Ordination of Women: The Issue That Will Not Die

See page 4
Editorial
To the General Conference

Dear Brethren,

I HAVE presented before you matters which the Lord has shown me, and I have a warning to give to this body now assembled in Battle Creek. You are in danger from the fact that plans may be formed, ways may be devised, propositions may be followed that mean, not success, but defeat. I dare not let this conference close, and those assembled return to their homes, without bidding you to consider carefully every proposition that has been presented. Look well to every plan that has been proposed, and give not your Yea and Amen hastily, as I have heard from the lips of some men whose understanding is beclouded, and they know not what is the character of the sentiments and propositions they are saying Amen to. Be not carried away with proposals that appear innocent, when their end is disaster and a forfeit of the favor of God. There is danger, and I sound the signal trumpet of warning.

God calls upon you to humble yourselves under His mighty hand, and to confess your sins and put them away, and He will lift you up. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:8. Ministers, high and low, have no time now to complain of your unsuccessful labor. Flee to Jesus, take hold of Him by living faith, lay hold of His strength, and make peace with Him. You have too great a desire for the praise of men. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:6-9. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; [mark the words] I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee: Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Isaiah 49:7-16.

Let not men exalt themselves, and seek to carry through their ideas without the cooperation and sanction of the people of God. Your strong spirit, your loud, contemptuous speeches are out of harmony with Christ and His ways. O, had you made your voice to be heard on high, God has seen you smiting with the fist of wickedness. You must bear the divine credentials before you make decided movements to shape the working of God's cause. As surely as we believe in Christ, and do His will, not exalting self, but walking in all humility of mind, so surely will the Lord be with us. But He despises your fierce spirit; He is grieved with the hardness of your heart. Pray that He will give you a heart of flesh, a heart that can feel the sorrows of others, that can be touched with human woe. Pray that He will give you a heart that will not permit you to turn a deaf ear to the widow or the fatherless. Pray that you may have bowels of mercy for the poor, the infirm, and the oppressed. Pray that you may love justice and hate robbery, and make no difference in the bestowal of your favors, except to consider the cases of the needy and the unfortunate. Then the promises recorded in Isaiah 58 will be fulfilled to you, "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Isaiah 58:10-11.

But you will need to make straight paths for your feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way. We are surrounded by the lame and halting in the faith, and you are to help them, not by halting yourselves; but by standing like men who have been tried and proven, and are firm as a rock to principle. I know that a work must be done for the people, or many will not be prepared to receive the light of the angel sent down from heaven to lighten the whole earth with His glory. Do not think that you will be found as vessels unto honor in the time of the latter rain, to receive the glory of God, if you are lifting up your souls unto vanity, speaking perverse things, in secret cherishing roots of bitterness brought from the conference at Minneapolis. The crown of God will certainly be upon every soul who
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.—Editors

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Editorial 2

Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty of supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in every way possible, insofar as is consistent with the principles of the government of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit upon the heart.

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Ordination of Women: The Issue That Will Not Die

It all started September 1973 at Camp Mohaven, Ohio. A conference on women’s roles in the church was organized under the leadership of the then Biblical Research Institute director upon the advice of certain General Conference leaders. It was the theologians who seemed to have opened the door to the proponents urging the ordination of women. At Camp Mohaven they reported that “the Bible neither advocates nor prohibits the ordination of women to the ministry, and that the issue was therefore one of church policy and administration.” *Adventist Affirm*, Fall 1989, 42.

This conclusion led to the issue of women’s ordination being placed upon the agenda of the Annual Council of October 1973. It is of no little significance that this issue was introduced at the time when Elder Robert Pierson, the then General Conference president, supported by the then editor of the *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*) Elder Kenneth Wood, was seeking to bring a mighty revival and reformation to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Subsequently, the issue has been presented a number of times before the Annual Council, and in 1990 it became perhaps the most focused-upon issue at the General Conference session in Indianapolis.

Before the 1975 General Conference session in Vienna, Austria, to which I was a delegate, I had heard minor rumbles concerning the ordination of women, but had no idea of the Mohaven Council of 1973.

However, quite surprisingly, I was catapulted into the debate before the 1975 General Conference session convened. A number of ad hoc committees were established to dialogue and make submissions on important issues before every General Conference session. Because I was president of Columbia Union College, only a mile away from the then headquarters of the General Conference, I was probably chosen over other college presidents to sit on such committees because of my location.

One such committee involved forty or fifty people, many with denominational background, but it included some laity, under the chairmanship of one of the General Conference vice-presidents. After the preliminaries, the chairman indicated that there were four issues that would be addressed by the committee, one of which was the ordination of women. I hoped that I would not be placed on that committee. However, not only was I placed upon that committee, but the chairman also turned to me and said, “Colin, I want you to chair that committee.” I pled to be released from the assignment, but the chairman was adamant. I remember praying, “Lord what will I do?” as I walked to our assigned location along with ten to twelve other members of the larger committee who also had been assigned to this ad hoc subcommittee.

The chairman’s secretary had been assigned to this committee and we quickly gave her the responsibility of being our secretary also. I told the committee that the only way I knew we could address this issue was to research the counsel given by Inspiration, a concept to which the committee members consented. So we divided the group in two, asking that one half research whatever could be established from the Bible and the other half, what might be determined from the Spirit of Prophecy. I suggested that those dealing with the Spirit of Prophecy take advantage of the White Estate staff to research any information that they could discover on this topic. We must keep in mind that this was long before the advent of the CD ROM in which all the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy are available.

Colin D. Standish
After several hours of research we reconvened. Those researching the Bible had concluded that there was no evidence of women's ordination in the Bible. Those searching the Spirit of Prophecy presented one statement for our consideration, "Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart for this work by prayer and laying on of hands." Review and Herald, July 9, 1895. It will be noted that it was part-time service, and that it was in the context of an article dealing with how laity should support the work of the minister. While the passage in no wise refers to ordination of ministers, and frequently laying on of hands is not associated with ordination (for example, the laying on of hands for the sick), nevertheless, the subcommittee recommended to the full committee that consideration be given to the ordination of women to the office of deaconess. The subcommittee pointed out that there was no divine counsel to support the ordination of women as either elders or pastors.

I was not prepared for the hostile response to the report when it was read. The chairman, addressing his secretary who had read the report, said, "I did not put you on that committee to bring that kind of report back." Then with a high degree of firmness he said, "This is the way we are going; we must move towards the ordination of women elders." I was no less shocked when I gave a short speech in which I pointed out that we could not follow the customs that were taking place in the world. I explained that it was the custom in the Middle East at the time of the establishment of the Israelite nation, to ordain priests and priestesses. It was true of Egyptian paganism, and it was true of Canaanite pagans surrounding the Israelite nation. I pointed out that having female gods and female priestesses was part of the concept of the balancing of the cosmic forces in the universe that underpin the whole theology of paganism. It was the same theology that promoted the balancing of good and evil, of truth and error. This theology is an anathema to the God of the universe. Thus, I was nonplussed when the ministerial director of the General Conference said, "I do not care whether it comes from paganism or not; we are moving in that direction."

Shortly thereafter a vote was taken, and I was flabbergasted that only one other man besides myself voted against the recommendation to pursue further the issue of the ordination of women elders. What had happened to the rest of my committee that had voted unanimously less than an hour before to support the report we had presented? It would appear that the few emotive words from two high officials in the General Conference were worth more than anything we could find in the Bible or in the Spirit of Prophecy. At that point in time I knew the obvious are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." Titus 1:5-6.

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." 1 Corinthians 11:3.

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to..."
inferior because the man is the head of the family, for Christ—while He was equal with the Father—submitted Himself to His Father as a servant, recognizing His Father as His head. See Philippians 2:6–9; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

"Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God’s plan." Ibid.

Although Inspiration does not ordain women to be the spiritual head, there are numerous appeals to women as well as men to assist the church in many aspects of medical and spiritual ministry.

The Feminist Movement

For almost six thousand years God’s people have resisted the pagan example, but in this age of ecumenism, and Satan’s final deceptions, many churches have capitulated. Now it seems that our beloved world church is on the verge of such a decision: Sister White has made the situation as plain as it could be made: “Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of women’s rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel’s message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other.” Testimonies, vol. 1, 457.

Some of the same issues that were strongly advocated in the women’s rights movements of the 1860s are also strongly advocated today, but the feminist movement in this day and age has gone well beyond its goals of the 1860s. Such observations surely should not be ignored by a people who declare that they have accepted the Bible as the only basis for their faith and practice.

Feminism in Adventism

There have been serious efforts to oppose the tragic intrusion of feminism in

Some of the same issues that were strongly advocated in the women’s rights movements of the 1860s are also strongly advocated today, but the feminist movement in this day and age has gone well beyond its goals of the 1860s.

was underscored by an observation in an Australian newspaper, “The reappraisal of institutionalized religion by feminist, and feminist-influenced church, synagogue and mosque-goers has been underway in its present form for thirty years.” Sydney Morning Herald, August 27, 1987. The article then went on to quote from Australia’s only woman theologian, “She sees the Scriptures as being so conditioned by the patriarchal nature of societies at the time that they were written, that their language and their underlying assumptions about society are... sexist. I suppose the Bible is going to have to be phased out; it is a post cultural language.”

the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1987 the women’s ordination issue was the basis of the establishment of a new publication, Adventist Affirm. The first edition asked many of the important questions related to the women’s ordination issue, with excellent biblical responses.

In the fall of 1989, a whole issue of Adventist Affirm was again given over to an in-depth study of the issues. Some of our best-known Bible-based writers contributed, including the late Dr. Gerhard Hasel, Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, Laurel Damsteekt, Dr. Gordon Hyde, Dr. Mercedes Dyer, and Dr. C. Raymond Holmes. Sister Damsteekt gave a most heart-rend-

Pressure From the North American Division

The groundwork that has accomplished the goals of the North American Division, allowing it to exert powerful pressure upon the world church in regard to the ordination of women elders and pastors, was achieved at councils and committees dominated by North American Division representatives where there was little representation from overseas divisions, which represent 90 percent of our church membership.

At the Spring Council of 1975, action was taken to accept a submission entitled “Role of Women in the Church” which foreshadowed later moves toward the ordination of women as elders and pastors. The Spring Council is heavily dominated by North American representatives, with few representatives from overseas divisions. Thus the decision could not be considered a truly worldwide church decision.

At the Annual Council of 1984, it was voted: “(1) To reaffirm the Spring Meeting action on the General Conference Committee of 1975 Role of Women in the Church... (2) To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.” The Annual Councils, like the Spring Councils, are also dominated by North American presence, including General Conference representatives, North American Division representatives, North American Division union and local conference, college, hospital, and publishing presidents. Once again the decision essentially ignored the input of duly-elected delegates from around the world.

Of deep concern is that none of these actions were voted at the 1975, 1980, or 1985 General Conference sessions, which vote alone could represent the voice of the world church. Thus until the 1990 General Conference session, the major actions were made by councils consisting primarily of North American Division representatives.

Of special significance were the 1975 Spring Council meetings. As quoted in Adventist Review, February 1995, 14–15, the action taken stated “that in harmony with the spirit and intent of... the Annual Council 1974 action... the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordaining of women to
The church’s authority is derived, not inherent. As long as the church is faithful to the Bible, its authority is without question. But when it is no longer faithful to the Bible, its authority must be questioned. 

they achieve the whole ordination process. This vote took them one step closer to their ultimate goal.

Let us look at the development of this feminist equality movement. Its history is little different from the many fallen churches of Protestantism. 1) In large liberal churches, a woman was first appointed, not as a Bible worker, but to the pastoral staff. 2) Eventually she was called pastor. 3) Next she was ordained as a local church elder. 4) She was then given approval to perform the same functions as an ordained pastor. And finally, 5) she will be ordained as a minister.

It is perceptive to note the way the arguments run. When the pressure is to allow the women to perform the same functions as a minister, the assurance is given that this is not ordination. But later, because she is fulfilling the same functions as a minister, it is argued that she is fulfilling those functions, therefore she should be ordained a minister. It seems that many people have little perception of the long-term consequences of short-term compromises.

A number of authors have thought to address the problems of women’s ordination. Recently, Raymond Holmes discussed the deeper implications of women’s ordination in his perceptive book The Tip of an Iceberg. In his book, Dr. Holmes places the issue in the context of church authority. He says, “The institutional authority of the church can never supersede the Word of God. The church’s authority is derived, not inherent. As long as the church is faithful to the Bible, its authority is without question. But when it is no longer faithful to the Bible, its authority must be questioned. Adventists believe in the infallibility of the Scriptures, not in the infallibility of administrators, clergy, educators, theologians, personal experience, committees, or councils of the church.

“The pastoral office and the Word of God cannot be separated from each other. If the office is separated from the Word, the office has no valid existence. The priestly (servant) role of the ministry cannot be separated from the prophetic (re-proof) role. When the minister ceases to be a prophet, that is to say a preacher of the truth of the Word, the minister may continue to be recognized as priest but no longer holds the office of the Word. The minister may have institutional authority but does not have divine authority; and the institutional church where ministry is not in harmony with the Word does not have divine authority to lay hands of ordination upon anyone.” C. Raymond Holmes, The Tip of an Iceberg, p. 40.

Concerning the ordination of women, Holmes said, “We have seen that in Christian society women were given their rightful places as established at Creation, and that Christian society served to constrain the office of local elder, counsel being sought in all cases by the local conference/mission from the union and division committees before proceeding.”

It will be noted that the delegates did not vote on whether or not the ordination of women was biblical. The Council assumed its validity, but recognizing the opposition of many of the overseas divisions, tried to make it more palatable to the overseas divisions by urging great caution. It will be noted that these divisions had little input into the matter, especially when we recognize that most of these divisions at that time had American presidents as their representatives at the Spring Council.

Our North American Division president has concluded that “the church crossed the theological bridge when we voted to recognize the ordination of women as local elders.” Ibid. But we did not cross the biblical bridge of divine counsel. And this so-called theological bridge-crossing was never done at a General Conference in full worldwide session.

Once taking these irregular actions, the present North American Division president then uses them, and the fact that now there are well over 1,000 women elders serving in North America, to justify the ordination of women pastors. “This decision [Spring Council 1975] by the GC to vest in the divisions the authority to make a decision on ordination could be seen as precedent-setting.” Ibid.

The North American Division president then makes the ominous statement, “There is no turning back.” Ibid.

If we cannot turn back from a wrong decision, we are in a terrible dilemma. I not only believe that we can have the moral and spiritual strength to turn back, I also believe we must turn back. The Jews returning from Babylonian captivity accomplished a much more difficult reform. They put away their heathen wives under the instruction of Ezra and Nehemiah. See Ezra chapter 10; Nehemiah 13:23-28. Cannot God’s remnant church turn back from its past mistake of ordaining women elders? I believe we must.

I urge our worldwide representatives at the 1995 General Conference session not only to reject the North American recommendation on the ordination of women pastors, but also to seek a vote to reverse the decision to ordain women elders, an issue that has never been addressed at a General Conference in worldwide session.
The Issue of Naboth’s Vineyard

The Bible record contains information portraying the events of earth’s history which will confront God’s church in this final hour. Ellen White confirms this truth many times:

“Each of the ancient prophets spoke less for their own time than for ours, so their prophesying is in force for us. ‘Now all these things happened unto them for en-samples: and they are written for our admo-nition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.’ 1 Corinthians 10:11. ‘Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.’ 1 Peter 1:12.

“The Bible has accumulated and bound up together its treasures for this last generation. All the great events and sol-emn transactions of Old Testament his-tory have been, and are, repeating them-selves in the church in these last days.” Selected Messages, book 3, 338-339.

When, through the eyes of faith, we accept the “events and transactions” recorded within the Bible narrative as ad-monition for those at the end of the world, seemingly mundane or insignifi-cant passages can take on serious impli-cations. It is this type of passage which is preserved in the story of Naboth’s vine-yard in 1 Kings 21.

Mrs. White addresses Naboth’s story in Prophets and Kings, 204, in a chapter titled, “The Fall of the House of Ahab.” Mrs. White identifies the story of Naboth as the close of probation for the house of Ahab. Naboth’s personal test and crisis was initiated by Ahab, at the time when Ahab had completely given himself over to the spirit of selfishness.

“Naturally of a covetous disposition, Ahab, strengthened and sustained in wrongdoing by Jezebel, had followed the dictates of his evil heart until he was fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness.” Prophets and Kings, 204.

Naboth’s character stood in striking contrast to Ahab’s as he refused to sell his vineyard to the selfish king. Unlike Esau, to him, his birthright was more important than life itself. When monetary enticement failed, Jezebel displayed her character by circumventing God’s law through false-hood, threats, and finally murder. When Naboth testified of his faith and obedience by pouring out his blood, Elijah appeared on the scene to announce that Ahab and Jezebel had closed their probation. As we carefully analyze this story to ascertain the information relating to our generation, this passage bears a solemn warning to us all.

Jezebel represents the corrupting in-fluence of Babylon upon God’s church:

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repenteth not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches will know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:20-23.

Ahab represents leadership of a church which has conformed to the influence of Jezebel, rather than to the in-fluence of God:

“The influence of Jezebel over Ahab was greater than the influence of the Spirit of God, however powerful and convincing the evidence from heaven.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7A, 1033.

“I was carried back to the time of Ahab. God would have been with Ahab if he had
walked in the counsel of Heaven. But Ahab did not do this. He married a woman given to idolatry. Jezebel had more power over the king than God had. She led him into idolatry, and with him the people.” Ibid.

When a leader rejects the influence of God’s Spirit, in his position of responsibility he can do nothing else than to manifest the character of Satan’s spirit. Ahab represents an unholy “kingly power.”

“Just as soon as man is placed where God should be, he loses his purity, his vigor, his confidence in God’s power. Moral confusion results, because his powers become sanctified and perverted. He feels competent to judge his fellowmen, and he strives unlawfully to be god over them.” Testimonies to Ministers, 376.

“It is not in the order of God that any man, or any class of men, should assume that God has made them conscience for their brethren, or put forth their finite hand in a patronizing manner to control the Lord’s delegated workers, thus endangering the safety of the Lord’s heritage as well as their own, and retarding the work of God. God does not confine Himself to one man, or to a set of men, through whom to accomplish His work, but says of all, Ye ‘are laborers together with God.’ This means that every believing soul should have a part to act in His sacred work, and every individual believer in Jesus Christ is to manifest to the world a symbol of Christ’s sufficiency, to represent to His church the higher laws of the future immortal world, and in obedience to the mandates of Heaven that are without parallel, they should reveal a depth of knowledge independent of human inventions.” Ibid., 208-209.

The setting of Naboth’s story is a church which has been corrupted by the idolatry of Babylon and which seeks to enforce arbitrary control through the exercise of kingly power, as symbolized by the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel. The story takes place in the city of Samaria, Ahab’s capital and palatial city. The city represents the church which Jezebel is influencing and Ahab is ruling:

“Not only did Ahab introduce Baal worship at the capital city, but under the leadership of Jezebel he erected heathen altars in many ‘high places,’ where in the shelter of surrounding groves the priests and others connected with this seductive form of idolatry exerted their baleful influence, until well-nigh all Israel were following after Baal.” Prophets and Kings, 114.

The church, as represented by the city of Samaria, was “well-nigh all” following the teachings of Babylon. Into this grave time of apostasy is lifted up the faithfulness of Naboth.

Naboth’s name means “elevation,” which not only describes how his character stood out during this time of great darkness, but also identifies how his enemies lifted him up as the issue which was causing great problems within the kingdom:

“And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.” 1 Kings 21:9-10.

The marginal reading for “set Naboth on high,” states “in the top of the people.” As Naboth is lifted up unto the people we should prayerfully ask what specifically turned Naboth’s vineyard into an issue finalizing forever the destiny of Ahab’s household? Who are the “sons of Belial”? What were the tactics used by Jezebel against Naboth?

The record of Ahab’s desire for the vineyard is more profound when one recognizes what a vineyard represents:

“You have a special branch of the work, which is your part of the vineyard to cultivate according to your ability. And to these men the Lord has given their work. They have another part of the vineyard to cultivate. They are not fitted to do your work, neither are you fitted to do their work. To every man is given his work according to his ability. They must work in their line, and you must work in your line. They are not required to do your work; you are not required to do their work. . . .

“When God commanded the tabernacle to be built in the wilderness, each man’s work was assigned him. If he left his work to engage in some other man’s work, death was the penalty. In setting up and taking down the tabernacles, in moving from place to place in the wilderness, the position each was to occupy was plainly specified. Christ was the invisible General of that company Canaan.” The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, vol. 3, 1147-1148.

“When a laborer is set in a certain portion of the Lord’s vineyard, his work is given him as a faithful laborer together with God to work that vineyard. He is not to wait to be told at every point by human minds what he must do, but plan his work to labor wherever he is needed. God has given you brain power to use. The wants of the believers and the necessities of unbelievers are to be carefully studied and your labors are to meet their necessities. You are to inquire of God and not of any living man what you shall do. You are a servant of the living God, and not a servant of any man. You cannot do the work of God intelligently and be the shadow of another man’s thoughts and directions. You are under God.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, 25.

Naboth’s vineyard represents the specific work which the Lord had ordained for Naboth to accomplish. Naboth did not recognize this vineyard as simply his, but as an inheritance from his fathers, which God had commanded him to maintain:

“Naboth valued his vineyard highly because it had belonged to his fathers, and he refused to part with it. ‘The Lord forbid it me,’ he said to Ahab, ‘that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.’ According to the Levitical code no land could be transferred permanently by sale or exchange; every one of the children of Israel must ‘keep himself to the inheri-
stance of the tribe of his fathers." Numbers 36:7. Prophets and Kings, 205.

Not only was Naboth’s vineyard ordained by the Lord to be his specific work to accomplish for the Lord, but Naboth’s vineyard was also located within the city. Naboth’s work was to be carried on within the precincts of the city, which represents a work within the church.

By God’s design, Naboth’s ministry was his own possession to work. He was to you go right to work in the name of the Lord, in a humble way doing what you can to teach the truth, God will vindicate you. If the work had not been so restricted by an impediment here, and impediment there, and on the other side an impediment, it would have gone forward in its majesty.

It would have gone in weakness at first, but the God of heaven lives; the great Overseer lives, the One who knew where Cornelius lived, and who appeared to him as an angel, or declare to him, Your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial before God. And now do you send men for one Simon, whose surname is Peter, who lives with one Simon a tanner. And he told him the very place where Simon the tanner lived. Then the angel of the Lord went to Peter, and prepared his mind for the reception of the men." The 1888 Materials, vol. 4, 1746.

Mrs. White soundly authorizes self-supporting work, just as Moses through the Levitical code required Naboth to keep the vineyard of his fathers. See Numbers 36:7. As Ahab sought to secure Naboth’s vineyard, we see illustrated a covetous church leadership seeking to control a work ordained by God to function within the church, though not controlled or directed by its ruling structure.

Now I want to say, God has not put any kingly power in our ranks to control this or that branch of the work. The work has been greatly restricted by the efforts to control it in every line. Here is a vineyard presenting its barren places that have received no labor. And if one should start out to till these places in the name of the Lord, unless he should get permission of the men in a little circle of authority he would receive no help. But God means that His workers shall have help. If a hundred should start out on a mission to these destitute fields, crying unto God, He would open the way before them. Let me tell you, if your heart is in the work, and you have faith in God, you need not depend on the sanction of any minister or any people; if

As Ahab sought to secure Naboth’s vineyard, we see illustrated a covetous church leadership seeking to control a work ordained by God to function within the church, though not controlled or directed by its ruling structure.
with their work, other than that they are all citizens of the city. After a falsified publicity campaign, a church trial is set up. False witnesses are then brought against the accused ministers, and they are then disfellowshipped from the church at large.

As we have dissected the story of Naboth, the implications for Adventism today are sobering and solemn. Before we raise our hand in agreement against the accused, we should be absolutely sure that the vote we cast is as the Lord would have us cast it. We should recognize that the Lord has ministries within God’s remnant church which work within the church, but outside the parameters of the dictates of the conference structure. But the most sobering thought of the entire story is the climax of Naboth’s story.

When the kingly power, which was being directed by a church corrupted by the influence of Babylon, executed their judgment on Naboth, immediately Elijah appeared on the scene to pronounce God’s judgment against that action, informing those involved that their probation was closed:

“...And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahab, for the provocation where-through thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.” 1 Kings 21:20-22.

God forbid that the “solemn transaction” of Naboth’s vineyard will be enacted once again in this earth’s history. At the very least we should understand this story as a warning against exhibiting a desire to rule our brethren. We should not, however, use this history as an excuse to evade dealing with sin in the church, but as a call to deal with it righteously:

“...The injunctions of God to the Hebrews should cause us to be filled with horror at the thought of even unintentionally destroying a human life. But when man is put to death by his fellowman, to serve some selfish purpose—as Naboth was slain that Ahab might obtain the coveted vineyard—what honor, what anguish, should be felt by those who make and execute the laws? How zealous should be their efforts to ascertain the facts, and then decide the case with strict integrity, and execute the penalty with impartial justice.

“...Here are lessons which God’s people at the present day should take to heart. There are grievous sins indulged by individual members of the church—covetousness, overarching, deception, fraud, falsehood, and many others. If these sins are neglected by those who have been placed in authority in the church, the blessing of the Lord is withheld from His people, and the innocent suffer with the guilty. The officers in the church should be earnest, energetic men, having a zeal for God, and they should take the most prompt and thorough measures to condemn and correct these wrongs. In this work they should act, not from selfishness, jealousy, or personal prejudice, but in all meekness and lowliness of mind, with a sincere desire that God may be glorified. Inhumanity, false dealing, prevarication, licentiousness, and other sins, are not to be palliated or excused; for they will speedily demoralize the church. Sin may be called by false names, and glossed over by plausible excuses and pretended good motives, but this does not lessen its guilt in the sight of God. Wherever it may be found, sin is offensive to God, and will surely meet its punishment.” Signs of the Times, January 20, 1881.

“All of God’s servants have a work to do in His vineyard. In the church of God, no one is to set himself up in kingly power and authority. ‘All ye are brethren.’” Bible Training School, May 1, 1903.

As we solemnly contemplate the sobering message found in the story of Naboth’s vineyard, should we not reevaluate our lives to Christ with the same consecration which Naboth demonstrated? Naboth chose to cast his vote on the side of the Lord’s revealed will, and we too, may choose every day, moment by moment, to place our vote, through the exercise of our wills, on the Lord’s side of the controversy. And if we find ourselves in a position within God’s church where we must exercise the responsibility of voting on one side of an issue or another, let us fulfill our sacred responsibility with holy reverence and humility of mind, esteeming others as better than ourselves and shunning every possibility of reenacting the attributes of Ahab and Jezebel.

Before we raise our hand in agreement against the accused, we should be absolutely sure that the vote we cast is as the Lord would have us cast it.

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And This Gospel of the Kingdom . . . Part 3

In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

A

S a consequence of Adam’s sin, each of his descendants has inherited, among other things, a fallen nature and separation from Divinity. Our fallen nature, left to itself, has no desire or ability to do what is right in obedience to God. Of itself, our fallen nature lacks spiritual discernment and moral power to do anything other than serve the desires of self. When we come to a knowledge of right—God’s will—and knowingly choose to disobey, we are in rebellion against God and are willfully sinning. The willful sinner carries a burden of personal guilt that the justice of God requires be purged from the universe by suffering the wrath of God in the lake of fire, which ends in eternal death.

We are told that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23. Every descendant of fallen Adam, because of personal, willful choices to participate in Adam’s rebellion, is under the condemnation of God’s broken law. Left to ourselves, we are a race most miserable and without hope. But, praise God, He has not left us in the darkness of despair.

The fallen human race has received a Great Light. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” Isaiah 9:2.

Isaiah describes “The mighty God,” the Ruler of the Universe, becoming the Son of the fallen race. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6.

Inspiration says that prior to His incarnation, Christ was eternal—without beginning. Before His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus had been the Eternal Word. See The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7A, 445–446. From eternity He had been a distinct person, (ibid., 440), one of the three “eternal heavenly dignitaries.” Ibid., 442.

Nearly two thousand years ago the angel announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem that a Saviour had come. “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10–11.

Joseph was instructed to name the Son to be born to Mary of the Holy Ghost, “Jesus,” for He was to save the fallen race not merely from the consequences of Adam’s and their other ancestors’ rebellion against God, but from their sins—their personal rebellion. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21.

“Jesus came to this world to save His people from their sins. He will not save us in our sins, for He is not the minister of sin.” Signs of the Times, February 15, 1892.

Was Jesus of Nazareth in truth a Son of the fallen race and can He really save us from our sins—our rebellion? It behooves us to be certain, for if Christ did not become a son of the fallen race as was prophesied regarding the Messiah, then Jesus of Nazareth was not the true Messiah and we must look elsewhere.

We are told, and rightly so, that the humanity of Christ means everything to us, and that the study of His incarnation will be rewarding.

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. . . . And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the
searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 244.

One of the principle reasons for Divinity becoming man was to demonstrate that man could obey God’s law and thus to help show that the law and God Himself were holy, just, and good. But Christ came to demonstrate more than that sinless Adam could have kept God’s law. God became Jesus of Nazareth to disprove Satan’s claim that the fallen sons and daughters of fallen Adam could not obey His law.

“Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus to prove to God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver.” *Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896.

Christ came “to show man that he can do the same work, meeting every specification of the requirements of God.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 211.

“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts... Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience.” *The Desire of Ages*, 24. All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.

The only way Christ could have proved Satan’s claim false, was for Him to take our fallen nature. We must conclude, therefore, that Christ had to take the same humanity with which fallen man struggles against temptation and sin.

Inspiration agrees with this logical conclusion. The prophetess, Ellen White, in some thirty-two references, stated unequivocally that Christ took our sinful nature. An example:

“Clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those He wished to save. In Him was no guile or sinfulness; He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature. Clothing His divinity with humanity, that He might associate with fallen humanity, He sought to redeem for man that which by disobedience Adam had lost.” *Review and Herald*, August 22, 1907.

In some eighteen distinct references God revealed to us through Ellen White that Jesus took our fallen nature. An example:

“It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man.” *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, 115.

In more than three hundred references the servant of the Lord used other wording compatible with “sinful” or “fallen” to state the same truth. An example:

“In Christ were united the divine and the human—the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and *the nature of Adam, the transgressor*, meet in Jesus—the Son of God, and the Son of man.” *Lift Him Up*, 345.

In 1915, in her final statement on this subject, Ellen G. White said it both ways—fallen and sinful:

> “He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. ... Sinless and exalted by nature, the Son of God consented to take the habiliments of humanity, to become *one with the fallen race*. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh. God became man.” *Signs of the Times*, January 5, 1915.

A not once did Ellen White confuse the issue by stating that Christ took an unfallen human nature, or that He took Adam’s nature before the Fall.

> “He had pointed to Adam’s sin as proof that God’s law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In *our humanity* Christ was to redeem Adam’s failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation.” *The Desire of Ages*, 117.

Human inheritance has given us the wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals from at least the preceding four generations of ancestors:

> “Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306.

> “Children generally have transmitted to them as a legacy, the appetite and passions of their parents, intensified.” *Signs of the Times*, July 1, 1880.

Christ accepted the results of the great law of heredity:

> “It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors.” *The Desire of Ages*, 49.

Christ’s lower powers or nature received all the evil tendencies that we inherit:

> “Coming, as He did, as a man, to meet and be subjected with all the evil tendencies to which man is heir, working in every conceivable manner to destroy His faith, He made it possible for Himself to be buffeted by human agencies inspired by Satan, the rebel who had been expelled from heaven.” *Letter K-303*, 1903.

By not violating one principle of human nature, Christ could then be tempted with our every temptation:

> “Christ declared, ‘where stands Satan’s throne, there shall stand My cross, the instrument of humiliation and suffering. No single principle of human nature will I violate. Clothing My divinity with humility, I will endure every temptation...”

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Before Adam fell, there was in him no corrupt principles or tendencies to evil, but with Christ’s fallen, lower human nature it was different.

He was as faultless as the angels before the throne. There were in him no corrupt principles, no tendencies to evil. But when Christ came to meet the temptations of Satan, He bore ‘the likeness of sinful flesh.’ “Signs of the Times,” October 17, 1900.

In spite of having all the strength of the passion of humanity Christ never did yield to temptation:

“He left the glories of heaven, and clothed His divinity with humanity, and subjected Himself to sorrow, and shame, and reproach, abuse, denial, and crucifixion. Though He had all the strength of the passion of humanity, never did He yield to temptation to do that which was not pure and elevating and ennobling.” Ibid., November 21, 1892.

Inheriting in our lower powers the evil, as well as the good passions of humanity, though in need of transformation, as the time of glorification, does not make us corrupt or guilty sinners. The corrupt tendencies of the lower powers do not cause corruption unless we yield to their temptation. Only the cherishing, or the yielding to, unholy passions or corrupt tendencies by our higher powers results in sin, guilt, corruption, and personal condemnation. Christ had a fallen human nature with corrupt tendencies of His lower powers, but His nature would not be corrupted unless He Himself participated in sin:

“The divine nature, combined with the human, made Him capable of yielding to Satan’s temptations. Here the test to Christ was far greater than that of Adam and Eve, for Christ took our nature, fallen but not corrupted, and would not be corrupted unless He received the words of Satan in the place of the words of God.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 16, 182–183. Emphasis in the original.

The children brought to Jesus to be blessed were innocent and uncorrupted, along with Jesus, even though they, and Christ, had our same inherited passions:

“The church is composed of men and women who have the same nature, the same dispositions, as did the little children who were brought to Christ. The members of our churches are composed of persons who have like impulses, who manifest the likes and dislikes, who display the same passions, as did the children who upon receiving Christ were to compose His heavenly kingdom.

“How appropriate it was that these children should be brought to Christ for His intercession and blessing! They were types of what the members of His church should become. The children of God are to possess the humility, the loving trust, the teachable spirit, the innocence, uncorrupted by worldly deception, that were possessed by the little children...”

“The words of Christ encourage parents to bring their little ones to Jesus. They may be wayward, and possess passions like those of humanity, but this should not deter us from bringing them to Christ. He blessed children that were possessed of passions like His own.” Signs of the Times, April 9, 1896.

Inspiration is clear—Christ inherited through His mother Mary the sinful nature that other children of Adam inherit. His fallen human nature, with its inherited physical, mental, and moral weaknesses, has been portrayed as a grapevine needing outside support and strength to enable it to reach toward heaven:

“The fallen nature of man is like the vine’s tendrils grasping the stubble and rubbish.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 17, 27.

“I am the true vine,” He says. John 15:1. Instead of choosing the graceful palm, the lofty cedar, or the strong oak, Jesus takes the vine with its clinging tendrils to represent Himself. The palm tree, the cedar, and the oak stand alone. They require no support. But the vine entwines about the trellis, and thus climbs heavenward. So Christ in His humanity was dependent upon divine power. ‘I can of mine own self do nothing,’ He declared. John 5:30. “The Desire of Ages,” 674–675.

An even more graphic symbol was used by Christ to represent to the children of Israel in the wilderness—His prophesied coming to this earth in the likeness of sinful flesh. The sinful nature which Christ took was portrayed by a serpent, the symbol of Satan:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” Numbers 21:8–9.

“What a strange symbol of Christ was that likeness of the serpents which stung them! This symbol was lifted on a pole, and they were to look to it and be healed. So Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came as the sin-bearer.” The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, vol. 4, 1451.

“As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3.” The Desire of Ages, 174–175.

Adam’s sinless nature was not subject to death. Only his post-Fall, sinful nature was subject to death. A major reason why Christ took Adam’s post-Fall, sinful nature was in order that He could die in the place of sinful man:

“Christ saw man’s fearful danger, and He determined to save him by the sacrifice of Himself. That He might accomplish His purpose of love for the fallen race, He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. ‘As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. . . . Wherefore in all things it...”
behaved him to be made like unto his brethren.' Hebrews 2:14–15, 17. 'Reflecting Christ,' 17.

"This love was manifested, but it cannot be comprehended by mortal man. It is a mystery too deep for the human mind to fathom. Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature, because by this act of condescension, He would be enabled to pour out His blood in behalf of the fallen race." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 26.

Paul summarizes Inspiration by stating that Christ came in the likeness (not unlikeness) of sinful flesh, thus enabling Him by a life of victory over sin to condemn sin in mankind’s fallen nature:

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Romans 8:3.

We can rest assured that Jesus of Nazareth was and is no sham. Heaven gave Him—the eternal Son of God—to the fallen race to be the eternal Son of Man:

"By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us, ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’ Isaiah 9:6. God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The 1 Am is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love." *The Desire of Ages*, 25–26. Emphasis in the original.

Indeed, Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. We will next search to discover how Christ related to His fallen human nature in a way that enabled Him to live without sin, and thus become indeed our Example in all things. □
Sobering Thoughts for a Delegate

Eatonville, Washington, May 1995

Dear Delegate to the 1995 World Session General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:

IN LESS than three months, God willing, you will be attending the fifty-sixth session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which will be held in the city of Utrecht, Holland.

I respectfully and prayerfully invite you to ponder with me the solemnity and the sacredness of your office as a delegate to the church’s convocation. Consider the dreams and the expectations, as well as the concerns and the fears, of thousands of fellow Seventh-day Adventist believers who, for quite some time, have stood for historic Adventism.

Contrary to the way some people in high office, moved by a zeal without knowledge, have systematically and negatively portrayed our intentions and motives toward our beloved church, the editors of Our Firm Foundation have always believed this “remnant church” (Seventh-day Adventist Church) of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity shortly before the second coming of Christ.

Please listen to the cry of our souls in behalf of the ministry, our church (leaders and laity), and its prosperity and eternal welfare. Please also take time to give us the benefit of the doubt, tearing down the walls of prejudice, animosity, and indifference. Let us all follow the advice of Nicodemus: “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?” John 7:51. Let us heed this wise counsel: “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Proverbs 18:13.

How Many More World Sessions?

Fellow believer in the faith once given to the saints, five years have gone by since we last met in Indianapolis, where we all said the traditional phrase: “May this session be our very last one.” Many of us, like Simeon, have been “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” Luke 2:25. We have been expecting the glorious moment “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto [us]: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:19-21.

But unlike him, who saw in person the promised Redeemer at His first coming, many of our people, who have looked forward to seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:2), have been laid in their dusty graves, along with their expectation that the blessed hope would become a reality in their lifetime.

It is up to us to prepare the way for the latter rain and to reflect perfectly God’s
character, which will equip us mightily for proclaiming the loud cry and the news of Christ’s imminent return, thus bringing our denominational world sessions to an end.

Lamentably, some of our children and grandchildren are presently asking: “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning.” 2 Peter 3:4.

The present is also a time when many saints in God’s remnant church are grieving because of the numerous inroads of worldliness, unbelief, and rebellion prevailing in our midst. Rather than admitting our backslidden condition and our lack of willingness to reflect God’s character, which would hasten His second coming, we preach, teach, and write messages to justify our course of action that has delayed Christ’s return for well over 100 years.

It seems at times that the powers of injustice, prejudice, and alienation against those who are called to lift up the banner that makes us a distinct and a unique people, have almost completely taken control of some branches of our denominational work. Many faithful and concerned Adventists cry out in anguish: “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation?” Zechariah 1:12. “Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” Joel 2:17.

But praise be to the Father that He “is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9.

We believe that God is still leading His remnant church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in spite of the politics that increasingly control and shape the policies that have sadly alienated a significant segment of Adventism. Even more, some of these policies are opposed to the plain and unequivocal principles in God’s Word and the Spirit of Prophecy, such as in the following areas A) Administration, B) Medical-Missionary Work, C) Evangelism, D) Publications, E) Education.

Five years ago (May 1990), Hope International prepared a special issue of Our Firm Foundation that focused briefly on each of these areas that deserve our urgent attention. We must be truly serious about receiving the latter rain, and finishing the commission that our Master gave us, and for which He called us into existence. Since that time, Hope has published a variety of articles, books, and pamphlets bringing before God’s people a vast knowledge of Heaven’s principles. The purpose of this work has been to correct our wrongs and failures in order to help us carefully follow His blueprint. Yet, we still persist in walking a path of apostasy (disobedience). According to God’s Word through the prophet Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 3:1-3), this course of action has compelled our Creator to withhold an immeasurable source of power (the latter rain) from His church.

Blessings and Privileges Without Commitment

The church has set a worldwide schedule (6:15 A.M.) to pray that God will bestow the latter rain and the gift of the Spirit upon His church. To pray for such an event is correct, biblically speaking (see Zechariah 10:1; Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:13), but it must always be combined with a firm determination and a fervent effort to fully obey the commands of the Lord. The apostle Peter testified to this prerequisite of receiving the Holy Spirit when he said: “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” Acts 5:32. Emphasis added. We understand that this obedience is born out of a faith relationship that works by love and purifies the soul, (see Galatians 5:6), and from a sense of gratitude for what the Redeemer has done in behalf of the believer. See Psalm 5:11-12. Furthermore, this obedience (work), which is essential for salvation (see Matthew 19:16-17), is performed by Christ Himself (see Isaiah 26:12; | Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 13:20-21), as God’s servants fully and daily surrender their entire wills to the control of His divine Spirit. See James 4:6; Romans 8:14.

To act differently can be spiritually and potentially dangerous, on the basis that “God heareth not sinners.” John 9:31. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Proverbs 28:9.

Furthermore, the Spirit of Prophecy describes the vision of a company which prayed to the Father for His Spirit, but did not meet the first prerequisite to follow the Lamb by faith into the Most Holy Place and to keep their garments spotless. Here is her account of what happened to this company: “I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, ‘Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan’s object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God’s children.” Early Writings, 56.

You may ask yourselves, Why were not love, joy, and peace present in this company? These virtues are fruits of the Holy Spirit; they are intrinsically related with obedience to all God’s will—a life which is harmonious with the principles of His character as they are revealed through His holy law. Examples:

A) Love is the fulfilling of the law. See Romans 13:10 and compare with Psalm 119:97, 113, 163.


C) Peace. “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” Psalm 119:165. See also Malachi 2:6.

Although Satan may have enough power to make fire fall from heaven (see Job 1:16; Revelation 13:13), and as “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), have the power to change weather patterns and to cause destruction afflicting the innocent (see Job 1:18–19), neither Satan, nor his evil angels, nor the wicked will ever be able to genuinely express the fruits of God’s spirit that are given to those who obey the Lord. See Acts 5:32.

When only we are completely committed to following the Lord’s counsels, will our mighty Benefactor bestow His blessings immeasurably upon us. Therefore, let us prepare ourselves to enter by faith into the Most Holy Place, into God’s presence.

Entering Into God’s Presence

The prophet Isaiah conveyed the solemnity of entering into the Shekinah, God’s presence, into the apartment where Christ entered and presently ministers. “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from
holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutoffh his eyes from seeing evil.” Isaiah 33:14-15.

Dear delegate, are you willing to walk righteously in the path of holiness, following the Divine blueprint in the areas of evangelism, publications, health work, health reform, administration, and education? Are you willing to pay whatever the price may be in order to return to primitive godliness and to follow Heaven’s guidelines, even if such a course may lead to a reduction of your salary or to a lower position in our denominational structure?

Do you have the holy boldness to speak uprightly (from the Hebrew Miyyshor: plain, straightforward), calling sin by its right name and declaring that something is not of the Lord? “Today there is need of the voice of stern rebuke; for grievous sins have separated the people from God. Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable. ‘We will not have this man to reign over us,’ (Luke 19:14), is the language of thousands. The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression; the trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God’s Word.

There are many professed Christians who, if they should express their real feelings, would say, What need is there of speaking so plainly? They might as well ask, Why need John the Baptist have said to the Pharisees, ‘O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ Luke 3:7. Why need he have provoked the anger of Herodias by telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to live with his brother’s wife? The forerunner of Christ lost his life by his plain speaking. Why could he not have moved along without incurring the displeasure of those who were living in sin?

“So men who should be standing as faithful guardians of God’s law have argued, till policy has taken the place of faithfulness, and sin is allowed to go unrebuked. When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church?

“Thou art the man.’ 2 Samuel 12:7. Words as unmistakably plain as these spoken by Nathan to David are seldom heard in the pulpits of today, seldom seen in the public press. If they were not so rare, we should see more of the power of God revealed among men. The Lord’s messengers should not complain that their efforts are without fruit until they repent of their own love of approbation and their desire to please men, which leads them to suppress truth.

If you are faithful to your divine calling, you will dwell in high places, not necessarily within the denominational ladder, but in the very presence of God. Your “place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.” Isaiah 33:16. Your ministry will be immoveable, in spite of attempts by man to take away your credentials. Your “bread shall be given” you. Your bread and water shall be sure. God ensures that your needs will be met by His sustaining power. After you have faithfully accomplished your apostolic commission, then “thine eyes shall see the king [of glory] in his beauty.” See Isaiah 33:16-17.

An Appeal—Cast Your Vote on God’s Side

“Would that every minister [or delegate] might realize the sacredness of his office and the holiness of his work, and show the courage that Elijah showed! As divinely appointed messengers, ministers are in a position of awful responsibility. They are to ‘reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering.’ 2 Timothy 4:2. In Christ’s stead they are to labor as stewards of the mysteries of heaven, encouraging the obedient and warning the disobedient. With them worldly policy is to have no weight. Never are they to swerve from the path in which Jesus has hidden them walk. They are to go forward in faith, remembering that they are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. They are not to speak their own words, but words which One greater than the potentates of earth has hidden them speak. Their message is to be, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have.

“God cannot use men [delegates] who, in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principles and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. It is to such as these that He will speak the words: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ Matthew 25:23.” Ibid., 140-142.

Dear delegate, if you take a firm stand for the right it means that sometimes you may be alone, but this fact should not deter your determination and effort to do what you know very well in your heart is right and true.
Believe it or not, if we look back in history we will find that one vote can make a difference. Here are a few examples related by Paul Lee Tan:

A. Oliver Cromwell won control of England in 1645, when Parliament voted 91 to 90 in his favor.
B. King Charles I was beheaded on the basis of the judges’ vote of 68 to 67.
C. France was changed from a monarchy to a republic in 1875. The vote of the deputies was 353 to 352.
D. During the American Revolution, anti-British sentiment was high in many colonies. A bill was presented to the Continental Congress which would have abolished English as the official American language in favor of German. The bill was defeated by one vote.
E. In 1845 the [U.S.] Senate voted 26 to 25 to admit Texas to the Union. Indiana’s Senator Hannigan had changed his mind and voted in favor of its admission. And the senator himself had won his election to office by only one vote!
F. President Andrew Johnson escaped impeachment in 1868 by one vote.
G. Rutherford B. Hayes was elected president of the United States in 1876 by an electoral vote of 185 to 184.

Finally brethren, the solemnity, cruci-uciality, and decisiveness of one vote may be described with what took place on the ominous date of November 8, 1923. The leaders of a tiny Nazi party met in a tavern located in Munich, Germany. They elected Adolf Hitler as their leader by a margin of one vote.

Yes, dear delegate, one vote can make a difference. Never allow your mind and heart to be diverted from the way of holiness, integrity, and honesty. Do not be as Esau, who for a dish of pottage sold his birthright.

Delegates of the General Conference of 1995, and in particular, members of the nominating committee, I close by recalling an appeal written for the last General Conference Session of 1990, which in the opinion of many, now is more relevant than it was five years ago:

"Anxious eyes of church members in all countries of the world are turned toward your meeting place, and hearts that are deeply troubled about conditions in the church that we love, are awaiting your choices and your decisions. Will you supply us with leaders who display both the meekness and the resolute adherence to principle that were seen in Moses? Will you give us leaders whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will not falter or fail in the performance of sacred duty because they, eschewing human wisdom and worldly policies, walk carefully and conscientiously in the light of the counsels of God? If you will, the great revival of primitive godliness that we have been promised may soon follow in the wake of your decisions. But this can only happen if you, yourselves, carefully apply the counsels of God in your own choices and decisions." Our Firm Foundation, May 1990, 10.

Yes, dear delegate, one vote can make a difference. Never allow your mind and heart to be diverted from the way of holiness, integrity, and honesty. Do not be as Esau, who for a dish of pottage sold his birthright.

And true, pure and holy, will also make a significant impact at this coming world session of the General Conference.

Take the Challenge

Finally, dear delegate, "to stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Sons and Daughters of God, 201.

Are you willing to face the test ahead? Are you ready to stand in a minority, perhaps only by yourself? Are you prepared to fight for truth’s sake when no one else seems to share your cause?

May this coming fifty-sixth session of the General Conference indeed be our "very last one." May this phrase be not just a cliché. May your stand for truth and righteousness become a reality. We want to go home! Our prayers are with all of you delegates. Go forward with holy boldness, but also go with the meekness of the Saviour.

The grace of God be with you all. Amen. □

Ahimaaz Runs Again

We are the church that is taking to the world the three angels' messages of Revelation 14." These words were spoken by a missionary of another faith to a Seventh-day Adventist minister, who heard them in astonishment. He had never before heard a representative of any faith other than Seventh-day Adventist make such a reference to these messages. Recovering from his surprise, the Adventist minister asked:

"What are you telling the world about the mark of the beast, in the third angel's message? What is the mark of the beast?"

"Oh, we do not know what that is," was the reply.

"And the second angel's message, about the fall of Babylon?"

"We do not know yet," was again the answer.

"And the first angel's message, about the judgment hour?"

"We do not know yet."

They were taking the three angels' messages to the world, but they did not know what they meant. We are forcibly reminded of the story of Ahimaaz, an aide to King David's general Joab, who was defending the king against a rebellion led by David's own son Absalom. See 2 Samuel 18. Absalom's rebel army had been defeated, and Absalom himself had been killed. Joab had dispatched another aide, Cushi, who had been a close observer of the events, to carry the news of victory to David. Ahimaaz begged for the privilege of also running to the king. Joab felt that Ahimaaz, although he could run well, had no accurate knowledge of the situation, but he yielded to his appeal.

So the fleet-footed Ahimaaz overtook the slower Cushi and arrived in the presence of the king ahead of him. But to David's anxious question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz could only answer, "I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was." From then until now this biblical experience has been the classic illustration of the problem of the messenger without a message.

How unlikely seems the strange situation, but how often in the history of Christianity has the experience been repeated! When we look back at the history of preaching in the church at large, we see neither a steadily ascending graph line nor a steadily descending graph line, but rather a series of high points and lows, of contrasting hills and valleys. Hugh Thompson Kerr counts four periods of elevation in the preaching of the Christian church, and between them three periods of decline, times in which the messengers lost their message, and Ahimaaz ran again.1

The high points, as he sees them, are (1) The preaching of the apostles in the first century; (2) The ministries of Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and the two Gregories in the fourth and fifth centuries; (3) The Reformation period in the sixteenth century; and (4) The evangelical preaching of John and Charles Wesley, Whitefield, and their contemporaries in the eighteenth century.

It will be worth our time to pause and consider the characteristics of the preaching in the times when it was most successful. The New Testament reports five sermons preached by Peter, one by Stephen, and several by Paul. Though much condensed, these sermons provide an interesting view of the apostolic style.

It was authoritative, invoking the authority of Scripture, and with particular emphasis, the prophetic portions of scripture:

It was uncompromising. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

It was confrontational. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Acts 5:30. All emphasis supplied.

It was ethically demanding. Nothing less than a holy life, lived through His power, would meet the demands of the gospel. The past life will be covered by His forgiveness, but there must be no intention of continuing in sin.

It was simple, practical, and direct. To have clothed such a message in ornate rhetorical forms would have been obviously inappropriate. Clarity was important; elegance was not.

It included appeals for personal repentance. These were never omitted. The guilt of the hearers was seen to be enormous, involving the rejection of the Son of God. But their cases were not hopeless. Forgiveness was offered upon the condition of repentance, an option available to everyone, so none need despair.

Ralph Larson, a retired pastor, last served as chairman of the Church and Ministry Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Far East.
These were the characteristics of the highly successful apostolic preaching, and indeed of the preaching in all of the four periods of effective and successful preaching noted by Kerr. What then of the three periods of less than successful preaching? They were clearly times when Ahimaaz ran again, as the messengers lost their message. We look first at the period of decline, between the apostolic preaching and the more effective preaching of the fourth and fifth centuries:

"After the death of the apostles and their fellow workers there is a decline."2

"We must wait for three or more centuries after the apostolic preaching for the eloquence of Chrysostom and the Gregories, Ambrose and Augustine."3

Much of the blame for this decline in the quality of preaching was due to the allegorizing of Origen, which was imitated by many others, and, as Martin Luther later said, "put a nose of wax on the Scriptures, which could be turned in any direction." We submit a sample, from Origen’s homily on Rebekah at the well, from the volumes of The Church Fathers:

"Rebekah going daily to the well represents daily devotions. The well is the Scriptures. Abraham’s servant is the prophetic word. His camels are irrational and perverse people. Putting down the water jar from her shoulder is the rejecting of Greek pride and eloquence. Going with Abraham’s servant to meet Isaac is the church following the prophetic word. Dismounting from her camel is departing from all vices. The jewelry in her ears and on her hands is golden words and golden deeds. Her marriage to Isaac is the union of the soul with God."

With such ludicrous distortions of the meaning of Scripture as this, example shows that the vocation of preaching suffered a great decline, and it could be accurately stated that the messengers had lost their message, and Ahimaaz was running again.

The influence of Origen, who was counted one of the great church fathers, carried past the era of the great preachers of the fourth and fifth centuries, which Kerr sees as one of the “highs” in preaching, into the dark and gloomy Middle Ages. There was actually little preaching done, for the celebration of the mass came to be the accepted form of worship, and such preaching as was done tended to be in Latin and in the style of Origen.

"In general, the clergy did not preach."4

"Over wide districts, and through long years at a time, there would be almost no preaching. When men assembled in churches it was only to witness ceremonies and hear chanting and intoning. If sermons were given, it was in many countries still the custom to preach only in Latin, which the people did not understand."5

With ceremonies displacing sermons, and allegorizing displacing the proper use of Scripture, the long period from the fifth century to the sixteenth century was tragically a time in which the messengers had no message, and Ahimaaz ran again. And just as the fourth and the fifth centuries brought a “high” in preaching which was followed by a sharp decline, even so the Reformation of the sixteenth century brought a “high” which was in its turn followed by a sharp decline. The eighteenth century materialism of France, the deism of England and the illuminism of Germany produced a change in sermon style and content. (Deism is the belief that God created the world and then left it largely to its own devices while He gave His attention to other matters. Illuminism is a term describing the belief of those who profess to have special knowledge that lesser persons do not have.)

"After the Reformation there was a sharp decline in preaching in the Protestant churches."6

Laboring to make the Bible more “rational,” preachers substituted references to man’s will for references to the Holy Spirit, putting references to a gradual improvement of manners and character in the place of references to the new birth called for by the Scriptures:

"Some preachers, unable to find in the Bible as they read it topics of sufficient interest, gave lectures on economical or social subjects, such as agriculture, vaccination, and the making of wills—or upon subjects taken from the natural sciences, such as the structure of fishes and birds."7

The lawyer Blackstone, after visiting from church to church and hearing every noted clergyman in London, said:

"He did not hear a single discourse that had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius, or Mahomet, or Christ."8

Thus the messengers had no message, and Ahimaaz ran again.

But the prodigious activity of John Wesley, with his 42,000 sermons, and of Whitefield with his 18,000 sermons brought preaching to a new period of success.

"The Evangelical Revival may be compared in its influence to the Reformation."9

The influence of this preaching was felt on both sides of the Atlantic, with results that lasted for years. Again we note the high authority of Scripture, and the call for repentance and surrender of the will to God which characterized their preaching, as it had that of the great preachers before them.

"While Bolingbroke assailed Revelation, and Chesterfield politely sneered at everything unselfish and good, and Christian Apologists vainly strove to convince the intellect of the upper classes. Whitefield and Wesley began to preach to the consciences of men, and thus felt no need of confining their discourses to the cultivated and refined."10

We find, then, that in the four periods of successful, influential preaching in the history of the Christian church there are certain similarities. In all of these four periods preaching tended to be literally historical and maintained a high concept of scriptural authority. It was uncompromising in the central positions of its theology. It made high ethical demands upon the people, setting them in conflict with their own cultures. It stressed the judgmental call to repentance. Its expression tended to be simple, practical, and direct. The messengers had a message, and the message transformed lives.

Against this background we wish to consider the experience of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is obviously a church that has been built by preaching. The first Seventh-day Adventists were
persons who had responded to the preaching of William Miller and his associates. In the Bible conferences that followed the great disappointment of 1844, a “platform of truth” was studied out which was to be central in all subsequent Adventist preaching. Those who believed that the “platform of truth” was sound and substantial began to travel among the scattered Adventists to proclaim it. Joseph Bates, James and Ellen White, Gurney, Pierce, Nichol, and others led out in this work, and groups of “Seventh-day Adventists” began to rally around them, and eventually they become a body of unified believers.

By 1863 the church was formally organized with 3,500 members. Unity of effort then made possible a new period of camp meeting preaching, reminiscent of the era of the Millerite movement. By 1870 the membership had grown to 5,440, and by 1880 to 15,570. By this time more preachers were being trained in the new educational institutions, and they scattered over wide areas, especially in the growing West. They shifted from the two- or three-week camp meetings to preaching programs that lasted many months at a time, and frequently resulted in the establishment of new churches. By 1901 the membership had reached 75,000. A ninety-four-year-old retired Seventh-day Adventist minister, who communicated with me as I was writing this paper, reflected that during his lifetime the membership has grown from 75,000 to approximately eight million.

This result must be recognized as one of the most highly successful preaching programs in the history of Christianity. And the close similarity between this manner of preaching and the preaching of the Apostolic Age, the fourth and fifth centuries, the Reformation, and the Wesleyan revival, is self-evident. As in these four high periods in the success of preaching, the preaching of Seventh-day Adventist ministers affirmed the unquestionable authority of the Scriptures, with special emphasis on the great historical prophecies. It was uncompromising, insisting on the uniqueness of its message, and admitting of no “comity” [harmonious] arrangements with other churches, whereby it would stay out of areas that they considered their own. It was confrontational, pointing to the broken law of God and the dishonoring of the sacred Sabbath day. It was ethically demanding, calling for Christians to abide by the biblical principles regarding diet, dress, entertainment, and stewardship, which placed them at odds with their own cultures. It was simple, practical, and direct. It always contained earnest appeals for personal repentance and surrender of the entire life to the will of God.

And as such preaching has always done, it transformed lives. The careless became earnest; sinners became saints; and the prodigal became pure. The messengers had a message, a powerful, convicting and converting message. There was no Ahimaaz here.

But then something changed. The tragic story has been told so often that we need only sketch it here. Some of our leading brethren engaged in a dialogue with Calvinistic theologians, who offered to stop calling us a “cult” if we would only surrender certain points of our faith. Incredibly, our brethren capitulated. The terms of their surrender were published in a book called Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine, now more commonly designated by the simpler form, Questions on Doctrine. In this book our concept of the present atoning work of Christ was carefully muted, and the direct question, “Does not Mrs. White state that Christ is now making atonement for us in the heavenly sanctuary?” was not directly answered. (She does. See The Great Controversy, 422, 428, 430, 433, et al.)

In addition, our brethren gave to the Calvinists and to the world a statement concerning our belief about the human nature of Christ that has now been proved to be a methodological monstrosity and a historical fraud. Careful and thorough research has brought to light 1200 published statements of our historic belief that our Lord came to earth in the human nature of fallen man, 400 of these statements by Ellen White. (See The Word Was Made Flesh, by Ralph Larson, available from Hope International.) In spite of this mass of evidence, our brethren gave to the Calvinistic theologians a statement that we had never believed that doctrine, but rather that we had always believed, as they did, that Jesus came to earth in the human nature of the unfallen Adam. See Questions on Doctrine, 650.

This admission may have seemed to them to be unimportant, but it has actually ravaged the church. There is a grim and inescapable logic connected with it. If Christ came to earth in the unbalanced nature of Adam, then He had no hereditary weaknesses, and could not possibly have been tempted as we are tempted, and it is unreasonable and unfair to expect us to live as He lived, without sin. The putting away of sin, which is the very heart of the sanctuary service, is impossible, and the entire doctrine of the sanctuary becomes meaningless. The Spirit of Prophecy, which testifies repeatedly that our doctrine of the sanctuary is meaningful and true, has to be discarded. And if it is impossible for men to keep God’s holy law, why bother about the Sabbath, much less about the mark of the beast?

Which brings us back to the point with which we started, the phenomenon of a church claiming to be taking the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 to the world, but not knowing the meaning of those messages. The first angel’s message, “Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come,” has no meaning at all if it is separated from the doctrine of the sanctuary. It is the sanctuary doctrine that makes clear both the time and the nature of the judgment. But an ever-increasing number of Seventh-day Adventist ministers are now rejecting the doctrine of the sanctuary, thus rendering themselves incapable of preaching the first angel’s message. Thus Ahimaaz, the messenger without a message, runs again.

More and more Seventh-day Adventists ministers are deciding that it is in poor taste to feel that we have something better than what other churches have, and so the second angel’s message, “Babylon is fallen,” (verse 8), has become distasteful to them. But the greatest havoc is wrought with the third angel’s message about the mark of the beast. Our historic position, well substantiated by the Spirit of Prophecy, has been that the beast is Catholicism, that its mark is the substitution of a false holy day for the true holy day of God’s sacred law, and that those who willfully reject the law of God and accept the law of the apostate church will eventually receive the mark of the beast. The false Calvinistic doctrine that it is impossible for any Christian to obey God’s law does away with this entire message with a single stroke. Those who have become infatuated with this false Calvinistic doctrine are unmoved by the fact that there are fifty verses in the New Testament that call for obedience to God’s law. They are equally unmoved by the fact that there are in the Spirit of Prophecy no fewer than 4,500 passages calling for obedience to God’s holy law. They manifest no concern over such Spirit of Prophecy statements as these:

“In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed.” The Desire of Ages, 761. All emphasis supplied.

“On this earth Satan sought to carry
Those who have become infatuated with this false Calvinistic doctrine are unmoved by the fact that there are fifty verses in the New Testament that call for obedience to God’s law.

The Desire of Ages, 24.

Ellen White placed thirty-five warnings of this nature before the church in the period between the eventful year 1888 and her death in 1915. Undoubtedly the most awesome of all is the following:

"Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. . . . Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations against God, in asserting that men can not keep the law of God." Signs of the Times, January 16, 1896.

When we consider how much literature is now coming forth from Seventh-day Adventist presses affirming Satan’s lie to be the truth, and how many ministers are now standing in Seventh-day Adventist pulpits making the same assertion, the above statement is sobering indeed. It is immediately apparent that such men could not possibly be used by God to bring the three angels’ messages to the world. They would be messengers without a message, the modern counterparts of Ahimanaz.

So how may we expect God to deal with this problem? We need not wonder. When the Jewish church lost its message, the Lord raised up the Christians. When the Catholic Church lost its message, the Lord raised up the Protestants. When the Protestants lost their message, the Lord raised up the Wesleys and their fellow workers. When the Wesleys lost their message, the Lord raised up the Seventh-day Adventists. And now that some Seventh-day Adventists are losing their message, and becoming modern counterparts of Ahimanaz, the Lord is raising up groups of faithful members all over the world who are known by various names: Concerned Brethren, Historic Adventists, Independent Ministries, and so on.

They are also known for their adherence to the pure gospel, and their firm rejection of the false doctrines of Calvinism.

The three angels’ messages will be delivered to the world! The will of God cannot be successfully resisted by man. Men who disqualify themselves to act as God’s messengers by their unbelief will simply be bypassed. A church that disqualifies itself by its unbelief will simply be bypassed:

"Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness." Testimonies to Ministers, 300. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 207-216.

I once listened in astonishment to Walter Martin, the Calvinistic theologian who led out in the discussions with our brethren, state that a General Conference officer of our church had told him that the publication of the book Questions on Doctrine had resulted in a great increase in our membership. If this actually happened, the General Conference officer was grossly misinformed. The precise opposite is true. In those areas of the world field where the book Questions on Doctrine has been widely distributed, the North American Division, Western Europe, and Australia, soul winning has practically come to a standstill. Such soul winning as is actually occurring in those fields is mostly among the minority ethnic groups, Afro-Europeans in England, Afro-Americans and Hispanics in America and Canada, and the races who inhabit the Pacific Islands are providing most of the baptisms in these areas. These are groups who have had little or no influence from the book Questions on Doctrine. They just have not read it.

The strong membership growth that has swelled our numbers toward the eight million mark has occurred, and is still occurring, in the Third World countries. These again are areas where the book Questions on Doctrine has had very little influence, and those who do soul-winning work are still preaching our message in its historic form, in the context of the three angels’ messages. Change is beginning to come, however, as more of the ministers from these countries are receiving higher education in Seventh-day Adventist seminaries where Calvinism is a prevailing influence. Make no mistake about it, dear reader. Calvinism is the kiss of death to our grand and glorious message, and turns its adherents into modern counterparts of Ahimanaz, the messenger without a message.

This fact should cause us deep concern, but neither fear nor despair. God is still in control, and none of these developments have taken Him by surprise. There are grim events ahead of us, as evidenced by such passages in the Spirit of Prophecy as these:

"God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat." Testimonies, vol. 5, 707.

"Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan." Testimonies to Ministers, 409-410.

Nevertheless:

"Not one cloud has fallen upon the church that God has not prepared for." Selected Messages, book 2, 108.

"To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsakes us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Testimonies, vol. 5, 136.

May God bless you.
In the Australian summer of 1993-1994 the editor of the *Adventist Review* visited his homeland. In one of his discourses at Avondale College, he proposed a view of the schism he observed in God's church. His analysis bore all the hallmarks of tolerance. He suggested that ever since the General Conference session of 1888 there have been two classes of Seventh-day Adventists. The first class emphasizes obedience while not denying grace, and the second class emphasizes grace while not denying obedience.

Since the editor chose to name names and placed my own name among that of my twin brother, Colin's, among the first class, this challenge gave cause for me to examine his proposal more closely. Are these the two prevailing views within God's church today? The documentary evidence resoundingly answers the posed question in the negative. Whatever the situation of the past in relation to these two classes, it does not prevail today. While there may be some minority views according with the editor's classifications, the fact is that the massive, worldwide schism in God's church today most decidedly is not based upon the different emphases of either of these two groups.

It is mandatory that we identify the distinctive beliefs of the two classes now to be found in God's church, for the minority is upholding the scriptural truths of salvation, while the majority promotes the devil's counterfeit. No lesser gift than eternal life is at stake. This schism, which is now upon every inhabited continent, is nothing less than the mighty shaking process of our God, which in His providence will cleanse His church of unrighteousness and prepare men and women true in heart to receive the seal of the living God and the refreshing of the latter rain. We are now far down into the shaking. Eternal decisions are being made by the members of God's church.

Let us examine the *Adventist Review* editor's first class. This class, it was indicated, was the minority position within our church and the one not favored by church administrators. If this view were truly a significant view in Seventh-day Adventism today, then it should be soundly condemned by ministry and laity alike, for it would be a fearful deception. No man or woman who relegates the tender grace of our God to a lesser matter has the least hope of salvation.

Scripture is so plain on this point that there is absolutely no excuse to misunderstand God's words. He declares that "by grace ye are saved," Ephesians 2:5. And in case we are dull of understanding the Lord reiterates this truth in greater detail. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9. Nothing could be more straightforward than these words. To misunderstand these words is to fall into the satanic trap of legalism. The entire basis of our salvation, is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—His great mercy to us. As a basis for our salvation, our works, however righteous, even when empowered by the Holy Spirit, provide not even the minutest contribution to the purchase of our salvation.

Grace brings justification to the believer. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Romans 3:24. All true Seventh-day Adventists proclaim by their voices and lives that "we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." Acts 15:11.

We are saved through faith. Faith is a work, albeit an emotional and mental work. The most difficult work of man is to accept the faith of Jesus in his heart.

"A general faith is entertained by many, and their assent is given that Christianity is the only hope for perishing souls. But to believe this intellectually is not sufficient to the saving of the soul. James tells us in his epistle that the devils believe and tremble, but this is not a saving faith that will justify them. There are thousands who believe in the gospel and in Jesus Christ as the world's Redeemer, but they are not saved by that faith. This is only an assent of their judgment to that which is a fact, but it does not transform the character. They do not repent and have that faith that lays hold upon Christ as their sin-pardoning Saviour, their belief is not unto repentance. There must be a faith that accomplishes its work for the receiver, a faith in the atoning sacrifice, a faith that works by love and purifies the soul." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, 356.
Thus the class of believer that is represented by the minority of God’s people today and which is unfavorably mentioned by most church administrators, upholds God’s grace as the sole basis of salvation. Our hearts go forth in tender, loving response to our Saviour for His provision of such mercy to us who are totally undeserving of it. We neither confuse the basis of our faith by replacing it with obedience, nor do we minimize its importance. Grace is all important. How we treasure His grace and thank our God for it!

Then with such believers, what place, if any, does obedience play? To seek the answer to this question we turn to a portion of God’s Word written directly by His own hand. “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” Exodus 20:6. So vital is God’s mercy, His grace, to our salvation that He enshrined it in the Decalogue. But lest we forget that this grace is only effectual if we meet certain conditions, God also presents us with these conditions:

The concept that God bestows saving grace unconditionally is a fearful deception of Satan. Yet this devilish falsehood is now promoted by not a few of our theologians, church administrators, and ministers. Scripture abounds with these conditions for the bestowment of God’s mercy. Such conditions include belief in Christ (John 3:16), doing the will of our Father in heaven (Matthew 7:21), keeping the commandments (Matthew 19:17), perfection (Matthew 19:21), loving God and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27-28), obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5), keeping of the law (Romans 2:13), exercising faith (Romans 3:28), walking after the Spirit (Romans 8:1), being spiritually minded (Romans 8:6), being led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14), being blameless (1 Corinthians 1:8), sowing to the Spirit (Galatians 6:8), holiness (Ephesians 1:4), being spotless and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27), being sanctified (2 Thessalonians 2:13), living soberly (Titus 2:12-13), being washed and regenerated (Titus 3:5), obedience to Christ (Hebrews 5:9), possessing God’s laws in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10), laying aside the sin that doth so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1-2), being reconciled to the world (2 Corinthians 5:17), being sanctified and holy (Hebrews 12:14), enduring temptation (James 1:12), displaying meekness (James 1:21), possessing humility (James 4:6), laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, enlying and evil speaking, and desiring the Word (1 Peter 2:1-5), eschewing evil and doing good (1 Peter 3:10-11), confessing our sins (1 John 1:9), doing the will of God (1 John 2:17), overcoming (Revelation 2:7), washing our robes and making them white in the blood of the lamb (Revelation 7:14), possessing the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12), being without fault (Revelation 14:5), and overcoming the mark of the beast (Revelation 15:2).

This list of conditions for salvation, although partial, is nevertheless impressive and demanding. However, if properly understood, each may be summarized as God did in the promise of the second commandment, “love me, and keep my commandments.”

**Belief**

This fact may be illustrated by an examination of the above conditions and comparing them with what found in John 3:16. As with every condition of salvation, the enemy of souls has supplied a counterfeit. The devil himself fulfills each counterfeit. Thus in the matter of belief, “The devils also believe, and tremble.” James 2:19. This belief is the superficial, verbal assent to Christ’s saving sacrifice, valued by many Christians, and not a few Seventh-day Adventists, today. To accept this counterfeit will not avail a single soul of the condition necessary to those who would be the recipients of Christ’s saving grace.

True belief is set forth in God’s Word. “Who soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:1-5. Here synonyms of genuine belief are set forth between the exhortation to believe in verse one and that which concludes the passage in verse five. These synonyms are (1) the new birth experience, (2) love for God’s children, (3) overcoming the world, (6) victory, and (7) faith.

Thus, the editor of the Adventist Review should have correctly categorized his first class as those who uphold grace as the basis of salvation, and love for God expressed in keeping His commandments (see John 14:15) as the condition. Neither the basis of salvation or the condition upon which salvation is appropriated is de-emphasized. Both are inestimable gifts from our God. No human mind will ever plumb the depth of God’s grace nor the divine love which empowers the obedience which He bestows. Salvation is impossible without either. It would be gross folly to emphasize one more than the other. In truth it is totally impossible to possess salvation and grace separate from the possession of God’s love in our hearts, which is evidenced by obedience to every command of God. The converse is equally true.

**The Second View**

Then what of the editor’s second classification? Those who emphasize grace while not denying obedience. This class is equally fictitious. That which is popular among our theologians, administrators, and ministers today and that which they attempt to foist upon our lay people is a counterfeit grace which totally denies the condition of full obedience for salvation. There is not even a de-emphasis of obedience. With some authors it is a total denial. One simply has to look at some of the popular Seventh-day Adventist authors whose works appear in our Adventist Book Centers, whose themes consistently deny the need to meet God’s condition of full obedience for salvation. Some do so very discreetly; others quite...
openly. Many of the works of these men are published by the Pacific Press and/or the Review and Herald. Their writings shame the high and holy purpose for which those presses were established. Such authors are fulfilling prophecy, for God's servant declared that "books of a new order would be written." Selected Messages, book 1, 204. It was to a number of these authors that the Adventist Review and the Ministry magazines looked to write articles purporting to provide our lay people and ministers with an under-

standing of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the great disappointment of 1844.

Is it not time for dedicated proof readers in our printing houses to refuse to proof those books which deny the plain words of Scripture? Has the moment not arrived that faithful press operators should refuse to print those works which disgrace our faith? Should not true-hearted bookbinders cease their labors in respect of those works of error? Is there one cover designer who will refuse to utilize his God-given talent to enhance books whose words cause division within God's church and reflect the thoughts of vain religious philosophy, rather than biblical truth? Where are the heaven-bound Adventist Book Center managers who will refuse to stock those books of a new order?

"I have a word to say to the workers in every printing house established among us: As you love and fear God, refuse to have anything to do with the knowledge against which God warned Adam. Let typesetters refuse to set a sentence of such matter. Let proofreaders refuse to read, pressmen to print, and binders to bind it. If asked to handle such matter, call for a meeting of the workers in the institution, that there may be an understanding as to what such things mean. Those in charge of the institution may urge that you are not responsible, that the managers must arrange these matters. But you are responsible—responsible for the use of your eyes,

God has called Seventh-day Adventists, and Seventh-day Adventists alone, in this vast world, to reach the three angels' messages, messages which reach their grand finale with the clarion declaration: "Here is the patience of the saints: hear are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. This passage does not state: "Here is the patience of the saints, here are they who cannot, nor indeed need not, keep the commandments of God, despite possessing the faith of Jesus." To deny God's condition of salvation—obedience—is to withdraw from God's commission to His church to take the three angels' messages worldwide.

With books saturated with these errors being promoted wholeheartedly by the leaders of some divisions and many of our publications, one need not search far to discover the reason why the administrators of the North American Division have declared, "There is grave danger that the precious Adventist message will not be passed to the next generation." San Diego Covenant, quoted in the Adventist Review, March 7, 1991.

Only obedient servants of God can enter heaven. It will not be a false obedience based upon our unsanctified efforts. God declares through His servant, "He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure." Selected Messages, book 1, 364. Those who proclaim, as do a host of our preachers, that we shall be sinning until Jesus comes, defile the sacred desk, for they lead God's blood-bought souls into carnal security. The blood of these church members will be upon their hands. As these words are penned, my heart aches for ministers who would deign to serve church members so poorly. How blind can one be who has taken sacred vows? What disregard of divine duty! What fearful judgment awaits!

Obedience, the condition for reception of God's mercy, His grace, pervades Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. If these ministers would simply set themselves the task of copying every text of Scripture which in one word form or another sets before God's people His requirement of obedience to His commandments, the pastor would suffer writer's cramp long before the task was completed.

Why do our theologians, pastors, and laity spurn God's condition for their salvation? The answer is to be found in three small words—love of sin.

Clifford Goldstein's book, The Remnant, published last year, plainly sets forth the appalling level of sin in our midst. In truth, among both ministry and laity, financial dishonesty, immorality of every kind, Sabbath-breaking and lying are rife, along with virtually every other kind of sin. Such is both the result of denying the great condition of salvation and the cause of its continued rejection. It was Satan who adamantly promised salvation to the disobedient; God never changed. See Genesis 3:4. Search the Bible and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Each over and over again points to divinely empowered obedience to God's law as the condition of salvation. Yet puny men declare to be false that which our God has asserted thousands of times, and they uphold before God's flock as truth that which Satan alone has proclaimed.

We love sin so much that many of us watch it for hours every week on our television sets, while our Bibles and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy lie on our bookshelves neglected. Thus we sit in our pews, unsteady upon the Word, and subject to accept any or all foolishness promoted from our pulpits. But instead of pointing our people to God's truth and to the study of it, we are now accelerating our publication of novels through our

Those who proclaim, as do a host of our preachers, that we shall be sinning until Jesus comes, defile the sacred desk, for they lead God's blood-bought souls into carnal security.
presses. Novels that contain sordid fantasies of sex and violence such as date rape, incestuous sexual abuse, adulterous love affairs, and other vile themes (see Adventist Review, December 1, 1994) deny God's great condition for salvation.

To the converted man, sin is repulsive. His love for God is so great that he recognizes that it was disobedience to God's law which led to the terrible sacrifice of His Saviour. He contemplates that each of his sins causes the most intense sorrow to the One who died for him. God's certain promise of power to deliver him from sin so that he may measure up to the great condition of salvation is a matter of great joy. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy...” Jude 24. Such a man rests in God, growing in grace day by day, climbing from one level of perfection to the next.

“Man may grow up into Christ, his living Head. It is not the work of a moment, but that of a lifetime. By growing daily in the divine life, he will not attain to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ until his probation ceases. The growing is a continuous work.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 367.

Day by day God reveals more of His will to the man who diligently studies the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Day by day as he submits himself to his Lord, Christ supplies the power for victory over all that He has revealed to the soul at that point in time. God does not demand our obedience to that which He has not yet seen fit to set before us. But we imperil our salvation if we reject that which He has shown to us. “Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth.” John 9:41.

The rapid decline of our church in First World countries, both in Sabbath attendance and in standards of belief and conduct, is due to the disgraceful denial of God’s condition for salvation.

The rapid decline of our church in First World countries, both in Sabbath attendance and in standards of belief and conduct, is due to the disgraceful denial of God’s condition for salvation. They have learned absolutely no lessons from the era of the First Advent, apparently believing that Satan has altered his tactics in these last days. They believe in a counterfeit grace, bestowed upon them if they acknowledge a belief in Christ that is no better than that possessed by the devils. Some go further and offer salvation without any condition to all men who answer its call. Some totally deny God's power to give them obedience, and thus promote the thought that they will sin until His second coming. They believe that then in their glorified bodies they will miraculously be able to do that which they have not been able to accomplish, even in God's power, while possessed of a fallen nature. Such persons, unwittingly, cast aspersions upon Christ, for either He cannot, or He will not, grant power for victory over sin, and Satan was telling the truth when he claimed that man could not keep God's law after the Fall. See Patriarchs and Prophets, 77. They have denied this truth and consequently thousands, failing to study God's Word, accept this error.

But see God's Word: “The world’s Redeemer passed over the ground where Adam fell because of his disobeying the expressed law of Jehovah; and the only begotten Son of God came to our world as a man, to reveal to the world that men could keep the law of God. Satan, the fallen angel, had declared that no man could keep the law of God after the disobedience of Adam.” Selected Messages, book 3, 136. Dare we continue to proclaim Satan’s lie? If Christ had possessed an unfallen nature, He could never have demonstrated Satan's claim that man could not keep the law of God after the Fall was a despicable lie.

Yes, today there are two distinct classes in God's church. One, a small minority, places their faith in Inspiration, rather than in the faulty dictates of man. They ever praise their God for His bestowal of the gift of eternal life through grace, and grace alone, and they humbly seek to meet the condition upon which that saving grace is bestowed, not in their own strength, but in the mighty power made available by their Lord.

The second group admire the words of theologians and church administrators more than those of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. They have learned absolutely no lessons from the era of the First Advent, apparently believing that Satan has altered his tactics in these last days. They believe in a counterfeit grace, bestowed upon them if they acknowledge a belief in Christ that is no better than that possessed by the devils. Some go further and offer salvation without any condition to all men who answer its call. Some totally deny God's power to give them obedience, and thus promote the thought that they will sin until His second coming. They believe that then in their glorified bodies they will miraculously be able to do that which they have not been able to promote Satan as being more powerful than God, for none dispute that Satan can and does lead the willing soul into disobedience, whereas these men's teachings declare by inference that Christ cannot lead the willing soul to obedience.

As prophecy foretold, these two groups are now here, plain for all to see. They exist on every continent. The key issue is one of obedience, of love to our God. Do we seek Him that we might meet His condition in His strength? Or do we rather accept Satan’s sophistries? My heart breaks as I see dear friends and former colleagues in the cause of truth accepting the second course. Our Lord, who is not willing that any one of us should perish (2 Peter 3:9), still provides probationary time. But how brief that time now is!

Soon the awesome words will be spoken of us: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Revelation 22:11. At that time no one will be left in doubt that the great condition of salvation—obedience to our God and love for Him—is clearly set forth in His Word. “Know ye not, that to whom ye sell yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Romans 6:16. For those who neglected to discern this fact and to live accordingly, it will be forever too late. We now cannot begin to comprehend the anguish of that eternal loss. “Repent, O Israel, for why should ye die?” □
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cherishes and nurtures these roots of dissension, and possesses a spirit so unlike the Spirit of Christ.

There is a work to be wrought in the heart of each one, that you may not sow tares. When the lips of the watchman are touched with a live coal from off the altar by the Lord of hosts, the trumpet will give a certain sound, very different from the sound we have hitherto heard. God has a living testimony for the world. This tame, lifeless sermonizing is not after God’s order. I appeal to you, men in responsible positions, do not seek to meet the world’s standard, to catch the world’s ideas. Do not speak smooth things, prophesying deceit. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God, whom “the Father shall send in my name,” said Christ, “shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” The ministers of the Lord are to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” 2 Timothy 4:2.

We have a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. We are under obligation as those who have made solemn vows to God, and who have been commissioned as the messengers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of the grace of God, to declare faithfully the whole counsel of God. Ever remember that we are surrounded, encompassed, with a great cloud of witnesses; for the heavenly intelligences are looking upon us as ambassadors of the King of kings and Lord of lords. We have a right to lift the standard high. He who understands the dignity of our calling, the sacredness of our work, commands that we declare the message with unshrinking heart. We may well humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, or He will humble us; but if we walk modestly and humbly before the Lord, He will accept us.

The Lord looks with disfavor upon those who would please the men of the world, while at the same time they accuse those whom God is using, and manifest a satanic disrespect toward those whom they should highly regard. The tenderness of spirit, the kindness, the courtesy, the refinement of feeling, that characterizes those who are learning in the school of Christ, has passed out of the heart and life of many who think that God is using them. The True Witness says, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:4-5. If there was far more repenting and confessing and forsaking of sin, and less self-sufficiency, and less self-boasting, we should see spiritual things more clearly. God desires that you come into vital connection with Himself, and then Christ will abide in the heart, and a pure flame of devotion will be kindled in the soul.

There has been a departure from God among us, and the zeal of work of repentance and return to our first love essential to restoration to God and regeneration of heart has not yet been done. Infidelity to God has been making its inroads in our ranks; for it is the fashion to depart from Christ, and give place to skepticism. The cry of the heart has been, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Baal, Baal, is the choice. The religion of many among us will be the religion of apostate Israel, because they love their own way, and forsake the way of the Lord. The true religion, the only religion of the Bible, that teaches forgiveness through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, that advocates righteousness by the faith of the Son of God, has been slighted, spoken against, ridiculed. It has been denounced as leading to enthusiasm and fanaticism. Take it back while it is not too late for wrongs to be righted; for you have sinned against God. But it is the life of Jesus Christ in the soul, it is the active principle of love imparted by the Holy Spirit, that alone will make the soul fruitful unto good works. The love of Christ is the force and power of every message that ever fell from human lips. What kind of future is before us, if we shall fail to come into the unity of the faith?

When we are united in the unity for which Christ prayed, this long controversy which has been kept up through satanic agency, will end, and we shall not see men framing plans after the order of the world, because they have not spiritual eyesight to discern spiritual things. They now see men as trees walking, and they need the divine touch, that they may see as God sees, and work as Christ worked. Then will Zion’s watchmen sound the trumpet in clearer, louder notes; for they will see the sword coming, and realize the danger in which the people of God are placed.

There is no time now to range ourselves on the side of the transgressors of God’s law, to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears, and to understand with their perverted senses. We must press together. We must become a unit, to be holy in life and pure in character. Let us no longer bow down to the idol of men’s opinions, no longer be slaves to any shameful lust, no longer bring a polluted offering to the Lord, a sin-stained soul, which is represented by the offerings of the Moabites and Amorites.

O, shall not repentance take the place of unbelief and rebellion? Or shall this state of impenitence and blindness continue until it shall be said unto us, as to the cities that spurned the offered mercies of Christ in the days of His ministry, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.” Matthew 11:21-23. □


**“The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit’s working.”**

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1Selected Messages, book 2, 36.
**Ordination of Women**

Continued from page 7

front pagan society’s denigration of woman. We have also seen that there were many women, many of whom Paul highly commended, engaged in helping ministries in the early church and that women and men enjoyed complete spiritual equality.

"However, we have also seen that women are prohibited from exercising a headship role in the congregation. A clear

Some years ago I wrote a letter to the then General Conference president expressing my burdens and predictions on the women’s ordination movement. The letter was written from British Columbia after I had read a feature article by a former moderator of the Church of Canada. He was defending that church against pressure to ordain known homosexual ministers. It was obvious that years before the Church of Canada had capitulated to the pressure for the ordination of women.

To add women’s ordination adds yet another issue to the already schismatic issues of the unfallen human nature of Christ, salvation in sin, celebration services, and NLP.

_distinction must be made between office and function. God is calling women to ministry, but not to the leadership office in which spiritual authority is exercised over men. No doubt this is the reason Ellen White, whose call to ministry was exceptional, did not hesitate to prophesy and exhort while never seeking ordination to the ecclesiastical office. In that sense, as well as others, her life and ministry were in harmony with the Scriptures." Ibid. 150.

Dr. Holmes raises the issue of “division.” Some recognize the divisive nature of the women’s ordination issue. Instead of calling for solutions that require submission to Scripture, they call for “statesmen-like behavior.” In other words, a political solution must be sought, such as the compromise action of the Indianapolis General Conference session that disallowed the ordination of women while permitting them to perform all the functions of ministry without ordination. The well-intentioned attempt to keep both sides happy has predictably failed because it provided the basis for further conflict as it compromises almost inevitably do.

“Political solutions cannot resolve biblical issues. Bowing to the feminist agenda on ordination for women leads us away from fidelity to Scripture.” Ibid. 130. How accurate has this latter statement of Elder Holmes proved? Any compromise solution is never God’s solution and it never resolves the issue. There must be a reassertion of moral and spiritual fiber among the leading decision makers in God’s church.

Now an ad hoc committee had recommended the possibility of ordaining some lesbian and gay pastors in that church. A decision by the full synod was to be made later that year. In my letter to the then General Conference president I wrote in part: “I am not a prophet, but as a student of history I can predict that should the battle for the ordination of women be won in the Adventist Church, the next battle will be over the ordination of gay and lesbian ministers. You may say, ‘impossible;’ I say, ‘inevitable.’ If we look at the trends in our church we can see how they follow, almost without fail, the trends in other churches. We just follow them twenty years behind. I am praying that God will overrule in this matter. We have to draw the line somewhere. I believe it is not good enough to allow us to go part way down the hill. All the theological jargon and all the sociological argumentation cannot produce a ‘thus saith the Lord’ to go ahead in the direction that we seem to be moving on the ordination of women.

“Neither is it good enough to say that many of our women are acting in various parts of the world with full pastoral authority. This does not give credence to this situation. We will have to, though difficult it will be, draw back from such a direction.” Letter to Elder Neal Wilson, May 30, 1988.

I still have not the slightest doubt that, should women pastors be ordained, the next battleground will be pressure from the very active homosexual lobby within our church to agitate for ordination from their ranks into the Seventh-day Adventist ministry. I believe that only the return of our Lord will save us from this prospect becoming a reality.

**After the 1990 General Conference**

Let us summarize what has happened since the 1990 General Conference refused to vote the ordination of women pastors, but naïvely yielded to the pressure of the North American Division delegates to have authority to allow women to perform the same duties as male pastors. In truth, without worldwide support, women were already performing these functions in North America before the 1990 General Conference session.

The Southeastern California Conference was almost ready to go forward in total rebellion with an action that would have defied the action taken by the General Conference session in 1990 by unilaterally ordaining women pastors. Some believe that only the intervention of Elder Tom Mostert, Jr., Pacific Union Conference president, saved the conference from going ahead with its plans to ordain women, in spite of the action at the General Conference session. If their decision had been in accordance with the Word of God then that would be appropriate, but being completely out of harmony with the Word of God, it represented a monumental step toward rebellion against God’s church.

However, the issue remained a social/political issue. The biblical principles were not central to the eventual decision not to go ahead against the church body, but the agitation continued, and eventually the leaders of North America unanimously voted to urge that reconsideration to the ordination of women be given at the 1995 General Conference session. It is interesting to note that the North American Division is willing to split the Seventh-day Adventist Church, asking that each division have the right to determine whether or not to ordain women pastors.

We hope that the leadership of the divisions around the world will see the not-too-subtle implications of this. For example, at my own ordination it was plainly stated that I had been ordained to the worldwide ministry of the church. Such a statement would have to be changed for women, if some divisions refused to accept the ordination of women pastors. We would also have to expect that tremendous pressure would be placed upon those divisions that did not initially

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join the powerful thrust of the North American Division.

**Troubling Implications for the Future**

Now let us summarize the inevitable results of an action at the General Conference session that would allow freedom for individual divisions to make their own decision on this issue:

(1) It would open a floodgate in the future for other decisions that would further fragment the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(2) While accusing self-supporting work of bringing division and schisms into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the overwhelming divisions have not come from this source, but from the incessant push of the worldly-minded faction of the church, which seems to have little concern for the disunity and distress it is causing. To add women's ordination adds yet another issue to the already schismatic issues of the unfallen human nature of Christ, salvation in sin, celebration services, and NLP. Our beloved church would be further fractionated.

Every one of these intrusions is clearly forbidden of God. The only reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that it is a special church with a special message established on the pure unadulterated Word of God to take the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Every one of these afore-reported intrusions is specifically designed by Satan to destroy the distinctiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to derail its mission.

(3) To vote at the 1995 General Conference the approval for each division to exercise the right to make its own decision on ordination will lead to other levels of our church, such as local conferences and local churches making the same demands, not only on this issue but also on many more.

(4) I predict that if the divisions have the right to make this decision, then very quickly those who initially resist such a direction in their division will, under increasing pressure, capitulate also.

(5) When the battle for women's ordination has been won, even greater numbers of earnest believers will separate from the denominational arm of the church. They will be condemned by those whose votes have been responsible for their disillusionment.

(6) Once the battle for women's ordination is won, the next battleground, if time should last, will be the ordination of homo-

sexual ministers. I am not moved by those who say that this will never be the case. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in recent decades has shown little moral strength to resist pressure to follow in the footsteps of the fallen churches of Protestantism. Already there is a significant homosexual lobby in Seventh-day Adventism, and its boldness increases.

(7) Should this divisive action be voted in the 1995 General Conference, it is going to be even more difficult to convince many faithful Adventists that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not Babylon. Already the excesses in our church have led an alarming number of concerned people to draw this conclusion.

(8) Such an action would be yet another nail in the coffin of the once firmly established concept that we "have no creed but the Bible." Every time actions are taken that are not in accordance with Inspiration, more members are turned to support leadership decisions rather than the Word of God. Such support is fatal to their hopes of eternal life. Still others may lose eternal life because of their disgust with developments in the church they once held so dear.

Already our church has gone far too far. One step away from truth, places us on Satan's territory. When we started to appoint female pastors, rather than Bible workers, we were already on Satan's territory; when we ordained these women as church elders, that direction was more firmly confirmed; when we consented to allow these women to perform almost all the functions of a minister, we were setting ourselves in concrete against the Word of God.

It is now necessary, if this church is going to recapture the vision and the mission that God has placed before us, to reverse all these steps and to explain through inspirational lines the principles of Heaven.

The recent efforts both in the South Pacific Division and the North American Division to desensitize their members and urge the women's agenda should cease immediately. If leaders do not have the moral insight or backbone to take a stand on this issue, then the laity must look for leaders who will follow a "thus saith the Lord" alone. Otherwise, the floodgate that has already been opened will be virtually out of control.

The servant of the Lord indicated that the omega of apostasy would be of a most startling nature. Certainly the deviation that we already have seen qualifies as part of the apostasy. The positive side is the fact that the defection from truth was clearly foretold. We now know that we are reaching the end of probationary time. This fact is a pressing call for all of us to make our election sure. Let us look up, for our "redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:28. I pray that we readers will be faithful to God's Word, deviating neither to the right nor to the left, allowing Christ the full possession in our lives, that we may soon witness the coming of our blessed Lord.

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