

# WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

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TO ALL TRAVELING OVERSEERS AND BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Since we have received letters inquiring about the Society's policy in dealing with individuals who are illegally in this country, we are pleased to provide you with the following comments.

An illegal alien, an individual who, for personal reasons, lives in a country in violation of the law, would not be prohibited from getting baptized, if otherwise acceptable. Onesimus became a baptized Christian though being a fugitive slave. (Philemon 8-19) So, obviously, such a person could participate in field service activity as a publisher. He may also share in the Bible study work and may be called upon to pray at home Bible studies or even to conduct a home Bible study in the presence of another brother or sister who may accompany him on his Bible study.

However, under normal circumstances, a person known to be an illegal alien would not be recommended for appointment as an elder, ministerial servant, or regular or auxiliary pioneer. He would not be used to give instruction from the platform because he is not exemplary in respect to his legal residence. (1 Timothy 3:7, 10) As far as using such a one as a reader at the Watchtower Study or at the Congregation Book Study, the "Question Box" published in the June 1972 Kingdom Ministry (August 1972 Spanish edition) provides direction. You will note that among the requirements for a Watchtower reader is that he should be a good example in Christian living. This again is emphasized in the "Question Box" of July 1977 Our Kingdom Service (September 1977 Spanish edition). Also, the May 1, 1979 issue of The Watchtower (September 15, 1979, Spanish edition), page 23, paragraph 10, states that those representing the congregation in prayer must be exemplary. Since, under normal circumstances, those who are in the country illegally are not exemplary, they would not be used to represent the congregation in prayer. However, it seems appropriate that illegal aliens be permitted to give student talks on the Theocratic Ministry School or be a helper in a Service Meeting part as long as it does not disturb the conscience of the brothers in the congregation.

Any illegal alien in this country who asks for counsel and direction concerning his status in the congregation should be counseled in harmony with what is righteous and appropriate. It would be proper for an individual to be encouraged to read Romans chapter 13 and Titus 3:1 and, thereafter, act in such a way so as to have a

TO ALL TRAVELING OVERSEERS AND BODIES OF ELDERS

June 15, 1988

Page 2

good conscience before God and men. An individual in this situation would also have to be prepared to accept whatever consequences may come his way because of his illegal status in this country. Nevertheless, we would not prohibit him from sharing in the field service activity and getting baptized nor from attending meetings or commenting during them.

We would like to add that, when an illegal alien files his papers for residency with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, his situation changes. He would no longer be someone who is hiding because "Caesar" would know what his name is, where he works, and any other information deemed necessary. Therefore, after a reasonable period of time has elapsed, he could be recommended as a ministerial servant or elder if he meets the qualifications. However, his situation should be described to the Society when the recommendation is submitted. As long as he has done what is legally required in filing his papers and the Immigration and Naturalization Service knows about him, then he may enjoy privileges of service even if the Immigration and Naturalization Service takes an extended period of time to process his papers.

We sincerely hope that the above information will be helpful to you. It is our privilege to be working along with you in attending to Kingdom interests entrusted to our care.

Your brothers,

*Watchtower B. V. Society*  
OF NEW YORK, INC.