (Wanegffelen, Le Figaro, February 19, 1998).

I find such a historiography quite curious, even unsound. At this point the following question emerges: What if such a method of analyzing things does not reveal that the people who believe themselves to be very tolerant are the very ones who find it difficult to accept pluralism in French society? Perhaps this discussion will help us understand some aspects implicit in present French society, or at least the mentality that forms a part of it. Most revealingly, in the epilogue to his work, the same author does not create a critical distance from the fuzzy criteria established by the Parliamentary Commission in 1996 to justify issuing a list of "sects" said to be "dangerous." However, these criteria, and the very principle behind such a list being developed for other than for judicial reasons, have been contested both by internationalists (M. Introvigne, J. Gordon Melton, 1996) and also (but gradually) by journalists (F. Champion, M. Cohen, 1999). It appears then that for the movements thus described and listed, the chief reproach laid against them is that of "intense proselytism" (S. Fath, Le christianisme au XXeme siecle, April 11–17, 1999).

(2) Pluralism and proselytism: a French problem

Let us return briefly to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The process that allowed it to happen (going back to 1660) was disguised as a search for religious concord (E. Labrousse, 1985). It was actually something else, for anti-Protestant repressions were still perpetrated in the 18th century. How then can one otherwise understand that, if the French "Lumieres" was more radical than its Aufklarung and Enlightenment counterparts, if it accused religion of fanaticism, wasn't it simply because acts of religious fanaticism really did exist in France? Thus, Marie Durand (1712–1776) and other women were imprisoned in the Tower of Constance, south of Nimes, from 1730 to 1768. Such acts did not connote the same meaning as they did earlier. In the 16th century persecution was the other side of the coin of an act of faith and was more collective than individual. In the 18th century, persecution became cruel because faith was less active, more individualized, even intimate (M. Vovelle, 1973). The politico-religious system (an absolute monarchy and ecclesiastical Gallicanism) was responsible for this situation, but religion in general suffered for a long time. Voltaire was read more in the 19th and 20th centuries than he was in the 18th.

Freedom of conscience was affirmed in 1789, and, two years later, free exercise of religion. But the rapid radicalization of the revolution stifled free competition among religions. The pluralism that appeared with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte (1802) was ambiguous. In theory, the plurality of "recognized churches" guar-

anteed their freedom and equality. In practice, Catholicism (according to the Concordat, "the religion of the majority of the French") appeared as privileged in comparison to other churches. The Lutheran church, the Reformed church, and other Protestant churches—and Judaism too—were often termed, even in official documents, "dissident churches." The organizational model of other churches had to follow the blueprint of the Catholic church—or at least be mindful of it. But a certain ambiguity lingered: Does religious liberty thus achieved allow also for a change in religion?

Since the Jews did not proselytize, we are left with the various movements in Protestantism—the recognized Lutheran and Reformed churches as well as the various Evangelical versions of Protestantism (which were developing all through that century)—as the framework for analysis of the right to proselytize in France.

Under the Monarchy of July (1830–1848) and the Second Republic (1848–1851), small movements of collective conversions to Protestantism took place in villages, hamlets, even in some urban quarters. Catholics were seeking a more modern form of Christian expression, one less predicated on the ideas of the past." This passage to Protestantism revealed a certain anti-clerical feeling, accompanied by a popular desire for religious innovation (J. Bauberot, 1985). During the Second Empire, these movements were repressed; semi-clandestine worship services were held in the woods and in the fields. The distribution of the Bible was not protected from judicial intervention. It is only with the liberal laws of 1880 (laws on the freedom to canvass, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc.) that evangelization by Protestants became really free. But at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, there developed an aggressive attitude against Protestantism. Among the accusations brought forward, some related to evangelization. The evangelists were Prussian or British spies preparing the way for an invasion by the British army, all proven by the spies' "purchase" of consciences. In his 1882 novel *The Evangelist,* Alphonse Daudet accuses them of practicing a form of brainwashing (J. Bauberot, V. Zuber, 1999).

It is not astonishing then that militant Protestants also favored the separation of churches from the state, this a result of the "conflict of the two Frances" running all through the 19th century. Official religious pluralism was largely determined by a dualistic confrontation—a political-ideological struggle between two concepts of the nation. One perceived France as a nation based on the values of the Revolution; the other as, above all, a Catholic nation. Tied to these two perceptions were two visions of citizenship. The first view was of an individual and the state side by side, hostile to all well-structured secondary groups. The second integrated the

person within a social network comprising the secondary groups, of which the Catholic church is by far the most important.

Protestants feared most those who perceived France as a Catholic nation. At the same time, they found themselves in two camps: those in favor of a secular society and those who had a passion for evangelization (J. Bauberot, 1985). Some Evangelicals, especially, saw the separation of church and state as providing an opportunity to profess clearly one's position on faith. From then on the question "What do I believe in"? or "What don't I believe in?" would be asked of each person. Without doubt, separation produced much more ambivalence than had been bargained for. Despite certain permutations, it remains in force today.

(3) Secular society and proselytism

Thus it is necessary to evaluate this ambivalence and indicate the main developments.

The law on separation marks a very important religio-political upturn, for this seldom evolves in such a short period. Its magnitude is still underestimated by French historiography. (The best work on the subject, Larkin's *Church and State After the Dreyfus Affair* [1974] was published in English and not widely distributed.) The opposition of militant Catholics to militant Republicans reached its peak with the Dreyfus Affair (even if, in the beginning, the Republicans were themselves far from being fully convinced supporters of Dreyfus). The struggle was very much alive at the beginning of the 20th century. It resulted in a new wave of population migration. Approximately 30,000 congregants, deprived of their right to teach, were exiled. Thus the bill on separation proved to be harsh on Catholic churches as it attempted to reduce drastically the overall influence of Catholicism and establish a principle of the equality of all churches which would drive all religions to dwell under the same roof. But the partisans of freedom of conscience and the friends of religious minorities opposed a proposal introduced in the fall of 1904 which continued the lean in that direction. They wanted to allow for the maximum competition possible among various religious forms. But even this was not acceptable to the Catholics of the time. Some of them, however, (socialists, in particular, whose priority addressed "social questions"), wanted to see an end to the "War of the Two Frances." So they drafted a bill which was not only liberal, but which also implicitly favored Catholic unity by preempting the rise from within of any dissidence which some observers believed was about to take place in the Catholic Church (Bauberot, 1990). Nonetheless, it would take the Catholic church 20 years to come to terms with the notion of separation.

Paradoxically, separation, born of a deep distrust between the Church of Rome and the Republic, energized Catholicism. Though no longer the official, established religion, it would remain for the majority of the French the religion of reference. In effect, separation deinstitutionalizes religion in its relations with global society and, to its own disadvantage, tends to place a premium on historical legitimacy founded on promises of innovation.

Three levels of legitimacy are in operation here: Catholicism, the religion that shaped the history and culture of France; Protestantism and Judaism, always present in French history as religious minorities, whose accession of a relative, symbolic legitimacy is tied to the founding of modern France; and Islam, existing for centuries on the world scene and present in the French colonial empire, but which now appears to some as an external intrusion, maybe even as the revenge of a formerly colonized people. Islam attracts: it is estimated that 50,000 individuals have converted. But at the same time, Islam finds itself denied all symbols of legitimacy by those still tied to a nationalistic ideology.

Two other religious phenomena render the situation more complex.

First, there is the upsurge of an increasingly attractive Buddhism (B. Etienne and R. Logier, 1997). One survey suggests that 46% of young French think Buddhism is conducive to personal fulfillment, but only 29% believe the same about Christianity (La Vie, March 27,1997). Buddhism is seen as a set of diverse elements, totally reinterpreted and inferred as a philosophy, which is supposed to convey spirituality much better than a genuine religion. For example, reincarnation is conceived, in essence, as a new opportunity for self-fulfillment offered to one and all, but all the while, according to traditional Buddhism, the ultimate aim is rather to break the cycle of reincarnation.

The second phenomenon is the constellation of sects and new religious movements which do not possess that symbolic legitimacy acquired by history. Their anti-societal strategy may be perceived as a social menace. Charges made against them are similar to those made against Catholic congregations at the beginning of the 20th century: questions pertaining to finance and sex—the total breaking-away from the very heart of one's origin. Add to this the complaint concerning certain medical practices. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions. One may argue that these groups are really not newcomers, and that, at any rate, they are evolving towards a less conflicted modus vivendi with society in general (P. Dericquebourg, 1999). This is where one must consider proselytism as one of the many reasons why these movements are responded to so aggressively.

That assertive proselytism has in the last decade moved beyond

the masses to target members of the middle class may be disquieting to some. Even physicians are being drawn to such groups. This is similar to the situation in the 1970s when some physicians became active in politicized anti-medicine movements.

Fears that may lead to mass suicide can be both fueled and validated by empirical facts. This is illustrated in the case of the Order of the Solar Temple which recruited from the upper classes of society. A combination of things is operative in such situations. Deep societal fears are often exacerbated by harsh reactions. In different countries allegations of "deviance" give rise to global stigmatization instead of being treated as separate, local, and unrelated matters. If this is so, it is, without doubt, due in part due to the fact that first generation converts, convinced that they have found the "truth," are cut off in an ambient relativism, with the destruction of wavering beliefs. This is not a specifically French phenomenon, but it is more acute in France than in other countries (the debate continues). In any case, even when conversions occur among groups that have achieved established religious legitimacy (Protestantism, for example), what witnesses say seems to give credence to the perception that in general the milieu of conversion is hostile. The basic differences between Catholics and Protestants cause more uneasiness in some companies of believers than do questions on such fundamental doctrines as the virgin birth of Christ. One understands then that conversions to groups considered, justifiably or not, to be sources of dangerous behaviors, increase the level of concern. While I have not surveyed Islam, I suspect that some conversions are related to marriages or take place in an artistic milieu, which makes them slightly more acceptable.

Multiple religious affiliations are quite socially acceptable. Catholics can worship regularly with Protestants and even accept the responsibility of becoming active participants in Protestant congregations while still calling themselves Catholic and preserving the specific beliefs that constitute the Church of Rome. Other people, while always stating they are Catholics, will integrate into their universe of beliefs spiritual themes Francoise Champion (1990) calls "nebulous esoteric mysticism." Such syncretism applies to religion the logic of consumerism—the exacerbated situation of a consumer society produced by socio-economic globalization. This is the reigning mentality. The symbolic universe is impregnated with an extreme centripetal logic which not only seeks to impose civil pluralism on society in general (this is a *fait accompli*), and doctrinal pluralism on the churches (for some important confessions this acculturation to global society is already accomplished), but also something akin to "a pluralism in the head" wherein the monopoly of a creed has to vacate the con-

science leaving the logic of the supermarket to reign in its place. One can understand that this goes against the cultural acceptance of proselytism even if proselytism is legally permissible and includes socially controversial religious groupings (ruling of the Lyon Court of Appeals, July 28, 1997).

Generally speaking, the religious groups most active in proselytizing are small and, when their behavior is not subject to criticism, not at all well known in societal circles, including the cultural elite. These groups promote their beliefs as certainties, the content of which may appear to be sharp, simplistic and repetitious. The adoption of these certainties—even an attraction to them—requires not only a change in the content of belief (this is always true), but a questioning of the free-floating form of thinking prevalent in contemporary society. Daily penetrating (by the media) the intimacy of the family, such thinking imposes itself on the average individual in an insidious and totalitarian way by the very fact that it takes the shape and form of the fundamental values of a democratic society. Bluntly stated, the media, following their own logic and without explicit intention, tend to impose pluralism on the mind (which is the negation of freedom of conscience) in the name of a pluralism necessary to civil society (which is the very condition of freedom of conscience). The media proceed in this manner because the structure of mass communication short-circuits the distance between the most public of arenas, the world and events in it, and the most private of spheres, the dining room or even the bedroom where sits enthroned a TV if not an entire multimedia system.

Though a consequence of democracy, the multiple small groups that actively proselytize paradoxically appear as opposed to it. This has a very strong resonance in France because it reminds people, implicitly, of a time when the Catholic church opposed the Republic. Secular society, like the Edict of Nantes in its time, has had to have recourse to a certain discretion in its public manifestations in order to safeguard civil peace. In the mind of most French citizens, separation means a certain reservation in the public manifestation of what is religious—a reservation, as in variable geometry, depending on which level of legitimacy is indicated. I suggest that if young Muslims had surrounded Paris in a "Hands Around Paris," the reaction would have been very different from that which followed the event organized by young Catholics on World Youth Day in August of 1997.

Without differing substantially from the situation in other countries, the matter of proselytism and freedom of conscience in France nonetheless appears particularly complex. I believe it is important for experts to ponder a *code de bonne conduite* which would, on one hand, clearly claim the right to proselytize, and on

the other hand, take into account social realities, thus distinguishing it totally from the time and spirit of the Crusades.

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Proselytism and Religious Liberty in Russia

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For many Christians in Russia (and Russian Christians abroad), proselytism is a synonym of religious liberty: the right of each person "to hold beliefs free, to search, to get, and to spread information and ideas by any means irrespective of state borders."

Although this word is used only once in the Russian translation of the Bible, the idea and the spirit of proselytism are present in a greater part of the books which comprise the Holy Scripture. No one can object to the statement that the first proselytes of the New Testament (and of course they were not the last) were the Savior's twelve disciples. Originally Jewish in faith, they converted to Christianity and followed their teacher, Jesus Christ. Thus in its original meaning the word "proselytism"is not intrinsically negative. It actually points to those who turn to God sincerely and turn from a religion of rites to the religion of spirit.

Still, though, we should consider the fact that in the minds of most of our contemporaries "proselytism" is the word associated with the aggressive enticement of people from one faith to another. Accordingly, many churches have officially rejected this term. But none of them ceased missionary activity, their generally recognized responsibility.

In Russia prior to the 20th century only my church—the Orthodox Church—could engage in proselytism. Conversion from Orthodoxy to another religion was considered a crime, punishable by the law of the state. When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, the "problem" of conversion ceased to exist. For some 70 years the authorities advanced the policy of national atheism. Only in the last decade have we seen an extreme flaring of passion about proselytism.

And not just by chance. After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, more than half of the Orthodox congregations of the Moscow patriarchate found themselves to be "abroad," mainly in Ukraine, now an independent nation. Following the example of nearly all the so-called Orthodox countries of the past

and the present, Ukrainian officials decided to establish their own national church structure whatever the effects.

The breakup of the Russian Orthodox Church into national churches was an unpleasant event. But what greatly effected Ukraine was the mass conversion of nearly five million to the Greek Catholic Church (the Uniat church) under the spiritual power of the pope. Almost 400 years earlier, their ancestors had done the same thing during a struggle between Moscow and Warsaw over control of Ukraine. In the 1940s members of the Uniat church came back to Orthodoxy by order of Stalin. Now we see that brute force failed the test of time.

The drama in Ukraine has resulted in a drastically aggravated relationship between the Moscow patriarchate and the Vatican. Moscow openly accused Rome of "proselytism." Responding to the accusations, the Roman Catholic Church issued—in Russian and clearly intended for Russia—a collection of official documents on this issue. Included in the collection was the complete 1990 Code of Canon Law which declares that "no one can dare to call a believer to conversion into another church."

The Vatican prepared another document, "General Principles and Practical Regulations for the Coordination of the Evangelistic Activity and Ecumenical Obligation of the Catholic Church in Russia and in Some Other CIS States," following a meeting (Geneva, March 1 and 2, 1992) with Russian Orthodox representatives. It stated that "so-called proselytism, i.e., any kind of pressure on conscience wherever it comes from, contradicts apostleship and does not represent the method by which Catholic Church pastors can be inspired."

Commenting specifically on the destiny of the Ukrainian Uniat Church, the document states: "One cannot call 'proselytism' the fact that entire congregations, together with their priests, who had been forced to acknowledge themselves Orthodox during the years of persecutions and destructions in order to survive, declared, when they regained freedom, their membership in the Greek Catholic Church."

The Russian Orthodox Church asserted that it considers all of the former Soviet Union to be the "canonic territory"of the Moscow patriarchate and, further, cannot accept the fact that descendants of Orthodox who are now nonbelievers go to those who are not Orthodox, i.e., to Christians of other denominations—Catholic, Protestant, even other Orthodox religious organizations not under the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate.

Meanwhile, the ROC as well as other religious organizations commenced active and successful missionary work among the people. To some extent, this success was predetermined by Russia's

emerging from self-isolation and her opening of borders to an exchange of people and ideas. The end of the persecution of believers within the Russian Federation came only recently.

Non-Orthodox Christians—Protestant and Catholic—often found the common language of witness to yesterday's nonbelievers more productive than did the representatives of the biggest religious organization in the country. They were better prepared. For the ROC, the establishing of new parishes on a mass scale caused a personnel crisis. Men who were certainly not ready for service became priests. It was easier for other Christian denominations: they had fewer churches. Moreover, the non-Orthodox now found themselves more liberated from the burden of years of inherited intolerance—which helped them to gain the confidence of people who had not yet made their spiritual choice. Such was the backdrop against which calls were issued "to defend Orthodox Russia from aggressive, totalitarian sects and false missionaries from abroad."

The newspaper *Pravda* was the first to open fire on foreign missionaries. As early as the winter of 1993 it reported that 200,000 preachers from the United States were going to attack Russia and establish 200,000 new religious organizations. Very soon it became clear that this allegation was not supported by fact. But seeds of suspicion and intolerance against foreigners and those having different trends of thought were sown and they began to germinate.

The result of this battle with foreign missionaries is well known. In 1997 the State Duma passed the law entitled "About Liberty of Conscience and Religious Unions." It legalized religious discrimination in Russia. No one doubted that this first step toward the restriction of the rights of believers in Russia would be followed by others. This is precisely what happened.

Speaking in Athens in May of 1999, Bishop Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad demanded the revision of international rules currently in force because, in his opinion, they are "exclusively western and liberal." The bishop complained: "Unfortunately, Orthodox spiritual and cultural tradition was not presented by the Soviets, due to ideological and political reasons, when modern standards of international relations and human rights were prepared." Otherwise, he seemed to be saying, international standards would be different today.

At present, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation is reviewing the 1997 law. What might be a possible result? The court could find that some clause in the law contradicts the Russian constitution as well as certain other international instruments to which Russia has obligated itself to observe.

As a result of the law, two legal cases connected with the violation of the rights of believers in Russia have been taken under con-

sideration by the European Court on Human Rights in Strasbourg, the jurisdiction of which extended to Russia once the nation joined the European Council. It would seem that for at least one of the cases, the result is pre-determined. In a similar case from Greece, the European Court supported the right of religious choice over national law.

Given this situation, Bishop Kirill decided to launch a campaign for the revision of standards set by international legal regulations. He described this effort as the "moral duty of post-communist Russia, as well as other countries belonging to the spiritual and cultural tradition of Orthodoxy, to present to the world [our] viewpoint of the problem." The bishop admitted that Orthodox believers face hard work in formulating their position and then defending before the world community at the United Nations and other international organizations. Dialogue "with other churches, denominations, and religions" will also be needed.

What then must this special position of the ROC include? According to Bishop Kirill, it is clear that one should find a new balance between the observance of human rights and the preservation of the cultural and religious identity of some nations (as if human rights and religious identity are placed on different scales without supplementing and supporting each other).

Bishop Kirill is correct when he says that Soviet leaders played the hypocrite when, in their time, they signed documents on human rights and acknowledged them as world standards, but never followed them. He rightly identifies the reasons for such hypocrisy: the desire "to repudiate accusations from the West in devotion to totalitarian methods of control and management" and the expectation "to turn sharply both ends of the weapon of propaganda against ideological opponents." (Setting aside the matter of political hypocrisy rising from the signing of international regulations on human rights without any intention of observing them, let us not forget, however, how humanity lived before those regulations appeared. Religious wars had raged from century to century. In Europe, east and west, differing trends of thought were suppressed with similar cruelty. People suspected of leaving the ruling religion or disagreeing with an official doctrine of the state were subjected to monstrous torture and agonizing death. For centuries these were the means of forcing conformity with those in power.)

The chairman of the ROC's Department of Foreign Relations now states that "having postulated human freedom as the highest social and cultural value of human life," western Christianity has "sanctified the union of neo-heathen doctrine with Christian ethics." In order to expose completely the incompatibility of this harmful "postulate" with the "undamaged norm of faith," he con-

nects its manifestation with "Judaic theological thought"—which, as Bishop Kirill has written, came "through Spanish culture and Jewish emigration to Holland and nearby countries." Along with "neo-heathenism," this influenced the forming of a "liberal standard." As a result, the bishop said, countries with Orthodox populations of multiplied millions are asking what life will mean for them in the sense of the preservation of their spiritual, cultural, and religious identity in the face of alien standards of ethics and values.

How then does Orthodoxy resist this perceived danger? The answer is obvious: Through peaceful coexistence between East and West under a mutual policy of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. For the political ideologists of Russia's recent past, this meant the coexistence of two opposing systems—socioeconomic and ideological. For the ROC it now represents coexistence with "neoliberal imperatives of different directions and traditions."

To accomplish this task it will be necessary for Orthodoxy to enlist allies "from the opposite side"—and first of all, from the world of Islam. In reality, it is a big and multi-sided world. In it exist not only repressive regimes bent on the suppression of human rights, but also states which have broken with theocracy and, without sacrificing their unique origins, have accepted standards common to all mankind. But the bishop counts not on these countries, but on those in which free confession of non-majority religions, including Christianity, is considered a crime punishable by death.

A joint Russian-Iranian commission on Islam and Orthodoxy met recently in Moscow. The dialogue itself is worthy of applause. Its aim is open to question: Building together a normal human community or dividing the world anew on the basis of religion. Formed at the initiative of Bishop Kirill and Mohammed Ali Taskhiri, the commission stated: "We cannot be tolerant of sinful actions and satanically evil suggestions" [and] "each nation must have the right to the original accomplishment of its historical mission, for the adequate presentation and protection of its interests within the world community." Indeed, one may be intolerant of sin, but does this justify inflicting on people the most savage despotism, even including exile?

Fortunately, not all members of the Russian Orthodox Church share Bishop Kirill's opinion on this issue. They take into account the fact that the bishop's attitude, existing today in political circles which view the church as a new party, is the same as the Soviet era's Communist Party which described itself as "this force in society which inspires and organizes."

Indeed, not everyone everywhere has received the answers of international law. The nations of the world still need to learn how to observe the right of self-determination without encroaching on

the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. We must understand clearly with whom we stand: with legal states and world religions or with those who are ready to accept the beauty of the world's pluralism. Russia has only recently escaped from the Soviet period's iron curtain. Under the pretext of the defense of "religious identity," must Russian again be curtained, this time from "harmful proselytism"?

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The Challenge of Proselytism: An American Perspective

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Without question, proselytism is one of the most controversial and sensitive issues in the arena of religious human rights. I think how we view this issue is directly affected by how we view religious pluralism: whether we see religious pluralism as a positive or a negative. Of course, if a society sees the development of religious pluralism within a country as negative, it can be expected that proselytism will also be considered as an evil and defined in a way that almost any sharing of a belief different from the majority religion will be viewed as an evil that must be suppressed.

An American with an understanding of the historical, cultural, and political background of the United States will, I think, look upon proselytism as a positive factor in the life of the nation even if he or she is occasionally annoyed by a knock on the door. I am convinced the major challenge of proselytism in the contemporary world is how to arrive at a general consensus of what are unquestionably unacceptable forms of proselytism and what are clearly acceptable. I say this because I am equally certain that at this moment in time we will not be able to agree to anything else.

We certainly will never be able to reach a consensus on this issue if we are not collectively sensitive to the historical and cultural basis for a national or regional attitude about the benefits or detriments to a given society which religious pluralism brings.

There are other real challenges. As everyone is aware, the United States is generally seen as a country that exports violent movies, cigarettes, automobiles, and foreign missionaries. In many areas of the world, foreign missionaries are viewed as the least desirable of America's exports.

I think this is because in many instances American missionaries have not been at all sensitive to the traditions and history of the country within which they seek to witness. In their zeal to evangelize, American missionaries have often exercised extraordinarily bad judgment. One example: Evangelical church school teachers went to Russia to teach in public schools in various places, but they went with the undisclosed agenda of establishing a Protestant church at each location. Little wonder then that the local Orthodox

priests became disturbed and resentful.

But most Americans generally see the practice of proselytism as a positive and are quite willing to contribute funds to such activity. (This may also account for a lack of sensitivity.)

Political leaders in the United States often remind us that in early America many left their homelands in Europe in order to find the freedom to practice their religious faiths. What we are not often reminded is that when these people came to the shores of North America, they sought only to protect their own particular beliefs. They set about to reproduce the model of religious establishment from which they had recently fled. Thus Catholics were persecuted in Colonial Virginia and those with Baptist views were rejected in the Colony of Massachusetts.

Political leaders such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison feared the potential rise of a future American monarch or an unchecked majority ready, willing, and able to trample on the rights of a free people. Jefferson, Madison, and their followers came to believe the best protection against either the tyranny of a king or the control of an unfettered majority was through a society where a multiplicity of diverse interest groups exist in both the secular and religious arenas. Religious pluralism was seen as a political asset.

Madison and Jefferson thus embraced the concept that the state must be absolutely neutral in matters of religion, and all religious groups were to be considered equal in the eyes of the state. Through this arrangement, there would always be sufficient diversity to maintain a check against religious tyranny.

Out of this political view, there quite logically grew the legal concept that the state knows neither "church" nor "sect," but only "denominations." With this theory, it became a reality that government must not interfere with the activities of religious groups, old or new, to gain converts. It was felt that those religious groups that proved beneficial to society would survive and prosper, while those that did not would die.

To fully understand the American concept, one must understand that a free press, free speech, and free assembly were guaranteed to be a constant check against governmental abuse. Therefore it should not be surprising that when Jehovah's Witnesses started sharing their beliefs door-to-door and were arrested under various local laws, the Supreme Court not only employed the "free exercise of religion" argument, but also the free press and free speech prescriptions to strike down such attempts to interfere with the Witnesses' activities. In fact, these early cases established the right of free speech in the public forum. The Court concluded in *Cantwell v. Connecticut,* 310 U.S. 296 (1940), that one should not be held

criminally liable for a breach of the peace where the proselytization efforts of the Witnesses only disturbed peace and tranquility. The Court stated:

> No one should have the hardihood to suggest that the principle of free speech sanctions incitement to riot or that religious liberty connotes the privilege to exhort others to physical attack upon those belonging to another sect. When *clear and present danger* of riot, disorder, interference with traffic upon public streets, or other immediate threat to public safety, peace, order appears, the power of the state to prevent or punish is obvious. Equally obvious is that a state may not unduly suppress free communication of views, religious or other, under the guise of conserving desirable conditions.

In another case involving Jehovah's Witnesses, *Murdock v. Pennsylvania,* 319 U.S. 105 (1943), the Court dealt with a peddler's ordinance that required one selling merchandise to obtain a license and pay a daily or weekly fee. Finding that this local law violated the rights of the Witnesses, the Supreme Court stated:

> The hand distribution of religious tracts is an age-old form of missionary evangelism: as old as the history of printing presses. It has become a potent force in various religious movements down through the years. . . . This form of religious activity occupies the same high estate under the First Amendment as do worship in the churches and preaching from the pulpits. It has the same claim to protection as the more orthodox and conventional exercises of religion. It has the same claim as the others to the guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Over the years the United States has developed into a highly pluralistic society; its people are unable to comprehend, or be sensitive to, nations that have not become highly pluralistic. Americans view the phenomenon of anti-pluralism with great misgivings. Thus it behooves Americans and American religious groups to come to a full appreciation that evangelism, which they take for granted, is seen quite differently in other parts of the world. This is a major challenge.

But as the present century closes, Europe will present an even larger challenge. Like America, Europe has become the home of the entire spectrum of the world's religions. In fact, Western and Central Europe are now home to more religious groups than North America. One expert, Dr. Gordon Melton, has identified more than 2,500 distinct religious groups currently functioning across Europe. Religious Europe is being re-created right before our eyes.

As the world becomes more pluralistic, national borders will prove ineffective in keeping out people who practice religious beliefs different from the traditional religions of a country. In addition, the religious ideas within countries will become increasingly more diverse because of the free exchange of ideas by television, radio, fax machines, and the Internet.

How then will members of the older and larger religious communities react? How will leaders of governments—officials with

the power of affecting the direction of their countries—relate to this new religious reality? There are three obvious answers. They can stand by and simply observe. They can regulate it. Or they can fight it. The last approach, already embraced by some countries, only brings bitter division.

Supreme Court Justice Sandra O'Connor once stated that no one should be considered a political outsider because of his or her religious views. Attempts to place severe restrictions upon religious groups that believe they have been called by God to share their religious beliefs with their neighbors will probably not result in compliance. Anti-proselytism laws directed against religious groups and their members will only generate discord.

A major problem with attempts to prevent "improper" proselytism rises from use of statutory language so vague as to permit government officials to exercise broad discretion. Thus the officials choose to apply the statutes only against the most unpopular religious groups.

Legislation which seeks to proscribe "improper" proselytism is always a dangerous instrument. It can be used by the majority religion against the minority religions. Moreover, it can have a chilling effect on perfectly proper evangelization. But in this sensitive area, I think penalties should only be applied against religious activity when there is a clear and present danger to public safety, order, health, or morality, or the fundamental rights and freedom of others. Even then, such legislation should not provide penalties any greater than absolutely necessary to prevent the danger from occurring.

There should be no restriction whatsoever against the mere communication of religious ideas to others. For example, religious groups, regardless of their entity status, should not be prevented from maintaining publishing facilities within a country; and all resident religious groups should be able to receive religious material from outside for distribution within the country. Government should not use its authority to prevent the use by all religious groups of public media, including radio, television, and public newspapers.

I believe in using voluntary arrangements to reduce religious conflict both between religious groups and within religious traditions. The exercise of good judgment and sensitivity with regard to witnessing will have a major impact on whether restrictive anti-proselytism legislation is enacted.

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The Right to Engage in Religious Persuasion: Emerging and Minority Religions and Proselytism

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Introduction. At the outset, it is necessary to stress that this paper cannot begin to address the full range of views emerging and minority religions take toward proselytism. One of the things most clear about the religions of our planet is that they are extraordinarily diverse—and they have correspondingly diverse views about the ethics of sharing their views with others. Herein I will attempt to identify some of the reasons why proselyting is so important to smaller religious communities and, more broadly, why it is so vital that we pay particular attention to their sensitivities with respect to proselytism. In general, the real test of religious freedom is not how larger groups are treated. Large groups can fend for themselves because they have much greater access to political power and the powerful background institutions of culture than do smaller groups. This is as true with respect to proselytism as it is with other matters. The fact that larger religions reject proselytism as the preferred strategy for community building and maintenance should not necessarily guide the judgments of smaller groups who face much more difficult problems precisely because they have to swim against the current of the dominant culture. My sense is that smaller groups far more accurately perceive what is really involved as a practical matter in the phenomenon of proselyting. Their experience provides a clearer picture of where the real problems with proselytism lie and ought to help us avoid overbroad descriptions of "improper" proselyting that can lead to overbroad restrictions on legitimate religious activities.

Terminology. An example of the cultural power wielded by larger religious groups is evident in the negative charge directly associated with the term "proselyting." It was only when I began to dialogue with individuals from larger religious traditions that I

sensed they attach a negative meaning to the term. Within my Mormon tradition, "proselyting" refers to legitimate religious persuasion: sharing one's belief with others under genuinely non-coercive circumstances. Only from the larger traditions did I hear the message that "proselyting" is suspect—something that might not be eligible for the normal protections of freedom of religion and freedom of expression. We owe current formulations of the distinction between legitimate witnessing activities and improper proselytism to documents drawn up by larger denominations. (See, e.g., "Common Witness and Proselytism," reprinted in *The Ecumenical Review,* Volume 23, No. 9 [1971]. This is a study document prepared in 1970 by a Joint Theological Commission Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.) Unstated (perhaps not intended, but nonetheless felt by smaller groups) is an implicit message of condescension: a religious organization that needs to engage actively in community building is definitely doing something distasteful or uncouth and, quite possibly, behaving unethically as well. The very terminology we use—proselyting—is molded by the culturally powerful into a not-so-subtle tool of disparagement. Nonetheless (as will become clear), I believe the larger churches have in fact identified genuine moral issues that need to be faced—issues at the edges of legitimate religious persuasion. But I am saddened that a once legitimate term has become so freighted with negative associations it is now actually difficult to use. I agree with the definition of proselytism offered by Tad Stahnke: "'Proselytism' means expressive conduct undertaken with the purpose of trying to change the religious beliefs, affiliation, or identity of another" ("Proselytism and the Freedom to Change Religion in International Law," *Brigham Young University Law Review,* Volume 1999, No. 1, p. 251). But because of the negative charge that increasingly taints even "proper" proselytism, I will use the term "religious persuasion" when I refer to legitimate proselyting and the term "improper" (or "abusive") proselyting when I refer to illegitimate activity.

Shared Positive Attitudes Regarding Religious Persuasion. Contrary to what some might think, there is in fact broad agreement among both the larger and the smaller religious groups I know best about the conditions for religious persuasion. Everyone recognizes that at some level, religious persuasion and teaching is vital to the flourishing of religious life. While different traditions have different views about how actively beliefs should be shared, everyone recognizes that all religious traditions have depended on fairly active proselyting at least at some stages in their history. Moreover, every tradition believes that the power of teaching by

example should be allowed. (We don't imprison people for saintly acts admired by people of other faiths.) It is further understood that for many religions, active sharing of faith is as central to religious practice as is participation in such sacramental rituals as the Eucharist.

Shared Understanding of Limiting Principles. There is also considerable agreement as to the basic governing principles of restrictions. As University of Strasbourg Professor Roland Minnerath formulates the point: Legitimate religious persuasion "cannot be imposed from outside by means of psychological or physical constraint. In our present understanding of human rights this freedom is rooted in the very nature of human beings and must be recognized as a civil right protected by law." The central point here is that persuasion accompanied by coercion is illegitimate. As the European Court of Human Rights recognized in *Kokkinakis v. Greece,* there are several species of improper conversion: (1) physical force; (2) deception; (3) undue influence; and (4) inappropriate material incentives. All have the result that a religious choice made under their influence is not genuine or authentic. Freedom in the most sensitive and sacred of all domains—the realm of conscience—is violated. Similarly, there is broad agreement that discussions of religious differences should be respectful, honest, and civil. This does not mean that society, groups, or individuals should be shielded as a matter of law from robust and sometimes overzealous discussion, and it certainly does not mean that one group cannot question the validity or truth of the beliefs of another. But such respect needs to go in two directions. Majority groups are all too prone to disparage smaller groups as "sects" and to engage in stereotypical thinking about them. My sense is that smaller groups suffer far more from such disparagement than larger groups. Moreover, smaller groups tend to be deterred from challenging such behavior, because any effort to do so simply attracts intensified reactions in return.

Proselytism and International Instruments. There is an array of international instruments that address religious freedom issues. These instruments can be used as the basis for an expansive right to engage in religious persuasion. It is important that the legitimacy of these arguments not be undermined by the fact that the issue of proselytism is not more explicitly addressed. We all know the history of silence on these issues. Silence reflects compromise rather than principle. That is, the key international instruments were adopted in settings in which it was not possible to secure commitment to a full measure of religious freedom by socialist and

Muslim countries. (I suppose they might argue that they actually conceded too much to the claims of religious liberty.) But we need to remember that we are dealing here with a human right. Human beings are entitled to religious freedom—including the right to engage in religious persuasion—simply because they are human. Human beings do not hold these rights at the discretion of any state or any collection of states. Remarkable success has been achieved at the international level in articulating and codifying principles of religious freedom, but the fact that all states have not yet agreed to the full range of legitimate religious freedom does not mean that the right does not exist or that every effort should not be made to achieve it in fuller form.

Dealing with Sources of Admittedly Counterproductive Coercive Behavior. If anything, smaller religious groups tend to be more concerned with making certain that conversion is voluntary than do larger denominations. Inauthentic conversion tends to become a drag on the smaller religious community. An individual who converts due to material inducements rather than for spiritual reasons is likely to renew requests for additional material benefits, creating a burden on the overall resources of the group. Similarly, conversion by physical force creates a need for maintaining coercive pressure. This is not only costly, it is demoralizing.

Indeed, when one contemplates the disadvantages of coerced conversion, one wonders why the phenomenon arises in the first place. One reason is excessive or misguided zeal. A second may be a desire for independent corroboration of the improper proselyter's own views: *If someone else converts, my beliefs must be correct.* A third reason may be that if one coerces *outward* conformity to religious beliefs, *sincere* belief may ultimately be induced, either later in the life of the target of coercion or the target's children. This strategy demands extraordinary coercive pressure; it probably cannot be accomplished without the active cooperation of the state. A fourth category of reasons has to do with administrative pressures. A mission leader needs to vindicate requests for ongoing funding and the number of converts is a ready measure of success.

Missionaries may feel a sense of competition with each other, which may create pressures for numbers. No doubt there are other institutional pressures which cause improper proselyting. This suggests that there may be value in refocusing discussions about improper proselyting. The controversy is not whether coercive conversion is good or bad as an ethical matter. The question is how a group best addresses the institutional or psychological pressures that lead to admittedly counterproductive excesses.

Invisible Sources of Coercion. Smaller groups tend to be acutely aware of the subtle, even invisible, forms of coercion often exercised—consciously or unconsciously—by dominant groups. One of the early arguments for religious freedom was the claim of John Locke that since religious beliefs cannot be coerced, the state should not waste its efforts in trying to impose them. While it is generally true that the most one can hope to accomplish by coercion—at least in the short run—is inducing hypocrisy, Locke's theory overlooks coercion accomplished by maintaining ignorance: that is, coercion may not be very effective as a device for instilling sincere religious belief, but it is extraordinarily effective in blocking change of belief. It is extremely difficult to be converted to a belief that is totally unfamiliar. Concerted conduct to filter the ideas to which believers are exposed, or to tarnish ideas with negative stereotypes so that they are avoided, are far more effective devices for conditioning belief than physical brainwashing.

In a parallel vein, just as material incentives may constitute improper inducements to convert to a religion, so material disincentives may constitute impermissible inducements at the point of exit. My sense is that whatever material inducements proselyting groups may use to encourage conversion pale in comparison with the economic and social disincentives larger groups can mobilize to deter an individual from leaving a religion: disinheritance, reduced job and educational opportunities, social isolation, and the list goes on. To the extent that coercion in religious matters is impermissible, the coercive mechanisms used by larger groups may be as deserving of scrutiny as the techniques used by smaller groups. (I use the term "scrutiny" advisedly here because, in general, I believe that state intervention in these areas should be minimal.)

Truth, Exclusivity, and Danger. There is a tendency to believe that religious communities that take truth seriously constitute a danger to society, particularly so when they make exclusive claims to truth. The argument seems to be that claims to exclusive truth are inherently dangerous. As Roland Minnerath states the problem: "If you have an exclusive concept of truth, then you need to convert everybody to your faith in order to save them. Then you are likely to indulge even in violent means for the good of your victims." The only way to avoid this risk, the argument continues, is to profess an inclusive concept of religious truth.

While there are belief systems that exemplify such dangers, the argument is overstated. Two beliefs frequently held by those making exclusive claims to truth typically avert any threat of social danger. First, if the belief system includes internal beliefs that the

dignity of other human beings should be respected even if they hold erroneous religious beliefs, one cannot assume that this exclusive truth claim poses any threat to society. Second, if a religion does not believe it is entitled to use coercive force to convert, whether that force is in private or public hands, the risk does not arise. Major strides in religious liberty evident in many predominantly Catholic countries over the past three decades have resulted from the dramatic events of the Second Vatican Council and the internalization of norms of religious freedom and human dignity within the Roman Catholic tradition. In general, the most effective way to achieve religious freedom is to find ways to strengthen the beliefs existing within virtually all religious traditions that lead them to internalize norms of toleration and mutual respect.

Ecumenism and Dialogue. Ecumenical efforts and dialogue can also promote understanding. But it is important to remember here that whether ecumenical approaches should be adopted is itself a matter of religious belief. Indeed, sometimes it is a matter of profound disagreement. For religious traditions that desire to engage in ecumenical processes, encouraging such processes is no doubt helpful. But to assume that it is somehow ethically incorrect to take a different stand simply misunderstands the nature of religious freedom. If a particular religion holds as one of its beliefs that it should not compromise its doctrines, or that it is not authorized to enter into joint ministry with individuals of other faiths, this is itself a matter of conscience protected by religious freedom. It is as incorrect to invoke state power in support of ecumenism as it is to invoke state power in favor of any particular group, whether that group participates in or rejects ecumenical discourse.

As a practical matter, however, it is often possible to promote the same beneficial levels of tolerance and understanding by facilitating cooperation on projects of common concern. This can include cooperative charitable and humanitarian aid projects. It can also involve common efforts in support of religious freedom. This is an area where indirect approaches to reaching mutual understanding and respect may be more effective than direct approaches.

Beware of Self-Defeating Arguments. During extensive work in Eastern Europe over the past decade, I have repeatedly confronted the following form of argument against proselytism: *Our people are not as educated about religion as the citizens of the West.* As a result of the education differential, it follows that whenever a foreign missionary confronts local citizens with new religious ideas, they are being subjected to undue influence. Their susceptibility and ignorance mean that the attempt at religious

persuasion is inherently coercive, and accordingly, the activity is automatically impermissible proselyting. The problem with this argument is that it is self-defeating. Because the same education differential exists between the people and clerics from the dominant religious tradition, efforts by such clerics to talk to "their own" (uneducated) people about religion would, by the same line of reasoning, constitute "impermissible proselyting."

The Need to Avoid Overly Expansive Interpretations of Improper Proselytism. I particularly enjoy reading with students the following paragraph from the dissenting opinion of Greek Judge Valticos in *Kokkinakis v. Greece,* the leading European Court case on the issue of proselytism, because they immediately sense how outrageously wrongheaded it is:

> Let us look now at the facts of the case. On the one hand, we have a militant Jehovah's Witness, a hardbitten adept of proselytism, a specialist in conversion, a martyr of the criminal courts whose earlier convictions have served only to harden him in his militancy, and, on the other hand, the ideal victim, a naive woman, the wife of a cantor in the Orthodox church (if he manages to convert her, what a triumph!). He swoops on her, trumpets that he has good news for her (the play on words is obvious, but no doubt not to her), manages to get himself let in and, as an experienced commercial traveler and cunning purveyor of a faith he wants to spread, expounds to her his intellectual wares cunningly wrapped up in a mantle of universal peace and radiant happiness. Who, indeed, would not like peace and happiness? But is this mere exposition of Mr. Kokkinakis' beliefs or is it not rather an attempt to beguile the simple soul of the cantor's wife? Does the Convention afford its protection to such undertakings? Certainly not.

Fortunately, the majority opinion of the European Court recognized that the last sentence was wrong. To the contrary, the court made it very clear that normal efforts to engage in religious persuasion—even the fairly activist efforts of Mr. Kokkinakis—are clearly protected by the European Convention, as well they should be.

What is interesting about this paragraph is that it exemplifies the need to be very cautious about overly expansive interpretations of the various subcategories of improper coercion. In Judge Valticos' view, simply going from door to door, even if characterized as "swooping" and "getting himself let in," is misconstrued as illegitimate physical force. If there were ongoing harassment, intentional ignoring of requests not to approach the door, or illegal trespassing, the matter might be different. The argument of undue influence and naivete also goes too far. I suspect that the cantor's wife was probably not pleased with her husband claiming, in effect, that she was a dimwit. Leaving aside whatever marital tensions the framing of the case may have caused for the cantor, it is clear as a general matter

that one does not have to be a graduate theologian to be eligible to participate in religious discourse, and believers need not limit their faith-sharing to persons with that level of training. Similarly, the fact that Kokkinakis claimed to have good news is obviously not fraud. Members of minority religions face incredible burdens in overcoming stereotypes that undercut their credibility. It is natural that they maneuver to avoid such stereotypes long enough to establish genuine interpersonal dialogue. The "wares cunningly wrapped" reminds one of worries about material inducements. It is all well and good to prohibit the conditioning of access to material goods on conversion. But once conversion has occurred—particularly where every effort is made to confirm that the conversion is sincere—must a religious group discriminate against its own members in the distribution of charitable and educational resources?

All these considerations point to the extraordinary need to be extremely cautious in expanding the categories that may justify restrictions on improper proselyting in *Kokkinakis*. Indeed, there are situations in which efforts at religious persuasion veer into zones of impermissibly coercive behavior, but we should be wary of drawing boundaries in vague and overbroad ways because of the inevitable risk that our first freedoms will be impermissibly narrowed as a result. The presumption in societies genuinely committed to human rights is that some tolerance for excessive and questionable zeal is a small price to pay to make certain that core rights of human dignity, expression, and freedom of religion are not compromised.

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The Media and Proselytism

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Introduction

This paper presents a brief overview of the media's use of the term "proselytism," media attitudes in general toward proselytizing and religious liberty, and concerns of media bias reflected in particular in the reporting and analysis of groups not considered mainstream in specific societies.

Media and the Word "Proselytism"

The media's use of the term "proselytism" parallels that of society, but (as is frequently the case) in ways more extreme. Invariably, it is used without definition. Thus the word takes on whatever color the writer or reader may wish. It may simply be another word for evangelism, or it may be taken to mean forced, or improper, conversion. Since proselytism as a term usually conveys negative overtones, it is frequently employed to describe changes in religious affiliation disapproved by the writer. One newswriter may intend proselytism simply to mean the active or passive encouragement to change religious affiliation, while another may have in mind a process that lures new members by questionable inducements. These inducements could be of real or perceived material advantage, brainwashing, appealing to emotional needs, playing on personal weaknesses, use of force, threats, or exploitation of fears.

Some examples of the "p" word demonstrate its use as a word highly charged and more reflective of the journalist's convictions than of actuality:

- "The door-to-door proselytizing done by the Southern Baptists in Salt Lake City. . . ."
- ". . . [T]he unbridled competition of proselytizing. . . ." (On Christian witness in South America.)
- ". . . [T]he influx of Protestant evangelicals, who are intent on proselytizing and who now reject the older traditions that were once a source of communal unity. . . ." (On the situation in Chiapas, Mexico.)
- "The Fez police accused Lamb of 'proselytism' for giving a Christian tract to a person in the hotel. Article 220 of the Moroccan Penal Code cites proselytism as a criminal offense when someone

'employs means of seduction with the intention of turning a Muslim away from the Muslim faith.' Lamb denies that there was any coercion involved, and hardly even remembers the event in Tetouan."

- "The Ecumenical Patriarch reserved his harshest words for so-called 'missionaries' from the West who proselytize among the Orthodox Christian faithful abroad."
- The Salvador conference strongly criticized aggressive evangelical methods by foreign missionaries since the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These activities are denounced as 'proselytizing' by dominant Orthodox churches in the region whose leaders believe that the missionary work is aimed at members of Orthodox churches."
- "Accusations by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II of aggressive proselytizing by both Catholics and Protestants and a proposed new Russian law aimed at shutting out other religious groups, along with other differences between East and West, contributed to the tension."
- "In the Islamic Republic of Iran, conversion from Islam is a crime. What practically all sources agree on is that there is precedent for both official and unofficial harassment—ranging from job discrimination to death threats—to deter Muslims who might consider conversion and to halt other religious groups from proselytizing."
- "Meanwhile, a report by the National Council of Churches in India . . . underscores that the local community in Baripada, among whom Graham Stewart Staines lived and worked, introducing new concepts of rehabilitating leprosy patients, did not complain about evangelism or any other proselytizing activity by the Australian missionary for the more than 30 years that he spent there." (On the burning to death of the Baptist missionary and his two young sons in India.)
- "The case in Salt Lake City involves a choir teacher who proselytized his religious belief in the classroom. A student at the school alleged that the teacher also encouraged and participated in the ostracism of her because she is an adherent of the Jewish faith."
- "Noting that Muslims, Hindus and other faiths are free to worship and proselytize in the West, Carey argued that 'this must apply equally to the rights that Christians should have in places where they are in a minority.'"
- "Greece, meanwhile, by keeping in its constitution a provision that outlaws proselytism on behalf of any religion other than the Greek Orthodox Church, has apparently not yet decided whether, in religious liberty matters, it really wants to belong to the West."

The Media's Concept of Proselytism

In general, the media does not regularly use the term proselytism. It is, after all, four syllables long and hard to spell. Nevertheless, the concept is frequently referred to when there seems to be some interfaith competition for members. The idea falls neatly into a number of categories much used by the media. Here are four:

(1) *The "evils of religion" category places at the door of religious faith the problems of the world.* Proselytism can be viewed as part of that aggressive process of emphasizing religious concepts of peaceful toleration in contrast to media-supported concepts. The strong secular emphasis in western media is not, however, particularly tolerant of those who reject such an emphasis.

(2) *Religious conflict as an explanation for rivalry and war.* While many conflicts have religious aspects, frequently these are not the prime reasons for hatred and violence. Yet the media may well identify these religious labels of convenience as the fundamental problems, particularly if they are related to active witnessing, i.e., proselytizing.

(3) *Ideals of cultural heritage and identity.* This again is the category that says, in effect, no religious outreach should occur since damage may occur to local culture. The old image of the imperialist missionary engaging in proselytism that results in persons making cultural changes is invoked as a stereotype to criticize faith-sharing activities.

(4) *Use of media for propaganda.* Away from pseudo-tolerant western media ideals, the press is frequently used as an instrument of propaganda or disinformation against an "enemy." Religious hatred can be fanned by the identification of the enemy's use of proselytism to convert, and therefore subvert, the nation. Portraying the other side as reprobates carrying on an insidious campaign of religious conversion is a sure way to raise nationalistic fervor. This is a commonly used tactic in the media of a number of countries.

Other examples of the concept of proselytism in the media could be added, but the point is made: The concept is an age-old tactic to engender loyalty to the prevailing religion, to instil fear of others who do not share the common faith, and to appeal to the individual's self-identity. "You cannot be an X without believing Y" is a common theme that makes nationality, culture, and religion virtually synonymous. This methodology for preventing proselytism strikes at the heart of concepts of religious freedom. It reflects a mentality of dictatorial control of society.

Media, Proselytism, and New Religions

Perhaps more than in any other area, media bias relative to proselytism is evident in reports on new religions. Indeed, the term is

rarely used in connection with majority or traditional faiths except where such faiths come into conflict. Again, the word may not be specifically used, but pejorative descriptions of the witnessing activities of new and/or minority religions are frequent.

Ideas such as "aggressive evangelism," "subtle manipulation," "brainwashing," and "anti-social activities" are often associated with the activities of new religious groups. Viewed by the existing society with fear and hostility, media reports on such "sects" and "cults" reflect such attitudes and may even encourage them.

Here the new religious movements are at a double disadvantage. Their activities are demonized by religious opponents, while a secular press is hostile to their religious fervor. An unholy alliance of traditional faiths with the media may develop. Media rejection of religious values is suspended in relation to traditional faiths in order that the common enemy of the NRMs may be attacked.

Witness the rather pretentiously pious reporting of the Heaven's Gate and Solar Temple suicides, of the activities of Scientologists or Unificationists, or the outreach program of the Jehovah's Witnesses in which supposedly secular media appear almost to extol the virtues of a better, i.e., more traditional, faith.

So when it comes to reporting on the successes of the NRMs in terms of adding members, charges of proselytism, mind control, conversion, aberrant behavior, and so on, are easily added to the story to insure that the audience gets the message clearly: *Such activities are socially, if not ethically, wrong.*

The situation is no better in societies which retain a strong faith component and in which the media has not become totally secularized. The media all too frequently ally themselves with the dominant religion and make their reports a vehicle for anti-NRM sentiments. The charge of proselytism carries a sharp religious edge. It is a useful weapon for both religious and civil authorities to restrict or prevent entirely the activities of NRMs.

The Media, Proselytism, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has adopted specific working policies defining its relationship to other churches. While it does not endorse territorial exclusivity wherein one denomination has the "right" to operate exclusively in a particular geographical area, the church does affirm all organizations that (in the words of the policy) "uplift Christ." From a religious freedom perspective, the right to practice religion, the right to witness, and the right to change one's religion are fundamental to Adventist belief. These rights undergird the Adventist church's outreach activities.

Charges of proselytism have occasionally been made against the Seventh-day Adventist Church, mainly by majority-faith communi-

ties. These charges have, at times, been reported by the media. The reports have either reflected the views of the majority faith or they have followed the secular humanist philosophy of the media which frequently seems implacably opposed to any display of religious conviction.

While it must be admitted that in times past Adventists have not always operated in the most conciliatory manner in their evangelistic endeavors, charges of proselytism appearing in the media are not supported from the perspective of the use of undue influence to convert. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has sought to develop good working relationships with all faiths around the world.

Recent anti-Adventist accusations of proselytism from Brazil, Venezuela (and other South American countries), Mexico, Sudan, India, Indonesia, and the nations which emerged from the former Soviet Union are in most cases part of a large concern against evangelism by many different faiths. This may be expected since any change-advocating organization growing at the rate the Adventist church is will be regarded with suspicion by societal traditionalists. However, the Adventist church rejects the use of any and all inappropriate inducements to conversion, believing the choice of religious faith to be a totally free and fundamental right, without any coercion from evangelist, traditional faith, and societal custom, or interference of the state.

Conclusion

Concepts of proselytism in the media portray religious conflicts in pejorative and biased ways, appealing to emotion, not factual description.

The use of the term "proselytism" (as well as such terms as "sect" and "cult") illustrates a prejudiced viewpoint that does not reflect balanced media reporting. As used by the media, the word carries too many overtones of a rejection of religious freedom values to be employed as a description of the outreach of any faith group. Some media now resort to the concept of "degrees of proselytism." This suggests that proselytism conducted by an occult group is worse than that conducted by an evangelical church. Thus Hare Krishna proselytizing is worse than Christian proselytizing.

One could wish that the sensationalist use of any and all terms or concepts related to conversion would be avoided. Since this is unlikely in the extreme, it becomes essential for all faith groups to avoid such ideas and language, for the right to choose or change one's religion is basic, a human right that cannot be contradicted by terms such as "proselytism."

While one person's proselytism is another's evangelism, every attempt should be made to develop good working relationships among faith communities in order to minimize misconceptions about belief and misunderstandings about outreach activities.

And since the role of the media must not be ignored, similarly good relationships with editors and journalists are also encouraged so that misinformation about evangelism can be avoided.

Dr. Gallagher presented this paper at the IRLA Conference of Experts, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain, May 1997.

Evangelism and Proselytism: A Religious Liberty and Ecumenical Challenge

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The Mandate of Evangelism

Evangelistic mission is an inescapable mandate of Christianity. Every Christian worth his or her salt recognizes that the essence of being a Christian is experienced in the responsibility and joy of witnessing to one's faith and salvation. Evangelism is, in fact, the spreading of the Gospel—the "good news"—of salvation freely available by the grace of God to every human being. The New Testament records not only the "great commandment"—to love God and neighbor, but also the "great commission"—to go, teach, baptize, and disciple all people as followers of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20).

This is a Christian perspective, of course. I realize that evangelism and its correlative activity, proselytism, are not practiced by Jews and Hindus and only to some extent by Buddhists. Islam, on the other hand, practices what appears to be a two-sided form of proselytism, promoting Islam in non-Muslim areas, but generally prohibiting any evangelism/proselytism in Muslim countries.

The Setting

We live in a newly found climate of religious freedom. Generally speaking, we no longer have government protected—and financed—state churches with religious "hunting preserves." (But Islamic countries do present a different picture.) As there will be political campaigns by competing parties where there is democracy and as there will be economic competition where there is an open market, so there will be religious competitiveness in the religious forum. I do not believe this to be bad, as long as there is no hatred, no chasing of prestige, no vindictiveness or acrimony.

Tensions Between Rights

Notwithstanding the great new fact of our era—religious liberty, there rises a conflict between the universality of religious freedom

as supported by United Nations instruments and other documents, and the idea of the *cultural relativism* of religious freedom. Moreover, we perceive a conflict between the right to freely *change* religion and the right to *keep* a religion.

Then there is a third tension between two rights—rights which may be complimentary or, at other times, in opposition: The right of the individual person and the right of the institution (for example, the church). Certainly every person has the right to decide which organization to belong or not to belong. Similarly, every religious organization should have the right to determine its own membership requirements, including "entrance" and "exit." The problem comes when the religious organization prohibits an individual from leaving and uses the police power of the state to enforce membership. Johan D. van der Vyver comments pointedly: "By submitting to totalitarian control of [its] internal affairs by governmental agencies, the religious institution forfeits its internal sphere sovereignty and becomes a pawn of religious oppression by the powers that be" (Johan D. van der Vyver: "Religious Freedom and Proselytism," *The Ecumenical Review*, October 1998, p. 422). Despite these tensions, the UN has clearly upheld the right to spread one's religion by teaching and personal manifesting. The final act of the UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) affirmed that "[a]ll human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner . . . [for] it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights" (Part I, Paragraph 5).

Legislation against proselytism springs from what I consider an illusion—a false hope: the achieving of uniformity or religious homogeneity. Such societies can no longer exist and keep power in this age of rapid change, fast travel, and instantaneous communication, except by a holocaust, by religio-ethnic cleansing, by using the religious police, by reviving medieval totalitarianism.

Disagreements and Agreements

Regarding mission and evangelism, we note a number of significant disagreements among Christians. There are disagreements over ecclesiology and sacrament. Those who are outgoing disagree with those who emphasize evangelism as internal renewal. Christians who think globally—who see the world as their parish, disagree with Christians who have an exclusionist, territorial view of the church—who think nationally or locally. In the arena of evangelism and proselytism, those who believe in the legal equality of all religious bodies are opposed by those who claim that historical

precedents and/or greater numerical size gives certain religious communities more rights than others.

There are, however, some general agreements among Christians that bear on evangelism:

- The evangelistic mission of the church is central to Christian faith.
- Christ has a unique role.
- Prayer is power.
- The church community is not conterminous with society.
- Evangelism is what God does more than what human beings do, albeit God works through human instrumentalities. (The implications of this point are not always understood fully. God is the author. Therefore when a Christian is hindered in evangelism, he or she feels violated, limited, and restricted in accomplishing the divine mission—even persecuted.)

Evangelism v. Evangelization

Some people try to differentiate between "evangelism" and "evangelization." I believe that such a distinction is artificial—at best a matter of emphasis. (Certainly there is no difference in French, German, Italian, and Spanish; they have one word only.) Some people see in "evangelism" a call to conversion, to a change of lifestyle which may include a change in religious affiliation. "Evangelization," on the other hand, is seen as the spreading of Christian values in society without necessitating a change in religious affiliation. I am personally convinced that all authentic evangelism/evangelization is a call to discipleship with emphasis on lifestyle changes. As those who are evangelized respond to the divine call, the possibility of a change in church membership becomes their free choice. Anything less is ersatz evangelism.

Definitions of Proselytism

It is useful to note that the term "proselytism," historically speaking, did not have the pejorative connotation it generally carries today. For some years now, there has been the unfortunate tendency to apply a sectarian connotation to proselytism. It refers to witness by other confessions for, after all, reprehensible methods of evangelism are never used by my church! So I would much rather talk about "improper proselytism" because "proselytism" by itself is an equivocal term rife with misapplications, replete with different definitions, many self-serving. Here is a short list:

(1) Proselytism is witness and evangelism aiming at conversions.

(2) Proselytism is false or corrupt witness using wrong methods.

(3) Proselytism, using false motivation, is sheep-stealing to increase one's own flock and empire-building to enlarge one's own

religious community.

(4) Proselytism, using false targets, evangelizes the wrong people.

(5) Proselytism interferes with the religious life and belief system of other people—a false tactic.

(6) Proselytism is false confession and formalism because it keeps people ignorant about real faith and religion, holding them captive in the church of their accidental birth.

(7) Proselytism is the conscious, intentional effort to win members of another church—a false strategy.

Improper Proselytism

I have indicated a preference for the term "improper proselytism"—or, alternatively, "false proselytism." It is easier to come to an agreement on this basis because most people are opposed to what we might call corrupt witness. Although some will assert that all proselytism is by definition false, I believe (and I think most will agree) we have improper or false proselytism when the following conditions are manifest:

(1) Cajolery, material inducements, or bribery.

(2) Intimidation, such as a workplace superior who pressures employees.

(3) Offering social or educational advantages.

(4) Attributing to others beliefs or teachings they do not hold.

(5) Any form of fiscal fraud or extortion.

(6) Slander or libel.

(7) Isolating individuals in intensive indoctrination, separated from family and friends.

(8) Conscious, strategic capitalizing on misfortunes such as ignorance, poverty, sickness, or death.

Other issues emerge, some ethical, some ecumenical, some doctrinal. For example, evangelistic activities by members of one church among members of another are viewed by some as, ipso facto, false proselytism: *If you must preach, go preach in a non-Christian country.* The evangelists respond: Not everyone is called to go to a non-Christian country. Furthermore, Christian witness cannot be limited simply because our neighbors are members of another church.

Who Is "Churched"?

Here we must address a fundamental question: Who is a believer? Who is a Christian? Who is "churched" and who is not "churched"? Does receiving the rite of baptism during the first few days of life make one a believer even though, subsequently, that person seldom goes to church, never develops a living faith, and

apparently fails to establish a vital connection with Christ? Is such a one truly "churched"? This question becomes all the more significant in view of the substantial inroads of secularism within formal Christian ranks.

Pastoral Care

In ecumenical circles the suggestion is made that the answer to the problem of proselytism is to be found in joint witness based on love and mutual recognition. It is said that where there may be, for example, inadequate pastoral care, evangelical churches should support existing historical churches by engaging in common witness. This makes some sense when the process is applied to situations where well-developed ecumenical relations, mutual respect, and equality already exist. But this is difficult to envision where newer (though not necessarily new) churches are looked down on, discriminated against, and, at times, treated by some established churches as a plague to be vaccinated against or, better still, to be quarantined by government action.

At times the evangelicals hear that their proselytizing efforts nullify the pleasant climate of Christian love that existed in the past. Historically, however, this has not often been the case. In pre-Communist Revolution Eastern Europe, for instance, the minority churches were discriminated against and often persecuted with the connivance of the majority churches.

Evangelistic cooperation presupposes respect, conversation, and dialogue. This ecumenical potting soil is often lacking. Churches that have been around for well over a century—even longer—are identified as sects and refused recognition or official status. On the record are cases of established, majority churches complaining vociferously about proselytism from the west, refusing conversation, denying dialogue, and utterly rejecting the recognition of evangelical faith communities. Such conditions render talk of Christian love totally lacking in logic. One can rightly ask whether what the established churches really want is not so much the cessation of proselytism as the complete elimination of other religious bodies seen as competition.

The Right to Be Proselytized

As we consider the right to proselytize, we should avoid overlooking the right *to be proselytized:* the right to be taught and then to grow in what may be a new religious experience. Here we deal not only with the right to impart information, but also the right to receive information. Regulations against proselytism cut off the supply of new and different information. Such anti-proselytism measures restrict both the dissemination and the receiving of ideas.

Those who have converted from a church espousing a system of formal belief to a church possessing a living faith must not be denied the right to witness. And the world does well to hear their witness.

Spiritual teaching leading individuals to turn, *of their own free will,* from a form of organized, established religion to a faith community somewhat less organized and definitely not established is not improper proselytism, as indeed the European Court held in the Kokkinakis case from Greece. The crucial issue of proselytism is the question of coercion. Columbia University Law Lecturer Tad Stahnke puts it this way: "[T]he more that proselytism interferes with the ability to freely choose, the more the regulating power of the state may be attracted" (Tad Stahnke: "Proselytism and the Freedom to Change Religion in International Human Rights Law," *Brigham Young University Law Review,* Volume 1999, Number 1, p. 327).

Violations of Ethical or Moral Norms

Even as we recognize false proselytism as improper, we need to see that most wrong forms of evangelism come under the aegis of ethical behavior, not statutory limitation. Much false proselytism constitutes a violation of moral, not legal, norms. Such behavior may be undesirable, morally suspect, even reprehensible. But the government is not there to correct faulty thinking or repress false religious witness. The state cannot read minds or consciences or motives. State involvement in this sphere can easily lead to great abuses of human rights. While we can agree on various definitions of improper proselytism, we do not always know where to draw the line—when and where public order and the rights of others are actually violated. Indeed, government should preserve public order and protect the rights of others, but again, most false proselytism falls into the area of moral violations which should not come under the purview of the state. The Constitutional Court of Hungary was correct in its 1993 holding that it is not for government authorities to decide what is proper religion; such is a matter of "self-interpretation by the churches" (East European Case Reporter of Constitutional Law,1994, p. 62, quoted in *The Ecumenical Review,* October 1998, p. 425).

Here now are a few tentative ideas on what might be called a "Code de bonne Conduite" relating to proselytism. As I noted above, there are two sides in this matter: the proselytizers (outside) and the prospective proselytes (inside). Both sides need to act properly and respectfully.

Good Behavior on the Part of the Proselytizers (Those Outside)

(1) Sensitivity to cultural customs.

(2) No exploitation nor taking advantage of the vulnerable.

(3) No questionable or outright false claims of miraculous healings or other interventions.

(4) No undue pressure on people to abandon the faith of their fathers, thereby risking injury to religious feelings.

(5) No offering of financial or other material, educational, or cultural benefits in order to induce conversions.

(6) No spreading of false information regarding the teachings of other religions and no ridiculing of their beliefs and practices.

(7) No use of pejorative terminology such as "image worshipers," "harlot of Babylon," and "apostate religion."

(8) No accusing the large majority churches of a lack of spiritual life or mission.

(9) No incitement of hatred, internecine strife, or antagonistic competition.

(10) No use of coercive or manipulative methods of evangelism, including advertising that preys on human gullibility.

(11) No use of socio-economic or political power.

(12) No discrediting of church art as a transgression of the first and/or second commandments of the Decalogue.

Good Behavior on the Part of the Prospective Proselytes (Those Inside)

(1) No exploitation nor taking advantage of members by keeping them ignorant.

(2) No spreading of false information regarding the teachings of other religions and no ridiculing of their beliefs, practices, or origins.

(3) No discrediting other, especially newer, religions by making alarming statements and unsubstantiated claims about "dangerous sects."

(4) No pressuring persons to remain members by use of open or implied threats, including ostracism.

(5) No encouraging (but rather discouraging) of government to discriminate against smaller and newer religious groups in order to suppress evangelistic witness labeled undesirable.

(6) No use of pejorative terminology such as "sect," "cult," "satanic group," "heretical organization."

(7) No incitement of hate or contempt for minority religions.

(8) No encouraging of ethnic strife.

(9) No use of socio-economic or political power.

(10) No seeking of preferential treatment by the government.

(11) Complete avoidance of the religious monopoly syndrome.

Good Behavior Applicable to All

(1) We will build bridges and relationships through contacts and conversations.

(2) We will speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

(3) We will always be ready to give a reason for hope and faith, subject to the three petrine conditions: humility, respect, and honesty (good conscience) (I Peter 3:15).

(4) We will consider missionary/evangelistic work to involve matters spiritual (personal salvation) and societal (justice and service).

(5) We will be truthful, transparent, and fair vis-a-vis other churches.

(6) We will maintain convictions; we will not compromise by subverting self-understanding.

(7) We will compare the ideals of your church to the ideals of other churches, not the ideals of your church to the realities of other churches.

(8) We will verify rumors and alleged happenings before believing them to be true.

(9) We will take account of history, not to fight for the status quo, but to understand where people come from.

Some Solutions and Conclusions

(1) There is a need for dialogue between (A) proselytizers, (B) opponents of any form of evangelism among the baptized members of a church, and (C) the proselytes. Dialogue within one side is a waste of time—like preaching to the choir on the importance of being in church next week.

(2) Proper evangelism/proselytism must involve tolerance, not compromise—a tolerance that respects the equal rights of others.

(3) Conversion should not be presented as something that requires giving up local customs and traditions not in opposition to the faith being proclaimed.

(4) Any form of coercion to change or to keep one's religion must be condemned and rejected, for every human being has the inalienable right to adopt a faith of personal choice or to change from one religion to another according to conscience.

(5) Evangelism? Yes—with vigor and the use of modern, effective means of communication, tempered by a clear sense of limited knowledge. We may know much truth, but God alone knows truth in all its fullness.

(6) Religious views and beliefs that are unable to stand in a free market of religious views and beliefs, and cannot survive in a climate of freedom, equality, and evangelistic persuasion, may very well be on the way to a library or a museum. To use the heavy hand

of the state to protect such systems from the power of proselytism and religious persuasion weakens their moral integrity and renders them (to use the language of big business) ripe for a takeover.

(7) "The responsibility of fostering religious freedom and the harmonious relations between religious communities is a primary concern of the churches. Where principles of religious freedom are not being respected and lived in church relations, we need, through dialogue in mutual respect, to encourage deeper consideration and appreciation of these principles and of their practical applications for the church" ("The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness," Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Seventh Report, 1998, p. 47).

(8) False proselytism does not liberate. False proselytism enslaves. It replaces ignorance with subservience to legalism and isolation from the dynamic realities of life. In contrast, authentic evangelism does liberate. Authentic evangelism brings liberation from intellectual and spiritual blindness, liberation from confining ecclesiastical structures, liberation from dead formalism. Such evangelism leads people to enjoy a special kind of freedom. Jesus said it best: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

Dr. Beach presented this paper at the IRLA Conference of Experts, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain, May 1999.

The First Word and the Last

Let's examine the Final Declaration of the Inter-Religious Assembly, a gathering of Christians of all denominations, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Bahais, Shintoists, Hindus, and others. The assembly met in Vatican City October 24–29, 1999, under the auspices of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee Year of the Year 2000 of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. (But the Final Declaration itself is specifically declared *not* to be a Vatican document.)

The representatives to the assembly call for dialogue within diversity: "There is an urgent need for interreligious collaboration." This does not require—nor even imply—"giving up our own religious identity. [We are on] a journey of discovery."

As the religions of the world travel together, they will reject "fanaticism, extremism, and mutual antagonisms that lead to violence. We are convinced that our religious traditions have the necessary resources to overcome the fragmentation that we observe in the world."

Religions on the road to discovery must work together in the common struggle to eliminate "poverty, racism, environmental pollution, materialism, war and arms proliferation, globalization, AIDS, lack of medical care, breakdown of family and community, [and the] marginalization of women and children."

Delegates to the Inter-Religious Assembly appeal to world leaders "to refuse to allow religion to be used to incite hatred and violence; to refuse to allow religion to be used to justify discrimination; [and] to respect the role of religion in society."

They call religions' leaders "to be ready to engage in dialogue with civil society at all levels."

All in all, it sounds like a message of hope. In fact, this is exactly how the Final Declaration concludes:

"It is with joy and a spirit of thanksgiving (most of us would say thanksgiving to God), that [we] offer to [our] brothers and sisters this message of hope."

We are constrained to applaud. This gets a standing ovation.

But something's missing. Or is it? What about proselytism? The Final Declaration seems to say *Let's talk together, let's walk together, but we don't have to* believe *together.* In a document that recognizes "the urgent need to create a new spiritual consciousness for all humanity so that the principle of respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience may prevail," direct reference to proselytism might irritate, agitate, even antagonize. Proselytism may even be one of the sins of religion for which the Inter-Reli-

gious Assembly says we need "today to seek forgiveness." It may be one of the "painful experiences of the past [which has] brought divisiveness and hatred." No doubt about that.

But every religion, every faith (yes, every!) must be free to seek and find, to call, to invite in, to recruit, to witness, to offer something new, something different, to evangelize, *to proselytize.* Business proselytizes. Politics proselytizes. *But religion must not?*

In the arena of international religious liberty, the question of proselytism persists. The discussion in this issue of *Fides et Libertas* is illustrative. Has the IRLA's Conference of Experts answered the question once and for all? Not at all. In fact, we plan to continue on this road to discovery in *F&L 2000*—with articles by Jose Camilo Cardoso (Argentina), Natan Lerner (Israel), Roland Minnerath (France), Gerhard Robbers (Germany), and others. And we will publish the final product of the Conference of Experts: A Declaration of Principles on Proselytism.

But back to the Final Declaration of the Inter-Religious Assembly—and one more observation:

The first word is *faith.* Whatever the faith—traditional, established, majority, minority, liberal, conservative, a new religious movement—if it's real, if it's alive and strong and deeply personal, it will not fear proselytism. Because it is *free.* And that's the last word.

Richard Lee Fenn

Religious Freedom

World Report

1999

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

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1999

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WORLD REPORT 1999

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Organized on May 20, 1863, in Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A., the Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 10.3 million members who are active in over 200 nations of the world. The *Annual Statistical Report for 1997* revealed that the church employed 153,617 persons who staffed 6,093 hospitals and medical centers, media centers, orphanages, elementary and secondary schools, universities, and other institutions.

Since its beginning, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has defended religious freedom for all. Under its patronage several religious liberty associations have been established, among which, in 1893, the International Religious Liberty Association. The IRLA became a non-sectarian association in 1946. Its president for 1999 is the Lutheran bishop of Oslo, Norway, Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, a member of the five-person Nobel Peace Prize Committee.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has conducted official dialogues with various Christian denominations. A fruitful multi-year dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation concluded last year. The church's Council on Interchurch Relations continues its mission to improve relations with other churches and religions. As a non-governmental organization recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the UN Department of Public Information, the Seventh-day Adventist Church works in New York, Geneva, and Vienna to support religious freedom, justice, and peace.

INCREASING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Persecution has been increasing in a very significant way recently. Though the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been a specific target in any country, its members, as Christians, have become the objects of the hostility directed at other denominations.

In the main, persecution comes from religious extremists. Other sources are governments and governmental institutions. Persecution has been particularly violent in India, Indonesia, Iran, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, and Sudan where the chief religions are Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. But intolerance does not stop at any religious boundary. Pressures and difficulties are also growing in nations where Orthodoxy is the principal national faith. Highly secular countries such as Belgium and France persecute by publicly

listing certain religious groups as "sects" or "cults." Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims are also persecuted in several countries. Still and all, it is important to know that many official sources (*United Nations 1997 Report,* for example) identify Christianity as the most persecuted religion in the world.

This report focuses on the current experience of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but does not neglect a broader outlook. Its content was supplied by officials of the church's Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty stationed in various cities around the world. Additionally, we have heard from other recognized nongovernmental organizations and from reliable private correspondents. We are particularly grateful for the volume of material supplied by APD (Adventist Press Service), Christian Solidarity, Compass Direct, Human Rights Without Frontiers, and Keston Institute. Obtaining accurate information is a formidable challenge. Accuracy, attribution, and full documentation are essential. We will always endeavor to improve our method of investigation as we prepare world reports in coming years.

Since January 1997, members of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty team have visited religious leaders, governmental and political officers, and fellow advocates for religious freedom in the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, France, French West Indies, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. During 1998, some 45 foreign diplomats and world religious leaders and experts visited the international office complex of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, just outside of Washington.

The compilers of the *Religious Freedom World Report 1999* solicit public comment. Please contact the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600, U. S.A. Our phone number is 301.680.6680. Reach us by fax at 301.680.6695. Access the web site of the International Religious Liberty Association at www.IRLA.org.

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CLASSIFICATIONS AND GENERAL COMMENT

The *Religious Freedom World Report for 1999* places the nations of the world in one of five categories, from best to worst:

Category 1: Government and legislation provide religious freedom for all. No problems for Seventh-day Adventists.

Category 2: In spite of favorable legislation, Adventists have some problems in public schools and in the workplace.

Category 3: Legislation is not against religious freedom, but religious extremists, some authorities, and/or the media create difficulties for Seventh-day Adventists.

Category 4: The government has voted restrictive legislation. Seventh-day Adventists encounter problems practicing their faith and fulfilling their evangelistic mission.

Category 5: There is no religious freedom. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is banned.

The difference between Category 1 and Category 2 is subject to interpretation. In most cases, we have accepted the classifications applied by our correspondents. We have noted that an American or Australian or Brazilian Adventist, for example, is likely to be more critical of his or her nation than an Adventist living in a country with many restrictions to religious freedom. In other words, where religious freedom is a real human right, minor restrictions, such as school and workplace accommodations for Sabbath observance, are more readily identified as major dangers. Where religious freedom is only an ephemeral concept, such restrictions are simply accepted as the price to pay.

The difference between Category 3 and Category 4 is more significant when it comes to the violation of religious freedom.

Category 5 represents the extreme violation of religious freedom. Saudi Arabia is the prime example of a nation in total denial of religious liberty. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Syria is the rare country where the church was expelled after being there for decades. Opposition rising from the nation's traditional Christian church seems to be more decisive than the will of the government. Ordinarily, Syria would be listed in Category 3, but for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Category 5 is more accurate.

NATIONS

CATEGORY 1
American Samoa
Andorra
Angola
Australia
Belize
Botswana
Burundi
Cameroon
Cook Islands
Costa Rica
Czech Republic
Democratic Republic of Congo
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Equatorial Guinea
Fiji
Finland
Gabon
Germany
Ghana
Gibraltar
Guam-Micronesia
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Honduras
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Kiribati
Kyrgyzstan
Liberia
Liechtenstein
Madagascar
Malawi
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Netherlands
Norway
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Pitcairn
Poland
Portugal
Puerto Rico
Rodrigues
Reunion
Rwanda
Saint Eustat/Saba
Saint Lucia
San Marino
Sao Tome & Principe
Seychelles
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Tonga
Tuvalu
United Kingdom
Vanuatu
Zimbabwe

CATEGORY 2
Albania
Antigua
Aruba
Austria
Barbados
Belgium
Benin
Bermuda
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Canada
Cape Verde
Central African Rep
Chad
Colombia
Congo
Cote d'Ivoire
Croatia
Dominica
Dutch Antilles
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
France
French Antilles
French Guyana
French Polynesia
Gambia
Grenada
Guyana
Haiti
Indonesia
Jamaica
Japan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Korea
Lesotho
Luxembourg
Mexico
Monaco
Montserrat
New Caledonia
Niue
Panama
Republic of Namibia
Republic of S. Africa
Romania
Saint Kitts/Nevis
Saint Maarten
Saint Vincent
Senegal
Sri Lanka
Surinam
Swaziland
Taiwan

Tanzania
Togo
Trinidad & Tobago
Uganda
Ukraine
United States
U.S. Virgin Islands
Venezuela
Western Samoa
Zambia

CATEGORY 3

Algeria
Armenia
Azerbaijan
China
Comoros Island
Greece
India
Iran
Jordan
Macedonia
Mali
Moldova
Mongolia
Morocco
Nigeria
Russia
Somalia
Tunisia
Turkey
Yugoslavia

CATEGORY 4

Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Bhutan
Georgia
Kuwait
Laos
Myanmar
Nauru
Nepal
Niger
Oman
Pakistan
Sudan
Tajikistan
Uzbekistan
Vietnam
West Russia
Yemen

CATEGORY 5

Afghanistan
Brunei
Libya
Mauritania
Saudi Arabia
Syria

AFRICA

CATEGORY 1
Angola
Botswana
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Equat Guinea
Gabon
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Rwanda
Sao Tome and Principe
Seychelles
Zimbabwe

CATEGORY 2
Benin
Burkina Faso
Cent African Rep
Chad
Congo
Cote d'Ivoire
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gambia
Kenya
Lesotho
Rep of Namibia
Senegal
Swaziland
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia

CATEGORY 3
Comoros
Mali
Nigeria
Somalia

CATEGORY 4
Niger
Sudan

CATEGORY 5
Mauritania

COMMENT

Category 1

Angola Increasing war in the country, but religious freedom is well accepted.

Category 2

Cape Verde Seventh-day Adventist members have been in jail since July 1998, accused of burning and looting Roman Catholic churches. No specific evidence has been brought against them. The church's PARL personnel in the region contacted local administration and government officials at high levels, along with the Catholic bishop, on October 7, 1998. Adventist administrators set up a strategy and contacted the embassy in Washington.

Cote d'Ivoire Local papers have published the accusations of some Roman Catholic priests that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a cult. In November 1998 some 60 Adventists were chased out of their village by fellow tribe members belonging to the Harris faith. Our mission administrators responded with positive contacts to the Harris church leadership as well as the government.

Category 4

Sudan January 30, 1999, was a very remarkable day for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sudan. Twenty persons were baptized in the White Nile River. Reports Sudan Field communication director Paul Yithak: "This is the first time people who are originally and ethnically local have joined our church through baptism. We request the whole church family to pray that God will bless the effort being made by the church in Sudan to reach the people who traditionally don't accept the Christian faith."

Earlier, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) compound in south Sudan was reportedly burned and looted while two local military factions spent three days fighting nearby. (ANN January 26, 1999.)

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
Belize	Antigua	
Costa Rica	Aruba	CATEGORY 4
Dominican Rep	Barbados	
Guatemala	Colombia	CATEGORY 5
Honduras	Dominica	
Nicaragua	El Salvador	
Saint Lucia	Grenada	
	Guyana	
	Haiti	
	Jamaica	
	Mexico	
	Panama	
	St. Kitts & Nevis	
	St. Vincent	
	Surinam	
	Trin. & Tobago	
	Venezuela	

COMMENT

Category 2

Antigua Problems are being reduced. The governor general, a Seventh-day Adventist, has been extremely helpful.

Aruba Saturday observance problems in public schools.

Barbados The private sector is a problem, but there has been excellent intervention and new laws enacted.

Colombia Saturday observance problems in public schools, military services, and employment.

Dominica In this Catholic-dominated area, inter-church relations are improving.

El Salvador Saturday observance problems in public schools.

Grenada Police service and the private sector have brought some problems, but there is excellent intervention by the PARL director.

Guyana University security service presents some problems, but the church is initiating dialogue.

Haiti At some schools, official exams are held on Sabbath and Seventh-day. Adventists cannot attend or

participate. Last August, a church was destroyed by a group of voodooists in protest against evangelical churches. We visited government leaders and the Ministry of Cults to present these problems. We are still working for a resolution and for more tolerance.

Jamaica A few problems in some public schools and workplaces.

Mexico San Juan Chanula: "Catholics, influenced by traditional Mayan Indian religion practices and village leaders have severely persecuted evangelicals and allowed only one church in the town. Dozens of evangelicals have been killed and about 25,000 forced to leave San Juan Chanula after being accused of threatening cultural religions and economic traditions." (*Religion Today,* December 7, 1998; APD, 12/8/98.)

Panama Saturday observance problems in public schools.

St. Vincent Public service is a problem: The general issue of Seventh-day Adventists needing to be off duty on Saturday. But church leaders are doing a great job. Conference officers and pastors are working together on problems.

Surinam Security services at the university is a problem, but the PARL officer is working to resolve the situation.

Trinidad & Tobago Public service, examinations, and private enterprise are sometimes problematic. The government is drafting legislation. High efficiency.

Venezuela Saturday observance problems in public schools. We are planning to send a letter to the new president, requesting a solution for these problems in the new constitution.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 4
Australia	Indonesia	Laos
Fiji	Japan	Vietnam
Kiribati	Korea	
New Zealand	Western Samoa	**CATEGORY 5**
Papua New Gui.		
Philippines	**CATEGORY 3**	Brunei
Solomon Islands		
Thailand	China	
Tonga	Mongolia	
Tuvalu		
Vanuatu		

COMMENT

Category 1

Australia Complete freedom, yet very little legislation exists to protect religious freedom.

Fiji New constitution separates church and state and provides religious freedom for all.

Papua New Guinea Constitution protects religious freedom. Potential problem with proposed six-day schooling.

Tuvalu Adventists are well respected in spite of the State Church of Tuvalu.

Category 2

Indonesia The situation in Indonesia has deteriorated. Fear overwhelms many people in almost all cities and villages. University students demonstrate. Factory workers strike. There is fighting among groups of people and senior high school students. Newspapers headline robberies and looting. Riots are uncontrolled. Many churches have been destroyed and burned. The number of the victims increases daily. Indonesians face gloom days. President Suharto resigned and President Habibie was installed. But political, economic, and social conditions are not better, but worse.

Several Christians were murdered at the beginning of January of this year, and one of the oldest churches in southeast Asia was burned down by Muslim rioters the last week of January, 1999.

Concerning the Malukan Islands, "Violence between Moslem and Christian factions has

flared resulting in what is described as a 'holy war.' People are being chased down and killed in the streets; buildings are being burned and the situation is out of control." (Report on Ambon from Christian missionaries, APD, January 23, 1999.)

According to *United Methodist News Service,* "Before September 1996, about 370 churches had been burned or destroyed over a 30-year period. By the end of 1998, the total had jumped to 500." (APD 2/21/99.)

One of our correspondents in Indonesia describes conditions as "fearful in East Timor, Aceh, and West Kalimantan." Twenty-five churches were burned or destroyed. But in the midst of this nation's time of trouble, he adds, "many look for peace from God and join in the services of the church."

Japan Notwithstanding good legislation, Adventists have problems in the public schools, workplace, and military with respect to Saturday observance.

Korea Notwithstanding good legislation, Adventists have problems in the public schools, workplace, and military with respect to Saturday observance.

Category 3

China Except in Hong Kong, the government has not allowed the Seventh-day Adventist Church to organize. China is still very cautious regarding religious affairs. Adventists meet in Protestant churches and homes on Saturday.

Mongolia It is very difficult for Christian churches to become officially registered. For example, the Adventist church in Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia, must renew its registration every year.

EUROPE, CANADA, UNITED STATES

CATEGORY 1
Andorra
Czech Republic
Denmark
Finland
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Liechtenstein
Malta
Monaco
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
San Marino
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

CATEGORY 2
Albania
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
Croatia
France
Kazakhstan
Luxembourg
Romania
Ukraine
United States

CATEGORY 3
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Greece
Macedonia
Moldova
Russia
Turkey
Yugoslavia

CATEGORY 4
Belarus
Georgia
Tajikistan
Uzbekistan

CATEGORY 5

Category 1

Andorra Freedom for all religions, but there is no Seventh-day Adventist member in this country.

Hungary Jozef Lajer, vice president of the Parliamentary Committee for Minorities and Human Rights, stated on TV that "the conditions for establishing churches should be tightened in Hungary." Presently, a new church can be established with as few as 100 members. The church then benefits from special tax exemptions. Proposed amendments to existing law would require a religious community to have 10,000 members or 100 years of history in the country before it could register officially. Pastor Jozsef Szilvasi, leader of Hungary's Seventh-day Adventists, commented that any such limitation would not affect his church because it has 10,300,000 members worldwide and has been in Hungary since 1898. The church official added that "while presently existing churches cannot be outlawed, we recall past persecution,

so we are very sensitive to all suggestions that tend to curb religious liberty."

Liechtenstein Freedom for all religions, but there is no Seventh-day Adventist member in this country.

San Marino Freedom for all religions, but there is no Seventh-day Adventist member in this country.

Category 2

Austria New legislation does not grant freedom to all religious minorities. Nonetheless, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has again been recognized. Our correspondent writes: "After the prescribed six months we were informed that we have been recognized according to the new law. However this new law gives no privileges whatsoever. The only positive aspect is that we are now existent as a church. Until then, we did not exist officially. In every day life, however, there are advantages we experience. We are no longer looked upon as a dangerous sect. We are allowed to advertise evangelistic meetings where before we were not allowed to. As far as religious freedom is concerned, there is not much change because religious freedom is guaranteed to all religious bodies. We believe that this new law is in confrontation with the constitution of our country and does not treat all people or religious groups or churches the same way."

Belgium The recent Belgian Parliamentary report creates significant difficulties and problems for some religious minorities. There are concerns about a special committee of inquiry on "cults" ("sects") which is at the point of being set up by the government.

Canada The Seventh-day Adventist Church of Canada is highly regarded. While there have been some legislative problems, the church has successfully defended its members before the Supreme Court. There are some problems in the workplace, but the overall atmosphere is positive.

France Our correspondent in France has worked on 45 separate cases involving young students from Adventist and Orthodox Jewish families who have experienced problems attending their classes and, at the same time, observing the Sabbath. Four were expelled or excluded from school. Two lost their family subsidies. Fifteen were forced to enroll in other schools in their communities or to relocate to other communities altogether.

France's new law on compulsory schooling will restrict religious freedom for many families. There are real concerns about new directives from the Treasury Office on matters of financial support of religious associations (taxes on money gifts to the churches and no salary/wage for the members of the board of directors of a religious association). Seventh-day Adventist Church personnel actively communicate with the French authorities in charge of religious affairs, as well as the French National Education Office, the French Treasury Office, and other agencies.

Luxembourg Seventh-day Adventist administrators appealed to the European Court against a decision of Luxembourg infringing a Seventh-day Adventist public school student's right to religious liberty.

Romania Frequently Catholics, Protestants, and Seventh-day Adventists in particular have problems with the Orthodox churches on the local level.

Ukraine There are some difficulties in educational institutions—schools, colleges, and universities—when exams are on the Sabbath. This is a particular issue in Western Conference where religion is taught in schools by Roman Catholics or Greek Catholics. Seventh-day Adventists face occasional problems in the workplace because of the Sabbath.

United States The United States seeks to set an example of tolerance and freedom for the world. The Constitution guarantees religious freedom. Civil rights legislation gives strong support to principles of religious liberty. However, Adventists in the U.S. continue to encounter religious discrimination in the workplace and in some domestic courts with child custody issues.

Category 3

Moldova Except for one article, the legislation on cults provides freedom of belief and witness to one's religion and equal rights before the law. The problematic article, "Banning Forced Proselytism," was adopted by Parliament just before the New Year. It is thought that this law is really the hidden agenda of the Orthodox church (which asserts a self-claim to have state status) to create legal obstacles for the free activities of Protestant churches. Seventh-day Adventist ministers now face the opposition of Orthodox priests who have unlawfully arrogated to themselves the power to establish norms and

rules in religious issues through local representatives of the national government. In Moldova's Prednestrovye region, religious meetings in public buildings are prohibited. Seventh-day Adventists cannot rent any halls to conduct workshops. Evangelism is out of the question. There are problems with advertising, invitations, and public events. Government and Parliament follow the "traditional" Orthodox church which is why Adventists are having difficulties realizing the nation's proclaimed principle of freedom of conscience.

Russia During an evangelistic crusade, some provocative articles appeared in the local papers. There is a malevolent, extremist attitude towards Seventh-day Adventist activities. In some cases, evangelistic programs have been prohibited. In Komsomolsk (Ivanovsk region), the church was not allowed to conduct an evangelistic program. The local paper published a slanderous article about the church. Adventist representatives visited the editors, who declared: "We have only one church—the Orthodox church." In Vanino, an evangelistic crusade was banned because the church did not have new registration. Students have problems at schools when they do not attend school on Saturdays: Administrators threaten not to transfer them to the next grade. Moreover, the Adventist church was not allowed to rent buildings for worship. In Ola, an evangelistic crusade was banned because the church did not have a new registration. In the city of Rostov-on-Don, Vecherny Rostov, the local newspaper, published a number of discrediting articles which charged that Adventists are not a church, but an American sect, hostile to Russia. Church administrators visited the journal's editors and the local legal office. The editors rejected the complaint and the lawyers would not support the church. In Yjeisk (Krasnodar), the local media representatives taped the church's program about family life and used it later as antisectarian propaganda. The church administration lodged a complaint with the city mayor, but got no answer. A literature evangelist selling books in Anapa (Krasnodar) was assaulted by the Cossacks. The church's appeal to the police was ignored. In Klintsu (Bryansk region) an evangelistic crusade was blocked. An appeal to the mayor by church representatives was successful. They were given permission to conduct the program. In Pugachev, an evangelistic crusade was prevented. The church appealed to the city administration with no response.

Yugoslavia Yugoslavia is a country of outstanding natural beauty, but recent conflicts, including the present situation in Kosovo, have brought many changes to the freedom once enjoyed. There have been physical scars in terms of many destroyed church buildings and large numbers of homeless refugees. The community has suffered emotionally, too, with families being driven apart by enforced separation and the difficulties imposed by economic sanctions. Currently we are facing these new problems:

(1) In previous years we had considerable liberty in proclaiming the Adventist message. For example, we used to have regular religious programs broadcast on a number of radio stations, but now we no longer have that opportunity.

(2) Newspapers quite often carry articles against the Adventist church in general and even against individual church members. Sometimes we are able to hire public halls for our evangelistic campaigns, but Orthodox priests, who are very strong, tell the members of the community not to attend the meetings. They speak of Adventists as a sect, sometimes using even stronger language. Orthodox believers come to Adventist meetings and stand by the door, telling people not to enter. Adventists have been physically abused while attempting to put up or display posters.

(3) In some parts of Yugoslavia, Orthodox priests warn Adventist children that they must attend Orthodox services because it is part of the local culture. The pressures on Adventist young people are increasing steadily.

Category 4

Belarus There are problems in evangelism. Adventist evangelists are denied access to public buildings and may use church buildings only. In many places there are no church buildings. What is available is not suitable for evangelistic programs. Church representatives have appealed many times to different statesmen and politicians, but have not received any positive solutions.

Tajikistan The local authorities do not allow evangelism. There were threats from extremist groups.

Uzbekistan Problems with registering Adventist congregations. In Karshi, volunteer missionary Igor Gusev was arrested and exiled for 24 hours. After reporting widespread restrictions of religious liberty in Uzbekistan and the refusal of local authorities to register the

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Navoii, Adventist News Network and Adventist Press Service learned that the direct intervention of the nation's president produced positive developments in the situation. According to Victor Krushenitsky, the church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Euro-Asia Division, President Karimov visited Navoii in November, "after which some changes were made in the leadership of the city and the region." On November 24, 1998, after seven months of waiting for a response, leaders of the Adventist church in Navoii were invited to a meeting in the mayor's office, reports Krushenitsky. "All required papers were signed and admitted for the processing of an official registration for the Adventist church in Navoii." In a speech to those attending the meeting, the mayor spoke of the need for spiritual growth in the city's population. He told the Adventist delegates that they should proceed quickly with their plans for a health center and soup kitchen. "All the plans will be a great support to the city," the mayor said. "Start working on the completion of your building right now as we want it to be occupied no later than May 1999."

Meanwhile, in some other municipalities, Seventh-day Adventist congregations are refused registration because they number less than 100 members. But in some other parts of the country, recent information underlines difficulties. A letter from one of our correspondents gives an outlook of the current problems in one part of the country. He wrote: "In Buhara, Uzbekistan, on Sabbath, March 13, our church was visited by a group of about ten policemen. They surrounded Pastor R's house, where our church members had gathered for worship. The police put down the names of all the people present there, took away everything they found: books, Bible lessons, tapes, Bibles. On the next day, Pastor R was invited to the police and they wrote out the fine for him in the size of 6600 sum (local currency, about $10.00). I talked with him and asked him not to pay the fine without the decision of the court. They blame him in illegal religious activity, as the church is not registered in the city of Buhara. We presented the papers for the registration, we got the special permission for the registration from the Ministry of Justice as we do not have 100 members in Buhara. The papers went through all the instances, but the Committee on Religious Affairs of Republic Cabinet of Ministers failed the registration. They said that the regulation about

the registration of groups less than 100 members is only for those who had been registered before the latest law came into practice, which put into operation this restriction. Once again we wrote to the Ministry of Justice and received the answer: `Present the papers.' Pastor R began preparing the papers again and then police were involved."

We quote also, "On January 26, 1999, the Deacon of Chimkent Church was carrying Bibles for Chimkent Church, which he took in the Bible Society of Uzbekistan. On board, Uzbek Customs officers arrested the literature, total 175 books, and took the matter to the law. The Court kept the papers for more than one month and after that returned the matter back without any decision made. The Customs does not give the books back, pointing to the Court. The Court says that we are not to blame, we are arrested illegally, but it does not give any decision. Till today we are hanging in the air, nobody wants to solve our problems. Only a Customs officer secretly told us that they would do everything possible for us to be mad about carrying religious literature."

The same correspondent mentions the difficulties of the Baptists in Almalyk and Angren and the Pentecostals in Karakalpakia.

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

CATEGORY 1

CATEGORY 2

CATEGORY 3
Algeria
Iran
Jordan
Morocco
Tunisia

CATEGORY 4
Bahrain
Kuwait
Oman
Yemen

CATEGORY 5
Libya
Saudi Arabia
Syria

COMMENT

Category 5

Saudi Arabia Religious freedom is not practiced here. About 400,000 Christians who are guest workers from other nations, have no right to pray together, to worship God together, or to read the Bible together.

Syria The Seventh-day Adventist Church was expelled from the country over 40 years ago. In recent months, however, a high-level delegation of Syrian Christian visited several major Adventist educational and medical centers in the U.S.

SOUTH ASIA

CATEGORY 1

CATEGORY 2

CATEGORY 3
India
Sri Lanka

CATEGORY 4
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Nepal
Pakistan

CATEGORY 5
Afghanistan

COMMENT

Category 3

India Reports from Adventist leaders in Gujarat state indicate that an Adventist church building in the city of Surat was attacked. The church was identified in the *Indian Express.* The Hindu-oriented *Frontline Magazine* also mentioned the Seventh-day Adventist church as the target of attack in Surat. Dr. M. S. Jeremiah, president, Surat Adventist Management College, said that one church member was injured when an attacker swung a cricket bat at him. Pastor G. E. Sharon, president of the Adventist church's Gujarat conference, fears that "many of our members have also been attacked. Two jungle chapels were burned, two others badly damaged. In every village where our people live, they have been receiving warnings and threats to stop worship or face severe consequences." Bibles were burned at Rajkot. Central India was the scene of anti-Catholic attacks in September 1998. Twenty Hindu radicals are suspected of ransacking several churches and raping four nuns.

Elsewhere, a Catholic priest was murdered and another was paraded naked. Catholic institutions in India number over 6,000. Christians of all denominations comprise only 2.5 percent of the population, but provide 60 percent of education. India is 82% Hindu. On February 2, 1999, Parliamentary Affairs and Tourism Minister Kadan Lal Khurana resigned, saying he was ashamed to be part of an administration that could not protect the lives of minorities in India. (Press and Information Service, February 2, 1999.) The United Christian Forum for Human Rights says it has documented 120 cases of rape, Bible-burning, and other assaults—all directed at Christians. (*Religion Today,* December 7, 1998, APD.) "Only about 40 such cases had been reported in the previous 30 years," UCF said. Prose-

lytism is the issue. Extremist Hindus accuse Christians of converting the poor and the uneducated by offering money and schooling. Hindu fundamentalist groups are dominated by upper-caste Hindus.

Observes Dr. Justus Devadas, Southern Asia Division PARL director: "You are aware of the troubles in our country and the atrocities perpetrated on Christians. There is a tremendous outcry from everyone. The government is being severely criticized for its lack of commitment to deal with this issue."

The low-point in India's current anti-Christian outburst has to be the murder of Australian Baptist missionary Graham Stewart Staines and his two young sons. They were burned to death in Pastor Staines' vehicle. Dr. John Graz, General Conference PARL director, expressed the condolences and mutual concerns of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in a letter to Dr. Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

Sri Lanka One correspondent wrote: "I cannot verify any concerted attempt to persecute or harass Christians in Sri Lanka. The media is tightly controlled, but our members are spread throughout the island and we would hear of any widespread occurrences. Some villages have attempted to discourage Adventist churches in their areas, but an appeal to the higher authorities has always worked in our favor."

The following case is not directly a religious freedom case, but can be underlined to understand the complexity of the situation in Sri Lanka. Here is the story, in brief, of Elkins Thurairajah, 25, the son of a Seventh-day Adventist minister: On October 27, 1998, about 6:00 in the morning, two men from the Intelligence Department and two policemen came to the Thurairajah home and announced they wanted to check Elkins' room. They found nothing that would implicate the young man. Nonetheless, Elkins was arrested and taken to the Crime and Detective Bureau on suspicion of terrorism. One of his interrogators warned him: "The authorities may get you out of here, but we will not let you live." Elkins was finally released in December, just before Christmas, and remains free.

Subsequently, the son of another Adventist pastor was taken into custody, but following ninety minutes of negotiation, he was released.

Back in March of 1998, Pastor Anthony

Alexander, pastor of the Adventist church in Vavuniya and principal of the Adventist International School, was arrested. He has been held in prison ever since. No trial. Not even a formal charge. But someone in authority thinks he has been involved in terrorism. Perhaps the real motive for Pastor Alexander's unlawful incarceration is the simple fact that he is a Tamil.

Ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sri Lanka—including Pastor Alexander and Pastor K. Thurairajah (Elkins' father)—are not involved in political activities. This is well known. Church leaders in Sri Lanka have joined the two families in requesting the government for fair treatment according to the law. To be held in prison without charge is to be denied a fundamental human right. The families of the imprisoned are placed in difficult straits. Their security is fully compromised.

Concerning these deplorable events, the General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty continues to gather information. Directly and through diplomatic channels, the church has submitted several official letters to both the president and the minister of justice of Sri Lanka. During the night of November 5, 1998, Pastor Vasu Sitharan, 34, of the Canaan Fellowship Church, a Christian group in Jaffna, was murdered by unidentified assailants who slit the minister's throat. On December 2, less than a month later, another man from the same church was found with his throat cut.

Category 4

Bhutan From a recent report: "Bhutan is a Himalayan Hindu kingdom, very small in size with little or no religious freedom. It is a Hindu kingdom ruled by a king. Some Adventist churches have been built on the border of Indian villages where a few Bhutanese also attend church."

Nepal Two young men, both Christians, were killed November 20, 1998, while in police custody. Among Christians, fear of an imminent wave of persecution was fueled in January 1999 by the establishment of a new extremist Hindu movement. (*Compass Direct* 1999, APD, January 14, 1999.)

Pakistan Two Pakistanis, a man, 24, and his sister, 20, recently turned up at the office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sri Lanka. As new converts from

Islam to Christianity, a death threat hangs over their heads. They had sought asylum in Kenya and one other country, but without success. Meanwhile, the United Nations says it cannot do anything for them right now because a whole village in Pakistan has come under government attack for adopting Christianity, fourteen of whom escaped to Sri Lanka.

Category 5

Afghanistan There is no religious freedom, nor any Christian church in this country.

CONCLUSION

The Religious Freedom World Report 1999 of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty is quite detailed relative to some regions and nations, admittedly much less so concerning other regions and nations. Some areas of the church's world field simply have better conditions and opportunities for reporting on religious liberty situations than others.

This much is clear: Over and against all the positive aspects to the existing worldwide religious freedom situation, there remain far too many places where religious liberty is either weak or nonexistent. In some areas favorable to religious liberty, the situation is threatened. Xenophobic nationalism, opposition to religious minorities and to evangelism, religious extremism, and intolerance are growing. These are times that try our religious liberty souls, test our convictions, and challenge our commitment to the fundamental principle of religious freedom for everyone everywhere. The mandate must continue until every person is able to exercise "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."