

provides enough to last for the next 2 years! After 7 such cycles or 49 years, the 50th year is the Jubilee Year.

In the Jubilee Year, liberty is proclaimed – all slaves set free to return to their families, all property (land and otherwise) returned to their owner and all debts cancelled. These redemptive acts signify the mercy of the true owner of all things (God) and through this the children of Israel were to be assured of never permanently losing either their freedom or their inheritance. The present year, 2016 AD, represents the 70th Jubilee Year since the entry into Canaan of the children of Israel in 1416 BC (following the Biblical Calendar, the year started September 2015 and will end September 2016).

**Roman Catholic Jubilee**

Following its own guidelines, the Roman Catholic Church has proclaimed regular Jubilees every 25 or 50 years with extraordinary ones added intermittently. The Catholic Jubilees are for forgiveness of sins and elimination of punishment due for sins. Pope Francis formally opened 2016 as an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy on December 8, 2015 to close on November 20, 2016.

This Jubilee is said to be unique as “it is based upon a theme” – the call to mercy. Forgiveness is to be widely extended and especially to those on the fringes of society. According to the tradition, Holy Doors to welcome the penitent are opened in the Basilicas and Cathedrals

across the world, but this time individual dioceses are expected to do the same in local churches and shrines etc. Additionally, certain Priests are being given authority to pardon sins normally reserved to the Pope himself. Granting indulgences is central to the mercy theme, whereby the penitent fulfils the conditions laid down by the Church to not only obtain forgiveness but be freed “from all consequences of sin”. It is also intended that this celebration will have an ecumenical dimension involving other Christian Churches as well as fostering a closer encounter with Judaism and Islam!!

**Importance of Vigilance**

Only time will tell of the significance of these happenings. They should also alert us to the importance of vigilance on our part so that we are not taken by surprise by future head-on confrontations as the traditions of men seek to replace the commandments of God.

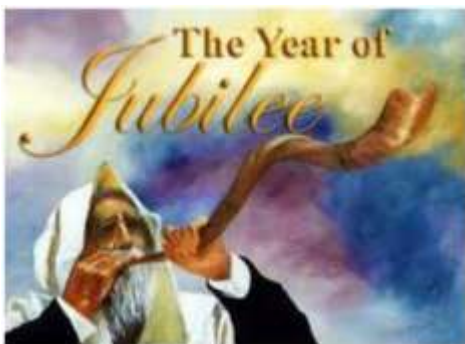
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*"Contributors to this edition: Pauline Knight, Stacey Knight Dennis, Treveen Little, and Tracy-Ann Wedderburn."*



VOL. 4 - ISSUE 1 **Religious Liberty** NewsLetter MARCH 2016

In this edition we highlight an important but little known fact about the present year. Additionally, there is discussion of leadership and governance issues in Jamaica and an illuminating viewpoint on religious liberty is presented.



**CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS IN JAMAICA**

**The separation of church and state is one of the hallmarks of religious liberty.** In Jamaica they are considered separate, but there is continuing evidence of close links between the two because of both the historical and cultural background of the country.

As a British colony, the Jamaican administration mimicked the situation in Britain where the Anglican Church was the state church and the monarch was not only the Head of State but also the Supreme Governor of the Church of England (the Anglican Church). While the Church of England ceased to be the official state church in Jamaica in 1872, relics of the past tie between church and state remain. For example, every parish in Jamaica continues to have an Anglican Church as the official Parish Church, and the tradition continues of the Chief Justice of Jamaica being the Chancellor of the Anglican Church. However, the Governor General, who represents

This year, 2016, has significance as a special Year of Jubilee. It is the Biblical Jubilee – first instituted when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land; and it is also the Roman Catholic Jubilee – first instituted in 1300. We will take a brief look at both.

**Biblical Jubilee**

Leviticus 26 explains that every 7th year the land should be allowed to rest, to have a Sabbath unto the Lord. At that time nothing should be sown or reaped from the land. This resting of the land is possible because God blesses the harvest of the 6th year so that it

the Queen as Head of State, is not considered head of the Anglican Church.

There is now no state church nor is there any official denomination, however Christianity continues to dominate. Jamaicans are extremely religious, boasting more churches per sq. mile (2.75 churches/sq mile) than any other country in the world according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Although the separation between church and state is desirable, **religious leaders are expected to support government by influencing the moral choices of citizens.** Indeed it can be argued that religion informs morality and morality informs governance; therefore religion is necessary for good governance.

Following are some of the facts that testify of the **firmly entrenched alliance between religion and governance that characterize our country:**

The National Anthem is a prayer to the Eternal Father. It reflects the country's shared morality which informs our laws, culture, collective conscience and thought.

Prayer is said at every sitting of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament

At the opening and closing of every sitting of the courts of law, God is called upon in the phrase "God save the Queen".

Our customs thus testify that we are a predominantly Christian country which holds firm to the belief that **"Righteousness exalteth a nation"**. Nevertheless, we are **duty bound to protect the continued separation** of church and state as an essential ingredient of religious liberty.



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### **GOD'S PEOPLE IN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

In general, the political leadership in Jamaica has always been Christian. However, it is **the first time, that Jamaica has a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Prime Minister** in the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, and along with him is a Governor General who as an SDA was the major leader of this denomination in Jamaica, His Excellency, Sir Patrick Allen, ON GCMG CD. Besides this, there are other SDA members in senior political leadership positions, such as the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Parnell Charles Snr.

In the Bible are many examples of **God's people in national leadership positions who upheld high moral and ethical principles** even in times of severe test and crisis. They thereby provided great inspiration and guidance for the people of their territories. Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai and Queen Esther are some of the most well-known of these Godly persons.

Joseph operated impartially, during

widespread famine, in distributing food without discriminating against any culture or religion. Daniel, though persecuted for his religious practices, remained firm and positively influenced Darius, the King. Mordecai protected the King from those who sought to kill him, maintained his fidelity to God and, along with Queen Esther, was instrumental in preventing genocide of the Jews.

We should also recall God's effective work on the heart of the Persian King, Cyrus. He motivated him to decree the release of the children of Israel from exile, facilitate the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and return the precious holy vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated and used in Babylon's pagan worship. Since God accomplished all this through a pagan ruler, **what can He be expected to achieve through believers who avail themselves to him?**

Undoubtedly, if all SDA members in public office should adhere to Godly principles, in both their public and private lives, this could have a significant multiplier effect, making an impact that would redound to the benefit of the entire nation. We need not wait for a clarion call, as in the days of Queen Esther when the Jews were exhorted to fast and pray for her. **We can begin to petition God now that our SDA officials will take the lead in remaining faithful to the word of God** so as to preserve and protect good governance, righteousness and religious freedom for all.

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*The following article appeared in a letter to the editor from CHARLES EVANS in The Gleaner of March 29, 2016.*

### **THE EDITOR, Sir:**

The Church is not an organ of government. And where governments seek to define the Church in law, they are frankly out of their depth.

The Church was established by Jesus Christ and is defined by Him. Jesus is the sole authority of the Church, because whatever the law may say, my function as a member of the Church is dictated by Scripture, not by man's law.

I worry when the Church seeks to depend on government to allow its influence to be felt. For me, the discussion about the buggery law is not one of whether or not homosexuality is wrong - BECAUSE IT IS WRONG; it is a question of whether or not one should have the freedom to choose if he commits sin.

The function of Government isn't to seek to prohibit sin (that is the remit of the Church as it seeks to influence people to choose God's law), but to create protective boundaries within which individual citizens will have equal rights of self-expression.

My position on homosexuality is both natural and scriptural. I am unapologetically heterosexual. It is an expression of my faith. Now, does the fact that because one chooses another kind of orientation, one's rights should be reduced or taken away?

As much as I hate to say it, the buggery law effectively takes the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil out of the Garden of Eden, and man has no freedom of choice.

What we must seek to do is what God did: Seek to persuade human beings to do the right thing. You don't legislate righteousness; you live and preach it.

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