

THE NIAGARA 2020 DECLARATION:
ON THE LIBERTIES OF THE CHURCH IN CANADA FROM SEA TO SEA

PREAMBLE

In view of various culture-abandoning errors and a broad decline presently inflicting and marginalizing the Church, and at a time in the Dominion of Canada when our civil society is renouncing, both in law and socio-cultural life, its historic Christian heritage in pursuit of liberty without the Gospel, justice without God's law, truth without the Scriptures, flourishing without obedience, atonement without the cross, love without faithfulness, peace without repentance, salvation without Christ, and a world without creational norms, it is incumbent upon a faithful Church to set forth to all powers and authorities, the claims of Christ and the freedom of His Kingdom people, the Church (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 1:9-11, 17; 3:15; 1 Pt. 2:16-17; 5:11).

In a national cultural context in which ultimate sovereignty is rapidly being seized by – or readily surrendered to – the State, imperilling inherited liberties and exposing our civil government to divine judgment, we must be mindful that freedoms not fought for are soon forfeited.

Therefore, in response to our national spiritual crisis, we declare:

WHEREAS Jesus Christ claims total authority over the nations as the Creator and Ruler of the kings, judges, and governors of the earth (Ps. 2:7-12; Ps. 110; Luke 23:3; John 19:11; Acts 17:7; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 1:5);

AND WHEREAS the one, holy, catholic (i.e. universal) and apostolic Church has been founded by our Lord Jesus Christ long before all temporal authorities of this Dominion of Canada came into existence (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:7-13; Col. 1:18);

AND WHEREAS the Church of Jesus Christ does not have her position in the nation assigned her by the permission of civil government, but *jure divino* – she has her own organization and she possesses her own office-bearers (Matt. 10:1-15; 18:15-20; 28:18-20; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 6:1-7; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:9-13);

AND WHEREAS the sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Church exist side by side, instituted by God and in service to God, mutually limiting each other as recognized in the Scriptures and applied in *Magna Carta* (Mark 12:13-17; Acts 5:29-32; Rom. 13:1, 4; 1 Cor. 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 2:1-4);

AND WHEREAS various kings and queens of the Dominion of Canada have confirmed in the British Parliament the *Great Charter* which grants that the Church “shall be free, and shall have all her whole Rights and Liberties inviolable” (*Magna Carta*, 1297);

AND WHEREAS our Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in her Coronation Oath (1953) swore that to the utmost of her power she would “maintain the Laws of God and true profession of the Gospel”;

AND WHEREAS the Royal Coat of Arms of Canada invokes the universal dominion of the Lord’s anointed King, Jesus Christ, over the land in its national motto: *A mari usque ad mare* (taken from the Latin Vulgate translation of Psalm 72:8: *Et dominabitur a mari usque ad mare, et a flumine usque ad terminos terrae*, meaning “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth”);

AND WHEREAS the Supremacy of God over the Dominion of Canada is clearly acknowledged in the preamble to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law”;

AND WHEREAS freedom of conscience and religion, expression, thought, opinion and belief, peaceful assembly, and association is enshrined in the international law common to all civilized nations and as fundamental freedoms in section 2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;

WE THE UNDERSIGNED, representatives of various confessionally orthodox churches, denominations, organizations, and fellowships, **DECLARE** that the following God-given and historically inherited liberties of the Church are to be observed, maintained, and protected in the Dominion of Canada today and forever:

Article 1. Liberty in all spiritual matters

There shall be no interference from civil authorities in the spiritual matters of the Church of Jesus Christ either by Federal or Provincial legislation, local bylaws, or by threats and intimidation from diverse arms of the administrative state bureaucracy. We recognize no authority other than Jesus Christ and His Word in the rule, ministry, and teaching of the Church. Spiritual matters include, in particular, the worship of God, the confession, sacraments, ordinances, discipline, and rites of the Church, and the teaching and pastoral guidance of the same.

Article 2. Liberties related to the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible shall be freely printed, distributed (both through electronic media and in hard copy), read, quoted, preached, and taught anywhere in the Dominion of Canada without fear of legal penalty or censure. The teaching of this Word is commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ, being Himself attested to us in Holy Scripture, as the one Word of God which all people have to hear, and whom all people have to trust and obey in life and in death.

Article 3. Liberty to preach the Gospel

The Churches shall remain free to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ peacefully, proselytize, establish churches, and disciple those who wish to follow Christ without any form of censorship or penalties imposed by temporal civil authorities. We reject all false doctrine asserting that the Church must surrender the content or form of its message to the prevailing ideological and political convictions of our day. The Christian Church is in all things to acknowledge and declare the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose Word upholds all things.

Article 4. Liberty of doctrine

The Churches shall be free to define and express their theological and moral doctrines under the Lordship of Christ and authority of Scripture without any form of interference, censure, or legal persecution by temporal civil authorities. We reject the false doctrines of men which assert there could be areas of our life in which we would not belong and be subject to Jesus Christ but to other lords above or besides Him.

Article 5. Liberty of conscience

Like all citizens, Christians in Canada have a right to liberty of conscience. As such, none may be compelled or coerced to act contrary to their conscience. No one may be compelled or coerced to adhere to, or to renounce, any religious, moral, or philosophical belief.

Article 6. Liberties related to the Christian family

Parents in Christian churches are to remain free to disciple, educate, and catechize their children in the faith and confession of the Church without fear of persecution, reprisal, or the seizure of their children by the State. We reject the false ideology that beyond its God-ordained and limited sphere as a ministry of public justice, the State should become the sole and total order of human life and so presume to fulfil the vocations of the family and the Church.

Article 7. Liberties related to ministers of the Gospel

Ministers and officers in the Church shall remain free to carry out the duties pertaining to their office without hindrance or interference from any person or authority as affirmed and protected in section 176 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*, 2019.

Article 8. Liberties related to gatherings for religious worship

The churches and their members shall remain free to meet in person for religious worship, prayer, the study of the Bible, or any moral or benevolent purpose without disturbance or interruption from any persons. The sacred duties to assemble for worship and engage in Christian ministry are divine obligations laid down in Holy Scripture and uniquely protected in Section 176 of the *Canadian Criminal Code* (2019). Recognizing that both the Church and a just State have an interest in mitigating harm when confronted with times of genuine crisis, such as war or plague, the churches may dialog and work with civil authorities to temporarily limit their religious practices without forswearing their prerogative to the same.

Article 9. Liberties related to taxation

Christians are ambassadors of Christ and the church is God's embassy, representing the sovereign claims of Jesus Christ. For centuries in the West, the existence of the church institute has placed a real limit on State power for all citizens. As such, the Church has maintained its immunity from taxation (modern law refers to charitable status) ensuring its freedom from coercion by the State, whilst at the same time freeing the State from any obligation to collect funds for the Church. The Church shall remain free and independent from State control by maintaining its immunity.

Article 10. Liberties to be enjoyed universally without partiality

Notwithstanding divisions existing within the Church at any particular time, all denominations, jurisdictions, communities, and individual believers are entitled to the full benefit of the liberties set out herein. There should be no partiality in law between different churches and their confessions in the enjoyment of the aforesaid liberties.

Conclusion

This solemn document – containing an affirmation of scriptural truth concerning Christ and His Church, the inherited liberties bequeathed to us by our forebears, and ten articles duly deduced from them – calls upon all who can stand in solidarity with its Declaration to be mindful of these biblical findings in all their decisions and actions concerning the relationship of Church and State and to passionately defend them when assaulted, and to earnestly pray for all those in civil authority, that God might direct them in all their ways so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Tim. 2:1-2; see also Ezra 6:10; Jer. 29:7; 1 Pet. 2:17).

***Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)***

This declaration, promulgated to defend the freedoms and liberty of the entire Church of Jesus Christ in Canada, was drafted September 2020 in the Niagara Region following a summit meeting of Christian leaders concerning the freedom of the church, by: Rev. Dr. Joseph Boot, in grateful collaboration and consultation with Rev. Dr. Aaron Rock, Rev. Dr. Michael Thiessen, Mr. André Schutten, and Mr. Pavel Stroilov.