

Період становлення церковно-державних відносин в Україні практично завершився. Утворено інститути, що координують відносини між церквою та державою: з боку держави це Державний комітет України у справах національностей та релігій; з боку церкви – Всеукраїнська Рада Церков і релігійних організацій. Відносини між церквою і державою сьогодні набувають характеру рівноправного діалогу, в ході якого реально вирішувати актуальні проблеми.

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ПРИНЦИПИ ЕФЕКТИВНОГО МІЖРЕЛІГІЙНОГО ДІАЛОГУ

Базовий принцип міжрелігійного діалогу – нехай всі віруючі вшановують Бога так, як хочуть. Якщо прихильники ексклюзивізму вважають, що є лише одна істинна релігія, яка дає відповіді на всі питання, то плюралісти називають всі релігії істинними. Віруючі Церкви Ісуса Христа Святих Останніх Днів (ЦХСОД), які відносять себе до інклюзивістів, вважають лише одну релігію правильною, але водночас визнають також і цінність інших релігійних напрямків.

Особливе ставлення до релігійної свободи виявляв засновник ЦХСОД Дж.Сміта. Так, влітку 1843 року він говорив про свою готовність захищати релігійні права і, в разі необхідності, віддати своє життя не лише за мормона, а й за добру людину з будь-якої іншої деномінації. Дж. Сміт наголошував, що він може доводити правдивість свого віровчення віруючому іншої релігії, але не може примусити його вірувати так, як вірить він.

Ще за часів свого становлення лідери Церкви Ісуса Христа Святих останніх днів усвідомлювали необхідність міжрелігійного діалогу. Вони спілкувалися з представниками пресвітеріанської та католицької церков. При цьому ці лідери користувалися думкою, що коли одна частина людства зневажає іншу за релігійні, культурні або інші вподобання, то Бог продовжує давати блага всім.

Дж.Сміт вважав свободу віросповідання базовим принципом свого життя. Бог дав людині свободу вибору, і інші люди не мають права позбавити її цього права. Право всіх людей на релігійну свободу було закріплене в Хартії від 16 грудня 1840 року.

Відтак кожна релігія має зробити крок до іншої і намагатись зрозуміти її, має бути вдячна їй за інший погляд. Для конструктивного міжрелігійного діалогу необхідно «будувати мости, а не бар'єри», акцентувати увагу на спільних цінностях. Ми маємо захищати можливість шанувати єдиного Бога, а кожний віруючий зокрема може робити це так, як він того бажає.

FRED WOODS.

The American writer, Henry David Thoreau taught that for every thousand hacking at the leaves of an issue, there was one striking at the roots. I believe that in order to have effective interreligious dialogue we must strike at the roots by implementing true principles which are in the words of Dr. Stephen R. Covey, timeless, self evident and universal. One such principle was advanced by the Chinese philosopher Confucius who stated, “Religions are many and different, but reason is one. The broad minded see the truth in different religions, the narrow minded see only the differences”.

Perhaps the Latter-day Saint position on obtaining truth may best be summarized by this statement articulated by a former professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah:

“*Exclusivists* hold that their religion is the only truth and that no other ideas are needed to answer the question of human existence. *Pluralists*, on the other extreme, claim that no religion has claim to the truth and that all religions are true, just as all cultures are acceptable - a relative position. *Inclusivists* take the middle ground, the position asserting that one religion is correct and true but that other religions do have genuine value.”

Concerning the middle ground position, Professor Daniel C. Peterson noted, “i am delighted that Mormonism is in the middle. The gospel of Jesus Christ makes no apology for its claim that it is the truth and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contains all the truth needed to save us. Yet it does not take a bigoted and narrow view of truth. We are willing to accept true insights wherever we find them”.

The phrase, “Let them worship, how, where, or what they may,” was written in 1842 by Latter-day Saint (LDS) Church founder and president, Joseph Smith Jr., due to the request of John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. Wentworth wanted to know about the basic beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as a result President Smith wrote the early history of the Latter-day Saint Church as well as thirteen articles of belief. These beliefs were later extracted and canonized in LDS scripture as the “Articles of Faith, which proclaimed some of their basic beliefs, yet never intended to be an exhaustive treatise of Mormonism”.

The eleventh of thirteen articles announced: “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, *let them worship, how, where, or what they may* (emphasis added).” Later this same year, Smith balanced this doctrine of liberty with the responsibilities and restrictions that must accompany any freedom. By way of a letter, Joseph explained: “All men ought to be free . . . to think, and act, and say as they please, while they maintain due respect to the rights and privileges of all other creatures, infringing upon none. This doctrine I do most heartily subscribe to and practice”.

In the summer of 1843, while delivering a public discourse in Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph Smith confirmed his universal regard for religious freedom:

The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a “Mormon,” I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race. Love of liberty was diffused into my soul by grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees.

In this same discourse, the Mormon prophet explained the appropriate course one should pursue when encountering differing beliefs: “If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning, for truth will cut its own way”.

Joseph Smith had an opportunity to practice what he preached in the spring of 1843, when a Methodist preacher (Samuel A. Prior) was invited to speak in Nauvoo. Reverend Prior published an account of his kind, tolerant treatment by Smith and his followers in their local Nauvoo periodical known as the *Times and Seasons*:

In the evening I was invited to preach, and did so. —The congregation was large and respectable—they paid the utmost attention. This surprised me a little, as I did not expect to find any such thing as a religious toleration among them. —After I had closed, Elder Smith, who had attended, arose and begged to leave to differ from me in some few points of doctrine, and this he did mildly, politely, and affectingly; like one who was more desirous to disseminate truth and expose error, than to love the malicious triumph of debate over me. I was truly edified with his remarks, and felt less prejudiced against the Mormons than ever. He invited me to call upon him,

and I promised to do so.

This experience supported Joseph's doctrine that "one of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may." Likewise, he also stated, "We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true 'Mormons'".

President Smith demonstrated kindness towards people who provided service in other faiths, as beautifully illustrated by the story of a local Catholic priest who was diligently trying to serve his people in the area surrounding Nauvoo. In 1841, Father John Alleman, a priest from France, arrived at his assigned post at Fort Madison in Iowa Territory. From there he ministered to a number of scattered Catholics in McDonough County and neighboring counties. Rev. Father John Larmer, relates the following:

Strange to relate, Joseph Smith and the leading Mormons, at all times professed the greatest respect and friendship for the big French priest, as they called him. Father Alleman once related . . . that he had no means of getting across the Mississippi river, to attend a sick Catholic in McDonough county, but the Mormons, having made known to Joseph Smith that the priest wished to cross, the latter not only had him ferried over, but furnished him a conveyance [carriage] to the sick man.

This kind act of service proved more than just enabling a Catholic priest to cross a river. It also built a bridge of religious understanding and tolerance between the Latter-day Saints and their Catholic neighbors. Joseph Smith shared his expanded view of benevolence when he said: While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes "His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but "according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil," in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India.

After spending several months in a cold, lonely Missouri jail for his religious beliefs, Smith wrote as the spring of 1839 dawned, "I have the most liberal sentiments, and feelings of charity towards all sects, parties, and denominations; and the rights and liberties of conscience, I hold most sacred and dear, and despise no man for differing with me in matters of opinion." During this same month of incarceration, President Smith wrote to LDS Bishop Edward Partridge and the Latter-day Saints in general, "We ought always to be aware of those prejudices which sometimes so strangely present themselves, and are so congenial to human nature, against our friends, neighbors, and brethren of the world, who choose to differ from us in opinion, and in matters of faith. Our religion is between us and our God. Their religion is between them and their God."

After only a few months of freedom from the unjust confinement of the Liberty, Missouri Jail, Joseph Smith wrote:

All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come. Since the God of heaven has left these things optional with every individual, we do not wish to deprive them of it. We only wish to act the part of a faithful watchman, agreeable to the word of the Lord to Ezekiel the prophet, and leave it for others to do as seemeth them good.

The following year (December 16, 1840), the Nauvoo Charter was approved which again demonstrates the great care Joseph and his followers took to ensure that all people enjoyed religious liberty. When this document was crafted, Joseph Smith was serving on the Nauvoo City Council, and would soon serve as the city's second mayor. Section one of the charter reads:

Be it ordained by the city council of the city of Nauvoo that the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans, and all other religious sects and denominations, whatever, shall have free toleration and equal privileges in this city, and should any person be guilty of ridiculing and abusing, or otherwise deprecating another, in consequence of his religion, or disturbing or interrupting any religious meeting within the limits of this city, he shall, on conviction before the mayor or municipal court, be considered a disturber of the public peace, and fined in any sum not exceeding five hundred dollars, or imprisoned not exceeding six months, or both, at the discretion of said mayor and court.

Less than five years later, the Illinois legislature revoked the Charter, thus weakening the city's defense against mobocracy; and the Latter-day Saints were forced to flee Nauvoo the following year. The concern for the Saints' civil rights had influenced Smith to run for President of the United States as the year 1844 dawned. In his presidential campaign, he chose to remain silent on the issue of religion, but he did call for the abolition of slavery and advocated prison reforms. Yet he soon found himself again imprisoned, and this time he would not escape confinement. John Taylor, one of the Mormon Twelve Apostles, who was also incarcerated, was an eye-witness to the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, which took place in the Carthage, Illinois Jail, June 27, 1844. On this fateful summer day, Taylor declared that these two faithful brothers "were innocent of any crime, as they had often been proved before, and were only confined in jail by the conspiracy of traitors and wicked men; and their *innocent blood* on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to 'Mormonism' that cannot be rejected by any court on earth." (Doctrine & Covenants 135:7, LDS Scripture).

The principles of religious freedom, planted in his mind by his family and his God, were Joseph's passionate preaching and practice throughout his short life of thirty-eight years. He extended so much tolerance, yet received so little of the same in return. He was violently rejected by those not of his faith and denied the very liberties he defended so ardently on behalf of his accusers. But he did not die in vain. His universal plea for a liberty of conscience and the freedom for all to practice their chosen beliefs are now proclaimed by over thirteen million of his followers.

The Latter-day Saints are now represented in 165 countries and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially registered in Kiev on September 9, 1991. LDS Church members world-wide now proclaim the importance of religious freedom for all mankind. May we also continue to advance this principle emphasized by the Latter-day Saint founder, Joseph Smith through advocating "the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow[ing] all men the same privilege, let them worship, how, where, or what they may."