

Conscience and Liberty

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The journal *Conscience and Liberty* (C&L) is a publication edited by *Association Internationale pour la Défense de la Liberté Religieuse*¹ (AIDLR). The first issue was published in 1948 in French (*Conscience et Liberté*),² two years after AIDLR was founded.

Background and Founding

The man behind both the association and the journal was the French-Swiss Adventist physician Dr. Jean Nussbaum.³ He engaged in high-level contact with politicians, scholars and representatives of denominations, and he used this talent to defend and propagate religious liberty. Nussbaum's approach was to fight for religious liberty not only for Christians but for every human, regardless the religious and confessional background. Nussbaum himself had experienced problems with Sabbath observance at school and at the university from his youth onwards. This is why he later resolved to help others in this regard.⁴ The Seventh-day Adventist Church benefited from his diplomatic skills and connections on an international level, e.g. in the discussions before the League of Nations concerning a calendar reform which might have caused big problems for Sabbath keepers.⁵

After the Second World War, Nussbaum maintained contacts on the basis of personal friendships with well-known people such as Eleanor Roosevelt, who was involved in developing the Human Rights Declaration in 1948. Roosevelt also became the first Honorary President of AIDLR. In that context, Nussbaum launched *Conscience and Liberty* (C&L). His aim was to propagate freedom of religion and belief by publishing articles on an academic level. Nussbaum edited only three volumes of C&L, and in 1951 the project came to a standstill.

More History and Outlook

Twenty years later the then secretary general of AIDLR, Pierre Lanarès, revived the idea of publishing an academic journal in the field of religious liberty. Thus, a new number 1 of *Conscience and Liberty* was launched in 1971. At first it was published only in French; two years later it was also translated into German (*Gewissen und Freiheit*). Other languages followed in 1978: Spanish,⁶ Italian, and Portuguese.⁷ Beginning in 2010, an English version has also been available.⁸ Some issues have been published in Romanian⁹ and the Serbo-Croatian¹⁰

language, but not the whole series.

Conscience and Liberty first appeared once a year, later twice a year, and recently a yearly schedule has been resumed. The responsibility for content and editing is in the hands of the secretary-general of AIDLR, supported by an editorial committee. Until now the secretary-general of AIDLR has been functioning also as director of the PARL (Public Affairs and Religious Liberty) department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the division level. This indicates the close link between the Church and *Conscience and Liberty*. Nevertheless, the journal is not an instrument of the denomination to propagate religious thought. It is neutral in appearance and is designed to advocate the human right of the freedom of religion and belief for everyone, according to the motto that Nussbaum once worded: "The main goal of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty is to disseminate, all over the world, the principles of this fundamental liberty and to protect, in all legitimate ways, the right of every man to worship as he chooses or to practice no religion at all. Likewise, the AIDLR association does not represent any religion, church or political party."¹¹

The printing, financial support, and distribution of the journal in the three languages—English, French, and German—is arranged by the PARL department of the Inter-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Issuing the journal in other languages is up to local unions of the Adventist denomination in the territory of the Inter-European Division. The C&L journals in these countries differ from the English/French/German version in terms of article sequence and numbering of volumes. In Italy, the journal is completely independent.¹² Most of the authors of C&L are scholars; the majority are non-Adventists. The goal is to reach people—both as writers and as readers—who are important players in the field of religious liberty. Thus, the journal is a tool for AIDLR to be recognized as an active human rights organization, and it is a door-opener to become acquainted with people who are relevant for the development of religious liberty. It is also a collection of international documents on religious liberty issues and therefore an important source for research.

In the history of C&L, each secretary general of AIDLR has influenced C&L in an individual manner. It is not possible here to summarize or to compare the contents of the different periods; but it is clear that it was to the credit of Pierre Lanarès¹³ to conceive a journal that would be instructive and readable for an interested public—i.e. also for non-scholars. He was the father of the new series of *Conscience and Liberty*. His successors were Gianfranco Rossi (1983–1995),¹⁴ Maurice Verfaillie (1995–2005), Karel Nowak (2005–2012) and Liviu Olteanu (2012–present).¹⁵

While it is possible to subscribe to the journal, most copies are distributed by mailing them to parliamentarians, scholars, and academic libraries.¹⁶

SOURCES

Archives Adventistes. "Conscience et Liberté" (1948, 1949, 1950). Accessed June 28, 2017.
<http://www.archivesadventistes.org/blog/2006/09/conscience-et-l.html>.

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Rossi, Gianfranco. "Adventists and the Struggle for Human Rights." *Adventist Review* (Online), June 15, 2002. Accessed November 11, 2017. <http://archives.adventistreview.org/2002-1506/story3.html>.

Conscience and Liberty: International Journal of Religious Freedom 72, 34 and 72, 21 (2016/2017).

NOTES

1. The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty.
2. See Gianfranco Rossi, "Adventists and the Struggle for Human Rights," *Adventist Review* (Online), June 15, 2002, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.archivesadventistes.org/blog/2006/09/conscience-et-l.html>, accessed June 28, 2017.
3. Nussbaum was Secretary General of AIDLR from 1946 to 1966.
4. Gertrude Loewen, *Jean Nussbaum, Pionnier de la Liberté Religieuse* (Dammarie-les-Lys: Editions Vie et Santé, 1995), 21, 38.
5. Ibid, 61.
6. *Conscience and Liberty* is no longer published in Spanish.
7. *C&L* has been published in Portuguese since 1978, with some years missing, and uninterruptedly since 1998.
8. The Inter-European Division publishes this version as well; in 1989 the Trans-European Division had already experimented with an English version of *Conscience and Liberty* in co-editorship with Gianfranco Rossi, at the time the Secretary General of AIDLR.
9. *Conscience and Liberty* is at present not available in Romanian.
10. *Savjest i Sloboda*, see also: <http://adventisti.hr/vjerska-sloboda/>, accessed November 25, 2017.
11. *Conscience and Liberty*, 72, 21. (2016/2017)
12. See <http://aidlr.it/rivista>, accessed November 11, 2017.
13. Pierre Lanarès was Secretary General of AIDLR from 1966 to 1983.
14. Gianfranco Rossi had the opportunity to influence the production of the UN-Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (November 25, 1981). See <http://archives.adventistreview.org/2002-1506/story3.html>, accessed November 11, 2017.

15. Liviu Olteanu invented the Dialogue Five in 2013 as a framework for cooperation between diplomats, politicians, academics, and representatives of religions and civil society. *Conscience and Liberty*, 72, 34 (2016/2017)

16. The numbers of copies sent by the Inter-European Division to the SDA Unions for the purpose of distribution in 2016 are: Austrian Union: 900; Belgian Federation: 315; France: 1300; Germany: 1820; Switzerland: 810.

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