

# Seventh-day Adventist Teachings on Governmental Relationships and Noncombatancy



NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION  
of the General Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists  
Washington, D.C. 20012

NSO-1

SM 3-82 8546

**NSO LEAFLET No. 1  
Seventh-day Adventist Teachings  
on Governmental  
Relationships and Noncombatancy**

## Introduction

Handling military obligations as a citizen or permanent resident of the United States can be a complicated process. This is especially true for Seventh-day Adventists, due to the teachings on the individual responsibility to God, on Sabbath observance and non-bearing of arms.

The church's teaching of each member's individual responsibility to God is basic in the counsel given. How one responds to this responsibility is the basis of God's judgment as to whether or not an individual will be in heaven. This response is determined by the personal relationship to Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Decisions made regarding military obligations are shaped by that relationship. Thus it is supremely important.

The church urges its members to give careful consideration to this counsel and then make a personal decision on the matter. This decision then becomes the standard or the norm by which all actions are determined. In other words, this is the "conscience"; the basis of an individual's "conscientious objection". The laws in the United States governing the application of military obligations, as well as the church's counsel, all presume that the individual has a personal belief or conscience which will not allow him to be at rest with himself if he acts contrary to this conscience. This important decision reveals much of the individual's thinking

about himself, his relationship with his fellow men, and his God, and his whole life-style now and for the world to come. One member's decision should not be felt to arbitrarily apply to all other members. They may have made different decisions.

#### **Current Draft Status**

Though registration has already taken place, until Congress does pass a draft for military manpower, no one can know precisely what obligations will be included in such a law.

Some time in the future women may be included in a draft as well as men, though hopefully not for combatant duty. However, already women are trained with weapons in each of the Armed Forces and pressures are being applied by some women's groups to allow them to enter every job in the military. **YOUNG WOMEN NEED TO BE AS CAREFULLY INFORMED IN THESE MATTERS AS YOUNG MEN.** In general, the draft will function very much as it did just prior to registration termination in 1973.

#### **Basic Statement of Your Church**

The Adventist Church's major statement on military obligations for its members throughout the world is probably best presented in an action of the 1954 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee. It reads:

Genuine Christianity manifests itself in

4

or doing routine military training or duty on Sabbath. This counsel is the result of strong statements by military leaders here in the United States.

This guidance by the church and by the military is based on: (1) it is normally not possible for a noncombatant to enlist voluntarily for military service (see "The U.S. Situation"), and (2) the activities of the military do not stop for a 24-hour rest from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Seventh-day Adventists refrain from "unnecessary" tasks that in their belief should be accomplished during non-Sabbath hours. Military personnel normally are required to be available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Since Adventists are not available in that way, the Church counsels its members to think of all these issues before considering voluntary enlistment so as not to cause problems for themselves or the military.

Further, the Church counsels strongly that, if in the course of Selective Service operations its members are drafted into the military in harmony with their conscientious beliefs, that they serve with a sense of mission. As they live a dedicated life among their fellow soldiers and share the sacrifices and burdens, they lift up a witness of Christ's saving power.

#### **Balanced Counsel**

This counsel of the Adventist Church has been arrived at: (1) by considering the Biblical principles involved, and (2) by the experience of thousands of church members who have faced similar military situations. These guide-

6

good citizenship and loyalty to civil government. The breaking out of war among men in no way alters the Christian's supreme allegiance and responsibility to God or modifies his obligation to practice his beliefs and put God first.

The partnership with God through Jesus Christ, who came into this world not to destroy men's lives but to save them, causes Seventh-day Adventists to take a noncombatant position, following their divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it. In their accepting the obligations of citizenship, as well as its benefits, their loyalty to government requires them to serve the state in any noncombatant capacity, civil or military, in war or peace, in uniform or out of it, which will contribute to saving life, asking only that they may serve in those capacities which do not violate their conscientious convictions.

This statement is not a rigid position binding church members, but rather, a stating of principles which cause Seventh-day Adventists to act as they do, giving guidance but leaving the individual member free to make his own decision. The laws of military obligation differ from country to country and even change from time to time within a country.

#### **Why Shouldn't I Volunteer for Military Service?**

The Adventist Church strongly counsels its members not to enter military service voluntarily if they have convictions against bearing arms

5

lines of experience and Scripture are vital today.

#### **Christian's Relationship to His Government**

What is the basis of government? Why does it have military obligations? A clear understanding of principles will help a Christian make a balanced decision in these two areas.

One of the fundamental teachings of the Bible is that the citizen should be loyal to the government of his country. This teaching goes back to God's instruction to Noah and his family as they came out of the Ark after the Flood. As recorded in Genesis 9:6 (NEB) God said, "He that sheds the blood of a man, for that man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." From that beginning statement to the emphatic statements in the New Testament the Bible is specific in stating that God approves when men living together organize for safety and protection, and to prevent chaos.

Paul made this particularly clear when he stated: (Romans 13:1-6 NEB)

Every person must submit to the supreme authorities. There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him; consequently anyone who rebels against authority is resisting a divine institution, and those who so resist have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive. For government, a terror to crime, has no terrors for good behavior. You wish to have no fear of the authorities? Then continue to do right and you will have their

7

approval, for they are God's agents working for your good. But if you are doing wrong, then you will have cause to fear them; it is not for nothing that they hold the power of the sword, for they are God's agents of punishment, for retribution on the offender. That is why you are obliged to submit. It is an obligation imposed not merely by fear of retribution but by conscience. That is also why you pay taxes. The authorities are in God's service and to these duties they devote their energies.

"Every person" is to submit to, or obey, the authorities, the government. But (verse 5) the Christian has a special reason for doing so. He must obey not only from "fear of retribution" or punishment, "but by conscience." The Christian is aware that "There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him." Even Christ on trial for His life recognized the source of the authority of Pilate in the words recorded in John 19:11 (NEB): "You would have no authority at all over me . . . if it had not been granted you from above."

Thus God provided for the organization of men into governments and required His people to be obedient to those governments. But this world is in rebellion against God. It is a world of sin. What if governments ordered God's people to do that which would be sin if carried out? There are many examples in the Old Testament to illustrate that God's people did not follow the orders of governments if sin would

8

ing will know that the Most High is sovereign in the kingdom of men; he gives the kingdom [government] to whom he will and he may set over it the humblest of mankind."

Sometimes this change of leadership causes great perplexity. A government may change due to revolution, constitutional change, or being conquered by another nation. The church member in such a situation will have to make a personal decision under perhaps strong feelings as to which government he will give his loyalty. In deciding he will have to consider these principles:

1. Is the change of government probably only a temporary situation with the people still strongly held together in their allegiance to the former government?
2. Is the situation just a temporary occupation of their area by an invading force that can be thrown back as the tides of battle turn?
3. Is it probably a more permanent change?

God does permit power to pass from one nation or government to another. Babylon was permitted to conquer Judah. God told the Israelites when this happened that they were to support Babylon and even pray for its prosperity (Jer. 29:4-10). Daniel as a captive before the final overthrow of Judah, and afterward, became a loyal servant to the Babylonians, and later to the Medo-Persians. God through His prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel told His people to be subject to the new government. The principle of the Christian's responsibility to his

10

result. In Daniel, the third chapter, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to the golden image. In the New Testament Peter and John were told by the civil government authorities not to preach about Christ (Acts 4:5, 18) but God through an angel told them to do so (Acts 5:19, 20). They preached. When called to court to explain their actions Peter gave expression to an important truth: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

What did Peter mean? Obviously he was not setting the Christian free from the obligation to obey the government, for he clearly set that forth in his counsel on a later occasion (1 Peter 2:13-17). Rather, he was simply stating that the follower of God should obey the government unless that which the government requires causes him to violate his conscientious convictions of God's instruction to him.

Thus the citizen—the Christian especially—is to obey the government, but to stop short of disobeying God while so doing.

#### **Leaders of Government**

Leaders arise or are chosen to administer the affairs of organizations of men. This administration is called government. To the casual observer it would seem that individuals or groups seize power or are chosen for office by the whims of man. This may at times be true. Sometimes, however, an understanding of what is happening is given through an insight of how God acts behind the scenes. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:17 NEB): "Thereby the liv-

9

government does not specify that a certain government is the only one the Christian is to be subservient to.

Paul refers to those in positions of authority in government as "God's agents" (NEB), or "ministers of God" (KJV). These are the same terms used to refer to leaders in the church as ministers or servants. Not all those in positions of authority acting as "God's agents" have characters to indicate they are serving God. Nero and Pilate certainly were not prime candidates for heaven. Yet God through Paul (Romans 13:1-6) indicated that His people should serve them.

#### **God Established Both Church and Government**

Christ called the first disciples and sent them out to witness to the world and from those who accepted the "good news" the church was formed. As mentioned above, God also established the principle of government. "There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him." (Romans 13:1). Thus God established both church and government and has given to each its area of authority. Leaders of governments may go beyond God's plan and purpose, but basically they operate under the provisions of God's authority, and ultimately, as individuals, are subject to His judgment.

#### **Areas of Church and Government**

It is important to understand and to distin-

11

guish clearly the areas of authority which God has delegated to the church and to the government. The church represents spiritual matters between God and man and between men. The government represents and administers secular or material matters and relationships between men. Christ pointed out the duality of this relationship of the follower of God in Matthew 22:21 (NEB): "Then pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God what is due to God."

The government administering the affairs of the nation sets policies or laws, collects taxes to pay its way, negotiates with governments of other peoples, and maintains the safety and freedom of its people through police and military forces.

In normal times the government obtains volunteers to staff the police and military forces but when times are not normal and more military forces are needed than can easily be met by volunteers, then a system of selecting and drafting the necessary personnel for the military is required.

#### **Basic Relationships of Church and State**

The Adventist Church's view of the relationship between membership in a church and residence in a country and being subject to its laws is basic in understanding military obligations.

As noted, God saw the necessity of organizations of men, or governments, and provided for their existence. These governments maintain legal guidelines in the everyday relationships between individuals. They prevent the chaos of

12

common with other churches, the Adventist Church abhors war. The death and misery that come from war go hand in hand with Satan's objectives.

In this world of sin it is not the church that wages physical war. It is nations that do so. The relationship between church and state or nations has just been noted. They occupy and administer different areas. When either the church or the state reaches across into the realm of the other, there is a potential conflict that will affect those who are subject to both institutions. War is an instrument in the hand of the government to be used as a weapon of last resort to maintain the safety and freedom of its people. The Adventist Church believes that it is not its prerogative to make a judgment as to whether or not a nation should enter into war.

#### **Taking Human Life**

The basis of government and the Christian's relationship to it has been discussed. Now turn to a great problem involved in warfare—the taking of human life.

The sacred character of life is portrayed throughout God's Word and in the Ten Commandments. The Old Testament gives the commandment in the King James Version, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). In the New Testament Jesus in discussing this commandment probably gives a more accurate rendering of the thought, "Thou shalt do no murder" (Matt. 19:18). Many modern English transla-

14

the strongest taking from the weakest. Those who live in the same community, state or nation are bound together by their common welfare. They have mutual obligations. These obligations and their dependence upon one another were easily seen in the early frontier life. However, even in today's more sophisticated society these bonds still exist.

The Christian then has membership in, and obligations to, two institutions: church and state. He is a citizen of a nation either by birth or by legal transaction. He is a citizen of the kingdom of heaven (and a member of the church) by rebirth. Both of these relationships are important. Both of these citizenships are meaningful to the Christian life. Ideally these two institutions should not be in conflict. It is only when one reaches across into the realm of the other that conflict develops.

**On the basis of these Biblical principles the Adventist Church respects government acting in its sphere of authority, and refrains from interfering with matters that appropriately belong to government.**

#### **Condemnation of War by a Church**

When it is popular for various churches to go on record condemning war—especially an unpopular war—many ask why it is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not added its voice to the chorus of condemnation. This is a fair question.

The fact that the Adventist Church makes no statement condemning war should not be interpreted as meaning that it approves of war. In

13

tions of the Old Testament use the same wording for the Sixth Commandment.

#### **God Commanded the Taking of Human Life**

That God in the Ten Commandments was not forbidding all taking of human life is very evident, since in the next chapter He commanded the taking of the life of certain law-breakers among His followers under the administration of the theocracy (Ex. 21:12, 14-17, 29; 22:18-20). In addition, God commanded His followers under the theocracy to wage war at His command. The Adventist Church understands these wars to be the execution of judgment pronounced by God on nations or groups of people. God alone is able to judge accurately the motive and the act, the present and the future of every human being.

Perhaps this can be understood by comparing Genesis 15:16 with Deuteronomy 20:16-18. In these verses in Genesis God instructs Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. Yet 400 years later in Deuteronomy, God instructs Moses that the Amorites should be utterly annihilated. The Ellen G. White comments on Genesis 15:16 at the close of the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, Volume 1, are very enlightening. She points out that there were a few good people among the Amorites at the time of Abraham who would accept of His offer of salvation. So God forbore with them at that time because of the presence of these people. Yet 400 years later God instructed Moses that the Amorites were to be utterly destroyed. God,

15

with His foreknowledge of the future of every individual in the Amorite nation at the time of Moses, could see that, just as in the case of those in the Egyptian army which had pursued Israel at the time of the Exodus, there were none then among them who would accept of His offer of salvation even if they should live out their whole normal life span. Thus He gave orders for their destruction.

This is similar to God's actions at the time of the Flood and at the time of the second advent. At the Flood all human beings except Noah and his family were destroyed because they had chosen disobedience. At the time of the second advent all those who have chosen disobedience will be destroyed. In each case this taking of life by God followed meticulous pleading for obedience leading to life, with death as a final judgment only after God could see that a final decision for disobedience had been made by the individual.

#### **Power of Sword Given Government**

In the taking of human life there is no question that murder is forbidden by God. A problem comes in understanding what relationship one should take to God's requirement that those who take life shall have their life taken (Gen. 9:5, 6). So that order, peace and safety might be the experience of a community or a nation someone must stand up against the violent members of that community or a nation. This is the power of the sword given by God to governments (Rom. 13:4). Punishment of the one who breaks the peace of the community or

16

basis as was the Jewish nation at the time of the theocracy. God can give life and therefore God can take life if He wills to do so, and He did so under the theocracy. Man cannot give life therefore should not take life. Following the principle of the sacred character of life as delineated in the Bible, the Adventist Church teaches that its members should follow non-combatant life-saving service.

#### **Other Viewpoints on Taking Human Life**

Some Christians, concentrating on God's placing of the sword in the government's hands, sincerely feel clear in following the command of their country to take the lives of those on the opposing side. They do not wish to take human life but feel that it is tragically necessary in order to protect their fellowmen in their community or nation. This has been the basis of the 1-A classification in the U.S. draft. The Adventist Church does not counsel this course of action.

Others who call themselves pacifists concentrate instead on God's statements of relationships between individual human beings—love one another (John 15:12), love your enemy; give him your shirt if he takes your coat; turn your other cheek, etc. (Matt. 5:38-48; Luke 6:28-31). Their emphasis on this area leads them to what they believe must be their personal Christian witness of love. Though they acknowledge that wrongs exist they believe they cannot join their fellowmen in an effort to stop the wrong by force in order to protect the

18

nation must be meted out to keep others from also breaking the peace. This is done, not on individual initiative, but only after a duly conducted trial with procedural due-process applied to the accused and more than one witness identifying the lawbreaker. The life of a convicted lawbreaker is only to be taken as a result of the action of a duly constituted court hearing (Deut. 17:2-7).

*This is not the same as taking the life of the enemy soldier on the battlefield because there is no court hearing available in determining which of the enemy should be killed. Also there is today no command of God to take the lives of certain groups in battle. Thus in the conscience of many, the random taking of human life in war certainly is not the same as God's direction to take the life of the tried and convicted lawbreaker.*

#### **Basis of Noncombatancy**

There is no statement in God's Word or in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy stating exactly what the Christian must do if his country calls him to take up arms in its defense today. When God instructed His people, who were all in one nation at the time of the theocracy, to enter warfare at His command, He had the unique capability of knowing the future decisions of everyone whom He directed His people to destroy. When an entire people had come to a point where none among them would ever come to Him for salvation, He could direct their destruction. Today God's people are in every nation. Today there is no government or nation that is instructed by God on a day-to-day

17

community or nation. This has been the basis of the 1-0 classification in the U.S. draft. The Adventist Church does not counsel this course of action.

Activist pacifists, going beyond the other pacifists, seeing great impersonal evils in society (i.e. industrial-military complex, pollution, etc), seek to reform that society. They will march in protest, disrupt the machinery of society that represents the situation they seek to change, or even engage in acts of violence to bring about the change they seek. The Adventist Church does not counsel this course of action.

#### **Church Counsel on Noncombatancy**

Now let's draw together the above principles enabling the Adventist Church to give what it believes is balanced counsel regarding military service. It recognizes that the sword is given into the hand of the nation by God to promote peace and safety. The Adventist Church leaves with the administering agents of the government the decision on how to maintain peace and safety. When warfare breaks out, the Adventist Church does not undertake to comment on the justness or unjustness of that conflict. Loyalty to the government requires the citizen to serve his government within the confines of his conscientious beliefs.

Under the theocracy God ordered His people to kill in warfare and they did so. There is no command from God to do so today. The Adventist Church believes that in war its members' Christian witness can best be shown in doing all

19

possible to save human life as noncombatants, asking that they may serve in those capacities which do not violate their conscientious convictions. They will be following the example of their Saviour not "to destroy men's lives but to save them." (Luke 9:56; see also Matt. 18:11). This noncombatant position is that which the Adventist Church counsels its members to take.

#### The U.S. Situation

After reading this far it is apparent there are several options concerning military obligations. Each member must study for himself and decide which course to take.

When the draft is resumed and a member is chosen to serve in the U.S. military forces, the Adventist Church recommends that he seek to do so as a noncombatant under the 1-A-O classification. The Adventist Church feels this classification best reflects the meeting of its members' obligations to God and country.

By so doing they will not be taking life, even in warfare. They will be following the Scriptural principle of obeying the government of their nation insofar as their conscience will allow. They will be shouldering their rightful share of the responsibilities and burdens of their fellow citizens. They will not expect others to go through hardships without sharing the dangers. They will have an opportunity to witness to their peers from all over the country as to what God has done for them in their life. Noncombatant service is a silent but potent protest against the taking of human life. Work

20

sification. The instruction is contained in NSO-1-b, *Special Enlistment Program for the Noncombatant*.

#### QUESTIONS ANSWERED

*Through all this discussion about military obligations there has been little mention of a very important topic: Can one observe his Sabbath as a Seventh-day Adventist in today's U.S. military forces?*

The observance of the Sabbath by being free of routine duty for the 24-hour period from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown is more difficult to arrange in the All-Volunteer Force. This is true for two reasons: (1) All personnel are there because they have volunteered to be there. No one is forced to be in the military. (2) There is a steady decrease in personnel available for each job to be done. This combination makes it difficult for commanding officers to free someone for a 24-hour period, much as they might be in sympathy with sincere religious convictions. This is especially true when other personnel must be assigned to duty in the place of the Sabbath observer. In case of a draft Sabbath observers are normally released from routine training during Sabbath hours and from routine duty during these hours of assigned duty.

Personnel in military service have no legal "right" to be free during Sabbath hours from duties that they consider to be contrary to their religious convictions. This is a "privilege" that can be extended by the commanding officer when he sees it is possible for the Sabbath

22

to save life represents the philosophy of the Adventist Church. Its members will have an opportunity to serve in a place where real need exists. In other words, they will be going as far as they can in serving their country and at the same time serving their God supremely.

#### Noncombatant Voluntary Enlistment

*The Adventist Church does not counsel its members to enter a military force voluntarily, but only to fulfill legally required military obligations. If a personal decision to volunteer has been made, the provision for noncombatant duty in the Army Medical Career Management fields should be investigated. It is the only area in which a person can enlist and yet retain 1-A-O classification. It has been stated to us that those who enter this program and indicate the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the chaplain's religious preference card will be given their Sabbaths free of duty during the modified basic training for noncombatants and during the various medical training courses preparing them for active duty. Such noncombatant volunteers must first be classified as 1-A-O by the Department of Army Military Personnel Center in much the same manner as those who were classified 1-A-O by the Selective Service System at the time of the draft. This must be done prior to enlisting voluntarily at the Army recruiting office. The youth director of any local or union conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States can give help and counsel on obtaining this 1-A-O clas-*

21

observer to put in as much duty time during the week as other personnel in the unit. The difference between a "right" and a "privilege" is that a "right" cannot be denied personnel in military service, whereas a "privilege" can be given or withdrawn.

The Sabbath observance situation becomes particularly critical during periods of training which normally run five and a half days a week, including Friday night and Sabbath morning. If one has a conviction that he cannot respond to orders to be in class or to report for normal duty during the hours of his Sabbath, it is far better not to enlist voluntarily and then be faced with an order to train or do duty during the period of training. The majority of those (both men and women) who do enlist voluntarily and then take the position that they cannot train during the hours of their Sabbath are released from military service. The main exceptions seem to be those who enlist in the Army Medical Department as noncombatants, as discussed earlier in this leaflet, or those who may be drafted.

Upon completion of training (anywhere from four months to a year, depending on training given) personnel are given a permanent assignment with a unit. Many units have duty hours similar to office hours, five days a week, though they may run into emergency situations when their duty is extended. Many units are active 24 hours a day, all week long.

Thus one may be able to keep his Sabbath if his duties are compatible with his convictions of

23

what he can do on his Sabbath, or if the commanding officer feels he can release a Sabbath observer from routine duty during the Sabbath and still accomplish the mission of his unit. In such case the Sabbath observer would have to put in total duty hours comparable to the other unit members but at times other than the Sabbath.

***What will happen to a Sabbath observer if he cannot respond to an order for duty during his Sabbath?***

This could be the case of a convert to Sabbath observance after entrance into the military, either as one newly entering the Seventh-day Adventist Church or one who, though formerly a Sabbath observer, had given up that practice when he entered the military and then firmed up in his conviction that he must again observe the Sabbath. In any case the thing to do is for the Sabbath observer to immediately communicate his belief to the one responsible for scheduling his duty hours and probably to the unit commander and unit chaplain as well. In doing so, the Sabbath observer must recognize that the declaration of not being available for routine duty during the hours of the Sabbath poses a definite problem to the commanding officer who is responsible for the unit carrying out its mission.

The commander has four possibilities. He will have to decide: (1) Whether he can release the Sabbath observer as requested and still get the unit's mission accomplished and maintain the

24

***cannot conscientiously accomplish? If he does not accomplish them, is he in trouble? Will the church help him in such a situation?***

One can be ordered to do any lawful task at any time while he is in military service. Not to obey a lawful order of a superior is an offense punishable under military law.

While the Adventist Church can in no way tell the military what it can do in a situation involving a controversy over Sabbath observance, it can and does seek to be of help in resolving the situation. Although it is perfectly legal to punish for disobedience of military orders or regulations, it has always been looked upon by highest military authorities in the United States as inappropriate to use punitive measures in military law against someone who has acted under sincere religious convictions. The total situation would be taken into account in making a decision, including the work habits and general attitude of the military person involved and the manner in which he sought to solve the problem involving Sabbath observance.

***How do Seventh-day Adventists in military service manage to keep their Sabbath?***

During the period of voluntary enlistment it is very difficult to obtain arrangements for freedom from routine duty on the Sabbath for someone just entering military service as an enlisted person since he has little or no skills or training to offer the military. However, the

26

unit's morale, inasmuch as others in the unit may also desire to have assignments favorable to their wishes. He may or may not be able to release the Sabbath observer during his Sabbath. (2) If not, the commander may recommend transfer to a unit where the Sabbath observance request can more readily be granted. It may be possible that in the Sabbath observer's training there is no assignment he can be given that will enable him to be free of routine duty during the hours of his Sabbath. (3) In that case, the commander will have to give consideration to either retraining the Sabbath observer for an assignment where it is possible to use him within his convictions of Sabbath observance, or (4) obtaining a discharge for the Sabbath observer rather than subjecting him to an order to duty during his Sabbath hours to which he could not respond.

The Sabbath observer should remember that if he finds himself with a problem involving Sabbath observance, that it is primarily his problem. In discussing it with the commanding officer, he should quickly identify it as his problem and seek the commander's help in solving it, pledging to take the steps necessary to reach a solution. If a transfer, retraining, or discharge is necessary to the solution it is probably the Sabbath observer's responsibility to initiate the request for such and to ask help in accomplishing the necessary paper work involved.

***Can a Sabbath observer be ordered to duty in the military on his Sabbath to tasks which he***

25

person with professional training who has only a minimal orientation needed to enable him to act in his professional capacity in the military can often arrange either to be free of duty during Sabbath hours or else to be assigned duty compatible with his convictions on the observance of the Sabbath. Particularly is this true of medical and paramedical personnel and chaplains. Other professions may find the duty required of them on Sabbath incompatible with their beliefs.

Those Sabbath observers already in the military who have sufficient status to be in the position of arranging their own duty schedule, or who are sufficiently valuable to a unit for the commanding officer to arrange for their not being available for routine duty during the Sabbath, are usually able to function in the military as Sabbath observers.

***If one helps a soldier to get well and he then goes to the battlefield and kills someone, hasn't he helped him kill?***

The sick or wounded soldier is a human being in need of help. He is a neighbor in the same sense as the man who was cared for by the Samaritan in Christ's parable. When he is whole again, perhaps as a result of care given him, he will make his own decision on his future course of action. At this point the one who helped is no more responsible for what the one helped does than one is responsible for the action of the man who lives next door at home. In his hour

27

of need someone was there to minister to him and to witness to him.

***Wouldn't the Adventist Christian witness be stronger by refusing to go into the military?***

The Adventist Church has never taken the position that its members should go into the military service nor has it taken the position that they should not. The church feels that it is better for its members not to be in the Armed Forces unless they have military obligations that place them there. Its members will have to determine in their own conscience whether or not they are meeting their obligations to their fellowmen by refusing to accept the burdens and the hazards others must bear in military service where they may not want to be either. One should think through carefully the basic reasons why he might wish to refuse to go into military service. Are they valid? Will they make him a better and a stronger man in life? Is he thereby meeting his obligations as a citizen?

***What if a member of the Adventist Church decides to fulfill his military obligations through alternative civilian service and seeks for a 1-O classification in the draft if it should be resumed? What is the Adventist Church's attitude toward that situation?***

The Adventist Church believes that each member should study how he can best fulfill his military obligations. He must decide on a course of action based on his deep religious convictions. To have a conviction and act contrary to that conviction will seriously weaken

28

help its members. The draft board will look for evidences of the sincerity of belief and how deeply it affects the person's life. The best way to present this to the draft board is in the form of statements by family members, neighbors, or friends who know him best. They should be asked to write statements concerning character, life-style and beliefs. The pastor, teacher, or other church worker who knows of the person's sincerity should also be asked to write statements for him. Their knowledge of church membership, attendance and participation in services of the church, personal standards of conduct, previous expressions of belief supporting the request for a 1-O classification should all be mentioned in their statements. If all these statements are notarized and given to the person making the request, then he can determine just which ones he wishes to present to his draft board. The person should keep copies of everything submitted to the draft board. If added counsel is needed during the process, the church stands ready to help with counsel and information even though the position may vary from that held by the church.

***How can a member keep in touch with the home church during military service?***

In addition to writing family members while away from home during a period of military service, one should keep in touch with the pastor, youth leader, a Sabbath School teacher, and friends. Send the tithe and offerings to the home church regularly. Newsy letters of Christian witness and life with fellow soldiers will be

30

one's conscience. Thus, while the counsel of the church is represented by the 1-A-O classification, if a member sincerely believes in the position represented by the 1-O classification he is free to seek it, so far as the church is concerned, without affecting church membership.

The Adventist Church at the 1969 Annual Council passed an action recommending that those who have beliefs leading to a 1-O classification first consider the church's teachings leading to the 1-A-O classification, but if they still choose the 1-O that pastoral support, guidance, and counsel be provided them if it is established that their request is based on a consistent religious experience. Such support is to be given by church pastors, teachers or other workers writing statements of their personal knowledge of the individual's church membership, attendance and participation in the services of the church, personal standards of conduct and his previous expression of beliefs in the 1-O position.

***Will the church help a member obtain a 1-O classification?***

When one seeks a 1-O classification the draft board will look for three basic prerequisites. The first is that his religious belief is actually that represented by the provisions of the law for the 1-O. One must think through his beliefs carefully and clearly state them for the draft board. The second thing the draft board will look for is whether or not one's beliefs apply to all wars. These first two points are personal beliefs. The third point is where the church can

29

an inspiration to those at the home church who may yet have to face military obligations.

The National Service Organization, a part of the Youth Department of the Adventist Church, is charged with looking after the members in military service and their spiritual interests. The NSO directs the Adventist military chaplains on duty in the U.S. military forces. It also directs civilian chaplains who are Adventist ministers especially assigned to minister to the needs of members in military service.

An important function of the NSO is to provide Adventist servicemen on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces with church periodicals and other items. Funds for this are received from an offering taken up in the churches in the United States every even-numbered year. The member in military service must take the initiative in notifying the National Service Organization of the General Conference giving his name and military mailing address so they can send these papers to the member.

***The background of the draft and the selection process is hard to understand. What are the details?***

First, American military obligations are based on the ancient English common law principle that every able-bodied citizen is obliged to keep himself armed and ready to fight the common foe alongside the regular military forces. In a word, all are members of the militia merely by being permanent residents of the country. All

31

U.S. draft laws from the Civil War to the present are based on this concept.

Since all are in the militia the choice of who is to go on active duty is the one that must be made. This involves a selective process of one sort or another, and hence U.S. draft laws are entitled "Selective Service." During both World Wars I and II great numbers of men were needed in the military forces. Anyone in the military age bracket served unless deferred. Deferments were for such things as activity in industry or agriculture in the national interest, necessary support for dependents, elective officials, aliens not of the American economy, a minister or priest, etc.

Following World War II, when less military manpower was needed, the deferment principles became harder to administer fairly. Inequities and outright abuses crept in, so that President Nixon in 1969 turned from the deferment principle to the lottery principle.

Two other principles of selection besides age deal with the able-bodied and the conscientious objector. The able-bodied must qualify physically, mentally, and morally. Physical and mental standards are easily understood. To illustrate the importance of moral standards, a country normally does not choose to place the inmates of the jail or penitentiary in positions of authority with guns in their hands.

The objectors include four general types:

1. Those not opposed to being in the military so long as they do not have to train with or use weapons (1-A-O).

32

2. Those who refuse any type of military service (1-O).
3. The selective objector (no draft classification).
4. The non-registrant (no draft classification).

Until recently an objector's status was open only to those whose objections stem from their religious beliefs. Supreme Court decisions now include those with moral beliefs which mold their life-style to the same extent as a deep religious belief.

Both the noncombatant (1-A-O) and the objector to all military service (1-O) are recognized in the present U.S. Draft law. The objector who "selects" when he can or when he cannot serve in the military on the basis of the current situation is not recognized by the law with an objector status. The Supreme Court has upheld the exclusion of the "selective objector." The non-registrant who believes that the nation cannot require him even to register for Selective Service, much less to serve either in military service or alternative service, is also not recognized by the law with an objector status.

33

Bible Credits: Texts in this leaflet credited to N.E.B. are from *The New English Bible*. © The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press 1961, 1970. Reprinted by permission.

35