

WINDS OF DOCTRINE – THE SHAKING

THE ROLE OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION

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THE PURPOSE OF THE SERIES

Why Heresies?

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. — Romans 8:28

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.— 2 Corinthians 13:8

It is thought by some to be a misfortune when erroneous theories are advanced, but the Lord has said, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” The **contention** among the Corinthians made it **necessary** for Paul to write his wonderful epistles to them. If the Gentiles had not backslidden from the faith, Paul would not have written, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you out of the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another.” It was a **misapplication** of the **Scriptures, to prove falsehood and error true**. If the Thessalonians had not **misinterpreted** the instruction they received, they would not have entertained the belief that the Lord was immediately to be revealed in the clouds of heaven, thus making it necessary for Paul to present the truth as it is in Jesus, leaving on record truth important for all time. And so **opposition against light and truth** called from Christ a **clearer definition** of the truth. Every time that error is advanced, it will work for good to those who sincerely love God; for when the truth is shadowed by error, those whom the Lord has made His sentinels will make the **truth sharper** and clearer. They will **search** the Scriptures for **evidence** of their faith. **The advancement of error is the call for God's servants to arouse, and place the truth in bold relief.** {ST January 6, 1898, par. 8}

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. KJV — 1 John 2:18

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. KJV — 1 John 2:19

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**. {ST 707.3}

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.— 1 Corinthians 11:18

For there must be also among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.— 1 Corinthians 11:19

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; — Ephesians 4:14

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR AN ORGANIZED CHURCH

Let's start with Israel. God has always had an elected and chosen people. The organization of Israel began with Moses, and through Jethro, God shared with Moses a model of organization and delegation. Israel developed into a well-organized system. However, from the prophecy in Daniel 9, we understand that the probation of the Jewish nation would come to a close, and the gospel would then be given to the whole world through the disciples and the followers of Christ. This marked the development of spiritual Israel.

Spiritual Israel was not without organization. In the New Testament, we see the early church planting churches, ordaining elders and pastors, and appointing deacons. Acts 15 recounts the Jerusalem Council, where the issue of circumcision was debated. Without organization, it would have been impossible to address such issues effectively, as everyone would have been independent and divided. However, because the church was organized, representatives from all parts of the field could assemble, discuss, and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reach a decision for all the churches.

Fast forward to Revelation, where under the seals we find the four horsemen. These horsemen symbolize the history of the church:

1. The White Horse represents the purity and victorious movement of the early church.
2. The Red Horse symbolizes the persecution of the church.
3. The Black Horse depicts compromise within the church.
4. The Pale Horse represents spiritual death, coinciding with Paul's prediction in 2 Thessalonians that there would be a falling away.

Revelation 12 introduces a woman, a symbol of the church, who gives birth to a male child destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron. This child, caught up to God's throne, is Christ. The woman, representing the pure church, then flees into the wilderness. At this point, the church becomes invisible. However, after the 1260 prophetic days (or years), the woman emerges from the wilderness, once again visible and identifiable.

The church's identifying characteristics, as described in Revelation 12:17, are:

1. It keeps the commandments of God (all ten, including the fourth).
2. It has the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy (Revelation 19:10).

The New Testament church was organized, went into the wilderness for 1260 years, and emerged with these identifying marks. Revelation 10 describes the rise of this church and its

mission. John is told to eat the little book, which symbolizes the book of Daniel—specifically, the portions concerning the end-time prophecies, including the 2300 days. Once closed, this book is now open.

When John eats the book, it is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly. This symbolizes the Advent movement's experience: the sweetness of anticipating Christ's return but the bitterness of the Great Disappointment when He did not return as expected. After this, Revelation 10:11 commands John to "prophesy again before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." This reflects the mission of the church to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

Revelation 12 identifies the church; Revelation 10 outlines its mission; Revelation 14 presents its message—the three angels' messages. Revelation 3, however, describes its condition: the Laodicean state, a lukewarm condition characterized by being wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

It is crucial to understand that the church is in a militant, not triumphant, state. Despite its challenges, the church has come out of the wilderness, with identifiable characteristics, a mission, a message, and a visible organization. This led to the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which aligns with the identifying marks of Revelation 12, fulfills the mission of Revelation 10, carries the message of Revelation 14, and fits the Laodicean condition described in Revelation 3.

1. WHY IS THERE A GC & HOW DID IT COME ABOUT

Now that we've established God has a church, an organized body, that came out of the wilderness, what events led to its organization and the formation of the General Conference?

The Lord has shown that **gospel order** has been too much feared and neglected. [The Adventists were of all churches, and at first they had no idea of forming another church. After 1844 there was great confusion, and the **majority** were **strongly opposed to any organization**, holding that it was inconsistent with the perfect liberty of the gospel. The testimony and labors of Mrs White have always been opposed to fanaticism, and in the instruction given through her, organization in some form was early insisted upon, as necessary to prevent confusion.] Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after his departure order was strictly observed among his apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing his children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites his children, **Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it**. Therefore men are hurried into the field who lack wisdom and judgment, perhaps not ruling well their own house, and not having order or government over the few that God has given them charge of at home; yet they feel capable of having charge of the flock. They make many wrong moves, and those unacquainted with our faith judge all the messengers to be like these self-sent men. Thus the cause of God is reproached, and the truth shunned by many unbelievers who would otherwise be candid and anxiously inquire, are these things so? {EW 97.1}

As our **numbers** increased, it was evident that without some form of **organization** there would be great **confusion**, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, **organization was indispensable**. {TM 26.2}

Lets break this down:

What does indispensable mean? You can't do without!

There are six things that were listed let's see if they can be carried out without an **organized visible** church.

1. To provide for the support of the ministry,
2. for carrying the work in new fields,
3. for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members,
4. for holding church property,
5. for the publication of the truth through the press,
6. and for many other objects, organization was indispensable. {TM 26.2}

The word of God does not give license for one man to set up his judgment in opposition to the judgment of the church, neither is he allowed to urge his opinions against the opinions of the church. **If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body.** There have ever been individuals of independent minds who have claimed that they were right, that God had especially taught, impressed, and led them. Each has a theory of his own, views peculiar to himself, and each claims that his views are in accordance with the word of God. Each one has a different theory and faith, yet each claims special light from God. **These draw away from the body, and each one is a separate church of himself. All these cannot be right, yet they all claim to be led of the Lord.** The word of Inspiration is not Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. – {3T 428.2}

Was everyone on board with this new organization idea?

Yet there was **strong feeling** against it among our people. The first-day Adventists were **opposed to organization**, and **most** of the **Seventh-day Adventists** entertained the **same ideas**. We sought the Lord with **earnest prayer** that we might **understand His will, and light was given by His Spirit** that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church—that **organization was essential**. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth. {TM 26.3}

We had a hard **struggle** in **establishing organization**. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, **the opposition was strong**, and it had to be **met again and again**. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by His

providence. We engaged in the work of **organization**, and marked **prosperity attended this advance movement**. {TM 26.4}

2. THE GC AS THE VOICE OF GOD

The Church became organized, but Ellen White once stated the General Conference is not the voice of God. Is that still true, and what were the circumstances?

The voice from **Battle Creek**, which has been regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, **is no longer the voice of God**.—Manuscript Releases 17:185 (1896). {LDE 50.2}

It has been some years since I have considered the **General Conference as the voice of God**.—Manuscript Releases 17:216 (1898). {LDE 50.3}

That **these men** should stand in a sacred place, **to be as the voice of God** to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be—**that is past**.—The General Conference Bulletin, April 3, 1901, p. 25. {LDE 50.4}

**Please note the dates of the above statements*

God has **invested** His **church** with special **authority** and **power** which **no one can be justified in disregarding and despising**, for he who does this **despises the voice of God**.—The Acts of the Apostles, 164 (1911). {LDE 56.2}

I am **encouraged** and **blessed** as I **realize** that the God of Israel **is still guiding His people** and that **He will continue to be with them, even to the end**.—Selected Messages 2:406 (1913). [From Ellen White's final message to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in General Conference Session. These reassuring words were read to the session by the General Conference president, A. G. Daniells, on May 27, **1913**.] {LDE 56.3}

**Please note the dates of the above statements as well. Ellen White died in 1915*

How does misusing Ellen White's writings fuel offshoot movements?

It is often the case that offshoot movements take disconnected passages without sharing the whole picture or context to establish their points. Ellen White also talked about that as well:

There are those who pick out from the Word of God, and also from the Testimonies, **detached paragraphs or sentences that may be interpreted to suit their ideas, and they dwell upon these, and build themselves up in**

their own positions, when God is not leading them. Here is your danger. {1SM 179.3}

You will take **passages in the Testimonies that speak of the close of probation, of the shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise.** Now all this pleases the enemy. We should not needlessly take a course that will make differences or create dissension. We should not give the impression that if our particular ideas are not followed, it is because the ministers are lacking in comprehension and in faith, and are walking in darkness. {1SM 179.4}

Your mind has been on an unnatural strain for a long time. You have much truth, precious truth, but mingled with suppositions. Your extreme ideas and strong language often destroy the effect of your best efforts. **Should many accept the views you advance, and talk and act upon them, we would see one of the greatest fanatical excitements that has ever been witnessed among Seventh-day Adventists. This is what Satan wants.** {1SM 179.5}

Unfortunately we see this happening today. We are seeing so many fanatical movements rising that is pleasing the enemy.

So what was taking place when Ellen White said the General Conference is no longer the voice of God?

It is important to know this because one can argue that because of prevailing apostasy the GC is no longer the voice of God again. So let us see what was taking place. Please note the dates. Again, she died in 1915.

We **cannot** now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any **new organization**, for this would mean **apostasy from the truth**.—Selected Messages 2:390 (1905). {LDE 55.2}

I am instructed to say to **Seventh-day Adventists the world over**, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to **the end of time**.—Selected Messages 2:397 (1908). {LDE 55.3}

Here is the issue that was taking place:

I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. **But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all**

parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body. – {9T 260.1}

At times, when a **small group of men** entrusted with the general management of the work have, in **the name of the General Conference**, sought to carry out unwise plans to restrict God's work, **I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference**, represented **by these few men**, as the **voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected.** {LDE 55.4}

There were just a few men making all the decisions and there was not a balance in power. So what was the solution? There needed to be restructuring to balance the power.

God has ordained that the representatives of His church from **all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.** The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of **one man**, or of a **small group of men**, the **full measure** of authority and influence that God has invested in His church in the judgment and **voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.**—Testimonies for the Church 9:260, 261 (1909). {LDE 56.1}

This adjustment was made at 1901 General Conference. Ellen White was very pleased, She never made another statement that denounced the voice or authority of the GC since the restructuring. We are still under that structure today.

What we want now is a **reorganization**. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle.... {LDE 53.1}

Here are men who are standing at the head of our various institutions, of the educational interests, and of the conferences in different localities and in different States. All these are to stand as representative men, to have a voice in molding and fashioning the plans that shall be carried out. **There are to be more than one or two or three men to consider the whole vast field. The work is great, and there is no one human mind that can plan for the work which needs to be done....** {LDE 53.2}

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.... There must be a renovation, a **reorganization**; a power and strength must be brought into the committees that are necessary."

[From Ellen White's opening address on April 2, 1901, to the General Conference Session in Battle Creek.]—[The General Conference Bulletin, April 3, 1901](#), pp. 25, 26. {LDE 53.3}

Note: **Reorganization** not a **New Organization**

New Conferences must be formed. It was in the order of God that **the Union conference was organized in Australia.... It is not necessary to send thousands of miles to Battle Creek for advice, and then have to wait weeks for an answer. Those who are right on the ground are to decide what shall be done.**—The General Conference Bulletin, April 5, 1901, pp. 69, 70. {LDE 53.4}

It hurts me to think that you are using words which I wrote prior to the conference. **Since the conference great changes have been made.** —3MR 205.5

The reorganization Ellen White called for was effected. Major changes later enumerated by A. G. Daniells were:

1. **The organization of union conferences and union mission boards** in all parts of the world where either the membership or the staff of workers make it advisable.
2. The transfer of the ownership and management of all institutions and enterprises of the cause to the organizations with which they are by location directly connected.
3. Making all the leading lines, such as the Sabbath school, educational, medical missionary, religious liberty, and publishing work, departments of the General Conference, and placing the chairmen of these departments on the General Conference Committee.
4. Enlarging and strengthening all conference committees and mission boards by placing on them men especially qualified to represent the evangelical, educational, medical missionary, and publishing interests of the cause.
5. Placing the responsibility of attending to the details of the work in all parts of the world, upon those who are located where the work is to be done.
6. Arranging an organic connection or union of all the parts of our organization and field by placing on the union conference committees the presidents of local conferences who are elected by the local churches; and further by placing on the General Conference Committee the presidents of union conferences, the superintendents of union mission fields, and the chairmen of all department committees. Thus every church, every department of work, and every institution in the denomination is represented in local and union conferences, and in the General Conference as well."—The Review and Herald, March 29, 1906.

It has been a **necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences.** The **power vested** in the **Conference** is not to be **centered in one man, or two men, or six men**; there is to be a **council of men over the separate divisions.** The showing by the **past leadership** of the **conference** is not after God's order.

There has been a work done of a character that has not been approved of God. The result we have before us in the ruins where once stood that large printing plant, [The Review and Herald Office in Battle Creek] with its expensive facilities.... {ChL 26.1}

The issue was a few people in control—Independent movements that break away is doing the very thing she speaks against when they break away.

The issue was a distribution of power. This issue was not apostasy. The church **has always and will always have apostasy** until it's purified through persecution. The wheat and tares will grow together until the harvest.

Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant. We are sorry that there are defective members, that there are tares amid the wheat.... **Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world**, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. **The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard.**—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 45, 49 (1893). {LDE 52.2}

A Statement by W. C. White (Ellen White's son)

I told her [Mrs. Lida Scott] how Mother regarded the experience of the remnant church, and of her positive teaching that **God would not permit this denomination to so fully apostatize that there would be the coming out of another church.**—W. C. White to E. E. Andross, May 23, 1915, White Estate Correspondence File. {LDE 56.4}

God has an Organized body that He is working through.

I tell you, my brethren, **the Lord has an organized body through whom He will work....** When anyone is **drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people**, when he begins to **weigh the church in his human scales** and begins to pronounce judgment against them, **then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.**—Selected Messages 3:17, 18 (1893). {LDE 51.4}

The key point is this: **the Church itself is not in apostasy, but apostasy exists within it.** However, because the Church operates under a structured organization, there is a level of accountability. In contrast, many independent offshoot movements lack such accountability. Typically, these movements are led by a single individual whose word becomes law. This often leads to fanaticism, as there is no structure, organization, or system to hold the leader accountable. Who holds the leader of the offshoots movement accountable?

Even before sin entered the universe, there was a system of governance in heaven. Similarly, while every family can and should function as a ministry, the dynamics change when a ministry involves paid workers or staff. At that point, governance and accountability are essential. This is why self-supporting ministries have boards and executive committees—to provide oversight. Questions like how money is spent, how conflicts are resolved, and how to address leadership failures or apostasy require a system of checks and balances. What disciplinary measures are in place if a leader strays from the path?

Thorough organization is, therefore, crucial. Ironically, the very lack of accountability that independent offshoot movements criticize in the Church is often replicated in their own operations—a concern that deeply burdened Ellen White about the state of the conference.