Which supreme court?

Jul 02, 2015 08:31 pm | Wayne Blakely

The recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court regarding “gay marriage” brings great cause for celebration, if you are not a Christian. And if you are a Christian and celebrating a union that God’s Holy Word describes as an abomination, it is unlikely you see God’s Word as His love letter to us for all time.
It is clear biblical teaching that all who follow the Lord Jesus will suffer persecution and that the experience will glorify God. Sadly, accounts throughout the scriptures, beginning in Genesis with the account of the murder of Abel and ending in Revelation, with the persecution of God’s people, all testify that His people cannot escape.

The Pope's encyclical and the mark of the beast
Jun 28, 2015 07:34 pm | Steve Wohlberg

On June 18, 2015, Vatican PR officially released in multiple languages Pope Francis's much-anticipated 183-page encyclical addressing climate change titled “Praised Be”—a title based on an ancient song called “Canticle of the Sun” attributed to St. Francis of Assisi written in 1224 A.D.
Which supreme court?
Wayne Blakely
July 2, 2015

The recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court regarding “gay marriage” brings great cause for celebration, if you are not a Christian. And if you are a Christian and celebrating a union that God’s Holy Word describes as an abomination, it is unlikely you see God’s Word as His love letter to us for all time.

A slippery slope beckons Christians who view God’s Word as an antiquated piece of literature, irrelevant to today. Those without a wholesome belief in God’s Word begin to let their feelings dictate their beliefs and actually place their human knowledge on par with God’s.

In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, Satan has perverted the doctrines of the Bible, and errors have thus become incorporated into the faith of thousands who profess to believe the Scriptures. The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition” (White, Great Controversy, 582).

Sadly, though the Bible is available to all, “there are few who really accept it as the guide of life. Infidelity prevails to an alarming extent, not in the world merely, but in the church. Many have come to deny doctrines which are the very pillars of the Christian faith” (White, 582). While people reject the truth, they also reject its Author, and “in trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver” (White, 583).

At the age of eight or nine years, I fantasized about marrying a guy. As a child, because I was daily teased and harassed for my feminine characteristics, I identified with Cinderella’s lowly position and the treatment she received from her haughty stepsisters. And as I grew up, my desires only intensified.

WHAT WAS MISSING? WHAT WAS WRONG WITH SUCH FANTASIES?

Thankfully, my parents taught me to honor and respect God’s Holy word and years later, though I had explored many dead-end roads, God was able to reach me because of this early training. Though I had been well grounded in God’s word, there was no Biblical discussion at home, school or church, about what to do when our “feelings” didn’t match up with God’s Word.

THERE IS HOPE WHEN WE RECOGNIZE OUR NEED

In fact, when I read God’s word, I recognized that the references to homosexuality were describing me and I asked myself, “Why and how can this be?” After all, I didn’t ask to be this way. Later, after studying God’s word, I came to understand that in His word we recognize that we come to Him, stained with sin, and that Satan competes with Jesus, to gain control of our mind. Therefore, unless we are keenly aware that our natural inclinations are sinful, we are sitting ducks for the wiles of the enemy.

Sadly, many will do anything that will help justify the sin they so desperately love and are therefore superficially satisfied with a “God connection” while rejecting a “thus says the Lord.” Such thinking now ushers in the close of earth’s history. In fact, it will be precious little time before “Sunday laws” rule.

However, Jesus has not given up on you or me. Our God, our King, our Creator, our lover of human lives, seeks intimacy with us. Sadly, all too many are in love with self and are blind to the abundant, life-giving love that Jesus holds out to us. They don’t allow Jesus to court them and therefore, the heavenly Groom is being separated from
His bride, who insists on embracing a counterfeit lover.

God’s messenger wrote how God “ordained that men and women should be united in holy wedlock to rear families whose members, crowned with honor, should be recognized as members of the family above” (White, Adventist Home, 99). Take note that God never ordains two men or two women for such a union. This would be a counterfeit plan, not God’s plan. Every day we see Satan’s counterfeit plan unfolding.

**SO WHAT’S NEXT? WHERE DOES ALL THIS LEAD?**

The gay community has long denied that the ushering in of gay marriage would lay the ground-work for yet another tragedy. Yet, as gays have become “loud and proud,” another entity has in fact, long been at work.

Using the same tactics of gay rights activists, pedophiles have begun to seek similar status, arguing that their desire for children is a sexual orientation, no different than that of heterosexuals or homosexuals.

Critics of the homosexual lifestyle have long claimed that once it became acceptable to define homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle or sexual orientation, nothing would be off limits. However, gay advocates have taken offense at such a position, insisting this would never happen. But, psychiatrists are now beginning to advocate redefining pedophilia in the same way homosexuality was redefined in 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) declassified homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Recently, a group of psychiatrists with B4U-Act held a symposium proposing a new definition of pedophilia in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders of the APA.

I recognize it is likely that I will come under fire for writing words that don't convey a feel good message and it is also very possible that my words will be twisted into a hate message. No one likes having his or her toes stepped on. I know I don't. But friends, God is tenderly and compassionately trying to shake and wake us. If only we would come humbly before Him and take Him at His Word, and believe that only He can know what is best for us and recognize that what is best for us will always agree with His Word.

Recently, an earthly supreme court has sought to over-rule God's heavenly court. Shocked and stunned by such a ruling, many have woken up to the reality that this world is not our home. Today it may appear that Satan is winning. But only for a time.

While sympathy for the precious lives of gays has paved the way for gay rights, many do not recognize that God has given all of us the right to choose whether we will act on our temptations or surrender them to Him. In fact, He taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I believe we are going to see an escalation of hate toward Christians. After experiencing ridicule and bullying in and outside the church, the gay community has developed a thin armor coat, as well as a united front that reeks with arrogance.

**PERSECUTION FOR THOSE WHO SPEAK OUT**

Gays have long desired power, equality and retribution for those who held them down for so many years. Because I have spoken out, I frequently experience their wrath, both in and outside the church. Gays have falsely accused me of delivering a “change” message that insists on “heterosexuality,” when what I actually share is God’s message of love, hope and redemption that focuses on surrender and intimacy with Jesus while seeking to do His will, rather than living by personal feelings.

In light of the advancement of equal rights, lawsuits are likely to be rampant at the first sight of what a gay person deems discrimination. Through all this, I believe God’s heart is breaking because His creation, like children defying their parents and insisting on their independence, has turned against Him.
THE GREATEST DANGER

The danger is when Christians acclimatize, rather than develop a shield of faith and trust in God as the world spins out of control. “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,... (KJV, 1 Timothy 3:2).

I remember a childhood song from Sabbath School. “Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong.” This sweet song teaches us to come back to Jesus when we fall or cave into temptation. Lean on Jesus. Trust in His strength and in His power. Be faithful to the end.

HELPING ONE ANOTHER ALONG THE WAY

From experience, I know Satan’s temptations and attractions! Though I live with them today, even as a converted Christian, they don’t constitute my identity. I desperately know that I want assurance that I will live with my Creator and lover of life forever and ever. The only way I can honestly have this assurance is by living in agreement with my Savior, denying self and choosing Him.

Humility does not come easily, but it is possible. Humbly come before God with your requests… with your pain and your aching heart, no matter what troubles you. He is our compassionate, loving Father who knows the fall of a sparrow. He desires the very best for you. Christians who place our complete faith in Him are going to experience rough times. But He is the rewarmer of such faith. He is not forceful, only invitational. He asks us to come apart from the world.

Do you see the revision of marriage as a victory? For who? Does it honor and glorify our God? Which “high court” will you honor?

Genesis 2:18 tells us that it is “not good for man to be alone.” I can certainly attest to that. Because of sin, God’s perfect plan has not been accomplished as He originally designed. But He does not ordain something that dishonors Him. Many are suffering from loneliness. Widows, widowers, gays and single heterosexuals all need to come together in our church communities to share our hurts with one another. We need to lift each other up in prayer for the healing that is promised. We need to be the family of believers that God intended us to be, helping each other to remain focused on Jesus until He returns to take us home.

“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:10-11).

Wayne Blakely is Co-Director/Co-Founder of ‘Coming Out’ Ministries and Director of Know His Love Ministries.
The present crisis and the North American Division leadership

Larry Kirkpatrick    July 2, 2015

In 1990 and 1995, delegates of the Seventh-day Adventist Church met in General Conference Session. On both occasions the church voted not to proceed with women's ordination. Even in 2010, the GC president polled leaders of the various world divisions, afterwards reporting a clear consensus that the church could not proceed with women's ordination at that time.

How is it then that only five years later, in 2015, there are multiple Unions acting unilaterally to ordain women? What happened?

In 2009 through 2012 we saw the leadership of the North American Division (NAD) continue attempts to bypass the will of the world church. General Conference Working Policy includes a section named E-60. In harmony with Scripture, E-60 designates which persons may serve as conference president. It clearly states that only an ordained minister may fill this role. The very language of E-60 makes it clear that the position of president has long been considered a headship role. In fact, the policy presents the president as one standing “at the head of the ministry . . . [and] chief elder, or overseer of all the churches” of that unit (GC Working Policy E-60). Thus, long ago, the church limited the responsibility of president to spiritually qualified males.

And yes, E-60 stood in the way of many in NAD leadership who desired to place women in executive roles. Therefore, the NAD made a request to the GC Annual Council to vote the Division a variance. Annual Council refused. This should have been the end of the matter.

It was not.

A month later, the NAD response to the denial of their request was to vote the removal of this limitation. They voted to modify the wording of the Division's own Working Policy. Under the new wording, such positions could be filled by an "ordained/commissioned minister." Therefore, the NAD granted its own variance.

Had the GC not intervened in the matter, the NAD would have gained what the world church had refused in two prior General Conference session votes. By ignoring the NAD's change of wording, the GC would have been derelict in duty and they would have been unfaithful to the remaining 12 divisions of the world church. And so, General Conference leadership patiently but firmly refused the NAD request.

NAD SEEKS LEGAL ADVICE AND THE GC RESPONDS

At this point, the NAD sought legal counsel and closely investigated the NAD standing on the basis of the Church Manual and Working Policy of the church. In due course the report came back: the NAD had exceeded its authority. Why? Because the NAD is part of the General Conference. Unlike its own Conferences and Unions, as the NAD president would point out, “Divisions do not have constituencies.” Therefore, the General Conference must vote changes at the Division level or no such change can be accomplished.

On January 31 of 2012, the president of the NAD sent a five-page letter to the 311 members of the North American Division Executive Committee. In this letter he outlined why the NAD was forced to abandon its self-voted E-60 variance. The NAD president said it was “a huge understatement” (p. 2), to say that the NAD leadership was perplexed about this outcome. With unflagging energy, he reminded readers that the “clear commitment of the members of the NADCOM to strengthen the role of women in ministry [had] not changed”. He went on to say, “It is of vital importance that we affirm the women clergy presently serving in our Division, and that we encourage women who may be called to gospel ministry in the future and that we enhance the understanding and unity of our
membership regarding the role of women in the church”. In fact, he stressed, “this is a very significant matter that needs to be dealt with” and that the NAD should “move this matter forward” and “consider new approaches” (NAD president - letter to NAD Executive Committee members).

A NEW PLAN IS DEVELOPED

In his letter, the president reaffirmed that the Holy Spirit had led the committee and that the committee should not abandon their conviction. Then, interestingly, he suggested “the E-60 matter was allowed to make the progress it did” in order that “we can now develop our thinking with far more clarity and power than ever before”. In other words, here comes a new plan!

Part of the plan, as already stated, was to re-educate the members of the church. The president called for:

. . . the development of a theology that demonstrates the basic biblical and Spirit of Prophecy foundations that emphasize not only the necessity of women in ministerial and leadership roles but also the theological mandate that they be active in specific roles. At the same time we must study the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy understandings of related issues such as the calling of God, justice, and equity” (NAD President, p. 3).

This is why the North American Division Report to TOSC, several months later, presented an extensive 240-page report. That document contained the root material planned for the re-education of North American church members, including you and me.

And yet, this was not enough. According to the NAD president, “the time has now come for us to become practical in our application of philosophy and belief” (NAD President, p. 3) How so? Remember, the fundamental point that prevented NAD leadership from carrying out its plan? “Divisions do not have constituencies.”

And so, the individual then standing at the head of the work in the North American Division, told the hundreds of members of his Division committee:

“The North American Division and its Unions and Conferences (as local circumstances permit) must become more intentional in the development of pathways to ministry for female pastors. We must also develop intentional methods of mentoring women who can take on executive leadership positions within our conferences” (NAD President, P.3).

Notice, the NAD president here calls for exactly what E-60 prohibits - namely, it calls for the premeditated development of a group of women who can take on executive leadership positions. This would include the position of conference president. The point for our special interest is that while the Division president pointed out on page 2, that Divisions do not have direct constituencies, on page 4 he calls for Unions and Conferences of the North American Division to be “intentional.” Indeed, pages 3-5 repeatedly urge that these matters be moved forward via new approaches. As the President says, “we must fully enable, recognize and utilize all who are called by God to serve as pastors and leaders” (NAD President, p. 5).

A NEW APPROACH CAUSES UNIONS TO SPRING INTO ACTION

What was the result of this official letter? Unions sprang into action.

Only 36 days later the Mid-America Union Executive Committee voted to ordain women. Similar attempts came as winter turned to spring in the North Pacific Union. However, that attempt was side tracked in a committee for a time. In the eastern part of the country the Columbia Union held a special constituency meeting on July 29 to approve “ordination without regard to gender.” Then, back to the west, and the Pacific Union repeated the show in Special Session August 19. With the onset of autumn, North Pacific Union announced it would educate its members and afterward hold a special session as Columbia and Pacific Unions had. Approximately one year following the
President’s letter to the Division Executive Committee members, in October 2013, the Southeastern California Conference elected Ms. Sandy Roberts conference president.

Incited by the President’s letter, Union and Conference leaders in the NAD had bypassed and contravened the repeated decisions of the General Conference in session and ignored the earnest pleas of current General Conference leadership.

The current NAD president and his associates pleaded for NAD Unions and Conferences to act, and NAD Unions and Conferences acted. In short order, these leaders have destabilized not only their own Division, but have side tracked the whole world body.

While there is much more to say about the theological foundations of women’s ordination and kindred issues, in a nutshell, this is basically how the present crisis developed from 2009-2015. Please continue to pray that God will give the General Conference leaders of His church wisdom and discernment in the weeks ahead.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFO: Larry Kirkpatrick serves as a pastor to the Deer Park and Chewelah churches in the Upper Columbia Conference in the North Pacific Union.
Facing the reality of Daniel 3:16-18

Owusu-Banahene Francis

In writing to the Philippians, Paul explains that “evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse” (NASB, 2 Timothy 3:13) and “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). To gain victory, we are to “continue in the things [we] have learned” (2 Timothy 3:14). Peter also understood that God’s people will be persecuted and he told the scattered Christians that they were not to be surprised at the “fiery ordeal among [them]” (1 Peter 4:12) and that if “anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:16). Indeed, it is clear biblical teaching that all who follow the Lord Jesus will suffer persecution and that the experience will glorify God. Sadly, accounts throughout the scriptures, beginning in Genesis with the account of the murder of Abel and ending in Revelation, with the persecution of God’s people, all testify that His people cannot escape from misunderstanding and even hatred by non-believers, even including family members.

TWO SIDES TO THE COIN

Though every coin has two sides, it has the same monetary value whether you present one side or the other to the person at the cash register. In the same way, there are two sides or fates to the Christian’s persecution, and either experience will ultimately glorify God.

One Side of the Coin: Misfortune Fate

Often people go through hard times and unsupported, they may even come to believe that God has forsaken them. In fact, because God seems to be silent, some may be tempted to doubt God’s goodness and even whether He cares or not.

A thick cloud of darkness gathers round, blocking the face of our loving God. One feels alone. God’s apparent silence, coupled with a deep sense of aloneness, can sometimes break the Christian’s heart and cause discouragement. As a result, it is extremely important to trust in God’s providence, to count one’s blessings, and to diligently study and meditate upon His words. When we experience this aspect of persecution, we must claim God’s promises to be able to endure and be faithful till death. Though it is not easy, strength will come from above if we continue to trust God.

A Christian writer says, “at times a deep sense of our unworthiness will send a thrill of terror through the soul, but this is no evidence that God has changed towards us, or we toward God. No effort should be made to rein the mind up to a certain intensity of emotion. We may not feel today the peace and joy which we felt yesterday; but we should by faith grasp the hand of Christ, and trust Him as fully in the darkness as in the light” (Ellen White, The Sanctified Life 90).

There are several biblical examples of those who faced the “misfortune fate”. As an illustration, let us consider Uriah (2 Sam. 11), a man unwaveringly faithful to king and country, whose wife was taken in adultery by his king, and then he himself murdered in the king’s attempt to cover up the horror of his sin.

Uriah’s faithful character

Uriah’s high regard for the reputation of his nation thwarted David’s initial attempt to cover his sin of adultery. When David endeavoured to cover his sins by proposing Uriah rest from the hardships of army life and spend time with his wife at home, Uriah could have accepted the royal privilege, without knowing David’s real intent. Like many of us, he could have considered it to be a scholarship from the king and an opportunity to rise high, yet he decided to be...
faithful to God. And in spite of Uriah’s faithfulness, God kept silent and watched him go through his painful ordeal, apparently alone at the hottest point of the battlefield, and finally dying in battle.

Did God care about Uriah? The answer is yes. God is alive and ever vigilant for His people, ever watching. However, it is just as true that His thoughts are not ours and that He allowed Uriah’s experience to happen.

The faithfulness and ultimate fate of John the Baptist is another example. Though he preached of the coming Messiah, he never had opportunity to personally witness Jesus’ ministry. He learned of Jesus’ work, only through the account of others. In fact, this same man called by God to declare the Saviour as the Lamb of God, in the gloom and inaction of his prison cell, exposed to the doubts and questioning of his disciples, himself began to experience despondency and doubt (White, Desire of Ages, 214). He was deeply troubled to see that his own disciples were cherishing unbelief in Jesus because of their deep love and loyalty for him. But John would not discuss his doubts and anxieties with his companions and he did not surrender his faith in Christ. Hoping that his disciples’ faith would be confirmed after an interview with Jesus, He sent two of them to Jesus to ask, “Are you the one we’ve been waiting for or should we look for another?” In his discouraged state, John also longed to hear some word from Christ spoken directly for himself (White, 216).

When the disciples returned to John and described what they had seen and what Jesus had said, John readily understood their evidence and he had a fuller understanding of the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1,2. Without his knowledge of the scripture, John would have imagined cause to doubt and perhaps even questioned why Jesus did not perform a miracle to release him from his prison experience. Because he understood Jesus’ words in the light of Isaiah’s prophecy, John “yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved” (White, 218). In the end, John experienced freedom from prison when he was beheaded for his faith.

The other side of the coin: fortune fate

On the other side of the persecution coin, there are those who live faithfully and though having suffered for the sake of the gospel; their earthly end is glorious as well as their heavenly end. Though they go through a fiery ordeal, they experience a miracle of God and finally emerge victorious. Biblical examples are Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, and the three Hebrew men.

Because this side of the persecution coin (fortune fate) seems to dominate the Christian story, many Christians forget the “misfortune fate” and come to God with the expectation that yes, we may suffer for Christ’s sake, but just as God did for Daniel in the lions’ den or for Joseph in the pit of slavery, God will work a miracle and ultimately relieve us from the suffering we experience today. It is indeed true that God said, “them that honour me I will honour,” (KJV, 1 Sam. 2:30), but how and when this will come about is not our business, but solely His.

Many may be led to give up their faith, believing God has failed them. For this reason, it is imperative to remember that God is still on our behalf, whatever side of the persecution coin we experience. This is why Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego could say with certainty, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire...but even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up (NASB, Daniel 3:17,18).

In fact, no matter which side of the persecution coin we may fall on, all Christians, like the three Hebrew boys, experience persecution identically. While in the throes of persecution, neither one knows their fate on earth. They walk with no assurance of earthly rescue or glorification, but the victorious trust God’s ultimate will. For this reason it is imperative that we trust implicitly in God’s holy word to uplift and encourage us through our dark days of persecution.
The Pope's encyclical and the mark of the beast

Steve Wohlberg

On June 18, 2015, Vatican PR officially released in multiple languages Pope Francis’s much-anticipated 183-page encyclical addressing climate change titled “Praised Be”—a title based on an ancient song called “Canticle of the Sun” attributed to St. Francis of Assisi written in 1224 A.D. Significantly, the Pope’s encyclical includes a strong appeal to keep Sunday.

There are many points that could be considered, but this article will only examine a few key points based on the prophecy of Revelation 13. First, most papal encyclicals (“circulating let-ters”) are sent to Roman Catholics only. Not this one. A June 14, 2015 Associated Press report was entitled, “Pope says upcoming environment encyclical meant to be read by everyone, not just Catholics.” Sure enough. In “Praised Be,” Pope Francis addresses the world.

At the beginning of his document, Pope Francis wrote that Planet Earth itself “cries out to us be-cause of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans in travail’ (Rom 8:22).”

Here, the Pope is correct. Indeed, Planet Earth is in trouble, due to man’s sin. Whether or not you accept the climate science that Pope Francis relies on, the reality is that our world is suffering because of Adam’s sin, our ongoing sinfulness, God’s curse (see Genesis 3:17), and satanic fury. Of this, there is no doubt. Environmental disasters are clearly increasing. Notice carefully:

In accidents and calamities by sea and by land in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hail-storms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. (Ellen White, The Great Controversy, 589).

Don’t be fooled. Things will get worse before they get better. In “Praised Be,” Pope Francis rec-ognizes the escalating crisis, its effects on the earth, man, and beast, and then quotes the Bible as he advances toward solutions. Read his words carefully, taken directly from his encyclical:

68. This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibrium existing between the creatures of this world, for “he commanded and they were created; and he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds and he set a law which cannot pass away” (Ps 148:5b-6). The laws found in the Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings. “You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and withhold your help … If you chance to come upon a bird’s nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs; you shall not take the mother with the young” (Dt 22:4, 6). Along these same lines, rest on the seventh day is meant not only for human beings, but also so “that your ox and your donkey may have rest” (Ex 23:12). Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.

Here the Pope states that we humans must realize that we are living on God’s earth, “must re-spect the laws of nature,” and should even realize that “rest on the seventh day” is good for both humans and animals. Sounds a bit Adventist, doesn’t it? Delving deeper into the Sabbath issue itself, Pope Francis continues:
71. ... The biblical tradition clearly shows that this renewal entails recovering and respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the Creator. We see this, for example, in the law of the Sabbath. On the seventh day, God rested from all his work. He commanded Israel to set aside each seventh day as a day of rest, a Sabbath, (cf. Gen 2:2-3; Ex 16:23; 20:10).

Now watch carefully:

206. A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products.

And finally,

237. ... Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation...

Let’s summarize some key points. Planet Earth is in crisis. Our environment is falling apart. The pope says we must return to God, and respect the earth, which includes “the law of the Sabbath,” which he states now applies to “Sunday ... meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world.” In other words, if enough greedy, selfish, capitalistic, and environmentally exploitive humans return to God, become more environmentally responsible, and start keeping Sunday holy, life would improve. This would be one giant step closer to “the Resurrection,” and “the new creation.” Pope Francis even wrote that ‘we the people’ can put “healthy pressure” on “those who wield political” power to make it happen.

Over 100 years ago, Ellen White saw it coming. Like an inspired news reporter commenting on the Pope’s encyclical and pending events, she wrote:

It will [finally] be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday-sabbath, that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced ... Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance (The Great Controversy, 590-592).

Did you catch that? “Calamities” (EGW) are increasing. In his encyclical, Pope Francis pro-motes “the Sunday-sabbath” (EGW) which, he states, if observed more fully, would help “heal our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world” (Pope). Humanity would thus stop “offending God” (EGW). “Healthy pressure” (Pope) should be brought to bear upon “those who wield political” power (Pope) which surely includes “rulers and legislators” (EGW), until they finally “yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance” (EGW) to help save the planet.

Thus Pope Francis’s 183-page encyclical entitled, “Praised Be,” lines up perfectly with the predictions written over 100 years ago in Ellen White’s book, The Great Controversy. In The Great Controversy, Ellen White also stated that this would especially occur “in free America.” Now consider this. The very same day (June 18) that “Praised Be” was released worldwide, Barack Obama issued this official statement from The White House:

I welcome His Holiness Pope Francis's encyclical, and deeply admire the pope's decision to make the case - clearly, powerfully, and with the full moral authority of his position - for action on global climate change.

As Pope Francis so eloquently stated this morning, we have a profound responsibility to protect our children, and our children's children, from the damaging impacts of climate change. I believe the United States must be a leader in this effort, which is why I am committed to taking bold actions at home and abroad to cut carbon pollution, to increase clean energy and energy efficiency, to build resilience in vulnerable communities, and to encourage responsible stewardship of our natural resources. We must also protect the world's poor, who have done the least to
contribute to this looming crisis and stand to lose the most if we fail to avert it.

Thus the very same day that the Pope’s encyclical encouraging all people everywhere to exert “healthy pressure” upon legislators, and which also promotes Sunday observance, Barack Obama, the president of free America, stated that “the United States must be a leader in this effort, which is why I (President Obama) am committed to taking bold actions at home and abroad....” With divine insight, Ellen White predicted:

As America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example (6T ,18).

Bingo! Dear reader, I beg of you, don’t be blind to these solemn facts. Open your eyes. Read Revelation 13:11-17. Correctly understood, this prophecy predicts that the lamblike beast (verse 11, the USA) will cooperate with and promote the sea beast (verse 12, Papal Rome) and finally even enforce Sunday, “the day of the sun,” which is a “mark” (verse 16) of Rome’s usurped au-thority, around the world.

Brothers and sisters, the hour is upon us to give the third angel’s message with a “loud voice” (see Revelation 14:9-12). We must be respectful, yet bold. This is our calling as a people. Before the flood, God raised Noah and gave him a message. Years later, he raised Jonah, then John the Baptist, then the apostle Paul, then Martin Luther, then William Miller. At this very hour, He has raised up Seventh-day Adventists to give His last message to a dying world.

In a special sense, Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention ... The world is to be warned, and God's people are to be true to the trust committed to them (9T, 19).

“If you love Me,” said Jesus to His disciples, “keep My commandments” (John 14:15, quoting Exodus 20:6). The core issue is the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment written by God Himself, or the “day of the sun,” the day of the beast. Inseparably connected to this, surely the biggest issue of all is revealing His love, because only “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Ro-mans 13:10). Do we love Jesus? Do we love His people? Do we love confused and mixed-up sinners? Do we love Roman Catholics? What about Pope Francis? Jesus died for him too. May God help us to understand our Savior’s own suffering for our sins, grace, forgiveness and love, which alone can provide sufficient spiritual power for victorious commandment-keeping (see Revelation 14:12) during earth’s final crisis, to the glory of His Holy name.

This critical information is now available from White Horse Media as a 30-minute DVD titled “The Pope’s Encyclical and the Mark of the Beast.” Call 1-800-782-4253. www.whitehorsemadio.com.
The thou shalt not's

Thandi Nkomo

June 24, 2015

There are so many 'sects' amongst the churches that it's almost like living in Bible times. Though all are either
labelling themselves or labelling others, almost every group is tarring the other with the proverbial feather. (However,
thankfully not all!)

The one group I want to focus on today is the don't group, or what I call the thou shalt not's. As their name suggests,
these people occupy themselves with what we should not do. Unfortunately, they are very busy pointing their fingers
at others, bashing what others are doing, and proclaiming what they believe should not be done. Therefore, they
forget to personally live what they should be doing. In other words, they are so full of self and what they believe is
right and wrong, that they forget the many requirements God Himself has set for us. Sadly, they tend to focus only
on the Ten Commandments with its prohibitions, and forget the positive commands found in both the Old and New
Testaments.

For example, they'll shout till kingdom come, “Thou shalt not covet,” in a bid to show that loving your neighbor
means not wanting what they have. However, they won’t remind you that loving your neighbor also means caring for
him, washing him if he's helpless, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. They are so busy looking at what
others are wearing that is wrong, that many of them forget to look in their own closets to find items to clothe the
naked and destitute.

Others criticize the rich man accusing him of being proud because he drives the latest sedan model, not knowing
that he’s been singlehandedly supporting a hungry family for the past two years, while his accusers fail to give bread
to a single hungry refugee. It’s all relative. (Maybe the rich man could afford even a more expensive car but he
chooses not to.) When we look at life using “self” as the standard, we forget that God looks at the heart.

HEARERS TURN EVEN FURTHER AWAY

The bottom line is that when we are judgmental and focus on the negative, we are wretched and miserable. By
neglecting to talk of God’s love, or to show our love for our fellow man, our words do not bring reconciliation, but in
fact turn people even further away the idea of uniting with believers.

God recognizes a difference between the confused, but earnestly seeking soul and those who are purposefully
obedient and stiff-necked. We could also discern the difference, if we would have the mind of Christ, instead of
using our own eyes to see. Instead, so many Christians, Adventist included, choose to lambaste others in public
forums, often speaking harsh words while pointing their finger at them.

The problem with the thou shalt not’s is that they actually undo the work of Christ. Though it is true that Christ did
proclaim “Thou shalt not”, He didn’t stop there, but rather, He taught us what we “shall” do to actively show His love.

The sad result of critical negativity is that when Christ's servants try to teach, “Thou shalt not,” many of those
hearing the message lump the good with the bad together, assuming they're cut from the same cloth. They close
their eyes to the truth because the truth was made odious to them. They cannot see Christ made poor that we might
become rich. Often they see only someone trying to gain popularity. They do not see that the reason Christ says,
“Thou shalt not” is so that they might find joy in a heaven where sin does not exist. Therefore, they do not see
Christ. Instead, when truth is preached they see a Pharisee. Good is then called evil.

And once again Christ will be whipped and crucified in the person of His faithful servants who are only trying to live
His life and share His word. All because someone came along before them and taught the law without living and
teaching grace and mercy.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE THOU SHALT NOT’S

The problem with the thou shalt not’s is that they give those who don’t love the truth an excuse not to seek for it as for hidden treasure. It gives them an excuse to label everyone who opens his mouth with a “Thou shalt not” as a troublemaker. In reality if they sought for Christ, He would show them that indeed, they are doing wrong. However, both groups are wrong. God’s people should not be negative and judgmental, speaking only negative words. Just as wrong are those who refuse to listen because self has risen up and they are tired of the constant rebukes.

ALL ARE HUMAN AND SUBJECT TO ERR

As hearers, there is no excuse because by God’s grace and under the impressions of the Holy Spirit we may deeply love the truth, no matter who speaks it or how. Knowing that we too are human and subject to err just like those to whom we speak, we must speak the entire truth with love as well as conviction. Truth must consist of mercy, love and acts of kindness mingled with the awful grandeur of the law.

May God help us to love truth so much that when we teach it, we do it. All of it. Christ showed the truth through His acts of love, even as He uttered that He wants us to keep every single jot of the law without compromise. A real Christian will do the same. We will be so empty of self that Christ will reign within and remind us: “Thou shalt not break the law, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
Coveting Forbidden Fruit

Ron Woolsey

When considering the fall of Adam and Eve, our first thought is usually that the sin of Eve was in eating the forbidden fruit. However, Jesus said “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (KJV, Matthew 5:28).

SIN IS CONCEIVED IN THE MIND

In other words, sinful behavior is first preceded by sinful thought, in this case, coveting and lust. Paul said, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7). Let us consider several definitions:

To covet is 1) to desire wrongfully or without due regard for the rights of others, as to covet another’s property; 2) to eagerly wish for, as in coveting the prize; or 3) to have an inordinate or wrongful desire.

To lust is also to have a yearning or desire, to have a strong or excessive craving for, or after something.

In light of these definitions, let us now consider the fall of Eve. After finding herself alone near the tree with its forbidden fruit, she listened to the deceitful and enticing words of Satan speaking through the serpent, and “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat…” (Genesis 3:6).

Notice the succession of fatal errors in Eve’s experience:

1. She saw the tree was good for food, even though her loving Creator had forbidden them to eat it, and warned that death would follow disobedience. (Genesis 2:17)
2. She was attracted to the fruit, and lingered with admiration because it was pleasant to her eyes, and apparently delectable.
3. She then “coveted” the forbidden fruit. She coveted that which belonged to God and though she had an unlimited supply of wonderful options that met with God’s blessing and approval, she desired what was off limits.
4. The final step in Eve’s fall was overt. “…She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat…” (Genesis 3:6).

TO SIN IS TO LOOK, DESIRE AND THEN ACT

Eve looked, lingered, desired, and then acted. And thus we see the danger of coveting. The thoughts and desires of the heart lead to overt behavior -- in Eve’s case, to disobedience of God’s clearly expressed ordained plan. This is one reason Paul counsels us to bring into captivity “every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF COVETING

The Bible is replete with warnings against coveting as well as examples of God’s dealings with this sin. Following are some examples we might not normally associate with coveting:

Coveting Tithe

God warns against robbing His tithe. God says, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein...
have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).

When withholding tithe, one must first covet that which God clearly claims as His own, the ten percent of all increase. This coveting is then followed by the overt behavior of withholding and using the tithe for one’s own desires. God labels such behavior as robbery, a violation of the 8th commandment.

The same is true when one steals from one’s neighbor. The desire to have what rightfully belongs to another gives birth to the overt behavior of taking.

**Coveting 24 hours**

Another example of coveting is described in Hebrews 4 when we disregard God’s weekly 24-hour period, He calls “My rest”. Breaking the Sabbath is always preceded by the sin of coveting for personal use what belongs to God. In other words, the coveter ignores God’s invitation to spend God’s Sabbath with Him.

**Coveting intimacy that is not ours**

Let us consider the issue of adultery. “…Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). From this text we learn that the desire to have someone else’s husband or wife is first conceived in the mind. Also included is the desire to own what does not yet belong to us, intimacy declared by God to be off limits, just like the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, coveting also leads to the overt behavior of adultery. Though it is true, that God is love, He nevertheless hates this sin and calls it an abomination (Ezekiel 22:11).

On that note, consider also the sin of homosexuality. According to God’s original plan, man was created to be sexually compatible with woman, and woman to be sexually compatible with man for the purpose and pleasure of procreation. God ordained the institution of marriage to accommodate this special relationship. Homosexual behavior is preceded by coveting, or lusting after that which God created for someone else. For a man to desire an intimate, sexual relationship with another man is to covet that which God designed to be exclusively for a woman, and which He explicitly states is off-limits. Likewise, for a woman to desire an intimate, sexual relationship with another woman is to covet that which God has created to be for a man.

Following through with this coveting leads to the overt behavior of homosexuality, which our God of love also hates and calls an abomination (Leviticus 18 & 20 and see also Romans 1:24, 26-28).

**ARE ALL SINS OF EQUAL MAGNITUDE?**

At this point I would like to pause and consider a word of counsel from inspiration, addressing God’s estimation of coveting.

God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man… Man’s judgment is partial, imperfect, but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God…. (Ellen White, Steps to Christ, 30)

Actually, these sins of the mind, not easily discerned in others, were those first indulged by Lucifer. Covetousness eventually made a devil out of a covering cherub. No wonder that covetousness is especially offensive to God!

**Coveting a forbidden role**

Now let’s take this issue, this sin of coveting, a step further. Let’s go to a very delicate and controversial place. What about the sin of Miriam? Why did God strike her with leprosy? “And they [Miriam and Aaron] said, Hath the Lord
indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?” (Numbers 12:2a). Even though Aaron, the high priest, was complicit with Miriam in her sin, “the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed…and, behold, Miriam became leprous white as snow” (Numbers 12:10).

It mattered not that the High Priest himself encouraged Miriam in her covetous rebellion, nor that Miriam was a prophetess. God was highly offended and therefore strongly rebuked her covetous desire for a role for which she was neither called nor allowed to be ordained. Neither was she ever called to be a priestess, to serve with her brother the high priest and her nephews, the priests. Though there are several instances in the Bible where God has ordained women as prophets and other important roles within His church, we do not find any example in the Bible where He ever ordained a woman to be a patriarch, a priest, a king, an apostle, an elder or a bishop. In fact, we find God lamenting that “As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths” (Isaiah 3:12).

IS THERE A WARNING FOR US TODAY?

In conclusion, we must recognize that the issue of coveting ordained roles within the church is by no means gender exclusive as seen clearly in the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

They “gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” (Numbers 16:3).

It appears here that the argument of “the priesthood of all believers” was being put into play even in the early days of Israel as a church/nation. Interestingly, it was argued that any member of the church (of Israel), male or female, “every one of them,” was entitled to the roles of leadership ordained by God Himself for Moses and the sons of Aaron.

However, Moses “spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy: and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him (Numbers 16:5).

The members of the tribe of Levi were appointed by God to work in a similar manner to our denominational workers today. The other tribes of Israel financially supported them. However, they were not ordained to the same work of Moses or Aaron and his sons. Just as Eve had coveted the forbidden fruit, Korah, Dathan and Abiram coveted a forbidden sacred role, that of priest. God was so displeased with the resulting defiance and rebellion that He not only destroyed these three men, but everyone who shared with them in their rebellion, including 250 unordained men who took up censors as priests.

After reading these stories, should we not approach the subject of ordination with extreme caution and reverence recognizing how the sin of coveting a role to which we are not called, is so offensive to God?

Herein lies my great fear in light of our denomination’s aggressive push to ordain women into a role for which there is no Biblical precedent. As Aaron was complicit with Miriam in her covetous rebellion, today’s church leaders strongly push their agenda. When I hear a denominational leader say, “One way or another we will get women’s ordination approved,” I am alarmed. I believe such statements are flavored with the spirit of defiance and rebellion, as was the sin of Korah. Such a leader lacks humble submission to a consensus by the godly leadership at the head of the church (i.e. the General Conference).

WHAT ABOUT SAN ANTONIO?

When I read in our publications, “What about San Antonio?” and then the reply, “Regardless of the outcome, the Adventist Church in North America will continue to see a growing number of women who are deeply convicted of
receiving a call from God to be in gospel ministry and to be a blessing for many,” again I am alarmed at what seems to be a defiant, rebellious spirit.

When I hear an SDA woman theologian calling for repentance for the “deadly sins” of patriarchy and heterosexism within the Adventist church, I fear that she is challenging what God ordained in Eden. What must God think...?! Is this promotional linking of women's ordination with the gay agenda not coveting forbidden fruit?

May God help us to humbly study and learn from the experiences of Eve, Miriam and Korah, and to understand the dangers of coveting what God has forbidden.
In the timeless struggle between the church and the world, a growing crisis in the last days promises to leave many church members unprepared for the soon coming of Jesus. While the final Laodicean church suffers a barrage of divisive attacks from the outside world, a more sinister deception and cunning temptation has reared within the church, between those who have genuine Biblical faith and those who mimic this lifestyle through their reliance upon the mere religious culture of Adventism.

**TWO TWINS, TWO DIRECTIONS**

This division is not a new one, and we need only go back to the Genesis account where we find two twins, Jacob and Esau, who could not be more illustrative of the issue. It should be noted that both were raised in the faith (church) by their parents. In addition, they both knew truth, and had a knowledge of God. It is from this point that the similarities of these twins radically diverge. When Esau sold his birthright for a temporary, earthly indulgence, he quickly cast off the restraints of his religious upbringing and gave in to the temptation of his fleshly nature. Consequently, Esau's decision detrimentally influenced the course of his life. His twin brother Jacob, however, found a life altering power through a new birth experience, from his faith and submission to God at Bethel.

Both started out with the same spiritual foundation, so what made the difference? Though from childhood Esau was immersed in the faith of his father's, but he did not seek transformation of heart and character, preferring rather to embrace the culture of his faith. He sought the blessing of God and the benefits of the culture, simply for earthly gain. As one minister duly noted, "Being born in the truth is not the same as being true." How accurate for many today as well!

Jesus also rebuked this superficial mimicry of true faith. In the gospel of John, we read His words, "...you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life..." (NASB, John 6:26,27). They followed Jesus to have their stomachs filled with bread rather than their heart filled with His Spirit and presence. They ate from His hand but not from His heart. Religious culture wishes to sit at Jesus’ feet but only to be fed conveniently in this life without any discomfort of preparation for the next. Biblical faith, however, will seek the spiritual bread even at the expense of earthly bread.

**LIVING ABOVE THE WORLD, NOT COMFORTABLY IN IT**

Herein lies the heart of the problem for many Adventists today. Those who profess Christ within Adventism, but do not testify by bearing fruit of a changed heart, only admit that they are the product of a nice culture rather than divine grace. They may appear to drink of the water of life, and yet be as destitute as the hills of Gilboa. A life enriched by Adventist culture without living faith cannot live above the world, but only comfortably in it. Therefore, without an entire surrender of the will, they do not experience genuine conversion. And without this, they do not come to Christ or practice self denial to lead others to Him.

The 25th chapter of Matthew prophetically describes the distinct division that exists among God’s people right before He comes. A contemporary view of the parable and its application would describe Adventists who have secluded themselves from the world, understanding truth, yet still enjoying the world’s pleasures and benefits. We call these people cultural Adventists. They want deliverance from evil but not from sin. Consequently, they seek their own kingdom rather than His.
True Adventism, by contrast, seeks not only escape from the consequence of sin, but more importantly through surrender to Jesus, seeks and receives freedom from the very root of sin. As a result, the new heart actively seeks to advance the kingdom of God through sharing its faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This new heart is filled with the power of grace because it is in constant surrender to the leadership of Christ. In addition, true Biblical faith views God’s commandments and counsel not merely as church rules but as grace from the heart of Christ for an abundant life. It joyfully accepts the plain, straight truth of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, recognizing that it is out of infinite love and the strong delusion of sin that God gives such straightforward instruction. Anything short of this experience is a sure indicator that one is only culturally Adventist, and not a transformed Adventist.

**ADVENTIST CULTURE MUST BE DRIVEN BY TRUE ADVENTIST FAITH**

This distinction being made, it should be noted that there is nothing objectionable about Biblical Adventist culture, as long as it is driven by true Adventist faith. The two can exist together with hope of eternal life, but the former cannot save without the latter and will only result in eternal loss. Adventist culture alone will not meet the requirement in the judgment when we stand before God. We must each seek God personally with all our heart while He is seeking us with all of His. We must be truly born again through living faith in Christ.

**Remedy for the problem of cultural Adventism**

To live each moment saturated with faith, not simply parroting the culture we know so well is the sure remedy for Laodiceanism in Adventism today. It is of paramount importance to revive our first love. Sadly, for many who are baptized members in the church already, there is the need to discover it for the first time.

Are you experiencing true Adventist faith or merely a cultural experience? Are you content to be comfortable in the world or do you want to live above the world? Your answer today is of eternal life and death significance. Choose faith. Choose life. Though we live on the edge of the final prophetic crisis, there is rich hope for any who look to Him today in earnest, heartfelt faith.
Why Women's Ordination Matters

David Read

Why Women's Ordination Matters — ADvindicate

This is a review of Clinton and Gina Wahlen's book "Women's Ordination: Does It Matter?"

As the TOSC meetings wore on, and it became clear who stood where on the issue, I was struck by the fact that many among those opposed to women's ordination, particularly the leaders of the opposition, were adult converts to the Adventist faith. Raymond Holmes, Gerard Damsteegt, Clinton Wahlen, Ingo Sorke, John Peters, and Doug Batchelor read and studied their way into our faith. Adult converts to Adventism seem to be more often opposed to female ordination than those born into the church. Those of us fortunate enough to have been raised as Adventists identify more with the subculture (particularly the health habits), the parochial education, and the social network than with the method of Bible study by which our doctrines were arrived at. By contrast, those converted to Adventism by Bible study are more conscious of the damage that erasing gender roles in the church will do to our Adventist hermeneutic.

Clinton Wahlen grew up an atheist. He excelled in science and mathematics, and, as a high school senior, was accepted into the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Clinton planned to work for NASA as a rocket scientist, but God had other plans. After graduating from high school and before heading off to MIT, Clinton spent a summer in Willits, California; there, someone gave him a copy of The Great Controversy and told him to pick a chapter that looked interesting and start reading. Clinton accepted the challenge and began reading the chapter, "The Origin of Evil." As he read, objections would come to his mind, but those objections were always answered within a few paragraphs. He kept reading. After finishing The Great Controversy, he began reading Daniel and the Revelation, and was amazed at the accuracy of Bible prophecy. At the end of the summer, he attended a camp meeting at Pacific Union College; when C.D. Brooks made an altar call, Clinton went forward. He was baptized at the Willits Church.

Clinton wrote to MIT, telling them “thanks, but no thanks,” and enrolled at Pacific Union College. Still loving technology but wanting to read the Bible in the original languages, he took a double major, in theology and computer science. Between his junior and senior year he served as a student missionary to New Zealand. Most importantly, he met Gina, a fourth generation Adventist; they graduated together in June, 1984, and were married that December. Clinton served on the staff of the St. Helena church, and Gina worked as a writer at PUC's office of public relations. Two years later, the couple moved to Berrien Springs, MI, to attend Andrews University, where Clinton earned his M.Div. and Gina earned a Masters' degree in interdisciplinary studies.

After a time pastoring in Northern California, the Wahlens, who by then had a son, were called to teach at the newly opened Zaoksky Theological Seminary in Russia. Clinton taught Greek and New Testament, and Gina taught Christian journalism and English. The Wahlens served in Russia from 1992-1998, near the end of which time a daughter was born, and Gina co-authored True Believer, a bestseller that sold over 10,000 copies. The couple then moved from Russia to England, where Clinton earned his Ph.D. from one of the world's elite universities, Cambridge. After a five year tour teaching at a GC sponsored graduate school in the Philippines, the Wahlens in 2008, were called to the SDA Church's headquarters in Maryland, where Clinton serves as an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), and Gina worked for Adventist Review and Adventist World, and most recently as editor of the Mission quarterlies at the GC's Office of Adventist Mission.

I had the pleasure of meeting Clinton Wahlen at the TOSC meetings. He is a mild-mannered, soft-spoken scholar and Christian gentleman. Just as you would expect of someone who had planned a career in high technology, Wahlen does not jump to conclusions; he is a careful, logical thinker and speaker.
Although Clinton Wahlen works for the BRI, *Women's Ordination: Does it Matter?* is not a BRI publication, but independently published. A troubling aspect of the debate on women's ordination is that those in favor of female ordination have had access to official periodicals and publishing houses, but those opposed have had to use independent publications (like *ADvindicate*) and independent ministries (like *Amazing Facts* and *Secrets Unsealed*) to air their arguments. At last year's Annual Council, Gina approached the president of Pacific Press and asked him if the Press would be interested in publishing a book presenting "the other side of the ordination issue." He said "no" because: 1) they had committed to publish a book from the seminary on this topic and, 2) since Pacific Press is now a NAD institution, they needed to print "what the NAD constituency wants." But the NAD constituency *should* hear both sides of the ordination debate, even if the NAD leadership does not seem to want both sides heard.

The Wahlens continued to feel impressed to write this book. Its purpose is to present pertinent conclusions of scholarly studies, including those presented at TOSC, in lay-reader-friendly language. The book was peer-reviewed by several Bible scholars, and was also read by pastors and lay members for input before going to press. The Wahlens formed "Bright Shores Publishing" to publish the book; due to the current controversy over this issue, their financial backers wish to remain anonymous. I can well relate to the difficulties attending the Wahlen's project, having formed a publishing company, Clarion Call Books, to publish "Dinosaurs—An Adventist View." The Wahlens hope that their book will help honest seekers after truth who are carefully considering the women's ordination question.

Turning to the substance of the book, the Wahlens begin with hermeneutics. Disagreement on a doctrinal issue does not mean that there are not clear biblical answers. The question is, what hermeneutic is being employed? Sunday-keepers use a certain hermeneutic to avoid the conclusion that the Sabbath commandment is binding on Christians: (1) they rely on a few vague, unrelated or tangentially related passages, (2) they ignore or explain away clear passages that do not support their position, and (3) they claim that the lack of a clear command in the New Testament to keep the Sabbath means that God must not require it. Watch for a similar hermeneutic among those who favor female ordination.

In a chapter on the qualifications of the elder/overseer, the Wahlens note that Paul specifies these qualifications—including that the elder must be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)—in letters not to churches but to Timothy and Titus. The instructions were virtually identical, even though Timothy was working in Ephesus, one of the largest cities in the empire, and Titus was working on Crete, a rural island with small towns and villages. Paul's instructions were intended to apply not only in Ephesus and on Crete, but wherever Timothy's and Titus' ministries would take them in later years. Indeed, the appointment of elders was important precisely because Timothy and Titus, like Paul, were itinerant, and would soon move on to the next mission field. Paul's instructions were not bound to a given time and culture, but are timeless, universal guidelines for all Christian Churches, from Timothy's day until the parousia.

The phrase "husband of one wife" is just as clear in Greek as it is in English. Had Paul intended "husband of one wife or wife of one husband," he could have written that; he used the phrase "wife of one husband" in the same letter in describing the type of widows who were eligible for food aid (1 Tim. 5:9), so he knew how to write that phrase. Moreover, the requirement that an elder be the "husband of one wife" was not aimed primarily against polygamy, which was virtually non-existent in Greco-Roman culture; the disapproval of polygamy has always been one of the prominent differences between Western Civilization and the East. By using the term "husband of one wife," Paul clearly meant to specify a man.

What about the "silence" texts? The Wahlens argue that 1 Cor. 14:34, where Paul says "Women should remain silent in the churches," is really about orderly worship, and, unlike the epistles to Timothy and Titus, was addressed to a specific church with a specific problem. The disruptive elements in the Corinthian Church were (1) men who spoke in a foreign tongue without an interpreter (v. 27-28), (2) men who began to prophesy while another man was still speaking (v. 29-33), and (3) women who kept noisily asking questions during the church service (v. 34-35). Paul uses a harsh word for silence, *sigao*, but the point was not that women should never speak, but that they should not
disrupt. By contrast, in 1 Tim. 2:11, where Paul says that “a woman should learn in quietness and full submission,” the word used is not *sigao* but *hesychia*, a form of which is used in 1 Tim. 2:2, where Paul urges us to pray for those in authority that we may live “peaceful and quiet lives.” The Wahlens conclude that the Scriptural teaching is not that women must never speak in church, but that they must (1) not disrupt orderly worship and (2) not *authoritatively* teach a man in the church, meaning to not usurp the authoritative teaching function of the male elder.

In the chapter on male headship in the home and the church, perhaps the most unusual insight is that in Gen. 3:16 (“your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you”) the Hebrew word ‘*el* can mean either “for” or “against” depending on context. The Wahlens argue that the word in this context is better translated as “against,” as in: “your desire shall be against your husband, and he shall rule over you.” In other words, sin would bring in disharmony, such that the wife would often want something contrary to what her husband wanted; Eve’s sentence was that, when she and Adam were not in agreement, God gave preference to the man. In the extensive questions and answers section at the end of the book, the Wahlens note that the Hebrew construction in the last clause of Gen. 4:7 (“. . . sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”) is almost identical to that in the last clause of Gen. 3:16.

Gina tells a very poignant personal story to illustrate the benefits of a wife’s submission to her husband. Clinton purchased an expensive supplemental cancer policy because their regular insurance would not cover everything related to cancer treatment. Looking at the substantial money deducted from their take-home pay, and noting that they were both very healthy, Gina argued that they should drop the cancer rider. But Clinton was firm, and Gina, thinking specifically of Eph. 5:22-25, submitted to Clinton’s decision. A month later, Gina was diagnosed with cancer, which entailed frequent doctor visits, lab tests, major surgery, and radiation treatments, all of which were covered by the supplemental insurance.

In a chapter on Ellen White, the Wahlens note that at the General Conference session of 1881, a resolution was introduced to ordain women to gospel ministry. There was a discussion, then the matter was referred to a committee, which was really just a polite way of defeating the measure. Ellen White never said anything about this measure, and some argue (perhaps having too often seen “A Man for All Seasons”) that her silence means that she consented to it, or even favored it. But is that how we are to read her silence?:

> From the light given me by the Lord, I knew that some of the sentiments advocated in [The Living Temple](http://advindicate.com/articles/2015/6/14/why-womens-ordination-matters) did not bear the endorsement of God, and that they were a snare that the enemy had prepared for the last days. I thought that this would surely be discerned, and that it would not be necessary for me to say anything about it. Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 202.

Ellen White would have remained silent about the errors in Dr. Kellogg’s book if the church had seen and rejected them. She was silent where she did not need to speak. She could remain silent on female ordination because the church discerned that error and rejected it. Ellen White did not say anything about it because she did not need to.

Ellen White opposed injustice in the Church; she spoke out strongly in favor of female workers being *paid* fairly, about the importance of sustentation for older ministers, and against the unfair treatment of black preachers. But she never said anything about ordaining women to gospel ministry, so she must not have viewed it as an issue of justice or fairness.

The Wahlens relate that a woman named Sarepta M.I. Henry, a Methodist activist in the WCTU who had become an Adventist after a stay in the Battle Creek Sanitarium, was Ellen White’s ideal woman minister. S.M.I. Henry’s burden was to educate women about their irreplaceable, crucial role in raising and educating godly children. Even though she frequently spoke to large crowds, the thrust of her ministry was to be a “teacher of the ideal” (Titus 2:3-4) to younger women, regarding the duties of the wife and mother in a Christian home.

Ultimately, the Wahlens conclude that this issue does matter, because it is a question of faithfulness to Scripture:
If we ever come to the place as a Church where we can interpret “husband of one wife” to mean “wife of one husband” or simply “faithful man or woman,” then we can make any passage of Scripture mean whatever we want it to mean or whatever our culture tells us it should mean. Could it be that, as a Church, we are now being tested as to whether we will continue to maintain the Bible as the authority for our faith and practice so that, having passed this test, we will be prepared for the greater tests just ahead with regard to same-sex marriage and even the Sabbath? p. 124

We are no more at liberty to substitute female elders for the male elders specified in Scripture than we are to substitute the first day of the week for the Seventh day. God wants us to be faithful to the order that He created in the beginning and intended to last for all time.
ADvindicate will be at the GC Session, after all

Shane Hilde

Update: In less than a day, gifts have flowed in and our request was met and even exceeded! A hearty thank you to those who gave. For those still wanting to give, your funds will be used to cover any unexpected expenses during GC Session and future booths. May the Lord bless your generosity.

General Conference Exhibit Manager Dean Rogers contacted ADvindicate today, asking if we were interested in having a booth at the July 2015 General Conference Session. We said yes! We're not sure who vetoed the North American Division (NAD) decision to disallow our booth at Session, but we feel God had bigger plans and we just had to wait for Him to work.

Our booth space is B118. Gerry Wagoner, Shane and Mary Hilde, David Read and Monte Fleming will be at the booth, so please stop by and say hello.

As a result of this news, we have an immediate financial need for those willing and able to donate. Since the NAD blocked our booth last August, we had no plans to go to General Conference Session. Now that God has opened the door, we are in need of $5,000 for expenses. You can help ADvindicate by giving your tax-deductable donation today. Our goal is to raise these funds by June 26. Thank you in advance for your generous support. It's because of your prayers and dedication coupled with divine intervention that you will see our booth in San Antonio next month.