

United Church of God, *an International Association*



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Jury Duty

Doctrinal Study Paper

Approved by the Council of Elders
March 11, 1999

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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In our modern society judgments are primarily concerned with the letter of the law. In contrast, God looks on one's heart and is concerned with the spirit and intent of the law. Man's laws usually do not take into account matters of conscience and other spiritual factors, as God does. Jesus taught that Christians must be willing to forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15) and the Apostle Paul wrote that we should even be willing to suffer wrong or be defrauded rather than take a brother to court (I Corinthians 6:7).

The Bible teaches that Christians must be cautious when judgement is required. They are admonished to exercise righteous judgment (John 7:24). On one occasion Jesus refused to judge a matter when asked to settle a dispute over an inheritance (Luke 12:13-14).

The United Church of God, *an International Association*, believes and teaches that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, members are ambassadors for Christ here on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20) and sojourners awaiting the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Christ's return (I Peter 1:17, 2:11). We believe that members should seek to limit their involvement in the governmental machinery or affairs of this world as much as possible (2 Corinthians 6:17). If a member becomes a juror they are, even if for a short time, part of the governmental machinery of the state for the judicial determination of a lawsuit. We teach our members to strive to avoid entangling themselves in judging those outside the Church as cautioned by Jesus' apostles in the New Testament (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5:12,13; 6:1-5).

A clear question also exists of not being able to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24) if serving as a juror. This could occur should the secular law or jury instructions conflict with Biblical mandates or where because of technical rules of evidence many relevant and Biblically allowed facts are withheld from the jury (even though the judge sees them). The Bible also prohibits work or similar secular activities on a Sabbath or Holy Day of the Church and jury service on those days would conflict with that command.

The Church believes that if a member's objection to jury duty based on the Bible is sincerely held, their service on a jury would also violate another tenet of the Church found in Romans 14:23 that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Conclusion

The United Church of God, *an International Association* supports its members in the exercise of their faith based on sincerely held religious convictions which the Church believes are consistent with scripture. When a member seeks exemption from jury duty pursuant to their personal beliefs and convictions based on the Bible, it is the Church's position that such action is in keeping with the scriptures. The United Church of God does not condemn any member who may, in good conscience, believe that he or she can, as a Christian, serve as a juror in a particular case. What one does must be governed by his or her own convictions based on the Bible, not by the beliefs or conduct of others. In any event, it is appropriate to ask that a member's convictions in this regard be respected.

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