

THE
FRANKFURT DECLARATION
OF CHRISTIAN AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

In the course of human events, it sometimes becomes necessary for people of good faith to speak out against the abuse of power. This should be done only after serious and prayerful deliberation, and even then, in an attitude of humility and with respect for the authorities that have been established by God. Such protest should be expressed in the hope that civil authorities who are found to be eroding rights and liberties may yet fulfill their responsibility as their rightful guardians.

A few concerned pastors from different continents, moved by an emergent totalitarianism of the State over all realms of society, and particularly the Church, and the disregard of God-given and constitutionally guaranteed rights during the Covid crisis, joined in common cause to craft a solemn declaration, which seeks to address these threats with the timeless truths of God's Word. The following affirmations and denials, derived from biblical principles, we put forth for consideration by all Christians and relevant authorities, in the hope that this document will give light and strength for faithful witness to Jesus Christ in our day.

2 Sam. 12:1-14; Acts 4:24-29; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14

Article 1 God the Creator as Sovereign Lawgiver and Judge

We affirm that the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is the personal Creator of all things visible and invisible, the blessed and only Sovereign, and the ultimate Lawgiver for all human conduct. We believe that He has revealed in the Holy Scriptures and the conscience of men an unchangeable morality which is rooted in His own character, and which defines the nature of good and evil conduct for all people at all times. As the Lawgiver, God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man, the risen Lord Jesus Christ. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

We therefore deny that impersonal matter is the final reality behind all things and the belief that human conduct is merely a biological or sociological phenomenon. Since God is the ultimate Lawgiver and Judge, we deny the right of any earthly authority to define morality and require unconditional obedience of their citizens when contrary to His law. We also have good grounds to question the modern State's ethical pronouncements and moral vision since their secular humanism and relativistic ethics have no transcendent basis for human behavior or morality.

Gen. 1:1; 2:15-17; Ex. 1:17; 20:1-17; Josh. 2:3-6; Ps. 9:7-8; Dan. 6:11; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; Acts 4:19; 5:29; 9:25; 12:17; 17:31; Rom. 1:32; 2:14-16; 11:36; Col. 1:16; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 11:3; James 4:12; Rev. 4:11

Article 2 God as the Source of Truth and the Role of Science

We affirm that God, the Creator, is the Truth and that therefore objective truth exists and can be derived from His revelation in Scripture and nature, and from any facts which can be credibly verified. We endorse science which seeks to discover, through the scientific method and debate, the truths that God has built into the natural world. We also affirm the limitations of science, including its inability to speak authoritatively on areas outside its purview and its propensity to err when data is lacking. Since man has fallen into sin, we further affirm that all his thoughts, deductions, and institutions contain degrees of corruption which tend to distort, manipulate, or suppress the truth.

We therefore deny that human governments are morally and ideologically neutral and always know or seek what is good for their citizens and that their narrative should be unconditionally trusted. We reject any deception, fear-mongering, propagandizing, and indoctrination by the State and mass media, and all reporting on critical world issues which is premature, selective, or ideologically manipulative. We further reject the assertions of any so-called “scientific consensus” which abandons the scientific method and ignores or suppresses the concerns of dissident voices. We likewise reject scientism since, even when scientific findings correctly describe a particular phenomenon, they cannot adequately and normatively address complex social realities or prescribe policies that have ethical implications.

Gen. 6:5; Ps. 19:1-8; 31:6; 119:160; Eccles. 7:29; John 3:33; 14:6; 16:13; 17:17; Rom. 1:18-20; 2 Cor. 4:2; Eph. 2:3; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; James 2:9; Rev. 13:11-15

Article 3 Mankind as the Image of God

We affirm that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (*imago Dei*) and therefore has inherent dignity and worth, along with certain inalienable rights and liberties requisite for a proper human life. These rights and liberties include the right to corporate worship, personal and in-person relationships, vocational employments, and participation in the important events of human life such as the right to comfort the sick and the dying (especially of one’s own family), to attend funerals, to witness the birth of one’s child, to marry in a public gathering, to fellowship and eat together with others, and to engage in honorable work. We also affirm that governments should recognize that each individual is responsible for their own bodily well-being and should protect the right to personal medical self-determination.

We therefore deny the dehumanizing actions of a governmental authority or any other institution to subject any person to psychological manipulation and intimidation. This includes fostering suspicion of others by portraying them as potential threats to the common and individual good. We likewise oppose the State’s mandating of medical decisions for its citizens, and the criminalizing, enforced segregation, vocational disempowerment, and any other deprivation of rights of persons who choose not to comply with their government’s medical policies. We thus reject all forms of medical coercion and any restrictions on individual freedoms for people who are not infected with any contagious, life-threatening disease; this includes the implementation of vaccine passes, social distancing, or mask-wearing as a general prerequisite for access to public places or for participation in work or social life. Global trends toward transhumanism and technological surveillance and control over human beings we also

oppose since they undermine the human agency which is so fundamental to our God-given calling to live as His image bearers.

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:24; 9:6; Ex. 20:9; Dan. 3:1-30; Matt. 25:31-40; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; James 3:9; 5:14-15; Rev. 13:16-17

Article 4 God-given Mandates and Limits of Authority

We affirm that all earthly authorities derive their authority ('the right to be obeyed') from God, who is over all and to whom all must give account. We believe that He has established their different spheres of responsibility (*i.e.*, mandates) and in so doing has set limits to their authority. God has delegated authority to civil governments for the purpose of rewarding good and punishing evil, and to protect the God-given rights and freedoms granted to all people. He has also delegated authority to the Church in its various expressions, particularly to make disciples of all nations by preaching the Word of God, and to establish and administer redeemed communities of faith living under the authority of Christ. In addition, He has delegated authority to the family as the basic unit of society for the purpose of fostering societal cohesion and sexual fidelity, and to protect, provide for, raise, and educate children in the way of the Lord. We affirm our right as citizens, parents, and Christians to freely self-determine our beliefs and behaviors based on these truths.

We therefore deny totalitarian ideologies of governments which do not recognize the boundaries of their authority and usurp the authority delegated by God to the Church or the family. In particular, we reject the tendency of governments to centralize beliefs and conduct for their citizens by creating an authoritarian society in which the State is absolute. Such totalitarianism and statism is built upon beliefs that have fundamentally redefined good and evil and the nature of human beings, and are contrary to the divine order of things. The effect of such beliefs is to enslave individual and religious freedoms, and engender an ideological intolerance which seeks to silence, cancel, and re-educate those who disagree. We also oppose the view that children are the property of the State and therefore subjects to be indoctrinated, and also any encouragement or manipulation of children to undergo medical procedures without parental consent.

Deut. 6:6-7; Matt. 22:20-21; 28:18-19; John 17:14; Rom. 12:1-2; 13:1-7; Eph. 5:21-6:4; Phil. 2:14-16; Col. 3:18-20; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; 4:15; Rev. 13:7-8

Article 5 Christ as the Head of the Church

We affirm that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ belongs to Him at the cost of His life and that it is accountable to Him alone in all matters of faith and practice. We believe that Christ's command to give to Caesar (*i.e.*, the civil authority) what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God establishes the functional independence of the Church from the State. We believe that Christ, who is Lord over all, calls all without distinction of any kind to freely and regularly gather together in His Name in local congregations to seek and serve Him in truth and love. We further affirm that the activities of the local church insofar as they are essential acts of worship are to be regulated by Christ alone.

We therefore deny that any other authority has jurisdiction over the Church to regulate any of its affairs in matters of faith and practice, or to relegate its activities to a non-essential status.

We thus repudiate all actions of the State that impose coercive measures over the Church and criminalize, inhibit, or regulate any of its activities which are undertaken as acts of service toward its Lord. Lastly, we resist the trend of digital platforms in Christian worship and ministry to become substitutes for congregational and in-person ministry which are essential to our faith.

Matt. 18:20; 22:21; Acts 5:28-29; 10:36; 20:28; Rom. 13:6-7; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 2 Cor. 4:5; 5:10; Eph. 1:20b-23; 3:20; 4:15-16; Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Heb. 10:24-25; Rev. 5:9

A Call for Respect, Repentance, and Resistance

We commend and express our gratitude to those civil authorities who respect the essential nature of these Christian beliefs and practices and who have a high regard for individual and religious freedoms. To those civil authorities who have disregarded these freedoms, we call on you to repent and to become again the protectors of liberty and of the rights that God has given to all men, lest in the abuse of your God-given authority, you become liable to God's wrath. To those who desire to compel us to obey the secular State rather than God, we respectfully, but firmly say (like the three Hebrews who refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue), "We have no need to answer you in this matter. The God we serve is able to save us from you, and He will rescue us from your hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the idols you have set up." (*Dan. 3:16-18*)

To our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world we say: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (*Josh 1:9*) It appears that the world may well be entering a time of testing, not only for the Church, but for everyone who believes in freedom and who opposes tyranny. Let us stand with those who are hard-pressed, arrested, or forcefully isolated because they have chosen to do what is right. Let us stand in solidarity with those whose churches are forcefully closed or who are exiled from their congregations. Let us help and support in practical ways those who are fined or have to forfeit their employment for the sake of Christ. And we ask our brothers and sisters who have lived under persecution all their lives to pray for us, that God would give us the grace to bless those who persecute us and to pray for them; that God would give us the courage to stand firm in our faith as His witnesses; and that He, who is Lord over all, would give us the strength to remain faithful and persevere to the end. Amen.

2 Sam. 12:1-14; Dan. 5:22-23; Matt. 24:12-13; 1 Cor. 16:13-14; Eph. 5:10-13

* * *