



Reflections on the Manhattan Declaration

By Stephen Bohr

Momentous things happening in the political, natural and religious world indicate that we are on the verge of what Ellen White called a 'stupendous crisis'. In my newsletter article this time I would like to mention just one of those happenings.

Perhaps some of you have heard of the *Manhattan Declaration*. This document was drafted on October 20, 2009 and released on November 20 by some very influential Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Orthodox religious leaders in the United States and the world. Among those who have signed the Declaration are bishops and archbishops, university presidents, theological seminary presidents, seminary teachers, chancellors, leaders of various family life organizations, senior pastors of influential mega and giga churches, lawyers and world renowned Christian authors, editors and religious broadcasters.

To date there are over one half million signatories from every religious stripe—Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Anglican, Orthodox, Methodist, United Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Reformed, Salvation Army, Christian, Reformed Episcopal, Church of God in Christ, Congregational, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Assembly of God, Church of the Brethren, Lutheran—a truly ecumenical group! In fact the drafters of the Declaration have explicitly stated: “we act together” and we have “united at this hour” to “reaffirm fundamental truths.” In another place the Declaration states: “We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right—and, more importantly, to embrace our obligation—to speak and act in defense of these truths.” As I see it, this ecumenical spirit is one of the most problematic aspects of the Manhattan Declaration. But why should unity among Christians in a common cause be so problematic? After all, didn't Jesus pray that we all might be one?

One wonders how such a diverse group of religious leaders can join together in a common cause. After all, their religious beliefs and practices are diverse and often contradictory. John MacArthur, Evangelical minister of the Grace Community Church, President of The Master's Seminary, author of numerous books and radio talk show host, abstained from signing the document. He explained that it ignores “the one true and ultimate remedy for all humanity's ills: the gospel.” MacArthur is correct when he stated that the Declaration nowhere explains the content of the true gospel “because of the contradictory views held by the broad range of signatories regarding what the gospel teaches and what it means to be a Christian.”

Another troubling characteristic of the Manhattan Declaration is its overtly political tone. In some respects it seems to be a political statement addressed to the political leaders of the United States government. Though the drafters of the Declaration claim that they make this commitment not “as partisans of any political group but as followers of Jesus Christ,” the issues brought forth in the Declaration are the very ones that have divided liberals and conservatives on the political spectrum in the past few years—the viability of abortion, the definition of marriage and the nature of religious liberty. In fact, Chuck Colson, one of the drafters of the Manhattan Declaration stated that the purpose of the document was to send a “crystal-clear message to civil authorities that we will not, under any circumstances, stand idly by as our religious freedom comes under assault.”

The political tone comes through clearly when the Declaration discusses the sanctity of life:

“Although the protection of the weak and vulnerable is the first obligation of government, the power of government is today often enlisted in the cause of promoting what Pope John Paul II called “the culture of death.”

The institution of marriage is another area where the Declaration indicts the civil power for attempting to subvert how marriage is defined:

“The institution of marriage, already wounded by promiscuity, infidelity and divorce, is at risk of being redefined [by the government] and thus subverted.”

“Marriage is not a ‘social construction,’ but is rather an objective reality—the covenantal union of husband and wife—that it is the duty of the law to recognize, honor, and protect.”

The document even indirectly seems to pit the present administration versus the previous one. The Document frowns upon embryonic stem cell research:

“The President and many in Congress favor the expansion of embryo-research to include the taxpayer funding of so-called ‘therapeutic cloning.’”

On the issue of abortion, the Declaration directly refers to the ‘present administration’ as wanting to make abortions legal, refers to the ‘infamous 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* which stripped the unborn of legal protection’ and accuses the President of wanting to ‘make abortion more easily and widely available’

Further the Document states:

“We will be united and untiring in our efforts to roll back the license to kill that began with the abandonment of the unborn to abortion.”

“A truly prophetic Christian witness will insistently call on those who have been entrusted with temporal power to fulfill the first responsibility of government: to protect the weak and vulnerable against violent attack, and to do so with no favoritism, partiality, or discrimination.”

“We call on all officials in our country, elected and appointed, to protect and serve every member of our society, including the most marginalized, voiceless, and vulnerable among us.”

An issue which must be brought to the forefront is this: Does the church really have the moral authority to admonish the state to protect life when it has been the instigator and supporter of, among other things, numerous wars, the Inquisition, the Crusades and the St. Bartholomew Massacre. Does the church really have the moral authority to lecture the state on the issue of the protection of human life when it has such a track record?

In my view, the Manhattan Declaration has problems from the get-go. The very first paragraph of the Preamble denotes an incredible and almost unforgivable ignorance of history. It states:

“Christians are heirs of a **2,000-year tradition** of proclaiming God’s word, seeking justice in our societies, resisting tyranny, and reaching out with compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering.”

Is this an accurate description of the church in its two thousand year history? The Bible states that at least for 1260 years (Revelation 12:6, 14) of the two thousand, the faithful of God had to flee to the desolate place of the earth to escape the wrath of the apostate church.

The second societal issue that the Declaration brings to view is marriage. It deplores the “widespread non-marital sexual cohabitation and a devastatingly high rate of divorce,” as well as the high out of wedlock birth rate especially in the poorer classes of society. And what is one of the proposed solutions to the alarming divorce rate?

“We must reform ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce.”

And regarding the idea of civil unions the Declaration unambiguously states: “No one has a civil right to have a non-marital relationship treated as a marriage. Marriage is an objective reality—a covenantal union of husband and wife—that it is the duty of the law to recognize and support for the sake of justice and the common good.”

“And so it is out of *love* (not “animus”) and prudent *concern for the common good* (not “prejudice”), that we pledge to labor ceaselessly to preserve the legal definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman and to rebuild the marriage culture.”

In one of the few places where the Declaration inculcates Christians for the disintegration of marriage, it candidly states:

“We confess with sadness that Christians and our institutions have too often scandalously failed to uphold the institution of marriage and to model for the world the true meaning of marriage. Insofar as we have too easily embraced the **culture of divorce** and remained silent about social practices that undermine the dignity of marriage **we repent**, and call upon all Christians to do the same.”

One wonders what authority the church has to rebuke the civil power for the deplorable condition of the marriage institution in our society when Christians divorce at a rate as high (and in some cases even higher) as society in general. Without intending to be judgmental or question the sincerity of the signatories, I wonder how many of them have been divorced and remarried. How can the church admonish the state to safeguard the sanctity of marriage when the problem of pornography among parishioners and clergy runs rampant? How can Christians struggle for a moral society when they go to the theater and watch lewd movies that glorify illicit sex and color the air blue with filthy language? Does not the church need to get its glass house in order before it throws stones?

One also wonders how the Roman Catholic clergy who signed the Declaration can have the moral authority to admonish the state to safeguard the sanctity of marriage when their church in recent years has been the subject of numerous child sexual abuse cases in several world countries. Further, would it not be part of the restoration of the Biblical view of marriage for the Roman Catholic Church to allow and even encourage its clergy to get married as Simon Peter (whom they believe to have been the first pope) was and as the bishops, deacons and elders were in the New Testament church? Would not following God's plan for marriage greatly diminish the number of gay priests and priests who sexually abuse children?

The third and final issue that is brought to view in the Declaration is the need for the state to safeguard religious liberty. In a splendid definition of the essence of religious liberty, the Declaration states:

"Christians confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Immunity from religious coercion is the cornerstone of an unconstrained conscience. No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions. What is true for individuals applies to religious communities as well."

This definition of religious liberty would be applauded by any knowledgeable Seventh-day Adventist. But the question begs to be asked: what is the motivation that led to this inspiring definition? The context of this sterling definition leaves no doubt about what is meant by religious liberty:

"The threat to these fundamental principles of justice is evident in efforts to weaken or eliminate conscience protections for healthcare institutions and professionals, and in antidiscrimination statutes that are used as weapons to force religious institutions, charities, businesses, and service providers either to accept (and even facilitate) activities and relationships they judge to be immoral, or go out of business."

The motivation for the religious liberty definition in the Declaration is to seek to compel the civil power of government to permit religious institutions such as hospitals and clinics to refuse

to perform abortions, to employ same-sex partners, to place adopted children in the homes of same-sex couples and to do human embryonic stem cell research.

Should the federal government have the right to compel religious institutions to perform abortions, to employ persons who are openly gay and to place adopted children with same-sex couples? Of course not! This would be an encroachment of the civil power upon religion which is clearly unconstitutional. Yet as far as I know, the government presently allows religious institutions to function according to their own moral standards **as long as** the institution does not receive federal funding. If this is true, then the solution to this problem would be for religious institutions to disentangle themselves from the civil power and refuse federal funding for their institutions and in this way they could abide by their own moral standards without the interference of government. After all, religious institutions cannot expect to receive Caesar's dollars while refusing to obey Caesar's laws be they unjust or not.

Some would say that this is naïve and totally unrealistic because these hospitals, clinics and charities could not function without federal funding. If this is true then the institutions are no longer merely church institutions because they are accountable, at least partially, to the federal government. There was a time when religious educational, medical and publishing institutions operated solely on the basis of funds that were contributed by the members of the church organization. This is no longer the case. Such is the price that church institutions must pay for becoming entangled with the money of the state!

Though not addressed by the Declaration, one wonders how the signatories would feel about religious displays on government property. In the past few years Christian activists have cried out that the government has denied them religious liberty because it has forbidden them from putting these displays on federal, state or municipal property. Some have even claimed religious persecution for not being allowed to put nativity scenes on public property. But is this really religious persecution? Do religious displays really have any place on Caesar's property? Must we render Caesar that which is God's? If Christians simply stuck to preaching and exemplifying the gospel and the state stuck to the preservation of a civil society, both church and state would be much better off.

Now an even more foundational question must be brought to the forefront and it is this: What is at the very heart of a moral society?

The religious leaders who signed the Declaration are to be commended for their desire to uphold high moral standards in society. I believe that their intentions are sincere. In many ways the document has laudable aspirations. For example, it calls "upon believers and unbelievers to defend the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage and the rights of conscience and religious liberty." The document affirms that these truths are "inviolable and non-negotiable." What genuine Christian could argue with such a statement? Most Seventh-day Adventists would heartily agree that the life of the unborn and the old and the sick should be zealously

protected by the state. They would agree that marriage should be between a man and a woman and that religious liberty should be protected. Yet, the critical question that needs to be answered is this: How can these worthy objectives be reached? Is it by appealing to the arm of civil power or does true and lasting success lie elsewhere?

How is a moral society created and perpetuated? A moral society can only exist when it is composed of truly moral persons. And what lies at the very core of truly moral persons? The answer is that in the new birth God gives people a new heart and then writes His moral law upon it (Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Jeremiah 31:31-34). As a result it will be a delight for the converted child of God to obey the moral law (Psalm 40:7, 8). In fact, the Christian will cry out with David: "How I love your law". It is impossible for a Christian to speak about morality without reference to the Ten Commandments because they are at the very foundation of a truly moral society!

Yet many religious leaders in the United States have taught that the law of God was nailed to the cross, that it is impossible for Christians to keep it this side of heaven, that Jesus kept it for us, (which is true in justification!) that we are not under law but under grace, that we are not under the letter but under the Spirit (true if understood correctly) and that observing the law is legalism and has nothing to do with our salvation. How can we expect a moral society when church members are taught on a regular basis in church that keeping God's law is not required by God at worst and is optional at best?

In recent years there has been a growing desire on the part of some religious leaders in the United States to have the civil power forsake its neutrality toward religion. Many of them have blamed the Federal and State governments for the disgraceful decline of morals in the United States. They have hinted that if the government displayed the Ten Commandments in our courts, gave vouchers for church charitable work, allowed Christian displays on government property, passed constitutional amendments against abortion and in favor of heterosexual marriage, inserted prayer in public schools, kept "In God we Trust" on our currency and "one nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, the morals of the nation would improve. In other words the ills of society are blamed on the legislative failures of the state and therefore the church looks to the state to correct them.

There certainly is an incongruity between preaching that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross or that keeping them is legalism and then turning right around and preaching that they should be posted in our courts of justice and upheld and enforced by the civil government.

I believe that the deplorable morals of society reflect much more the failure of the church in modern society rather than the failure of the state. The church is the leaven of society, the salt of the earth, the light of the world and the church has failed to be leaven, salt and light. People who go to church today hear very little about obedience, holiness and victory over sin. Very little is said about the need for repentance, confession, conversion, the new birth and a life of obedience that flows from a heart of love. The message in churches today (including some

Adventist churches, sad to say!) seems to major on signs and wonders, political involvement, psychological self-help, material prosperity and feeling good about oneself. And rather than hearing the word preached, the service oftentimes revolves around praise music, fellowship and entertainment—having a good time and feeling comfortable! Anything that ruffles feathers, afflicts the comfortable is deemed judgmental and unkind. The apostle Paul certainly described our time when he stated that in the last days many Christians would have itching ears to hear smooth things and as a result would turn away their ears from the truth to fables.

I believe that in order for morals to truly and lastingly improve in our society, the religious leaders of the United States will have to begin preaching the Ten Commandments (and I mean not nine but all ten!!) in two legitimate contexts.

First of all by example and preaching they must have the courage to rebuke sin in their churches and call it by its right name. The Bible defines sin as the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) so it is impossible to preach about sin without preaching about the law. As parishioners look into the mirror of God's law they will feel bad about themselves. They will understand that sin is a hideous monster that led Jesus to the cross. Satan makes sin appear desirable. The cross reveals that sin is so terrible that it nailed Jesus to the cross!

Ministers must help their parishioners understand that their adultery, lying, cheating, covetousness, and idolatry is what nailed Jesus to the cross. Ministers must clearly and without apology show their members that the worldly music they listen to, the immoral movies they watch, the intemperate habits they indulge in and the questionable entertainment they participate in are what nailed their beloved Savior to the Cross.

Secondly, when hearts are broken by a realization of what sin did to Jesus, then religious leaders must teach their members that God is not only willing to forgive them for breaking His law if they repent and confess, but that God is willing to give them a new heart where He can write His holy law so that they can reflect the beautiful character of Jesus in their words and actions.

Thus ministers must teach their parishioners that there is a pre-conversion function of God's law and a post-conversion function of the law. This work is not done on Capitol Hill but rather in church!

Ellen White, in the literary masterpiece, The Desire of Ages made a profound statement about the mission of Jesus and the attitude he manifested toward the civil power of His day:

“The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Savior attempted no civil reforms.”

Rome was notorious for its licentious immorality. Ritual prostitution, murders, abortion, the abandonment of the newborn to a certain death, pedophilia, homosexuality, slavery, political assassinations and other social evils ran rampant. Yet nowhere in the gospels do we find Jesus railing against the civil power of Rome and encouraging his disciples to put pressure on it to conform to the law of God. Ellen White continues:

“He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments.”

Was Jesus so callous that He did not care about these social evils? Wasn't Jesus aware of the abuses that were being practiced under the auspices of the Roman government? Ellen White answers:

“Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart.”

And then Ellen White concludes the statement with the following profound words:

“Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God.” The Desire of Ages, pp. 509, 510

To try to correct the disease of society by civil laws would be like sprinkling leaven on top of a lump of dough. In order for leaven to raise the dough it must be put inside, not sprinkled outside. In the parable of the leaven Jesus taught that this is the way the kingdom of Jesus is to grow. When the heart is right then the behavior will be right!

After the Day of Pentecost, the apostles followed the example of Jesus. Not once in the book of Acts do we find the apostles appealing to the civil power of Rome to correct the evils of society. They stuck to what the church had been called to do, preaching the Word of God under the powerful ministration of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts reveals that the apostate Jewish institution of the day constantly appealed to the civil power of the magistrates of Rome to persecute the Christians! Sadly, later on in the fourth century when church and state were joined together in unholy matrimony, then the church began to persecute through the use of the sword of the state.

There is one more thing that religious leaders of the United States need to do. They need to instruct their parishioners to keep the whole law out of love for Jesus! If I asked any believer whether it is alright in the sight of God for a genuine Christian to have other gods, to practice idolatry, to take the name of the Lord in vain, to dishonor parents, to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to bear false witness, or to covet, they would undoubtedly say 'no'.

Yet there is one commandment that the religious world refuses to keep and that is the Sabbath. When this subject is brought up the excuses begin to flow. 'The Sabbath was for the Jews', 'keeping the Sabbath is legalism', 'if you keep the Sabbath you have fallen from grace', so go the arguments. One suspects that the Commandment that presents a problem for the religious leaders of America is the fourth. They would have the civil power uphold all the Ten Commandments except the fourth!

One disturbing element of the Declaration is the repeated reference to the need for the civil power to enforce the sixth and seventh commandments and to guarantee religious liberty for **'the common good.'** Here is one example:

"The biblical purpose of law is to preserve order and serve justice and the common good; yet laws that are unjust—and especially laws that purport to compel citizens to do what is unjust—undermine the common good, rather than serve it."

Obviously in the minds of the framers of the Manhattan Declaration, abortion, same-sex marriage, divorce, pornography, and other social ills undermine the 'common good.' I would agree with them heartily that the violation of these commandments disturbs the 'common good.' Yet the question is: What will be the next commandment that needs to be emphasized for the betterment of the morals of a secular society that has lost its spiritual bearings? What other commandment will the religious leaders eventually get Caesar to enforce for the 'common good'?

As Seventh-day Adventists we have always believed that the Sabbath will be the great bone of contention at the end of time. In a society that has become increasingly secular, would not church attendance be the most logical step to get people spiritually in tune again and to enhance the morals of society? Would it not be the natural step to return the United States to what it once was in the good old days when everyone went to church on Sunday? Would it not be ideal for the civil power to impose a national Sunday law so that people will have this day free for family and spiritual enrichment? Would this not be for the 'common good'? The concerns of the framers of the Manhattan Declaration are only the tip of the iceberg. Hidden underneath is the massive iceberg itself, stealthy, invisible, imperceptible, probably even for many of the signatories of the Declaration.

These religious leaders are probably oblivious to where all of this is leading or what the capstone of their movement will be but Ellen G. White saw it clearly. Speaking about the agitation for a national Sunday law in the late 1880's she states:

“The Sunday movement is now making **its way in darkness**. The leaders are **concealing** the true issue, and many who unite in the movement **do not themselves see** whither the **undercurrent** is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon.” Testimonies for the Church, p. 452

Ellen White has already predicted how the churches in the United States will unite upon points of doctrine that they have in common and cooperate to have the civil power enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions. I believe that the Manhattan Declaration is a clear vindication of the accuracy of the following statement made by Ellen White in the late 1880’s:

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” The Great Controversy, p. 445

This scenario portrayed by Ellen White is no longer a mere possibility or probability. It is a reality unfolding before our very eyes.

Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have called upon the civil authorities to write civil legislation that will guarantee the observance of Sunday as a basic human right. Especially in Europe there is a groundswell movement led by the Roman Catholic Church to strong arm the European Parliament to enact a Sunday law that will cover the entire countries that belong to the European Union. The North American Religious Liberty Association informs us that recently “a conference was organized by a number of trade unions, political parties, Roman Catholic Bishops, and Protestant Churches including the Baptist, Methodist, Church of England, and Evangelical Lutherans” to put pressure on the European Union Parliament to enact a Sunday Law. Notably, the central argument of these cooperative groups is that a Sunday law would be for the ‘common good’ of all in that it would provide time for family enrichment and religious activities.

How long will it be until the religious leaders of the churches in the United States say that the secularization and materialization of society is due to a disrespect of the sanctity of Sunday? It cannot be too far away. Several Protestant ministers have recently expressed the same desire for the United States of America.

To the careful reader of the Manhattan Declaration, the Roman Catholic influence is patently clear. First of all, the causes which the Declaration stands for (opposition to abortion, gay marriage, stem cell research, the culture of death, euthanasia and the struggle for human dignity and religious liberty), have all been spearheaded in recent years by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI as a rallying cry to unite Catholics and Protestants in a common social cause.

Secondly, Pope John Paul II is referred to by name more than once in the document as one who was pro-life and therefore opposed 'the culture of death' and numerous Roman Catholic priests, bishops, and archbishops have signed the document.

Thirdly, the emphasis in the document upon procreation as the central purpose for marriage reveals a strong Roman Catholic influence. Expressions such as "the great good of procreation" and man and woman as a "reproductive unit" makes one suspect that Roman Catholic theology had much to say when the document was drafted.

Fourth, the appeal to natural human reason in addition to Scripture reveals clear Roman Catholic thinking and terminology. For example, we are told that the declaration "is grounded in Holy Scripture, in natural human reason (which is itself, in our view, the gift of a beneficent God), and in the very nature of the human person."

And let none forget that the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally claimed to have changed the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday without any Biblical support and has strongly advocated that governments guarantee the observance of Sunday as a basic civil right!

Back in the late 1880's when there was a strong religious movement in the United States to enforce Sunday as the national day of rest by a constitutional amendment, Ellen White stated:

"Yet this very class [religious leaders in America] put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called "Christian sabbath," and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the morals of society. This claim is especially urged in America, where the doctrine of the true Sabbath has been most widely preached." The Great Controversy, p. 587

The Sunday movement has been mostly dormant and out of view since then but we are told that it will awaken with a vengeance just before the end of time:

"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives." The Great Controversy, p. 592

She continues:

"As the Protestant churches reject the clear, Scriptural arguments in defense of God's law, they will long to silence those whose faith they cannot overthrow by the Bible. Though they blind

their own eyes to the fact, they are now adopting a course which will lead to the persecution of those who conscientiously refuse to do what the rest of the Christian world are doing, and acknowledge the claims of the papal sabbath.” The Great Controversy, p. 592

“The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected.” The Great Controversy, p. 592

Would it be acceptable or even desirable for Seventh-day Adventists to sign the Manhattan Declaration? Would it be wrong to cooperate with these religious leaders in areas that we agree on? The answer is that Seventh-day Adventists could never sign a document such as this! Why not? Do we not believe in the sanctity of life? Do we not believe in marriage between a man and a woman? Do we not believe in religious liberty? The answer to these questions is a resounding yes! Seventh-day Adventists agree with these religious leaders on the **disease** but we disagree on the **cure**. We believe that the cure for these social evils is found in the church not in the state. Ellen White gives the clear reason why we could not sign such a Declaration:

“The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms which the people need, principles which are in harmony with the Bible; yet while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God's law [Sunday legislation], His servants **cannot unite with them**. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men.” The Great Controversy, pp. 587, 588

Let us continue to preach the Word of God with power and conviction. Let's reach out with the saving gospel to a world that is perishing in sin. Let's not get distracted from our mission by using methods that produce no lasting change. God has not called us to criticize every decision that is made by the federal government. Hearts are changed by the foolishness of preaching. These are exciting times to live in. May we be wise as serpents and harmless as doves as we sail the dangerous waters of end time events.

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